

Freedom of Expression in Action: Interviews from Speakers' Corner

Speakers Corner: Is it worth the threat of violence in response to opposing views?

"This is not a place for the faint of heart."

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Freedom of speech and expression is one of the most controversial topics within our society today. We all want to practice our right to freedom of speech and expression in a variety of ways which can cause chaos and hostility.

Speakers Corner, a small area within Hyde Park full of rich British history, takes place every Sunday where anyone can turn up to preach and debate their truths.

The modern concept of freedom of speech and expression within Speakers Corner has been up for debate within the community of preachers and activists that regularly attend due to the ongoing attacks that have taken place.

For example, Hatun, well known Christian preacher to some and hate preacher to others was stabbed in the face due to many of her controversial opinions.

The attacker was aiming for her neck attempting to murder Hatun, she is not the only victim of attempted murder, abuse and assault in the park, she is one of many.



Image by Israa Elmousa: Hatun

With violence being a growing concern, it is often debated whether or not Speakers Corner should have more restrictions on what you can and cannot say, more security or be banned completely.



Image by Israa Elmousa: Muslim and Christian in heated debate

To get a better understanding of Speakers Corner I attended the park to interview some of the most well known activists and religious preachers at Speakers Corner.

Pavlo Domitrashchuk, a Ukrainian activist and youtuber

“I have been coming to Speakers Corner for as long as I have been in the United Kingdom, 5 years.”

“I enjoy coming here very much but if you come here with points against religion your freedom of speech will not be tolerated but there is a place here for everyone.”

“I wouldn’t say there is necessarily Islamophobia or Anti-Semitism within Speakers Corner, but I would say there is religious hatred and tension. Despite this being an issue I would not say it is that big of a deal.”

“Ultimately I would say if you are looking for a place to throw your views and put them through the test with debating, heckling, trash talking and some insults then this is the place for you.”

“This is not a place for the faint of heart.”

Joseph, Jewish zionist activist

“I have been coming to Speakers Corner for 10 years, I do not like it here. It used to be full of Jews, Muslims, Christians and communists and then the cameras came along and now it’s all ego and conflict so it’s a very hostile environment.”

“There is a lot of Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and Christophobia, if that’s a thing.”

“The most traumatic thing that’s happened as a result of this is there was a Christian preacher who was stabbed and the attacker got away with it. I have also been beaten several times and had my property smashed.”

Shuyab Abker, Youtuber

“I have now been coming to Speakers Corner for 22 years, I started going when I was 19 and I have loved it ever since.”

“I like it here because when you come here you can find anything and hear so many different views to learn about like politics and religion. I love speaking about religion and teaching on my YouTube channel.”

“Everywhere you go around the world you will sadly find Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism. Speakers Corner is no different, you can never run away from hateful people.”

“The majority of people are looking for peace, that is what we should focus on. I recommend people coming here for a better understanding of life.”

Written by Israa Elmousa

My first article during my BA Journalism degree at City University of London