

THE NEW ZEALAND BRAVERY STAR (N.Z.B.S.)

Hussein AL-UMARI (Posthumous)

Date of action: 15 March 2019

Date of award: 6 December 2024

Citation

On Friday 15 March 2019, Mr Hussein Al-Umari attended afternoon prayer at the Al Noor Mosque on Deans Avenue in Christchurch. He entered the main prayer room just before 1.30pm, greeting fellow worshippers and commencing his prayer near the front row.

Shortly before 1.40pm, a lone gunman armed with semi-automatic shotguns and assault rifles, with several hundred rounds of ammunition, commenced an attack on the Al Noor Mosque. The gunman entered the Mosque, and made his way to the main prayer room, shooting people in the main entranceway and along the corridor.

The congregation attempted to flee from the gunman as he came down the corridor and into the main prayer room. Most of the congregation fled to the sides of the prayer room. Several people directly in line of the corridor were shot. Mr Al-Umari, hearing the shots turned around to face the gunman. He stood up and walked purposefully in the direction of the corridor. At this time, the gunman had turned in the corridor to shoot into the adjacent library room. Mr Al-Umari yelled at the gunman and moved towards a second door where the main prayer room adjoined the library, following the direction of the gunman's shots while the other worshippers were moving away towards exits.

Mr Al-Umari entered the library, encountering no one inside, as the gunman had continued into the main prayer room. Instead of moving through the library towards an exit, Mr Al-Umari returned into the main prayer room. At this time the gunman had begun shooting worshippers in the main prayer room. Mr Al-Umari turned to face the gunman as he entered, at this time being the only person standing on his side of the room, as others tried to flee or take cover. The gunman shot Mr Al-Umari and he fell to the floor.

While the gunman was focused on worshippers around Mr Al-Umari, another worshipper from the other side of the prayer room ran over and tackled the gunman from behind, knocking him to the ground. In challenging the gunman, Mr Al-Umari drew attention away from others who were able to flee. Mr Al-Umari's selfless actions demonstrated outstanding bravery, at the cost of his life.