# Man’s Koran burning outside Turkish consulate raises fears of blasphemy law revival in UK



A protestor's incendiary act of burning a Koran outside the Turkish consulate in London has sparked significant controversy and raised questions about the state of free speech in the UK. Hamit Coskun, a 50-year-old man of Turkish-Armenian descent, ignited Islam's holy book as a means to protest against the perceived transformation of Turkey under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan from a secular government to an increasingly Islamist regime. In an interview following the event, Coskun stated that he would have reconsidered coming to Britain had he known of the threats to free speech, asserting, “Radical Islamists do not exist in Turkey – they exist in the UK.”

The subsequent fallout from Coskun’s actions has proven tumultuous. Following the protest, he faced violent retribution; a knifeman attacked him, and subsequent harassment led police to relocate him to a safe house under the watch of bodyguards. As legal proceedings unfold, Coskun awaits a verdict from Westminster Magistrates’ Court regarding charges of a religiously aggravated public order offence and disorderly behaviour. The implications of these charges have stirred debate about the boundaries of free expression in light of a potential backdoor reinstitution of blasphemy laws, abolished in the UK in 2008.

Legal commentators have remarked that the charges against Coskun evoke the potential restoration of blasphemy principles. Akua Reindorf KC, a legal expert, characterised the prosecution as “plainly defective” and warned of the punitive implications of convicting Coskun, likening it to a criminalisation of religious dissent in public spaces. This sentiment has found resonance among various political figures, with senior MPs expressing concerns that the nature of the charges could pave the way for a de facto blasphemy law, impeding the freedoms once thought to be protected under UK law.

Public reaction has been polarised, with a considerable segment supporting Coskun's right to express dissent against Erdogan’s government while acknowledging the offensive nature of his method. Stephen Evans, chief executive of the National Secular Society, remarked that a guilty verdict would signify a significant blow to freedom of expression and protest, warning that such actions could establish a dangerous precedent. The Free Speech Union, along with the National Secular Society, has financially supported Coskun in facing his legal challenges, underlining the broader implications of the case on communal rights to free speech and protest.

In a further twist to the narrative, a man named Moussa Kadri admitted to assaulting Coskun during the protest, although he denied possessing a weapon during the incident. This altercation exemplifies the volatile atmosphere surrounding issues of free speech and religious sentiment in contemporary British society. As the legal proceedings progress, the outcome of Coskun’s case may serve as a litmus test for the future of free expression within the UK, where the balance between protecting community sensitivities and upholding fundamental liberties remains perilously thin.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14770461/Man-50-set-fire-Koran-outside-Turkish-consulate-London-says-never-come-Britain-knew-country-does-not-free-speech.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.breitbart.com/europe/2025/05/10/uk-prosecutor-backtracks-after-attempting-to-charge-quran-burner-with-blasphemy-law-that-doesnt-exist/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14770461/Man-50-set-fire-Koran-outside-Turkish-consulate-London-says-never-come-Britain-knew-country-does-not-free-speech.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.secularism.org.uk/news/2025/04/quran-burning-charge-evokes-blasphemy-offence-legal-expert-says), [[7]](https://freespeechunion.org/fsu-attempts-to-contact-koran-burning-suspect-amid-fears-of-blasphemy-law-by-the-back-door/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.thejc.com/news/politics/quran-burner-blasphemy-laws-cnhlk1n7), [[5]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/man-admits-assault-koran-burning-turkish-consulate-london-knightsbridge-b1222348.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.gbnews.com/news/koran-burning-protester-hamit-coskun-charges-cps-rewritten-london-turkish-consulate)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14770461/Man-50-set-fire-Koran-outside-Turkish-consulate-London-says-never-come-Britain-knew-country-does-not-free-speech.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.breitbart.com/europe/2025/05/10/uk-prosecutor-backtracks-after-attempting-to-charge-quran-burner-with-blasphemy-law-that-doesnt-exist/> - In May 2025, the UK's Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) attempted to charge Hamit Coskun, 50, with causing 'harassment, alarm or distress' after he burned a Quran outside the Turkish consulate in London. This move was criticised as an attempt to reintroduce blasphemy laws, which were abolished in 2008. Following backlash from free speech activists and politicians, the CPS revised the charge to more accurately reflect the alleged offence. ([breitbart.com](https://www.breitbart.com/europe/2025/05/10/uk-prosecutor-backtracks-after-attempting-to-charge-quran-burner-with-blasphemy-law-that-doesnt-exist/?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.thejc.com/news/politics/quran-burner-blasphemy-laws-cnhlk1n7> - Senior MPs, including former Liberal Democrat leader Tim Farron, have expressed concerns over the decision to charge Hamit Coskun for burning the Quran outside the Turkish consulate in London. They warn that such actions could lead to the imposition of 'de facto blasphemy laws' in the UK. ([thejc.com](https://www.thejc.com/news/politics/quran-burner-blasphemy-laws-cnhlk1n7?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.secularism.org.uk/news/2025/04/quran-burning-charge-evokes-blasphemy-offence-legal-expert-says> - Legal expert Akua Reindorf KC has stated that the charge against Hamit Coskun for burning a Quran outside the Turkish consulate in London 'evokes the notion of blasphemy'. She argues that the charge is 'plainly defective' and that convicting Coskun would amount to criminalising the desecration of a religious text in a public place. ([secularism.org.uk](https://www.secularism.org.uk/news/2025/04/quran-burning-charge-evokes-blasphemy-offence-legal-expert-says?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/man-admits-assault-koran-burning-turkish-consulate-london-knightsbridge-b1222348.html> - Moussa Kadri, 59, has admitted to assaulting Hamit Coskun, 50, after Coskun burned a Quran outside the Turkish consulate in London. Kadri denied possessing a bladed article during the incident and will face trial at Southwark Crown Court next month. ([standard.co.uk](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/man-admits-assault-koran-burning-turkish-consulate-london-knightsbridge-b1222348.html?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.gbnews.com/news/koran-burning-protester-hamit-coskun-charges-cps-rewritten-london-turkish-consulate> - The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has amended the charge against Hamit Coskun, 50, who burned a Quran outside the Turkish consulate in London. The CPS admitted to incorrectly applying the term 'religious institution of Islam' in the original charge and has substituted a new charge to more accurately reflect the alleged offence. ([gbnews.com](https://www.gbnews.com/news/koran-burning-protester-hamit-coskun-charges-cps-rewritten-london-turkish-consulate?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://freespeechunion.org/fsu-attempts-to-contact-koran-burning-suspect-amid-fears-of-blasphemy-law-by-the-back-door/> - The Free Speech Union (FSU) is attempting to establish contact with Hamit Coskun, 50, who was charged with a religiously aggravated public order offence after burning a Quran outside the Turkish consulate in London. The case has sparked fears that England and Wales are on the brink of reviving blasphemy laws by stealth, despite having formally abolished them in 2008. ([freespeechunion.org](https://freespeechunion.org/fsu-attempts-to-contact-koran-burning-suspect-amid-fears-of-blasphemy-law-by-the-back-door/?utm_source=openai))