Pro-Palestinian activist sentenced to 18 months for attack on Jewish man in New York

June 14, 2023

By Luke Tress

The Times of Israel

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/pro-palestinian-activist-sentenced-to-18-months-for-attack-on-jewish-man-in-new-york/>

A New York court on Tuesday sentenced a pro-Palestinian activist to 18 months in jail for an attack on a Jewish man two years ago.

Waseem Awawdeh was one of five assailants who attacked Joey Borgen while he was walking to a pro-Israel rally in Manhattan in May 2021.

The attackers punched, kicked, pepper-sprayed and beat Borgen with crutches, causing injuries, including a concussion.

Awawdeh pleaded guilty in April to attempted assault in the second degree as a hate crime and criminal possession of a weapon in the fourth degree. He received 12 months for the assault charge and six months for the weapon charge. The sentences will be served consecutively.

Another attacker in the case, Faisal Elezzi, pleaded guilty in April to attempted assault in the third degree as a hate crime. He is set to serve three years of probation and go through mandatory anti-bias programming, the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office told The Times of Israel.

Awawdeh and Elezzi admitted that they attacked Borgen with the three other attackers and were required to make public apologies.

The three remaining defendants — Mohammed Othman, Mohammed Said Othman and Mahmoud Musa — are expected to stand trial in August.

They are expected to be tried on hate crimes charges and “face significant state prison time if convicted,” the district attorney’s office said.

“No one should ever feel unsafe because of their religion, and we do not tolerate the antisemitic hate displayed by the defendant in this case,” the district attorney’s office said on Tuesday.

The attack took place during a spike in antisemitic incidents in New York City around the time of the May 2021 conflict between Israel and Gaza terror groups.

Borgen said he had been jumped on the street while wearing a kippah.

The Manhattan district attorney, Alvin Bragg, had come under fire from Jewish groups and advocates for perceived lenience in the case before offering Awawdeh the 18-month plea deal.

Jews are targeted in hate crimes more than any other group in New York, by far, year after year. So far this year, an antisemitic hate crime has taken place in the city [every 36 hours](https://www.timesofisrael.com/nyc-police-report-100-anti-jewish-hate-crimes-since-start-of-year-down-from-2022/) on average, according to New York Police Department data.

Security groups say many more incidents likely go unreported.

The attacks rarely result in jail time.

Another pro-Palestinian activist, Saadah Masoud, was sentenced earlier this year to [18 months in prison](https://www.timesofisrael.com/pro-palestinian-activist-gets-18-months-in-prison-for-attacks-on-jews-in-new-york/) for a series of attacks on Jews in 2021 and 2022.

Federal authorities took up the Masoud case amid complaints from the Jewish community about the lack of penalties against antisemitic attackers.

Awawdeh and Masoud have both appeared at rallies led by Within Our Lifetime, a prominent pro-Palestinian activist group that regularly calls for an intifada and the destruction of the Jewish state [at rallies](https://www.timesofisrael.com/intifada-until-victory-pro-palestinian-demonstrators-rally-in-new-york/) in New York.