

Cabbie death protest Fiery tragedy blamed on car flaw, intersection

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Abstract:

[Yousuf], who lived in Woodside with Khatul and relatives, became a U.S. citizen this year. Khatul said Yousuf had hoped to bring his wife and five children, ages 7 to 17, from Bangladesh to the U.S.

[Bhairavi Desai] said Crown Victoria police cars are now undergoing safety modifications to the fuel tank. Desai said the Alliance and Yousuf's family are calling on the city to make Ford do the same for taxicabs.

CRAIG WARGA RESPECTS Atiar Rahman pauses at makeshift shrine to Mohammed Abu Yousuf at Northern Blvd. and Broadway, in Woodside. Yousuf was killed when cab was rear-ended and burst into flames at same intersection Friday morning.

Full Text:

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Friends and family of Mohammed Abu Yousuf yesterday called for justice in the investigation of the taxi driver who died in a fiery auto crash.

Twenty-five people yesterday gathered in a candlelight vigil at Northern Blvd. and Broadway, where Yousuf, 44, was killed in a hit- and-run accident as he sat in his cab at a red light Friday morning.

Yousuf was just minutes from his Woodside home after finishing an overnight shift when his Ford Crown Victoria was rear-ended by an SUV and spun across the intersection before it caught fire at 4:30 a.m.

The driver of the SUV abandoned the vehicle at the scene and fled. Police have made no arrests.

Yousuf's family members said they have received no word from police on the investigation into Yousuf's death.

"We haven't heard a word from the police," said Amena Khatul, 22, Yousuf's cousin. "They don't tell us if they caught the person."

Yousuf, who lived in Woodside with Khatul and relatives, became a U.S. citizen this year. Khatul said Yousuf had hoped to bring his wife and five children, ages 7 to 17, from Bangladesh to the U.S.

The family now awaits Yousuf's burned body for burial.

Kaml Bhuiyn, a 20-year friend of Yousuf, said Yousuf had phoned family members minutes before the crash to let them know he was five minutes away from home.

"I'm coming, you can get ready my dinner," Bhuiyn, 36, said of Yousuf's call. "I'm shocked. My friend is dead."

Ford recall reported

Bhairavi Desai, staff coordinator for the New York Taxi Workers Alliance, said Ford recently issued a recall for 350,000 Crown Victorias which have been known to burst into flames in rear-end collisions.

Desai said Crown Victoria police cars are now undergoing safety modifications to the fuel tank. Desai said the Alliance and Yousuf's family are calling on the city to make Ford do the same for taxicabs.

"All taxicabs in New York City are either Crown Victorias, Lincoln Town Cars or Mercury Grand Marquis," Desai said. "The city should require that Ford install safety devices in these taxicabs."

Desai said the Alliance wrote a letter to state Attorney General Elliot Spitzer, requesting him to file a suit against Ford.

Mohammed K. Ahmed, Yousuf's next-door neighbor and fellow cab driver, described the intersection of Northern Blvd. and Broadway as confusing and called on the city to make improvements there.

"This intersection is mortally dangerous. This intersection is dangerous to everybody," said Ahmed, organizing committee member for NYTWA. "We want real justice."

Khatul said Yousuf's relatives are working to fulfill his wish to bring his family to the U.S.

Had he lived, Yousuf yesterday would have made the final payment on the Ford that he had leased to own.

[Illustration]

Caption: CRAIG WARGA RESPECTS Atiar Rahman pauses at makeshift shrine to Mohammed Abu Yousuf at Northern Blvd. and Broadway, in Woodside. Yousuf was killed when cab was rear-ended and burst into flames at same intersection Friday morning.

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