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Reading stabbings: What we know so far

20 minutes ago



Reading stabbings



Three people are dead and at least three others have been injured after stabbings in a park in Reading.

Police have said they are treating the attack as a "terrorist incident".

Counter terrorism officers are continuing to question local man Khairi Saadallah, 25.

What happened?

Police were called to Forbury Gardens at about 19:00 BST on Saturday following reports that a number of people had been stabbed.

Thames Valley Police said a suspect was apprehended and arrested within five minutes of the call.

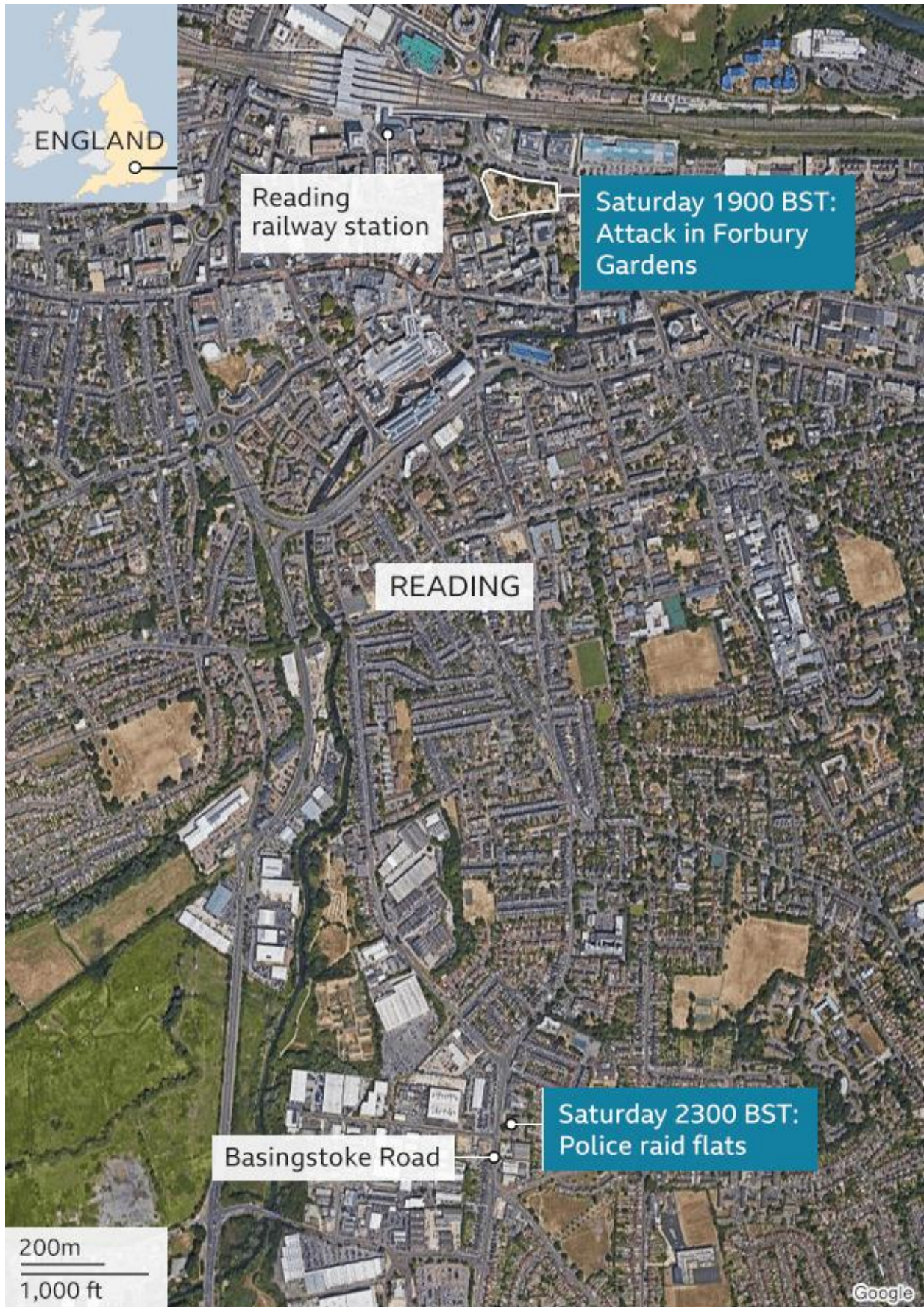
That man is now **known to be Mr Saadallah**, who remains in custody.

He was initially arrested on suspicion of murder on Saturday, and was later re-arrested under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000.

There are reports that a police officer "rugby tackled" the suspect to the ground, according to **the Sunday Mirror**.

The head of counter terrorism policing, Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner Neil Basu, thanked "unarmed and incredibly brave" officers for detaining the suspect.

He added that the attack was unrelated to a peaceful Black Lives Matter protest held hours earlier in the park, and that members of the public had provided emergency first aid to victims in the immediate aftermath.



South Central Ambulance Service said "multiple ambulance resources" were sent to the scene, including five ambulance crews and a helicopter.

Three people had suffered serious injuries.

One was seen at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford, where they were later discharged without being admitted to hospital.

Two were admitted to the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading. One has since been discharged, while another remains in a stable condition under observation.

About a dozen armed police officers with shields were later seen entering a block of flats in Basingstoke Road in Reading at about 23:00 BST, and families living in the building were moved out.

A loud bang was heard from the flats later at about 00:30 BST, as officers gained entry to an apartment.

What do we know about the victims?

The identities of two of the three people who died have emerged.

Tributes have been paid to teacher James Furlong and American Joe Ritchie-Bennett.

Mr Furlong, 36, was head of history and government and politics at the Holt School in Wokingham.

His parents described their son as a "wonderful man" who will "live in our hearts forever".

In a statement, Gary and Janet Furlough, said: "He was the best son, brother, uncle and partner you could wish for. We are thankful for the memories he gave us all."

The Holt School said Mr Furlong was a "kind and gentle man" with a "real sense of duty" who "truly inspired everyone he taught".



In a statement, Anne Kennedy and Katie Pearce - co-head teachers of the secondary school for girls - said he was a "wonderfully talented and inspirational" teacher.

"He was determined that our students would develop a critical awareness of global issues and in doing so, become active citizens and have a voice," the school's joint head teachers wrote, in a statement.

On Monday, Joe Ritchie-Bennett was also named by US TV network CBS as having died.

Mr Ritchie-Bennett was reportedly from Philadelphia and had lived in the UK for 15 years.

His father, Robert Ritchie, said: "The family is heartbroken. They have lost their brilliant and loving son. This was senseless."



Following the report, the US ambassador in London, Woody Johnson, confirmed that a US citizen had died in the attack.

In a tweet, he said the death was a "great sorrow" and that the US embassy had offered to help British investigators.

A two-minute silence was held for the victims at 10:00 BST on Monday, during which some of Mr Furlong's pupils and colleagues gathered outside the Holt School's gates to pay their respects.

What do we know about the suspect?



Khairi Saadallah, a 25-year-old local man, is being held by police over the attack.

Security sources have told the BBC **that Mr Saadallah, who is thought to be a Libyan national, was known to MI5.**

'No immediate threat'

They said the suspect had come to the attention of the security services over information he had aspirations to travel abroad - potentially for terrorism, according to the BBC's home affairs correspondent Dominic Casciani.

When the information was further investigated, as the first stage of looking into a potential lead, no genuine threat or immediate risk was identified.

No case file was opened which would have made him a target for further investigation.

There are about 3,000 people under investigation by MI5 over extremist activity, according to BBC security correspondent Gordon Corera.

Mr Saadallah was among a further 40,000 names in the agency's system but who were not under active investigation, Corera said.

A friend of the suspect told the BBC's home affairs correspondent Daniel Sandford that Saadallah seemed to be a "normal, genuine guy", and had been someone with whom to smoke cannabis.

Kieran Vernon said: "He seemed like me or you. Whenever we used to meet up we used to talk about drinking whiskey and how different ganja affects the different thinking of mind.

"And that's pretty much all we'd chat about."

Neighbours of the suspect also said that he once threw a television out of a top floor window.

Officers are not looking for any other people in connection with this incident and say there is no intelligence to suggest that there is any further danger to the public.

Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner Neil Basu said that the "motivation for this horrific act is far from certain".

What did witnesses see?

More than 40 witnesses had come forward by 14:00 BST, police said.

The park, located in the town centre, was reportedly busy at the time of the attack, and officers are appealing for anyone who may have seen something to contact police.

Eyewitness Laurence Wort, 20, told the BBC that he was visiting Reading for the day and was about 10m from the attack.

"The park was pretty full, a lot of people sat around drinking with friends when one lone person walked through, suddenly shouted some unintelligible words and went round a large group trying to stab them.

"He stabbed three of them and then turned and started running towards me, when we turned and started running.

"When he realised that he couldn't catch us he tried to stab another group sat down.

"He got one in the back of the neck and then when he realised everyone was starting to run, he ran out the park."

PA MEDIA

Claire Gould, a freelance journalist who lives in Reading, said she walked past Forbury Gardens at around 18:40 BST "and everything seemed calm".

She then saw an air ambulance land in King's Meadow - another park close to the scene - at around 19:00 BST, followed by a second around 10 minutes later.

"There were multiple sirens from 19:00 going on for the next couple of hours and police helicopters [were] circling," she added.

What has the reaction been?

Prime Minister Boris Johnson initially **tweeted** to say that his "thoughts are with all of those affected by the appalling incident in Reading".

In a later interview on Sunday, the PM said that he was "appalled and sickened that people should lose their lives in this way".

He added: "If there are lessons that we need to learn about how we handle such cases, how we handle the events leading up to such cases, then we will learn those lessons - and we will not hesitate to take action when necessary."

Asked what action he was suggesting, he replied: "If there are changes that need to be made to our legal system to stop such events happening again, we will not hesitate to take that action - as we have before, you will recall, over the automatic early release of terrorist offenders".

In the immediate aftermath of the attack, Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer **said** called it "horrific" and that his thoughts were also with the victims and their families.

On Monday, he said communities across the UK were "united in their grief" and that he wanted to work with the government to see what lessons could be learnt, adding "this is not a time for party politics".

On a visit to the crime scene on Monday, Home Secretary Priti Patel, said investigators were carrying out "extensive work" into the tragedy.

She added that officers must "look at all aspects" of Mr Saadallah's history which she said "dates back over several years".

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French President Emmanuel Macron **tweeted** his condolences to victims, their loved ones and "all the British people".

"France will always stand with the United Kingdom to combat the scourge of terrorism," he added.

Reading Borough Council leader Jason Brock said the town was "an incredibly strong community" where "people will come together and they won't allow themselves to be divided".

Reading East MP Matt Rodda called it the "most dreadful incident".

He added: "This will come as a real shock to our community and I think what's happening now is people are pulling together and trying to support one another at this dreadful time."

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