

Kasrils condemns 'beard' murder

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The "savage" attack on two Muslim men in the North West carried "the stench of Islamophobia", former intelligence minister Ronnie Kasrils said on Wednesday.

"My heartfelt condolences and solidarity to the family of Fayaaz Kazi whose brutal killers must be hunted down and brought to justice," Kasrils said in a statement.

"My deepest wishes and speedy recovery to uncle Ansaar Mahmood who was savagely injured in this criminal attack which carries with it the stench of Islamophobia.

"May all South Africans unite to stop in its tracks the evil of racist and religious intolerance which is a threat to every South African regardless of creed, culture and colour," Kasrils said.

He offered his condolences to the family of the killed man, Mohammed Fayaaz Kazi.

Kazi was beaten to death in Magaliesburg, allegedly by two people who insulted him because of his beard, according to a family friend.

Kazi (27) from Ventersdorp, was with his father's friend Anser Mahmood when they were attacked at a Chicken Licken outlet on Monday.

"Two white people... they called him [Osama] bin Laden in Afrikaans because of his beard...and then they called us k****rs," Mahmood told Sapa by telephone on Wednesday.

"Fayaaz, he understood Afrikaans, and was arguing with them."

All four were thrown out of the fast food shop, and the fight continued outside.

"I asked why they were troubling him and he punched me," Mahmood, 33, said.

"I don't know what he hit me with. I was unconscious."

Mahmood was mostly hit in the face, while Kazi was beaten over the head. Mahmood said he did not know what object was used to attack Kazi as he was lying on his side.

"Nobody helps us. They wanted me dead also, but I survived."

North West police said a murder docket had been opened for Kazi's killing.

"After purchasing food from a fast food outlet an argument allegedly broke out between Kazi and two unknown Afrikaner males. It further alleged that the two suspects were mocking Kazi about his long beard," said Brigadier Thulani Ngubane.

The two men, whose identities are unknown, then fled the scene after the assault.

Ngubane said that police arrived on the scene but Mahmood refused to open a case and the two left for Ventersdorp.

"Upon arriving on Ventersdop, Kazi became weak and was transported to the Ventersdop Hospital where he was treated and transferred to Potchefstroom Hospital after his condition became worse," Ngubane said.

Kazi died in hospital at Potchefstroom. His funeral was held on Tuesday.

The murder case was registered at Potchefstroom police station. It is expected to be transferred to Magaliesberg police station.

The Media Review Network, a Muslim advocacy group on human rights, called on Police Minister Nathi Mthethwa to ensure a speedy investigation was undertaken.

Researcher Ibrahim Vawda said there was widespread anger across the Muslim community.

"We strongly urge all members of our community to exercise restraint and patience and to allow the normal process of the law to take its course."

Bin Laden was the founder of al-Qaeda, which the US claimed was responsible for the September 11, 2001, suicide attacks on the country. US soldiers killed him in Pakistan on 2 May, 2011.

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