

Manchester bomber's flat had funny smell, court told

Unlike most trials of rape/abuse/prostitution gangs the Manchester Evening News has been carrying reports daily, as have many of the nationals. A video link from the Central Criminal court in London has been set up to venues in Manchester and the other northern and Scottish cities where the victims live (or lived) so they and their relatives can watch proceedings. Trials are not filmed in the UK as such; indeed it is forbidden to photograph inside a court or courtroom (even to commemorate the retirement of a colleague) but a live video link in real time for witnesses is a device of long standing, and this is an extension of the principle.

But I am overdue a mention of events. From the [Manchester Evening News](#)

A Libyan man who illegally sub-let his council flat to the Manchester Arena bomber said there was a “funny, strong smell” in his home when he returned to the 12th-floor property the month before the atrocity, a court has heard.

Aimen Elwafi said he was “so angry” at the state his flat had been left in, with Salman Abedi departing two weeks before the end of the agreed two-month period, that he intended to call the man and complain.

He said there were water bottles filled with cloudy liquid in the freezer, the electricity had been switched off, and a mattress, sleeping bags and a blanket had been left behind.

Elwafi said Abedi “left the flat in a hurry” in mid-April and called him from the airport.

“I opened my flat door and I smelt a funny, strong smell. It smelled like petrol and diesel.” He added: “I noticed the

carpet was dirty. The next thing I noticed was the wire in the ceiling was hanging down and the smoke alarm was gone. There were four bottles of mineral water. I smelled that, and it was very strong, the same smell that was carrying through the flat.”

He told police he was “angry that they had left my flat in this way”.

Elwafi said he found some kitchen foil shaped into a bowl, containing some sort of substance designed to make the flat smell good. He added: “At first I thought about black magic, I was trying to find an explanation. I didn’t think it was illegal.”



Artists impression of Hashem Abedi, now 22, appearing at the Old Bailey, London | CREDIT: Julia Quenzler/ SWNS

Abe di’s brother, Hashem, is on trial at the Old Bailey accused of 22 counts of murder, one count of attempted murder encompassing the injured survivors, and conspiring with his brother to cause explosions in the Manchester Arena attack on 22 May 2017. Elwafi said he did not speak to Salman again, but recognised his face in the media coverage the day after the

bombing. He later contacted police to explain the sub-let, and spent time in custody before being released without charge a few days later.

A friend of Manchester Arena bomber Salman Abedi – who was arrested in the wake of the attack – has told a jury he had nothing to do with the plot. Jurors heard university student Ahmed Taghdi was a member of the city's Libyan community and knew Salman Abedi from school.

He had been suspected by detectives of helping the bomber and his brother Hashem buy a Nissan Micra allegedly used to store explosives and then looking after it when the brothers flew out of Manchester the month before the attack.

The witness, who was arrested and released without charge following the 2017 bombing, admitted he helped the brothers purchase the car but insisted: "I can say one billion per cent I was never tasked to look after the Micra."

In a statement he made to the police which was read out in court, Mr Taghdi said he knew the battered old Micra was parked in Rusholme because Salman Abedi had told him so.

The Prosecution claim Salman and Hashem Abedi manufactured the explosives in a 12th floor flat at Somerton Court in Blackley, parking the vehicle up near a block of flats, Devell House, in Rusholme.

When the car was found by the police two weeks after the bombing, the jurors were told traces of TATP explosives were found in the boot as well as bags of screws and nails and more than ten litres of sulphuric acid.

Mr Taghdi said in his statement: "I never knew Salman had returned to the UK and I was shocked to find out he was the Manchester Arena bomber." Mr Taghdi said he had not been involved in the attack and had 'no idea' what Salman Abedi had been planning. The witness said: "Salman was a really good

friend of mine. We used to go to the gym and play five-a-side football together.” He said his friend ‘became more religious...

The jury hears that when he asked Salman Abedi why he needed a car when they were about to fly out of the country, Mr Taghdi admitted his friend gave a ‘vague answer’. He said he knew the area where the car had been parked up because it was where he purchased cannabis. Mr Taghdi said he was revising for his university exams on May 23, 2017, when he saw that Salmam Abedi had been named as the person responsible for the bombing.

“I thought s**t, what did they do with that car?” said Mr Taghdi.

Mr Taghdi said that as a result he drove straight away to Rusholme, parked at a petrol station and looked at the car park of Devell House and saw that the Micra was still there. He said he felt ‘relieved’ when he saw the car still there because he thought it had been used in the bombing. Mr Taghdi said he didn’t tell the police about the Micra as his boss had advised him not to.

[On Thursday, the Old Bailey](#) heard that in early 2017, the defendant called a friend to ask him to buy sulphuric acid, before sending him a WhatsApp link to the item on the online retailer Amazon.

The witness, who cannot be named for legal reasons, said Abedi, who is of Libyan heritage, told him he needed the acid for a generator at his family’s home in Libya because his brother had spilled the contents.

Despite thinking it was a “bullshit story”, he added that “at the time I didn’t want to let him down so I said yes”. He then attempted to purchase the acid, but the £76 order was declined because of a lack of funds in his account. Jurors heard that the friend asked his father for assistance, but he described the request as “dodgy” and told his son not to buy the

product, explaining that acid could be used in the manufacture of explosives.

In conclusion an awful lot of people had cause to know that something evil was afoot.