

The children of Peshawar shooting 'went to school and never came back'

Students of all religions come together to pray for the victims of Pakistan

BY POLINA GANEVA

The heavy rain yesterday made it seem as if the whole city was crying for the victims of the recent terrorist attack on a school in Pakistan where over 140 people died, 131 of which - innocent children.

More than 200 students and staff gathered in front of Sheffield Students' Union to say their farewell to the teachers and students who lost their lives in Peshawar, Pakistan and to pray for the souls of the wounded who are still desperately fighting to survive.

Christians, Muslims and people of other or no religion attended the vigil and lit candles in hopes the souls of the victims will find peace in the afterlife. They all stood in sadness with lowered heads as the organisers of the event asked for a two minute silence.

A student proposed to form the word "Peshawar" using those same candles they lit signifying the lost lives in the attack. With combined effort, it was written on the concrete ground.

Many of those passing by the union stopped to look at the hundreds of candles that glowed in the darkness.

The wind was blowing the flames out but the students kept relighting them, dedicated as the teachers who gave their life to protect the younger ones in Pakistan.

A teacher of the Army Public School and College in Peshawar was burned alive in front of her students according to news reports. Afsha Ahmed, 24, confronted the terrorists: "You can only kill them over my dead body, I won't see my students lying in blood on the floor".

She was then doused in petrol and set on fire. Other teachers and students met with a similar fate. The principal Tahira Kazi was also allegedly burned alive because of the fact that her husband was an army officer.

Imam Sheikh Mohammad Ismail, head of the Muslim chaplaincy at University of Sheffield, spoke at the event without hiding his distress.

"I thought in the morning it was not a big problem. But in the evening I realised it was on our doorstep and it concerns us all."

He said he knew the families of at least three of the students who were killed in the attack and even the principal who was set on fire was a family acquaintance of a postgraduate student studying in Sheffield University.

Leena Farhat, a student and a member of the Pakistani Society in University of Sheffield which organised the event, said she was very proud that people of all colour and religious beliefs stand together against oppression.

With tears in her eyes, she looked around the faces of all attending and said:

"They went to school and never came back... More than one hundred children died..."

"I see Pakistani people, other Muslims, people of different colour and people of different religions and people without such beliefs. Yet we are all here to honour those that lost their lives and to pray for the recovering."

"This shows that we, as humans, are not so fragmented after all. We are here together gathered against terrorism and against undeserved violence against children."

She spoke that through a megaphone but there was no need as everyone was standing close and listening attentively in the cold silent evening.

Ms Farhat then gave Mr Ismail the chance to speak. He concluded his speech with a prayer in two languages and asked the students for a two-minute silence.

Rev Anthea Colledge, Christian chaplaincy development worker, also came to express her solidarity and to say that the Christian community is supporting the victims of the terrorist attack and their families and that they will be in their prayers every day.

In an interview after the vigil, Mr Ismail spoke about the politics of the terrorism act in Pakistan:

"The attack will have an immense effect on the Pakistani nation and country

because since this terrible tragedy all the political forces came together and the nation is behind the army to fight this problem. The neighbouring country which shares the same issues, Afghanistan, has made an announcement that both countries will cooperate and fight terrorism together.

"I am very pleased by the turnout and grateful to all who came. I believe this shows we are all human beings and we are all united for the safety, security and well-being of our sons and daughters."

Numerous students from Pakistan attended the candle service and were eager to speak against the atrocities in Peshawar.

Ehsan, 28, from Islamabad, said: "This is the most terrible event in the history of Pakistan so far. We are utmost devastated and we feel the terrorists should be punished."

"And these children... No one in the whole mankind can think of such a brutal act against children as normal. All faiths and races stand against this type of violence, it doesn't need boundaries - so they come here and they express their solidarity and we will remember these children forever."

The Muslim community in Sheffield is organising another vigil, which is expected to be bigger, on Saturday morning. It will take place in the Peace Gardens at 11am and people from all backgrounds are welcome to attend and express their solidarity.



With candles and prayers, students said their last farewell

Goal: Support the homeless more

Charities urge people to give back to those who 'don't have anything' this Christmas

BY POLINA GANEVA

People were urged to donate and take a minute to think about the homeless yesterday during Homeless Awareness Day.

The Day was organised by Sheffield Volunteering in collaboration with Cathedral Archer Project, a charity for the homeless and vulnerable, and included an information stall, a walk through City Centre to showcase all facilities available and talks about changing people's attitudes towards those without a home.

Jade Hearsam, a representative for Cathedral Archer Project, was in charge of the stall at Sheffield University Students' Union. Having met many of the homeless people involved in the project, she said it was important to raise awareness.

"As Christmas is approaching and the weather is getting worse people are realising the importance of helping people who don't have anything," she said.

"Some of our clients only have a rucksack and that's literally all their belongings in there. So I think people really appreciate what they have and think 'I am going to give back to those that don't'."

The Cathedral Archer Project, established in 1990, marks its 25th anniversary this year. It aims to support homeless and vulnerable people in the city by offering them food, chance to socialise and to stabilise their lives.

It assists between 50 and 90 clients a day and offers maths and literacy classes to boost their standard of living. There are also organised activities like crafts, team sports and gardening which help members meet friends.

"In 1989 we started as a breakfast project, there are no records of the date of the first breakfast, nor any details of how many people were there," said Andy Parfremont, Manager at Cathedral Archer Project. "Today we still deliver that essential breakfast but we have added so many more services."

"At the heart of the project the importance of building relationships and providing a safe space remains as the foundation on which new opportunities and new lives can be built."

"We need to build awareness. The journey into homelessness is complex and frightening and the journey out can be



People from Cathedral Archer Project believe they can make a difference much harder.

"Those pioneers of the first breakfasts recognised this and started to offer activities and learning as well as breakfast. Over the years this has evolved into the Cathedral Archer Project we know now."

"We are still evolving and looking at new ways to help and support homeless people, learning from them as well as other organisations."

"Staff roles have changed from being pastoral and supportive to case working and development roles with most of their previous work now undertaken by people who came to use the project to support their peers."

"We recently built a new centre and it has enabled us to offer more activities, better access to the nurse and dentist and to work with people to find out what they

want us to do to help them."

On Homeless Awareness Day, Cathedral Archer Project advertised heavily their activities and learning as well as breakfast. Over the years this has evolved into the Cathedral Archer Project we know now.

On Homeless Awareness Day, Cathedral Archer Project advertised heavily their biggest event for the next year - the annual Sleep Out which is to take place on Friday, 20th March.

There participants will have the opportunity to learn and experience for one night what it might be like to be homeless and to be forced to sleep on the streets. The Sleep Out Project requires registration. Booking forms can be found at the website of the charity (<http://www.archerproject.org.uk/>)

Edwards stole from three properties on Westbourne Road, Broomhill, while still subject to two community orders issued for theft in February and March.

"Edwards has 47 other offences, 29 of which are theft," said Ian Goldsack, prosecutor. "Although burglary is a first time offence, the fact that Mr and Mrs Trickett were inside is a matter of greater harm."

"In her statement, Mrs Trickett said that her husband is very upset by the incident and feels 'he no longer can go on holiday'."

Edwards smirked. Looking relaxed, she began talking to the security officer with her in the dock.

Her lawyer, Paul O'Shea, asked the judge to impose another community order as a sentence.

"The defender is now significantly better," Mr O'Shea said. "She has the criminal record of a drug addict and has improved while she was in custody. There she has taken no drugs."

"She has no record of previous offending of this offence - also there are particular circumstances that have to be considered - she was intoxicated at the time."

"Much of her problems are associated with other issues - she was robbed and violently assaulted in the past by a guy she was together with who is now in prison. She is trying to rid herself of those types of issues."

Judge J Goose said he rejected the proposal for a community order. According to sentencing guidelines, Edwards must go to prison for nine months because of the great harm her presence caused to Mr and Mrs Trickett.

Because she pleaded guilty and "used her time in custody on good effect", he reduced that to seven months and told her that if her good behavior persists she could "get out almost immediately".

Labour wins PCC election

Rev Dr Alan Billings, a former priest, won the election with more than 50% of the votes. UKIP came second with 32% of the votes, followed by the Conservatives and the English Democrats.

BY POLINA GANEVA

Alan Billings, put forward by Labour, is the new South Yorkshire police and crime commissioner. He will replace Shaun Wright, who resigned after the sexual abuse negligence scandal in Rotherham.

A former Sheffield parish priest, Rev Dr Alan Billings believes that the role may not be needed but a good person should hold the position while it is still in place.

He was a deputy leader of Sheffield City Council in the 1980s and is a regular contributor to Radio 4's Thought for the Day on the Today programme.

The Sheffield Star debate, which brought all the candidates together and asked them the questions of the public, was a point in time when all of them made promises to the people.

Rev Billings said he has been involved in politics for a long time.

"I know quite a lot about what works in reducing anti-social behavior, what works in reducing crime, so it is that background that I want



Rev Dr Alan Billings as he takes the post of PCC

bring to this job."

He said that the Rotherham case might not be the only one in the country and after investigation more of the same issues might be repeated so it is important to build the trust in the police and politics.

"That trust will not be restored before the reports and the truth come to light. The new Chief Constable and staff are seriously trying to get to the bottom of this."

Alan Billings said it is important not to forget about the victims of the child sex abuse scandal in Rotherham and that he will be sure not to "take his eyes off the ball".

"We are just beginning to realise who these people were, it is a culture that has to be put right," he said.

"These things began as crimes and the police is the first instance - of which Jack was part of. A lot of our communities are fragile so we do need a period to bring them together and not try to divide them."

"Prophet Jeremiah said: 'seek the welfare of the city, because in its welfare lies your own.' This is what I intend to follow."

The promises of the other PCC candidates



Jack Clarkson UKIP

Jack Clarkson, who is a former member of the police, said he does not have a lot of experience in politics but he possesses other useful background as he knows the victims and the cases. "It's bad politics that's caused this", he said on the Rotherham sex abuse issue.

On the topic of the PCC position, Clarkson said he does not support the existence of the role because "it's a conservative initiative to politicise the police."

"Overall the policing responsibility should be left with the Chief Constable. There should be a watchdog but politicisation of the police is a big agenda of the Tories."

Despite that, he ran a heavy campaign after he was appointed as a candidate for UKIP.

He agreed with the other three candidates that the trust of the public should be regained.

He said that not only people's trust is lost but also morale among PCs is quite low as well. He said that communities need "the policing service they need, not what politicians think they want."

"One size does not fit all - and we need a whistle-blowing system in place."

"There should be a new enquiry that will get to the bottom of the Rotherham scandal. I will help in every way I can."

"We owe this to the victims of Rotherham."



Ian Walker Conservative

Ian Walker did not underline his background and addressed the issue in another light. He said that there is a big job to be done as victims of crime need a neutral place where they can go and now they are often not treated seriously by the police.

"The police on the frontline are doing great but some of the systems maybe with senior police officers are not holding all this together."

He emphasized on the need to have someone overseeing the police and to put pressure on them as "there are far too few prosecutions in South Yorkshire."

Walker put the issue of public trust at first place.

He promised bi-monthly community meetings in locations such as libraries and shopping centres that are easily accessible by all members of the public. He also said there will be more support for local agencies and charities.

"Engaging with the community is important, making sure that we know what their problems are. Being visible, being available."

Ian Walker dismissed the importance of a new enquiry and said that not forgetting about the victims is most important.

He finally said: "The new PCC should be consistent and proby and get to the bottom of this."



David Allen English Democrats

As a father of two daughters and a second time candidate, David Allen said he understands the problems that occurred in Hillsborough and Rotherham and thinks that the police are currently unable to uphold the law.

"It is almost impossible for someone at the Labour party to clean up the PCC role", he said. "There is ideological bias and institutional lack of acceptance of problems."

He believes Rev Dr Alan Billings will not be ruthless enough to bring those kinds of people to justice.

About the PCC role, he said that the police force are not elected but the PCC is - and that role brings the democracy in policing as the person can be held to account if things go wrong.

When discussing the Rotherham scandal, he was not very wordy but said "it was a very devastating change."

"The trust of the people should be rebuilt and that is top priority."

"An enquiry into what happened again should be the one to help the truth come out."

"Senior police officers were pressured to get results and to hit those targets. Child sexual exploitation was very low down the list."

Despite that, he blames the councilors, social services and council officers for the Rotherham case who turned a blind eye on the victims.

Female burglar 'tricked' elderly couples, court told



The Tricketts were burgled of most of their valuables

BY POLINA GANEVA

The evening of June 13 was slightly more exciting than usual for 71-year-old Mrs Trickett. Her granddaughter's prom party was close, and she was working on the special dress. In the dining room, she was fixing the lining of the skirt and was holding the dress over her head, looking at the stitches.

Mrs Trickett heard her husband walking in the hallway and called for him. There was no reply. Then she heard him going upstairs. Even at that point nothing seemed too strange.

The next morning it seemed a bit odd when the wallet that Mr Trickett left hanging on the handle of the bathroom door was missing.

It was very odd when Mrs Trickett could not find her wallet either.

Their Scottish banknotes were missing. A railcard was missing.

And it was then that Mr and Mrs Trickett realized. They had been burgled.

On the evening of June 13 two more homes were visited and also burgled - all by the same stranger. Flustered, appearing intoxicated, she told the residents she was pregnant and on the run from her abusive boyfriend.

But her own story proved her downfall. Concerned for her safety, the people she stole from telephoned the police. They found her in possession of cash, credit and debit cards with different names plus other small valuables.

Cheryl Edwards, 26, was arrested on the spot and yesterday appeared before Sheffield Crown Court for sentencing after she admitted three counts of dwelling burglary.