

# The Manchester Arena Attack: One Year On

The 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 2017 shook the whole of the UK. A suicide bomber detonated a bomb in the foyer of the MEN Arena after Ariana Grande's concert. This killed 22 people, including children, and injured around 500 more.

I'm from Manchester and this event certainly did hit close to home. It's easy to be bombarded with the negatives of the situation by the media. But one year on, the solidarity of the city has been shown through many events which have united the diverse communities of Manchester and its surrounding areas. Simple hashtags have been created, messages of support written, and even huge charity events organised. This has all added up and has strengthened support within the communities, and even different religions, which I've had the pleasure to experience first-hand.

## 1) #WeStandTogether

The hashtag #WeStandTogether emerged on social media following the dreadful event. Just from this one simple hashtag, it truly shows the community spirit and support in not only Manchester, but other communities in the UK and across the world. This hashtag of solidarity was (and still is) displayed in many of the shops, cafes and restaurant in Manchester city centre.



*A sign I found in a shop window in the heart of Manchester City Centre*

## 2) The One Love Benefit Concert

I attempted to get some tickets to this event, but it sold out in record time! Around 26,000 people attended this charity concert on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June 2017, just over a week after the attack. This in a way showed that the community of Manchester had not been scared to carry on with their ordinary lives. The ISIS attack would not stop them from attending concerts and other social events full of fear. The 26,000-strong crowd, joined by 10.9 million viewers on BBC 1, enjoyed music from Arianna Grande who organised the event and guest stars, Justin Bieber, Niall Horan, Miley Cyrus and even more. All money was donated to the victims of the attack.

## 3) St Anne's Square Memorial

I personally visited this memorial with my mother in the days following the attack. The atmosphere was one I find hard to describe. There was silence, not an eerie one, but one of unity. The silence was only broken by media reporters broadcasting stories for the news. The whole of the square was packed with teddy bears, balloons, flowers, candles and on the floor, messages of remembrance were scrawled.

Members of the Islamic community of Manchester were handing out bottles of water and food to visitors as it was an extremely hot day. This undoubtedly showed how the religious diversity of the city coming together to support each other in a time of such heavy grief among the citizens.

Reverend Sue Ball, church manager at St Ann's Church described her experience of the atmosphere in St Ann's Square;

“The memorial in the square was very moving. Manchester was like a silent movie in the days following the attack. People were going about their business, but there was no sounds at all. To have so many people in the square all fall silent at 11 o’clock was very emotional. I felt that the number of media people and vehicles was intrusive, but I guess the worlds eyes were on the city. We made a conscious decision to limit the number of the times the cameras were in the church to enable it to remain a quiet space for people to take time to reflect.”



Messages of support from the public.



Hundreds of balloons, flowers and teddies from the public.



New presenters reporting at the memorial.

#### 4) Street Art: 22 Bee’s Mural

On a warm day in June 2017 I visited Manchester city centre. My bus travelled down Oldham St towards Piccadilly Gardens, but this time I got off a stop earlier than usual. On the side of The Koffee Pot café a mural of 22 bees was being spray painted by graffiti artist Russell Meham. A crowd of around 30 people all watched in awe as he created each unique bee with skilled precision. The worker bee has become a symbol of solidarity for the people of Manchester. This mural is a constant reminder of the strength and resilience of the people of Manchester following the attack.



The Manchester Bee Mural

#### 5) The Manchester Bee Tattoo Appeal

Many people have got permanent reminders of Manchester’s strength on their bodies. Tattoo shops all over Manchester offered the bee tattoo at a set price to help fundraise for the victims of the attack. Around 10,000 people are said to have gotten the tattoo. I personally know a few people who rushed to get the tattoo as they were proud to show they are from such a tough and resilient city.



Ashleigh Allcroft's Manchester Bee Tattoo