

BURLINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

PRESS RELEASE

April 29, 2016

ANTI-MUSLIM HATE CRIME RESULTING IN ARREST

On April 26th, 2016 at approximately 4:40 PM, a Black female wearing a hijab was walking with her young child on North Champlain Street when a man approached her, called her a terrorist, and pointed what appeared to be a gun at her. With the help of a bystander, she was able to leave the scene and proceed to the Burlington Police Department's headquarters at One North Avenue.

Officers at headquarters took a report of the incident. A description of the suspect was provided by the victim: an older White male with a blue shirt, beard, and salt and pepper hair down to his ears. Officers immediately responded to the field and conducted an investigation. After a short time, officers narrowed down suspicion to a man they were familiar with, Michael Kochalian. Sergeant Paul Petralia, Officer Derek Hodges, and Corporal Brent Navari responded to his residence. Having developed sufficient evidence, including the account of an independent witness, they placed Kochalian under arrest. No firearm was recovered at that time.

Michael Kochalian has been charged with Disorderly Conduct with a hate crime enhancement. He was lodged at the Chittenden County Correctional Facility and arraigned on the hate-crime enhanced charge. Bail has been set at \$500 and has not been posted. He remains in custody. The Police Department has been in contact with the victim, as recently as this afternoon.

"Our officers take hate-motivated crimes very seriously, and their response here was fast and decisive," said Chief of Police Brandon del Pozo. "Attacks against individuals based along the lines of race, religion, gender, or any other identity are intolerable and violate the basic values of our community. We value our partnership with State's Attorney TJ Donovan, which allows for collaborative responses to these serious crimes."

Kochalian has an extensive criminal history in the State of Vermont: two felony charges with one conviction and 42 misdemeanor charges with ten convictions. His charges include Simple Assault, Unlawful Trespass, Disorderly Conduct, and Violation of Conditions of Release. He has a history with the police of profane and aggressive outbursts. Kochalian also has two pending cases in the Superior Court for the offenses Simple Assault (two counts) and Disorderly Conduct.