

Mother of man killed in Syria says feds failed Aaron Driver

CALGARY (CP) — A former Calgary woman whose 22-year-old radicalized son was killed while fighting alongside Islamic extremists in Syria two years ago says the federal government failed both Aaron Driver and his family.

Driver, 24, died during a confrontation with RCMP in Strathroy, Ont., Wednesday after allegedly making a martyrdom video that suggested he was planning to detonate a homemade bomb in an urban centre.

"I cried. Honestly, I cried," said Christianne Boudreau, from her new home in Eymet, France. "It just broke my heart because there was just so much opportunity for agencies, organizations or anybody to step in and support that family and help turn something around and nobody did."

Boudreau found out that her son, Damian Clairmont, was being watched by Canadian intelligence agents for two years before he disappeared from Calgary. She thought he'd gone to Egypt to study Arabic after he converted to Islam. She had no warning that her son might be in danger and didn't receive any offer of help from anyone in government.

Driver had been under a court order not to associate with any terrorist organizations or to use a computer or cellphone.

"They left them on their own, and you just can't say take out the Internet, take away the social media. That doesn't cure a damn thing," said Boudreau.

"They should have provided full counselling for the family and to him to make sure that they were getting down to what was disturbing him, what was bothering him and to take whatever emotional motivation that was pushing him in that direction and those beliefs and use that energy for something that is positive."

Boudreau had been harshly critical of the government of former prime minister Stephen Harper, who she said was "washed up and burnt out" and whose approach to dealing with radicalization was based on fear.

She had hoped for better from the Liberal government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. But she said the new government appears to be denying that radicalized youth are a problem.

"I really, truly think they are burying their heads in the sand," she said.

The cancer that whispers



SHANNON
LINDEN

The good, the bad & the bloody

Many cancer patients say the process of battling their disease transformed them, helping them to better appreciate their lives.

Then there are those like ovarian cancer survivor Alison Crawford, who says the biggest change was her hairstyle.

"I had very long hair that I cut off to the shoulders because it got thin. I wore colourful scarves. I'm lucky I can rock that bohemian look," she grins.

Radiant, with glowing skin and a petite, super-fit frame, she toasts her journey with a paper cup of coffee, insisting cancer was part of her path but is firmly in her past.

"I had it really easy. I mean I felt a bit crappy the day after chemo, but I was eating everything — and drinking wine."

Red wine and black coffee — two of her staples she saw no reason to sacrifice — along with most aspects of her life.

"If I only had a short time to live, I decided I would change nothing. ... I just wanted more of the life I was living."

Yet Crawford's life was far from perfect.

"The year before was hell," she says. Her husband passed away and her father was declining from Parkinson's disease while her work was particularly stressful.

"The funny thing is, I took my boys to Tofino for the best vacation," she says. "I went to Big White with a bunch of friends and thought my life was great. I turned 60 on Feb. 8, 2014. I was diagnosed a week later."

Known as the silent killer, ovarian cancer is relatively rare — but it is more frequently fatal.

Dr. Susan Ellard, a Kelowna medical oncologist, calls it "the cancer that whispers" because women are often asymptomatic in the early stages. When they do present with complaints like painful periods, abdominal bloating, swelling, gas and change in bowel habits, weight loss or gain, fatigue and frequent urination, their symptoms can be attributed to a host of other medical maladies.

"When there are symptoms, the cancer is usually already spread," Ellard says.

Thankfully recent research has revealed a new understanding of ovarian cancer.

"What we've called ovarian cancer for many years may actually originate in the far end of the fallopian tubes," Ellard explains. "The ovary and fallopian tubes are positioned in such a way that they can shed cancer cells into the abdominal cavity from a very early stage of cancer growth, before symptoms can be detected and any scans or blood tests can demonstrate cancer."

About one in five women diagnosed with high-grade serous ovarian cancer, or HOSOC (the most common kind of ovarian cancer) may be found to have the BRCA gene defect. That's why women with ovarian cancer should have gene testing, informing their families of potential risk, and making them candidates for new treatments designed to slow down this kind of cancer growth.

Younger women with known high risk now have the option of removing their



Ovarian cancer survivor Alison Crawford is still scaling mountains, like Idaho Peak.

fallopian tubes after childbearing, followed by their ovaries after menopause.

"This two stage surgery option allows younger women to avoid early menopause, which carries its own health risks," Ellard explains, suggesting surgical prevention can reduce the risk of lethal cancer by 90 percent.

Here in B.C., specialized gynecologic cancer surgeons are leading the world. They're instituting a provincial policy recommending removal of the fallopian tubes during benign surgeries for women who aren't planning future pregnancies.

"This adds only minutes to surgical time, with no increase in risk," Ellard says.

"It has been estimated, given the frequency of surgeries for benign issues, the risk of ovarian cancer could be reduced in the population by about one-third or more with this policy of 'opportunistic salpingectomy.'"

In cities across the country, Ovarian Cancer Canada hosts the annual Walk for Her, raising funds and awareness. Both Ellard and Crawford will speak at the Kelowna walk on Sept. 11 at Mission Creek Regional Park.

The picture of health before her diagnosis, Crawford loved hiking, biking and kayaking, but was extremely fatigued the month before.

"I do remember running on my lunch hour on a beautiful January day. I told my girlfriend I felt a real heaviness and I had to walk a bit. It was the tumour, pressing down. I don't usually have to visit the washroom at night and it did seem I was up throughout the night. Again, the fast-growing tumour was pressing on my bladder."

When she spotted blood in her urine, her doctor acted fast.

"We thought I had a kidney infection," Crawford says, "but your GP is the gateway to your health. Dr. Rodney Joshua was thorough. He sent me for an ultrasound as a precaution and I'm so thankful."

Three weeks later, she was in surgery having a stage two tumour removed. Forty-eight hours after that, Crawford was home, readying for 18 weeks of chemo.

"There's a lot of brain chatter that goes on, so I did Hatha yoga."

Trusting the expertise of her physicians (GP, surgeon and oncologist), Crawford avoided the Internet.

"My doctors were incredibly knowledgeable. My job was to support them by taking care of myself."

"I don't dwell on the past or plan six years in advance," she says. "I embrace every single day and live every moment."

Which recently included travel to South Africa, New York and Mexico. She's hiked Mount Blanc in France and will soon depart for England, Morocco and Spain.

Still, Crawford's heart can be found here at home, where she babysits her 18-month-old granddaughter every Tuesday and sees as much of her sons as she can. With both daughters-in-law expecting, she's excited about more grandchildren on the way.

"My dad always said life isn't fair but don't let that defeat you. I don't want my cancer to define me either," she says, rocking a knowing smile.

For more information and to register for the Walk for Her, visit ovariancancer-walkforhope.ca

Shannon Linden writes a blog, magazine articles and grocery lists. Her health and humour column runs the second weekend of the month in The Okanagan Sunday.

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PRODUCTION PARTNER: ROMAN

Man stabs 6 people, starts fire on train

Incident in Switzerland not initially believed to be terrorist-related

BERLIN — Police say a Swiss man set a fire and stabbed people on a train in the country's northeast, wounding six people as well as himself.

Police in St. Gallen canton say the incident happened at 2:20 p.m. local time Saturday as the train neared the station in Salez, near the border with Liechtenstein.

They say the 27-year-old suspect had at least one knife and poured out a flammable liquid, which caught fire. Police spokesman Bruno Metzger said the assailant poured the liquid on one woman, and that it appeared to have caught fire when it came into contact with oxygen.

Police say the wounded included a six-year-old child, three women, aged 17, 34 and 43, and two men, aged 17 and 50. Some of the injuries were said to be serious but there were no further details.

Police were investigating the attacker's motive. Switzerland's 80 Minuten newspaper reported on its website that police did not believe the incident was terrorist-related.

A preliminary estimate says that the train sustained 100,000 Swiss francs (\$103,000) in damage.

There have been similar attacks on trains recently. In July, a refugee from Afghanistan attacked four tourists on a German train, then stabbed a woman as he fled from the train. All survived. Police shot and killed the attacker.

Last September, a heavily armed gunman opened fire on a high-speed Amsterdam-Paris train, but he was overpowered by two American soldiers and their companion.

— The Associated Press

IN BRIEF

Imam, associate shot near mosque

NEW YORK — The leader of a New York City mosque and an associate were fatally shot in a brazen daylight attack as they left afternoon prayers Saturday.

Police said 55-year-old Imam Maulana Akonjee and his 64-year-old associate, Thara Uddin, were shot in the back of the head as they left the Al-Furqan Jame Masjid mosque in the Ozone Park section of Queens shortly before 2 p.m.

Both men were later pronounced dead, an administrator at Jamaica Hospital said.

No suspects are in custody.

"There's nothing in the preliminary investigation to indicate that they were targeted because of their faith," said Deputy Inspector Henry Sautner of the New York Police Department.

Sautner said video surveillance shows the victims were approached from behind by a man in a dark polo shirt and shorts who shot them and then fled with the gun still in his hand.

5 wounded in random shootings

JOPLIN, Mo. — A random shooting injured five people Saturday, including three members of a Joplin church who were starting a trip to St. Louis, police said.

A 26-year-old suspect was taken into custody and was being held but has not been formally charged, The Joplin Globe reported.

"This came out of the blue, and all of a sudden people were shot and going to the hospital," said Jason Glaskey, director of Christian education at Immanuel Lutheran Church.

Police Capt. Bob Higginbotham said there was no apparent motive for the shootings, which began after the suspect's father called police to report the suspect was firing rounds at their home.

Chaos in mall over reports of gunfire

RALEIGH, N.C. — Witness reports of gunshots ringing out inside a busy North Carolina mall caused chaos Saturday afternoon as shoppers ran screaming for the doors or sheltered in stores while dozens of officers arrived.

Police said hours later they were investigating but hadn't confirmed whether any shots had been fired, adding no one was found wounded by gunfire.

The police chief said no shell casings had been found, but witnesses heard what sounded like gunshots. The FBI, sheriff's office and state investigators were also on scene.

Eight people ranging in age from 10 to 70 were transported to hospitals for treatment of injuries sustained as they rushed to leave the mall.

— The Associated Press