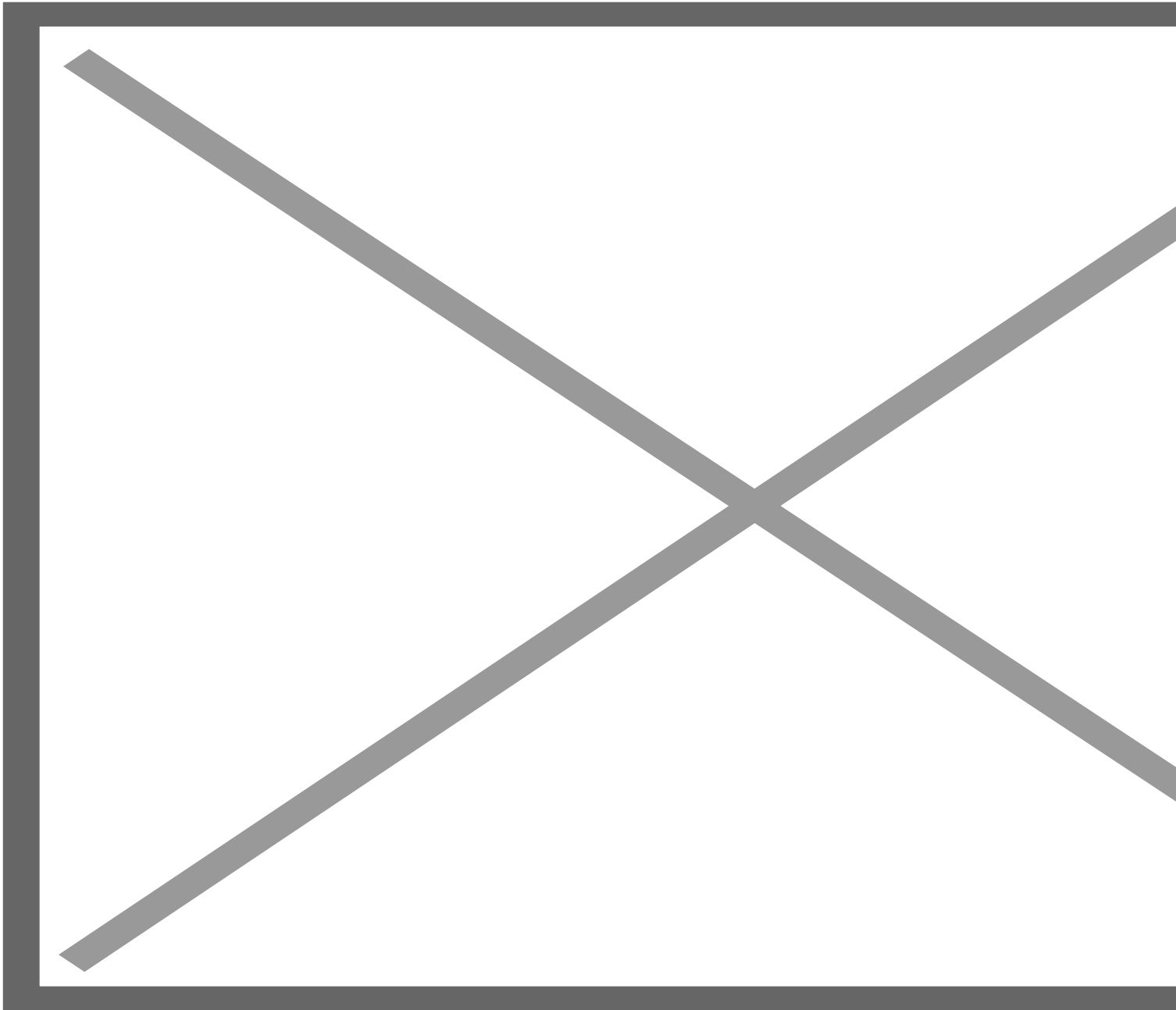


San Diego mosque shooting victims remembered as ‘men of courage, sacrifice, and faith’

by [Ulaa Kuziez](#)

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The three men killed during Monday's shooting at a San Diego mosque have been identified as Mansour Kaziha, from left, Amin Abdullah, and Nadir Awad. (Courtesy photos)

The three American Muslims killed during a shooting Monday at a San Diego mosque are being remembered by their imam and faith community as “men of courage, sacrifice and faith” who put themselves on the line to protect others.

The Islamic Center of San Diego identified the victims as Amin Abdullah, describing him as a “gentle” security guard; Nadir Awad, a “dedicated neighbor”; and Mansour Kaziha, a longtime shopkeeper and caretaker of the mosque.

Abdullah died protecting more than 200 children and community members, the mosque’s Imam Taha Hassane said in an interview. The “beloved” security guard was killed first, Hassane said, but before he died, he used his radio to warn teachers in the center’s school to lock their classroom doors. He “undoubtedly he saved lives today” by delaying the shooters in a gunbattle in front of the mosque, said San Diego Police Department Chief Scott Wahl during a press conference Monday.

Federal authorities are investigating the shooting at the largest mosque in San Diego as a hate crime. They said on Tuesday they recovered a manifesto by the two suspects, who were found dead in a nearby car by police, that discussed hate speech against various races and religions.

Abdullah, born Brian Climax, is remembered by community members as a hero, Hassane said, describing him as a faithful man who smiled often and warmly greeted kids, adults, and visitors who entered the mosque’s doors.

His daughter, Hawaa Abdullah, spoke about her father as a loving protector, a best friend, and a role model. At a press conference Tuesday afternoon, she began with a recitation of the Quran, then broke into sobs before giving heartfelt tribute to her father.

“My dad was the No. 1 advocate for safety and keeping our community safe,” she said. “He stood against any form of hate. He took his job seriously to protect everyone here. He would want our community to stand together as one. That’s exactly what he would want.”

Awad, a “dedicated” neighbor of the mosque, ran when he heard shots to protect congregants and his wife, who teaches at the Islamic school, Hassane said. He said that Awad attended prayers at the center every day.

Awad and Kaziha were killed in the mosque’s parking lot as they attempted to draw away the shooters from the school, police said. Kaziha was the first to call 911.

Kaziha was lovingly known to congregants as “AbbulEzz,” or father of Ezz in Arabic, because of his son, Ezzat. Kaziha dedicated his life to the mosque for 40 years, Hassane said, taking care of its bookstore, managing logistics, and cooking meals for congregants on Fridays and daily during Ramadan. That included a signature Syrian lentil soup appreciated by many congregants.

He received the mosque’s Lifetime Achievement Award. He was also a husband, father, and grandfather.

“He was our grandfather—he was everything, to be honest,” Hassane said in an interview. “He was the pillar of the Islamic center.”

Imam Mohammad Faqih, who led the ICSD two decades ago, said Kaziha has been a constant presence at the mosque, “always helping and volunteering.”

“I can’t even imagine the center without him,” he said. “All seven imams who served knew him well. He loved us all and respected us immensely.”

A [donation fund](#) for the victims’ families had raised over \$500,000 by Tuesday afternoon. A separate [fundraiser](#) for Abdullah’s family organized by the mosque and CAIR San Diego has collected over \$2 million.

“These were men who put themselves on the line for our masjid and our community,” the mosque said in a statement. “Men of courage, sacrifice, and faith. Their absence leaves a void that can never truly be filled. They were more than community members, they were family.”

Muslim advocates have warned in recent months of increasing anti-Muslim bigotry, [including from elected officials](#). Reported Islamophobic incidents rose sharply in 2025 compared with previous years, according to multiple groups that track hate incidents.

The Muslim Public Affairs Council, which condemned the shooting as a “horrific anti-Muslim terror attack,” said it tracked an “unprecedented eleven-fold increase in threats and attacks against American Muslims since January 2026.”

The group said anti-Muslim bigotry from elected officials and members of the [Sharia Free America Caucus](#), which formed in December 2025, has real-world consequences on American Muslims.

In 2025, CAIR received 8,683 civil rights complaints, the most the group has recorded since 1996, [according to its most recent report](#). The Muslim advocacy group identified 33 incidents targeting American mosques and Islamic community centers last year.

“A deadly attack on an American mosque was as predictable as it is unacceptable,” CAIR said in a Monday statement. “Anti-Muslim hatred is one of the last acceptable forms of bigotry in American society, and it is long past time for the tolerance of this hate to end.”

Data shows a majority of mosque leaders are concerned about security in their religious spaces, with more than a quarter saying that they’re very concerned, [according to 2020 research](#) from the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, a research organization focused on Muslims in the US.

The shooting happened on the first day of Dhul-Hijja, a sacred month when Muslims participate in the Hajj pilgrimage in Mecca and increase good deeds.

Hassane said that before the shooting, the mosque had taken safety precautions, including practicing lockdown drills, placing cameras inside and outside its buildings, installing a fence and applying for security grants from the US Department of Homeland Security. He said during a Tuesday press conference that the mosque has received hate messages in the past.

Hassane said his mosque community is strong because of its diversity and outreach to neighbors. He said he is focused on spreading a message of tolerance in response to hate speech by elected officials and some faith leaders.

“This is something that we have never expected to take place, but at the same time, the religious intolerance and the hate, unfortunately, that exists in our nation is unprecedented,” Hassane said during Monday’s press conference. “All of us, we are responsible for spreading the culture of tolerance, the culture of love.” —Religion News Service