

# Prison guard union chief claims Islamic terrorists are exempt from sniffer dog searches at Manchester jihadi attack jail

From [the Sun](#)

PRISON officer union bosses say sniffer dogs have been banned from the unit that held terror plotter Hashem Abedi – after terrorists complained they offended their Muslim faith.

Officers at [HMP Frankland](#) used the hounds to search inmates as they returned from the exercise yard.

But the head of the prison officers' union says checks were axed after those held at the unit said coming into contact with the animals was against their religious beliefs.

Mark Fairhurst, national chair of the Prison Officers' Association, said: "When it first opened, every prisoner housed on that unit was thoroughly searched on the unit, and when they left the unit and when they returned to the unit. On occasion, dogs were used. The prisoners complained that it interfered with their religious beliefs. The management committee overruled the staff and removed the dogs from searching those prisoners. We appease these prisoners and pander to them. Why? Why are we so obsessed with upsetting prisoners, terrorist prisoners, whose sole purpose is to murder prison officers?"

Last night [Ministry of Justice](#) sources insisted there had been no operational changes to the use of sniffer dogs at high-security prisons including Frankland.

But Justice Secretary [Shabana Mahmood](#) said: “Wherever I find there is an opportunity to strengthen our defences, and better protect our staff and the public, I will do so. The Prison Service will also conduct a snap review into whether protective body armour should be made available to front-line staff.”

*Further in [The Telegraph](#)*

Prison officers should be issued with Tasers to tackle violent prisoners, their union has demanded.

Ahead of a meeting on Wednesday with Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood, the prison officers’ association (POA) said specialist teams of officers should be armed with the electric stun guns to subdue violent offenders in high-security jails. The POA is also pressing for officers to be issued with stab vests in the wake of terrorist Hashem Abedi’s assault on four prison officers at HMP Frankland in County Durham.

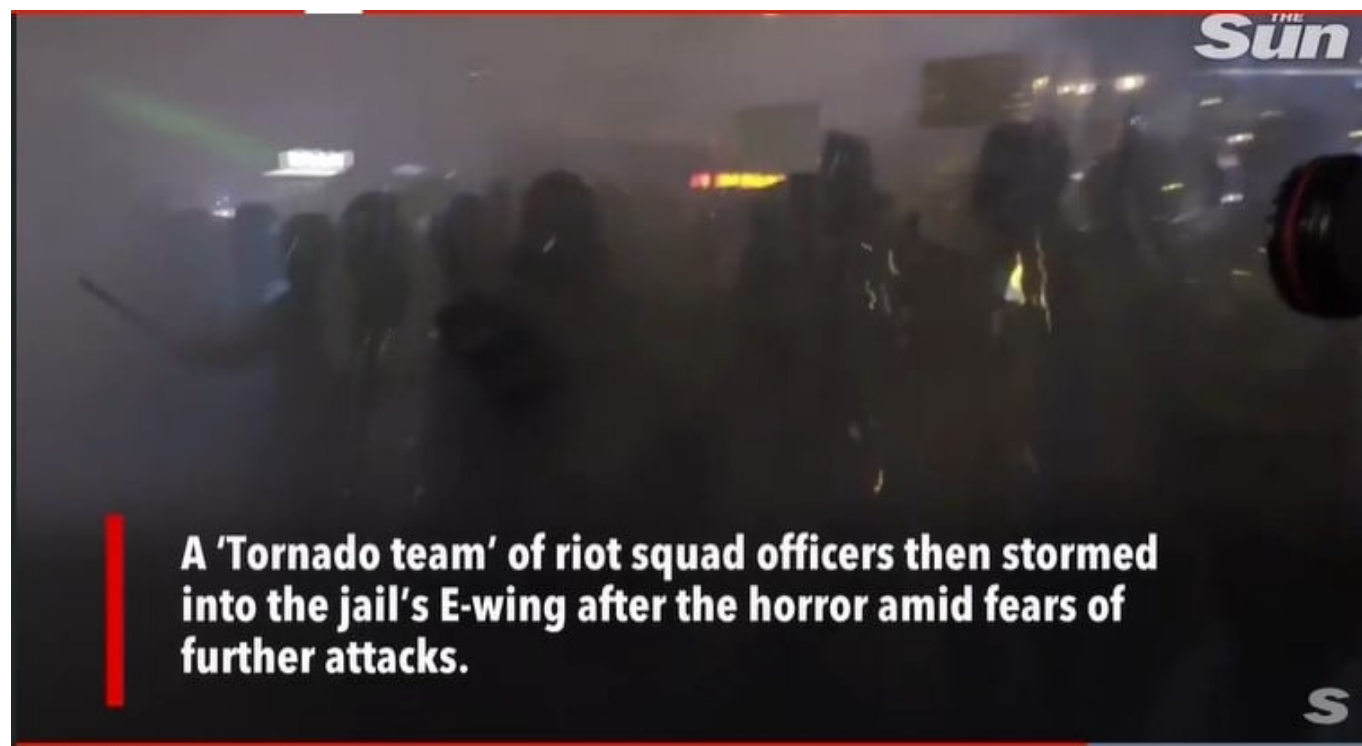
Mark Fairhurst, national chairman of the POA, said officers needed more tactical choices if their current options of extendable batons and synthetic pepper spray failed to stop an attack by a violent prisoner.

Mr Fairhurst said: “The violence levels and ferocity of attacks are such that we need tactical options.

“If I am facing a prisoner armed with homemade knives and my extendable baton and my incapacitant spray have failed to subdue the threat, then I want local response teams in high security prisons trained in the use of Tasers. They red dot the prisoner, and then there is a choice. Either the prisoner surrenders or suffers the consequences. I don’t think that is unreasonable. The level of threat has increased to such a level that all our lives are on the line. We don’t have an adequate response or resources to deal with the threat.”

He added that terrorists’ “ideology will not change”, saying:

“That man is determined to murder a prison officer on duty and we don’t have the capability to quell that level of threat because we have not got the equipment available. That needs to change.”



Ian Acheson, a former prison governor and adviser to the MoJ on extremism in jails, backed the POA’s appeal. “Issuing staff with a stick and a tin of spray and polycotton shirt doesn’t seem to be an adequate response to the level of threat,” he said.

He also said the MoJ’s “cultural reluctance” to take a more robust response to the threat needed to change. “There is a cultural reluctance inside the upper echelons,” he said. “It is unduly influenced by prison reform groups who are hostile to the notion of militarisation. They would say it represents a barrier between staff and prisoner for rehabilitation purposes. I think that balance in managing highly dangerous offenders is out of whack.”

Last week, Ms Mahmood accepted that more needed to be done.

