

Liverpool bomber probably faked conversion to Christianity, inquest told

From the [Telegraph](#) and the [Liverpool World](#).

The inquest, which lasted about an hour, found Al Swealmeen died from an explosion and subsequent fire when the device detonated in the taxi driven by David Perry.

The Liverpool suicide bomber had a copy of the Koran and a prayer mat in his flat and probably faked conversion to Christianity in order to claim asylum, an inquest heard on Thursday.

At an inquest into al-Swealmeen's death, Andre Rebello, the senior coroner, said it was clear he was a practising Muslim even though he had converted to Christianity at Liverpool Cathedral in March 2017.

Detective Chief Inspector Andrew Meeks, the senior investigating officer in the case, told the hearing it was likely al-Swealmeen had claimed to be a Christian in order to strengthen his asylum claim in the UK. *I wondered if the conversion was genuine, up to a point, but then he had pressure put on him by fanatical Muslims, and martyrdom was his 'penance' for apostacy. We'll never know. He was certainly a Muslim again when he tried to kill so many women and children.*

At the inquest, at Liverpool and Wirral Coroner's Court, Mr Rebello said: "When premises were searched, both a Holy Koran and prayer mat were present and it was fairly evident that he carried out the religious duties of someone who is a follower of Islam, notwithstanding the reported conversion to Christianity."

The coroner also revealed how the terrorist had spoken to his brother, who lives in America, two days before the attack and warned him that he was planning to do "something bad".

Mr Rebello told the inquest: "He [his brother] says towards the end of the call Emad said something like 'if I do something bad that will affect the family, what do you think?' He replied something like 'don't do s-', advising him as an older brother, although this was something which caused him concern, knowing his previous issues."

Mr Rebello said al-Swealmeen had been in prison in the Middle East for a serious assault, as well as being arrested in Liverpool for possession of an offensive weapon.

...financial investigations showed Al Swealmeen had been purchasing materials likely to be used in the manufacture of improvised firearms or home-made explosives, including 2,000 ball bearings.

Senior coroner Andre Rebello recorded a narrative conclusion and said: "It is clear from the evidence even beyond the balance of probabilities this device could have only been manufactured with murderous intent, fortunately there was only one victim. It remains unclear as to whether he intended the device to detonate when it did."

[Mr Rebello gave details recalled](#) by taxi driver David Perry. "As his car came to a stop he didn't notice anything unusual, no warning, no movement from the passenger, just the blast. He described the journey as non-eventful, saying if the bomb hadn't gone off he wouldn't have remembered anything about the journey."

Mr Perry escaped from the car and staggered out, and a man wearing a hi-vis jacket approached him, the inquest was told. The coroner said: "He recalls saying to him 'the bastard tried to bomb me'. As he turned back to look at his car it went up and was on fire."

Mr Perry suffered three fractures to the bottom of his back and damage to his eardrums.

The inquest heard that he told police: "I am gutted someone died but I don't know nothing about the man. He didn't care about me anyway, I was just another person to kill."

"He recalls the last fare being on Allerton Road. He remembers a young girl specifically as she said to him 'I have given you all my luck' as she got out of the car. This really stuck in his mind and made him think how lucky he had been...I suppose he is probably one of the unluckiest taxi drivers around and yet possibly one of the luckiest given what could have been.""

In conclusion, Mr Rebello said: "One thing that struck me was this lone actor from a disrupted family, with a bit of a chaotic background, [could well have killed many, many innocent people](#) and there doesn't appear to have been any opportunity to have detected this was about to happen. It is something that has been planned over many, many months. Clearly, from what he said to the family, he had something in mind – and yet this was hidden from everybody."

"It just shows how everyone needs to be very vigilant about anything of this nature with regard to nipping anything in the bud."