

South Belfast stabbing incident may have been Islamist terror attack, PSNI believes

From [Belfast Live](#) and the [Belfast Telegraph](#)

PSNI detectives investigating a South Belfast stabbing believe the incident may have been an Islamist terror attack.

Specialist officers are probing the attack, which happened on the evening of March 1, and are understood to be working towards the possibility the stabbing was motivated by Islamic terrorism, it was a hate crime or it was a mental health episode.

Belfast Live understands the man attacked was a 51-year-old Northern Ireland born male and that he suffered a single stab wound in the incident. The victim has since been released from hospital and is said to be recovering.

Local officers responded to the attack as well as the Armed Response Unit and the suspect, an 18-year-old, was arrested shortly after the attack. A knife, believed to be a kitchen knife, was also recovered.

Police found a kitchen knife when arresting the suspect – who was originally from north Africa. It is understood he entered Northern Ireland after travelling from Heathrow Airport into Dublin in 2022 before arriving in Belfast from Dublin in September 2023, living here since.

It is believed that if the attack has been driven by religious ideology it will be the first of its kind in Northern Ireland. The PSNI are liaising with the UK intelligence services as

well as counter-terrorism police in Britain as part of their continuing investigation.

The attack happened close to the junction the Ormeau Road and University Avenue. At this stage it is understood local police believe the man acted alone in the attack. It is also understood local police are working closely with immigrant communities in the city amid concerns the incident could lead to heightened tensions.

PSNI Assistant Chief Constable Davy Beck said: "The suspect was arrested on suspicion of wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm and possession of an offensive weapon in a public place, before being detained for the purpose of assessment by mental health professionals. He has, of today, been arrested under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act upon his release from the facility. It is important to stress that, while the suspect has been arrested under the Terrorism Act, the motive for the attack has not yet been established.