

French police kill one, arrest 11 in raid on alleged terror cell

Pierre Mabut
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Last Saturday, French anti-terrorist police raided addresses in Paris, Cannes and Strasbourg. They shot dead 33-year-old Jérémy Louis Sidney, the alleged leader of an Islamist terrorist cell, and arrested 11 other people.

Sidney was allegedly in possession of a .357 magnum revolver, which the police claimed he fired at them.

The raid was carried out in connection with an attack on a Jewish kosher grocery store on September 19 in the Sarcelles district of Paris, a community of various religious and ethnic backgrounds. The attack, using a defense grenade, caused damage and injured one person.

Interior Minister Manuel Valls insisted on the home-grown nature of the suspected Islamist radical group. “It does not concern an outside terrorist network. It concerns a network in our local communities”, he said. “Not foreigners, but French people converted to Islam”.

Valls said that it was “not only the Jewish community that was targeted, but France.”

According to *Le Monde*, several other members of the group escaped arrest, having left for Syria to join a jihadist group. One of the men arrested in Cannes posted favourable comments on Facebook about Hassen Brik, a Tunisian citizen who is the spokesman for the Salafist group Ansar Al-Sharia.

Ansar al-Shariah is a North African Islamist group suspected by Tunisian police of carrying out an attack on the US embassy in Tunis on September 14. This attack itself came only three days after the attack on the US consulate in Benghazi, which killed four Americans including US Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens.

The killing of a man by police without trial points to the reactionary character of the police build-up in France, and to the terroristic methods of the armed groups French imperialism is supporting in its wars in the Middle East.

Valls alluded, though briefly and indirectly, to popular opposition to French-backed wars of intervention in the Middle East, as a potential motivation for these

individuals’ alleged sympathy for jihadist groups. The terrorist threat was fed by “fantasy and hate”, but also the “geo-political context”, he said.

Valls said he had had to cancel a visit to Qatar to take charge of the “terrorist threat”. Qatar is currently behind terrorist activity in Syria, supported by the French government, to further the US proxy war in that country and overthrow Syrian President Bashir Al-Assad.

The day after the raid, President Francois Hollande declared that a new anti-terrorist law will be put before the National Assembly in the shortest possible time, “to further reinforce the instruments in order to be more efficient against this scourge”.

The neo-fascist National Front’s (FN) reaction to the arrests was to immediately seek to incite more hatred of oppressed suburban youth and Islam, along the same lines as Valls. FN leader Marine Le Pen attacked Islam, saying: “Islam is financed by foreign money. There is no French Islam”.

In fact, roughly 10 percent of the French population, or 6 million people, are of Muslim faith or cultural origin.

The young men arrested have been branded as ex-petty criminals and drug dealers converted to radical Islam either in prison or on leaving prison by Salafist preachers. Though he is currently engaged in a series of austerity programs that will deepen poverty and attacks on public education, Hollande hypocritically continued: “It is by the Republic’s public education system, by a determined effort against all poverty that we can bring French people together.”

Five of the young men were released without charges on Thursday morning, after four days in custody, suspected of creating “a terrorist cell of an extremely dangerous nature”.

The remaining seven have been charged with “attempted assassination in connection with a religion and with regard to a terrorist project”.

Paris public prosecutor François Molins said “it was the most dangerous terrorist group uncovered in France since the 1995,” the period of activity of the Algerian Armed Islamic Group’s (GIA) attacks in France.

The public prosecutor claimed that traces of Sidney’s DNA were found on the grenade used to attack the Jewish grocery store. During a raid on a house in Torcy east of Paris (Seine-et-Marne), another suspect, Jérémy Bailly, was arrested.

He had been under surveillance for some time, after being suspected of traveling to training camps abroad. Police seized so-called Islamist propaganda and a list of Jewish associations in the Paris region. Materials for the fabrication of explosive devices were found at Torcy, as were four “testaments”, supposedly linked to the men’s eventual deaths. Some €27,000 (US\$35,000) were also recovered.

Molins stated that Louis-Sidney’s role was to recruit jihadists for the civil war being waged by the United States in Syria. This simply begs the question: why is the French government supporting terrorist groups in Syria, funded by Qatar and Saudi Arabia and backed by the US—while arresting and even gunning down those among its own citizens who it believes hold similar positions? It is because it is well aware that the groups it is promoting in Syria use terrorist methods that Paris believes further its interests in the region.

This simply points to the criminal character of the policy of France and its allies in the Middle East.

In a further deeply reactionary comment echoing the propaganda of the FN, Valls indicated he would attack any public demonstration of Islamic faith or of hostility to the escalating imperialist interventions in the Middle East: “Me, I won’t allow totally veiled women, people praying in the street, or hostile slogans against our allies who share our values, being heard in our streets.”



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