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SALWAN MOMIKA

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## 1. Introduction

Salwan Momika, an Iraqi immigrant to Sweden, became a highly controversial figure due to his public burnings of the Quran.

His life took a tragic turn on January 29, 2025, when he was shot and killed in his apartment in Södertälje while broadcasting live on TikTok.

This report will explore Momika's complex background, the events leading up to his death, the subsequent investigation, and the broader implications of his case.

## 2. Salwan Momika's Background and Transformation

- Born on June 23, 1986, in Bakhdida, Iraq, to a Christian family.
- Later became involved in Iraqi politics and was a member of the Syriac Democratic Party, part of the Iranian-backed Shia militia group, the Popular Mobilization Forces.
  - Some reports suggest he led a Christian militia within this group called the Brigades of Imam Ali.
  - He also expressed support for the Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr.
- Described himself as an "atheist and enlightened politician, thinker and author".
- Arrived in Sweden in April 2018 and was granted refugee status in 2021.
- **His residency permit was revoked in October 2023** due to false information but he was granted a new temporary permit due to the danger he faced in Iraq.
- Sought asylum in Norway, was arrested, and then deported back to Sweden where he was granted a one-year residency permit in May 2024 because of the risk of torture in Iraq.

## 3. The Koran Burnings and Their Impact

- In 2023, Momika began staging public burnings of the Quran.
  - These acts included desecrating the holy book by wrapping it in pork and kicking it.
  - Often performed with his associate, Salwan Najem.

- **His actions sparked outrage and condemnation in the Muslim world.**
  - Protests erupted in several countries, including attacks on the Swedish embassy in Baghdad.
- The Swedish government condemned his actions but stressed the country's laws regarding freedom of speech.
- These events had a significant negative impact on Sweden's international relations.
- The events also led to a heightened terror alert level in Sweden.
- **A city in Iraq offered a reward of two million dollars and a Quran made of two kilograms of gold for anyone who killed him.**

#### 4. Legal Battles and the Aftermath

- Momika and Najem were charged with “agitation against an ethnic or national group” (*hets mot folkgrupp* in Swedish) for their actions.
- The trial took place in January 2025, with the verdict scheduled for January 30.
- **Momika’s murder on January 29 led to the dismissal of charges against him** and the postponement of the verdict for Najem.
- Najem was later convicted of hate speech for his role in the Quran burnings, with the court ruling that their actions exceeded the limits of "objective debate and criticism" of religion.

#### 5. Momika’s Death and Investigation

- **Momika was shot dead in his apartment** in Södertälje while broadcasting live on TikTok around 11:30 pm on January 29, 2025.
- Witnesses to the livestream reported hearing multiple gunshots, and the video captured police entering the apartment.
- **The police found Momika lifeless at the scene, and he died later in hospital.**
- **Investigation:**
  - Five men were arrested as suspects in the immediate aftermath of the shooting.

- Some suspects were reported to have lived near Momika's residence and had prior convictions for weapons and protection offenses.
- **However, the charges against all five were dropped due to weakened evidence**, though the investigation continues.
- Authorities are exploring the possibility of a foreign power being involved.
- It is believed that Momika may have revealed his location through his TikTok videos.
- **Possible Motives:**
  - Revenge for his desecration of the Quran.
  - Involvement of foreign powers or terrorist groups due to the international outrage Momika caused.
  - Possible connections to domestic criminal organizations.

## 6. Broader Implications and Questions Raised

The death of Salwan Momika raises crucial questions about freedom of expression, religious tolerance, and the safety of individuals who become targets of global outrage:

- **Complexities of Free Speech:** Momika's actions pushed the boundaries of free speech, sparking debate about the limits of expression when it conflicts with religious sensitivities.
- **Perils of Provocation:** Momika's actions, though protected by law in Sweden, made him a target for violence, and exposed him to a very real and credible threat to his life.
- **Role of Social Media:** Social media played a significant role in amplifying Momika's message and documenting his death. It is also being investigated as a possible source of information for his murderers.
- **Impact on International Relations:** Momika's actions caused diplomatic tensions and highlighted the challenge of balancing domestic legal protections with the need to respect religious and cultural sensitivities internationally.

- **Security Concerns in Sweden:** The events raised concerns about the security of individuals in Sweden and the government's ability to protect them.
- The question of whether Momika had personal security at the time of his death is unclear. His lawyer stated that he had security during the trial and public gatherings but other reports suggest he did not have police protection.

## **7. Conclusion**

**Salwan Momika's life was a complex and controversial one.** His journey from militia leader to political refugee to public provocateur ended violently in a Södertälje apartment.

His actions and his death highlight the deeply divisive issues of freedom of speech, religious tolerance, and the dangers faced by individuals who become targets of international outrage.

The circumstances surrounding his death continue to be investigated, and the implications of his case will be discussed for years to come.