

Man charged with arson and carrying a fake gun after Hackney house fire

From [Jewish News](#)

A man has been charged with arson after a fire in Hackney, east London, injured four people.

Ian Pitkin, 63, will appear at Thames Magistrates' Court on Monday charged with arson with intent to endanger life, possession of an imitation firearm with intent to cause fear of violence, and possession of an offensive weapon in a private place.

Police had initially said they had arrested a man with regard to a potential hate crime.

Detective Superintendent James Conway (responsible for policing in Hackney) said: "To protect the integrity of the judicial process and to ensure justice for the victims and our community, we are rightfully limited in what we can now say. However, we will continue to engage with our close partners in the local community, including the Community Security Trust and Shomrim to support those impacted by this incident."

I have been watching this but didn't want to post until more was known, in particular until the man arrested was actually charged as the defendant. I knew the area reasonably well as a child but much has changed in 60 years. The respected Clapton synagogue is long gone; all that remains is a length of railing shaped like a menorah. The shops and houses opposite are now a prominent mosque. [On Wednesday](#) the Metropolitan Police said three neighbours and a passer-by were injured in the fire that the force believe was started deliberately. Eight fire engines and around 60 firefighters tackled flames

at the terraced home after first being called at 12.42pm.

House fire in Hackney today <https://t.co/Y0QswKH4fRpic.twitter.com/fk0La1Yzn2>

– UB1UB2 West London (Southall) (@UB1UB2) [March 20, 2024](#)

Detective Chief Superintendent James Conway said: “On his arrest the man made a number of threatening comments, some of which were allegedly antisemitic. We take instances of antisemitism extremely seriously and for this reason we’re investigating the incident as a potential hate crime. Undoubtedly this will be extremely concerning news for our Jewish communities in Hackney and beyond, and I and my officers will be engaging with partners including the Community Safety Trust and the Shomrim, to answer their questions and listen to their views. . . I know our Jewish communities are about to begin celebrations for Purim, and we have a robust policing plan in place, including increased patrols and enhanced police visibility, to ensure the festivities can be enjoyed safely and securely.”

Krzysztof Bozych, 48, was working two doors down from the fire when he heard a loud explosion in the road..

One woman had already jumped from the top floor and was lying in the garden with a broken leg, neighbours said.

Mr Bozych told [The Independent](#): “I heard a boom; it was so loud. I went on the roof like, what the hell is going on? I heard a woman screaming from a window, ‘It’s a fire, help me please.’ There was no time to wait. I ripped open the fence and grabbed a ladder. The mother was so scared she was going to jump on me just as I was climbing the ladder. “I said, ‘Calm down, relax, we are going to get you out.’ “She passed me the baby, I think. I realised I had a baby in my hand. I thought, ‘I’m going to be a godfather.’ “I wasn’t thinking of

myself, every human would have done the same.”

Four people suffered non-life-threatening injuries as a result of the fire, The police added that there is no suggestion the incident is terrorism-related.

Rumours include i) a neighbour dispute, ii) a mental health problem, iii) a Jewish plot to discredit the neighbours. Ian Pitkin will have to be committed to the Crown Court for an offence as serious as arson. I still have enough faith in the jury trial that the truth will come out then. However I cannot disagree with the commentator who drew a line between this and the marchers screaming hate across London every Saturday.