

Craig Hicks Indicted for Murder of Three Muslim Students in North Carolina



Chapel Hill, February 17 (RHC)-- A grand jury in the U.S. state of North Carolina has indicted a 46-year-old white man on three counts of murder in the shooting deaths of three Muslim students.

The grand jury in Durham County handed up the indictments on Monday for Craig Hicks, who shot dead Deah Shaddy Barakat, 23, his wife Yusor Mohammad Abu-Salha, 21, and her sister, Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha, 19, near the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill campus on February 10th. Hicks is scheduled to be in court on the murder charges on March 4.

Local police have launched a homicide investigation focusing on a dispute over a parking space, but the families of the victims have rejected that narrative, describing the killing an "execution-style murder" and a "hate crime." The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has also launched a preliminary inquiry into the murders to determine whether or not any federal laws were violated.

The tragic murders of three bright Muslim students have started a debate over whether the students were targeted because of their religion. The incident has also caused outrage among Muslims all over the world are calling for Hicks, the shooter, to be charged with hate crimes.

"There is a high probability that the shooter targeted the victims because of their religion and national origin," the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee has said. The Arab American civil rights group pointed out it had recently recorded a sharp increase in "reported hate rhetoric" following the release of the Hollywood movie "American Sniper," which has been denounced for its portrayal of the Iraqi people.

The movie is based on the autobiography of a notorious US Navy SEAL, Chris Kyle, who was deployed to Iraq and is known for being the most lethal sniper in U.S. military history. In his book on which the movie

was based, Kyle writes of killing 60 Iraqi "savages."

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