

French government assassinates six of its own citizens in bombing raid in Syria

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The French state carried out the extra-judicial assassination of at least six of its own citizens in a raid on an Islamic State (IS) militia training camp in Syria last week, blatantly violating the French constitution's ban on the death penalty.

Last Thursday night at 11 p.m. a group of two French Rafale fighter aircraft descended on an ISIS training camp five kilometers southwest of Raqqa, the capital of the IS-controlled area of Syria. The French youth were allegedly training in the camp alongside over 100 other foreigners. The planes dropped seven 250-kilogram, GPS-guided smart bombs on the camp, in the latest French raid on ISIS training camps since a raid on another camp near Deir Ezzor on 27 September.

The government has not released an estimate for the number of dead and wounded of the hundred or so youth in the camp. The previous raid reportedly killed over 30 youth, including 12 child soldiers. However, a Syrian NGO announced that at least six French citizens had been killed in the latest raid, a figure confirmed yesterday by anonymous French officials, who also confirmed that their raid was consciously designed to kill French citizens.

They told BFM-TV, "We targeted a training camp containing ISIS foreign fighters prepared to come attack us in France. Among them there were French citizens and French speakers."

French intelligence had reportedly identified the presence of French nationals and French-speaking youth as well as other foreigners by interviewing captured ISIS fighters. Thus, Le Drian, President François Hollande and the French military knew that French nationals would be killed in the raid before launching it.

On tour in the Middle East, French Prime Minister Manuel Valls made clear that France's Socialist Party

(PS) government claims the right to murder French citizens, as well as anyone else. Speaking on the raids from Amman, the capital of Jordan, Valls claimed that they were aimed at people in the camp of "all origins and all nationalities. "We don't target this or that person for their passport. We hit all those that prepare terrorist attacks on France."

The PS government tried to justify its illegal murder by invoking its right to "self-defense," since these IS trainees in Syria could later return to France and carry out terrorist attacks.

This establishes a sinister and anti-democratic precedent: the state's right to pre-emptively punish a suspect for crimes he has not committed, based on nothing more than the assertion that it believes that the suspect might commit a crime in the future.

One must assume that Hollande personally authorized and launched this killing. Recently, it was revealed that, just like US President Barack Obama, Hollande maintains a "kill list", which he discusses with Le Drian and a few other top intelligence officials. Hollande does not publicly present any evidence or justification, even retroactively, for the escalating number of illegal state murders France is carrying out.

Last week's bombing in Syria makes clear, moreover, that French citizens as well as foreigners can be placed on the "kill list." This allows the PS effectively to suspend citizens' fundamental democratic rights without recourse, and order the French military-intelligence apparatus to liquidate them.

France's plunge into state illegality highlights the collapse of basic democratic rights internationally, even in the imperialist countries with the oldest democratic traditions. It is joining the United States and Britain in publicly asserting its right to extra-judicially murder its

own citizens—after US President Barack Obama ordered the drone murder of US citizen Anwar al-Awlaki in 2011, and British Prime Minister David Cameron announced last month that British drones had murdered two British citizens in Raqqa.

The PS' full-throated support for state murder marks a sea change in French politics. Though the French state has extra-judicially murdered French citizens in the post-World War II period, such as the murder of Maurice Audin in 1957 for his opposition to France's colonial war against Algerian independence, this was always denied and covered up. The fact that French soldiers had tortured and murdered Audin was only officially confirmed last year, when the files of paratrooper and torturer General Paul Aussaresses were opened after his death in December 2013.

The last time the French state publicly asserted its right to murder French citizens without trial, the position now being taken by the PS, was in Nazi-occupied France, when the Milice of the fascist Vichy regime hunted down French Resistance fighters.

The PS government's claim that this vast political shift is driven purely by security concerns—that the PS is resorting to state murder solely due to its concern to stop terrorist attacks in France by hostile Islamist fighters in Syria—is a political lie, shot through with jarring contradictions.

Firstly, France in fact supports Islamist opposition militias in Syria, who are fighting in line with the PS' policy of seeking the destruction of President Bashar al-Assad's regime. Hollande himself publicly recognized the Islamist opposition as Syria's government in 2012, and ISIS is financed by key French allies, such as Saudi Arabia. Under surveillance of French intelligence agencies, hundreds of Frenchmen have been recruited by ISIS to travel to Syria.

Even after Frenchmen active in Islamist training networks carried out the January attacks on *Charlie Hebdo* and Hyper Cacher in Paris, the PS has maintained this policy of waging war for regime change in Syria using such Islamist terrorist operatives as its foot soldiers.

Moreover, the semi-covert networks who are recruiting and arming the French Islamist fighters targeted for state murder by the PS in Syria enjoy French state protection at home. Last month, it was revealed that the PS is invoking the state secrets

privilege to block an official investigation into French security forces and police informers who provided weapons to at least one of the January attackers, Amedy Coulibaly.

If the PS is advancing a policy of state murder of French civilians, it is not because this is the only way to combat the danger of Islamist terrorism arising from the war in Syria. Rather, Paris is seizing upon the escalating disasters provoked by its reckless wars in Syria as a pretext to accelerate the imposition of terrifying police-state measures in France.

Ultimately, the main target of this offensive is not ISIS-linked Islamists, who are in fact assets of French foreign policy, but popular opposition to PS austerity policies, particularly in the working class, that has made Hollande by far France's most unpopular president since World War II. Faced with escalating class tensions inside France itself that it cannot control, and for which it has no progressive solutions, the PS is relying ever more on police-state measures designed to threaten and terrorize the public.



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