



Bristol Muslim mother received death threats after ex-husband was acquitted of rape charges

By [The Bristol Post](#) | Posted: January 27, 2017

Death threats, stalking and attacks on her reputation are just three of the trials a Bristol mother has faced since she made allegations of rape against her ex-husband, who was acquitted of all charges.

Now, for the first time, Anira Khokhar has waived her right to anonymity to reveal the backlash she has encountered from Bristol's Pakistani community and lack of support she feels she received from the police.

Anira believes her case was not handled correctly by both Avon and Somerset Police and the Crown Prosecution Service and has now made official complaints to both organisations.

The 35-year-old first made allegations of rape against her then-husband under Islamic law, Farooq Siddique - a prominent member of the Bristol Muslim community - to police in July 2014.

After a two-year legal process, Mr Siddique was acquitted of three counts of rape, two counts of causing actual bodily harm and one count of making threats to kill between 2009 and 2014 at Bristol Crown Court last November, before the case went to trial.

The CPS offered no evidence on the charges and Judge Julian Lambert recorded not guilty verdicts on all counts.

Mr Siddique, 47, who has previously worked for the Government as an anti-radicalisation advisor, strongly denied all charges from the outset and, after his acquittal, described the legal process as "900 days of sheer hell".



Anira Khokhar says she has been the subject of rumours, threats and abuse since her identity was revealed on Facebook

Alongside the emotional burden of dealing with the case, Anira says she was left reeling when she was told that the evidence collected in the investigation included videos of her taking part in sexual activity with Mr Siddique.

The mother says she had not consented to being filmed, a claim that the *Bristol Post* understands to be denied by Mr Siddique.

Anira says she is now a practical pariah in the Pakistani community and claims that she and her family have been the subject of derogatory rumours, abuse and threats to their lives after her identity was made public on Facebook.

She has now decided to speak out to fight back against comments made about her online.

'I got death threats'

Anira said: "It's been horrific. I cried for weeks. I couldn't eat, I couldn't sleep, I couldn't leave my house.

"The disclosure of my identity caused me serious problems. I had three people come up to my dad and say 'oh my God, I didn't know it was your daughter'.

"I had I don't know how many women come up to my mum - and she still won't tell me stuff, to protect me.

"All the community were saying I did this because he didn't want to be with me and that it was revenge on my part.

"The women that hated me were writing that I should go to jail. I had people campaigning on Facebook that they were going to burn me and put acid on me and I got death threats."

Alongside the threats, Anira claims that many in the community were shocked when it was revealed that she was married and had a child with Mr Siddique, as he has another wife – a practice which is permitted under Islamic law.

Anira claims Mr Siddique told her he was divorced when they married and says it is this climate of secrecy which has in part prompted her to speak out.

She said: "For me it kills me, it hurts when I have to talk about this, but I have to.

"I feel in a way like anonymity has handcuffed me and it is stopping me from doing stuff. I am strong enough to do this now. I don't see why I should tip toe around the community.

"I was at home the whole of December, because the police said 'do not go to Easton' and because of all of this stress, I failed my first assignment at university.

"The majority of non-Muslims are actually supporting me. At the end of the day it is about humanity. There are Muslims out there who live under this banner of Islam but they don't get it, they don't understand it - none of these men are Islamic.

"If they were Islamic when I was [figuratively] stood out in the road naked, they would have come forward to cover me up rather than push me away from the community."



Anira and Farooq Siddique on holiday in Rome during their relationship
For Anira, the end of the case and the publication of her story marks a line in the sand.

She said: "No one will ever understand what I have been through.

"The process has given me my strength. I am the strongest woman I can be, nothing can break me now.

"My child is my cure and my strength. Nothing will touch my motherhood or come between me and my family.

"My mum has shown strength for me, but inside she has died because of what has happened with the videos.

"But it is her strength that is giving me strength. As a Muslim woman from my community I would be dead if my parents weren't more educated."

The *Bristol Post* has approached Mr Siddique, who declined to comment.

'Nothing was more important to me than my modesty'

Alongside her anger at the community's reaction, Anira Khokhar has serious misgivings about the way her case was handled by the authorities.

She says that Avon and Somerset Police failed to tell her that videos of her taking part in sexual activity were found by officers, and claims she did not consent to them being filmed. It is understood that Mr Siddique denies this claim.

In addition, Anira says she feels let down by the Crown Prosecution Service, which decided that there was not a "realistic prospect of conviction" in her case due to inconsistencies in her evidence.

She has now made official complaints, and both organisations are carrying out investigations.

According to a CPS document, 52 videos were seized by officers when Mr Siddique was arrested in 2014. However Anira was only told of their existence in October last year.

The *Bristol Post* understands that, while there is no official College of Policing guidance, in cases where a participant's consent is not clear, the expectation would be to inform them of the existence of video footage they appeared in. However, the final decision would rest with the investigating officer in the case.

Anira says that, had she known about the videos she would not have pursued the case, in order to protect her honour - and now feels mortified that they have been examined as evidence.

"Nothing was more important to me than my modesty," Anira said.

"I wake up at night sweating because I think it is a bad dream and then I remember and I throw myself in to prayer for Allah.

"I said I felt like everyone who watched those videos raped me. When someone asks how many men I have been with, I say I actually don't know, because I don't know how many people have seen them.

"I said if you had told me about those videos I would have respectfully, with honour, moved back if it meant that it would have stopped a group of men analysing my videos and my face.

"I feel stupid wearing clothes sometimes. I crack stupid jokes like 'Kim Kardashian has nothing on me' and then I start crying.

"This was pure humiliation and I will never forgive the police for not telling me."

Anira says that, as a result of finding out about the videos, she stopped wearing her hijab.

She said: "What was the point? I was already naked. They have ripped off my external hijab, but I will never let them touch my inner hijab."



Anira has stopped wearing the hijab since finding out about the existence of explicit videos of her, found by police on Farooq Siddique's phone

Case was 'not dealt with properly'

Anira claims the police failed to take her case seriously and were insensitive to her vulnerable position due to her culture.

She said: "They didn't even bother to get a specialist on board to determine how post-natally depressed I was. There was no support or counselling. I felt very vulnerable, but they put nothing in place.

"Meliha Berridge [an honour-based violence officer] was the only good thing about the case. She was the only one who understood the cultural impact on the community."

Statistics on domestic violence prosecutions in the Muslim community are few and far between and Avon and Somerset Police said it would take 20 working days to disclose how many complaints the force has received in the past year, under a Freedom of Information request.

However a police source has told the *Post* that officers are scared of getting involved with honour-based violence in the Pakistani community, for fear of upsetting community cohesion.

The source said: "Her [Anira's] case from the outset has not been dealt with properly, purely because the officers did not understand the cultural aspect of it.

"It is all about safeguarding community leaders and not creating community tension."

Alongside the complaint to Avon and Somerset Police, Anira has also made a complaint about the way the CPS handled her case.

The Muslim women's rights campaigner claimed that she was raped on three occasions between 2009 and 2014 in an interview with police in July 2014.

Mr Siddique was acquitted of all charges in November before the case went to trial.

'Not a reliable witness'

In communications with Anira seen by the *Post*, the CPS said it believed she would not be considered a reliable witness by a jury for several reasons, including phone records that showed she made more than 100 calls to Mr Siddique after lodging the rape allegations against him in 2014.

Anira claims these calls came at a point where she was still very vulnerable to the influence of her community and were primarily made to make arrangements with Mr Siddique about the care of their son.



Anira is upset that videos of her engaged in sexual acts were examined by the CPS for

The organisation states that contradictions in her evidence would also make it difficult for a jury to believe her.

In particular, the CPS said that dates on the 52 sex videos show they were recorded between July 2013 and January 2014.

However, Anira told police she had not had sex with Mr Siddique since the birth of their child in August 2013.

She said: "I find it outrageous that the CPS think that I could have had sex 52 times between July 2013 and January 2014 having just given birth and when I had my family with me constantly.

"Plus Farooq was in Pakistan from August 26 until October, the first time he met our son was on October 25. So that leaves a window of approximately ten weeks for us to have had sex 52 times.

During the initial review of Anira's case, the CPS said that the videos had been reviewed to see whether there was any "evidence of force or coercive behaviour" from Mr Siddique, and it was decided that "this was not demonstrated".

For Anira, this is one of the most upsetting factors in the treatment of her case by the CPS.

She said: "I have never seen the videos, but I am angry at the suggestion that I appear to look consensual. What does consent look like?

"I never alleged that he raped me throughout our whole marriage, of course we had consensual sex, we have a child. I loved him.

"To me they are separate issues. Just because I may have consented to sex on some occasions doesn't mean I consented to every occasion."



The CPS said it took in to consideration Anira's wish for the footage not to be shown in court when it took the decision not to continue with the case.

A letter sent to Anira on October 17, signed by a C Williams, senior Crown prosecutor, said: "After careful consideration I have reached a decision that there is no longer a realistic prospect of a conviction in this case.

"A jury properly directed in accordance with the law must be sure of Mr Siddique's guilt.

"The differences between your version of events and the electronic records means that a jury is unlikely to be sure exactly what happened between Mr Siddique and yourself during the course of your relationship.

"There is some evidence to support the fact that Mr Siddique behaved in an aggressive manner towards you.

"However, in light of the electronic evidence, it would be inappropriate for the case to proceed in respect of this element only."

Reviews into handling of case underway

The two reviews by the two organisations into their handling of the case are still taking place.

An Avon and Somerset spokesperson said: "We can confirm that we've received a complaint regarding this matter. This is currently being investigated, so it would be inappropriate for us to comment further at this time."

A spokesperson for the CPS added: "I can confirm we have received a complaint and we are currently looking into this matter. As this is on-going, it would be inappropriate to comment further at this time."

The *Post* has approached Mr Siddique, who declined to comment.

<https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/bristol-muslim-mother-recvied-death-threats-after-farooq-siddique-acquitted-of-rape-charges/story-30090233-detail/story.html>