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Nashville mosque vandalized second time

This time, community rallies around members; police say suspect told them he had been drinking

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Mohamed Hassan, Al-Farooq Mosque member

Mosque Vandalized in Nashville: The Al-Farooq Islamic Center was hit by vandals overnight. Two cars were left with shattered windows and several windows of the mosque were also smashed.

Written by Adam Tamburin and Brian Wilson The Tennessean

About 100 people rallied at a Nashville mosque Monday, only hours after police arrested a man they say ransacked the place and then fell asleep in a car blocks away.

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Even before the evening rally and prayer service, hundreds of people came to Al-Farooq mosque on Fourth Avenue South to give support and provide help replacing what had been broken, mosque leaders said.

"This is the Nashville I know," Muhammed-Shukuri Hassan told supporters. "We are going to move forward and heal together."

The vandalism at Al-Farooq mosque was reported about 3 a.m.



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Monday, a Metro dispatcher said. By that afternoon, Tyler A.

Wilson, 27, of Nashville was arrested and charged with burglary and felony vandalism in connection with the incident.



An Al-Farook mosque funeral car had smashed windows and other damage. / Sanford Myers / The Tennessean

The response from the community was notably quicker than the time the site was vandalized two years ago, when people took a day to respond to what had happened, said Drost Kokoye of the Tennessee Immigrants and Refugee Rights Coalition.

Officers were called to the Islamic Center after a cab driver familiar with it saw a man wearing only boxer shorts inside a car parked outside the mosque, according to a news release from Metro Police. The man fled the scene on foot.

Inside, investigators found broken windows, plus tables, a water cooler, a vending machine and a microwave overturned. The windshields of two hearses parked outside also were damaged.

Police found Wilson sleeping in a vehicle on Second Avenue South hours later, the release said.

Wilson told detectives that he drank heavily the night before and did not remember anything from Monday morning, the release said. He also said he has no animosity

toward any religion or group.

“The investigation at present, which is being conducted by the South Precinct and the Specialized Investigations Division, strongly suggests that the vandalism at the Islamic Center was committed by one person and was not a planned crime,” Chief Steve Anderson said in a statement.

The mosque was also vandalized in 2010, when someone spray-painted “Muslims Go Home” on the building.

“These acts of violence should not be happening to any places of worship,” said Remziya Suleyman, who leads the American Center for Outreach. “Houses of worship ... are sacred homes.”

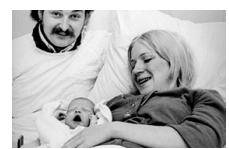
Congregants are rattled by the repeated vandalism, she said.



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"They are in kind of disbelief that this is happening again," she said. "This is not something they see every day, and they understand this doesn't represent Tennesseans and Nashvillians as a whole."

Suleyman said she had been at the mosque throughout the morning and that people from a variety of backgrounds had stopped by to voice their support and help out.

"We are really grateful for the really quick response of law enforcement," she said, noting that Nashville police and the FBI were investigating. "They have been absolutely amazing."

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