

Police ban 'Walk with Jesus' march through Muslim area over fears of 'violence and serious disorder'

Staff writer |

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A 'Walk with Jesus' march through a predominantly Muslim part of London has been banned by the Metropolitan Police over concerns that it will lead to "violence and serious disorder".

The march was due to take place in Whitechapel, in the London borough of Tower Hamlets, on 31 January.

"Join our parade in Whitechapel worshipping Jesus Christ on January 31, the month dedicated to the holy name of Jesus," an advertisement read.

It is the second time the Met have intervened after a planned march in the area by UKIP last October was forced to relocate to central London.


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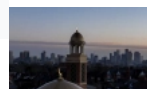
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That planned march prompted groups of mostly men, many of them masked and wearing black clothes, to stage a counter-demonstration pledging to "defend their community". According to [media reports](#), chants of "We will honour all our martyrs" and "Allahu akbar" could be heard, as well as "Zionist scum off our streets", prompting [concerns from the Jewish community](#).

Reform leader Nigel Farage - a founding member of UKIP and twice leader of the Right-leaning party - responded to the counter-demonstration at the time by saying it was "one of the most terrifying things I've ever seen in my whole life", and accused police of "caving in to Islamists".

The Met have now banned UKIP's second planned march using powers under the Public Order Act on the grounds that it would pose "a risk of serious violence to members of the community and to our officers". The Met said the march was permitted to go ahead at a different location in London.

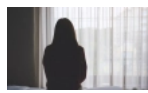
Commenting on the Met's decision, Deputy Assistant Commissioner James Harman said there was a "very real likelihood" that the presence of UKIP in Whitechapel "could lead to serious disruption or serious disorder".

"We are not saying that the UKIP protest, in isolation, will be disorderly. But we do know that many will find it provocative and that provocation is likely to lead to an adverse local reaction," he said.

"We reasonably believe, based on the information available and on previous similar incidents, that the coming together of the UKIP protest with opposing groups who are hostile to its presence would be highly likely to lead to violence and serious disorder."

He continued, "It would be reckless to allow an event to go ahead when we understand there's a risk of serious violence to members of the community and to our officers. We are not doing so on the grounds of politics.

"We're not even doing so on the grounds of whether people will be offended or not by their presence. We are doing so solely on our risk assessment for serious disorder.



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"It's also important to clarify this isn't a ban. The UKIP protest can still take place elsewhere as it did last time."

The Tower Hamlets Palestine Solidarity Network responded to the decision in [an Instagram post](#) by saying that the borough has a "long and proud history of standing up to fascism".

"We thank the Mayor, the Council, and our faith and community leaders for putting pressure on the police to protect our borough," the network said.

Tower Hamlets Mayor Lutfur Rahman said he had met with local faith leaders "including many Christian friends of all denominations" to "discuss how we prepare for UKIP's latest planned march on Tower Hamlets".

"We are united, and will never be divided by their hate," he said.

"Our conversation this evening focused on what brings us all together - love, respect and understanding for our borough. As in the past, our council will work with the police and key stakeholders to ensure that there is no place for hate in Tower Hamlets."

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