

PRESS RELEASE

New Jersey man charged with terrorism offenses relating to his attempted murder of Salman Rushdie

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U.S. Attorney's Office, Western District of New York

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-wdny/pr/new-jersey-man-charged-terrorism-offenses-relating-his-attempted-murder-salman-rushdie>

BUFFALO, NY – A grand jury returned a three-count indictment charging Hadi Matar, 26, of Fairview, New Jersey, with attempting to provide material support to Hizbollah, a designated foreign terrorist organization, engaging in an act of terrorism transcending national boundaries and providing material support to terrorists.

“We allege that in attempting to murder Salman Rushdie in New York in 2022, Hadi Matar committed an act of terrorism in the name of Hizbollah, a designated terrorist organization aligned with the Iranian regime,” said Attorney General Merrick B. Garland. “The Justice Department will prosecute those who perpetrate violence in the name of terrorist groups and undermine the basic freedoms enshrined in our Constitution.”

“This defendant put time and effort into traveling to the Western District of New York with the intent of taking the life of another,” stated U.S. Attorney Trini E. Ross. “Only because of the brave efforts of those who were present that day, the defendant was prevented from completing his murderous intention. This indictment is a result of the collaborative efforts of our investigative partners in law enforcement, which is one step towards ensuring that the defendant be held accountable for his actions.”

“Today’s indictment demonstrates the FBI’s steadfast commitment to investigate and seek justice against individuals who jeopardize American lives and freedoms,” said FBI Buffalo Field Office Special Agent-in-Charge Matthew Miraglia. “This case reflects the dangerous spread of violent radicalization which threatens our communities. It’s a challenge; but one the FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force and law enforcement partners will never stop working.”

According to the court documents and statements made by the government in court, between September 2020 and August 2022, Matar, attempted to provide material support and resources to Hizbollah, a designated foreign terrorist organization. Matar did this by attempting to carry out a fatwa calling for the execution of Salman Rushdie, which Matar understood was endorsed by Hizbollah.

The indictment further alleges that Matar attempted to kill and did in fact assault Rushdie. Matar was motivated, in part, by a 2006 speech given by Hizbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah, in which Nasrallah endorsed the fatwa calling for Rushdie's death, which was originally issued in 1989.

Matar was arraigned this afternoon before U.S. Magistrate Judge Jeremiah J. McCarthy and was held pending a detention hearing on August 7, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.

If convicted, Matar faces a maximum penalty of life in prison. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

The FBI is investigating the case.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Timothy C. Lynch and Charles M. Kruly for the Western District of New York and Trial Attorney Frank Russo of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section are prosecuting the case, with assistance from the District of New Jersey.

An indictment is merely an allegation. All defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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