

Pakistan authorities charge man with cyber terrorism over misinformation that sparked riots in UK

From [ABC News \(International\)](#) LAHORE, Pakistan –
Photograph and additional information from [Arab News](#)

Authorities in Pakistan on Wednesday arrested and charged a man with cyber terrorism for his alleged role in spreading misinformation that led to widespread rioting in the U.K. earlier this month.



Pakistan's Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) personnel escort Farhan Asif (C), arrested allegedly over cyber terrorism, to a court in Lahore on August 22, 2024. (AFP)

Farhan
Asif
appeared
in
court
for
the
second
day
in a
row
in
the
city
of

Lahore over allegations he published an article falsely claiming that a Muslim asylum seeker was behind a deadly knife attack on children in the United Kingdom.

The suspect was identified as freelance web developer Farhan Asif, 32, said Imran Kishwar, deputy inspector general of investigations in Lahore, the capital of eastern Punjab province. The man is accused of spreading misinformation from YouTube and Facebook about the British teenage suspect in a stabbing attack that killed three girls and injured 10 other people July 29 at a dance class in Northwest England.

The false information claimed that the suspect was a recently arrived asylum-seeker and had a name that suggested he was Muslim.

After the misinformation led to a violent mob attacking a mosque near the site of the stabbing the next day, police took the unusual step of clarifying that the suspect was born in the U.K. It's been widely reported in British media that his parents are from Rwanda and said to have Christian beliefs.

Channel3 Now, an account on the X social media platform that purports to be a news channel, was one of the first outlets to report the false name, Ali Al-Shakati. A Facebook account for the channel said it is managed by people in Pakistan and the U.S.

At a news conference in the eastern city of Lahore, the police official Kishwar said Asif was arrested at his house in the city for questioning.

He said Asif has claimed that he was not the source of the misinformation but that he reposted it from social media. Kishwar said Asif ran the Channel3 Now account, and alleged that he spread fake news to gain more viewers and income.

"He regretted over reposting fake news," Kishwar told The Associated Press. "This act on the part of Asif amounts to cyber terrorism for which he has been charged."

Kishwar added that Asif's arrest was a message for other YouTubers that they should verify facts before disseminating

any information.