

7-year-old Pakistani boy beaten in school bus for 'being Muslim'

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Washington: In an act of pure discrimination towards Muslims, a 7-year-old Pakistani boy was allegedly beaten up by his classmates on the school bus in US for being a Muslim, a move that forced his family to return to Pakistan.

The parents of Abdul Usmani have alleged that he was bullied and beaten by five students on the bus while returning home from Weatherstone Elementary School in Cary, North Carolina, as they made references to Muslims and the boy's Pakistani heritage.

“Welcome to the United States of America of Donald Trump,” Zeeshan-ul-hassan Usmani captioned a Facebook photo showing his son, Abdul, with his left arm in a sling.

“He is in grade 1, bullied and beaten by his own classmates in school bus for being a Muslim,” Usmani said.

Usmani told BuzzFeed News that he and his wife along with their three sons have left the US for Pakistan after this latest incident in a long history of discrimination towards his children and family.

“These are six and seven year old kids calling him names, with one kid punching him in the face, while two other kids attacked him, kicked him, and held his arms back,” Usmani said.

He described his son “as American as you can get.”

“They keep beating him all the way from school to home on the bus,” Usmani said of the boy's ride home last Friday.

Abdul, his father said, is traumatised by the attack and has a sprained arm.

Lisa Luten, a spokesperson for the Wake County Public School System, was quoted as saying that the principal of the school immediately began investigating the alleged incident after the family told them about it.

“(The principal) interviewed seven students sitting near this child, and none of the students, nor the bus driver, witnessed any type of altercation or incident,” Luten said, adding that the principal has one more child to interview and has not been able to get in contact with the Usmani family since Friday.

Usmani, 38, first came to the US as a Fulbright Scholar from Pakistan and currently works as a Chief Technology Officer of a Silicon Valley data software company.

Usmani said his family was harassed by a neighbour for months because of their religion, and that his other son has been called a terrorist.

“Times are changing and it's not the America we always thought of and believed in. It's not the America that I studied in,” Usmani said.

“If Trump wins, America will be great again, but a great that nobody will care about,” he said.

Usmani said the irony of the alleged discrimination is he has been working to combat the effects of terrorism and has

worked with the UN's Special Envoy for Global Education on a safe school initiative in Pakistan. Usmani said his family will stay in Pakistan until after the election to see if Trump is elected to determine if his family feels safe enough to return.

- (With inputs from PTI)