

France declares state of emergency after ISIS terrorist attacks kill over 100 in Paris

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Horrific scenes of bloodshed filled the streets of Paris last night, as multiple simultaneous terrorist attacks starting around 10 p.m. claimed at least 140 lives and left at least 110 wounded, including dozens in critical condition.

Shortly before midnight, French President François Hollande announced that France was closing its borders and imposing a state of emergency under a 1955 law that suspends key democratic rights. Several areas of Paris were on lockdown early Saturday morning, and authorities called on Parisians to stay inside, as police helicopters circled overhead and paramilitary police and army units deployed across the city.

According to anonymous high-ranking officials cited by the media, there were at least seven nearly simultaneous terrorist attacks, which were likely coordinated. These attacks included:

- * At the Bataclan theater in Paris' 11th district, a team of three or four gunmen armed with grenades took hundreds of people hostage at a concert of the Eagles of Death Metal, an American band. According to some concertgoers who managed to flee the scene, the gunmen were shouting "Allah Akbar" and "This is for Syria." Paramilitary police units stormed the building shortly after 12:30 a.m. Saturday, killing two terrorists. They said they found horrific scenes inside, with over 100 dead.

- * Three bombs went off at restaurants and a cinema near the Stade de France stadium just north of the city, in the near suburbs, where tens of thousands of fans were watching a football match between France and Germany. One of the bombs was reportedly activated by a suicide bomber. According to initial reports, there were four dead and 50 wounded, including 11 in critical condition, in these attacks. Hollande, who was at the Stade de France watching the game, left for the Interior

Ministry after the blasts, but the game was nevertheless allowed to continue to its conclusion.

- * On Bichat street in Paris' 10th district, there were 14 dead and 20 wounded including 10 in critical condition, according to Fire Department figures, after a series of drive-by shootings carried out by gunmen in a black car at several restaurants. Further shootings occurred across the area nearby, which is a popular hangout on Friday nights.

- * There were four dead and 21 wounded, including 11 in critical condition, in shootings on the nearby Avenue de la République.

- * There were 19 shot dead and 23 wounded, including 13 in critical condition on Charonne street.

- * There were seven wounded, including three in critical condition, in shootings on Boulevard Beaumarchais.

- * There were reports of other shootings in several other locations across downtown Paris, including at the Forum des Halles shopping area.

Authorities had been aware of potential threats earlier in the day. A bomb threat phoned in at noon to the Hotel Molitor, where the German national football team was staying, forced the evacuation of the hotel, which was sealed off with police tape before it was searched and then declared safe two hours later.

In a brief public address before attending a Council of Ministers meeting at midnight, Hollande announced that he had ordered an all-out deployment of the security forces and an intervention by the military.

"Two decisions will be taken: the state of emergency will be decreed, which means several places will be closed off, and traffic will be limited in certain areas," he said.

Hollande continued: "The state of emergency will apply across the country. The second decision I have

taken is to close the borders, so that the people who have committed these crimes can be apprehended. We know where this attack came from. We must show compassion and solidarity, but we must also show we are united.”

Though Hollande remarked that French officials “know where this attack came from,” as of this writing no terrorist group has taken responsibility. However, several media reports suggested that the attacks were carried out by members of the Western-backed Sunni Islamist militias fighting President Bashar al-Assad’s regime in Syria.

Former CIA director James Woolsey told ABC News that since the United States, France and other countries had killed top “management” of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) militia, “We have to realize we are at war.”

The immense sympathy for the victims and the terrible suffering that their families will endure does not relieve us of the responsibility of assessing the source of this tragedy. If, as seems likely, the attacks were carried out by European veterans of ISIS or a similar militia, the hundreds of dead and wounded in the streets of Paris are victims of imperialist wars in the Middle East, waged for cynical geopolitical ends, that are now spiraling out of control.

Twelve years ago, when the Bush administration launched an illegal invasion of Iraq, the French government, foreseeing the disaster that would flow from the war, refused to participate. The reintegration of France into NATO’s military command in 2009, followed by its decision to join the United States and other NATO powers in Middle East wars in 2011, has proven to have disastrous consequences.

The French political establishment backed Islamist militias in proxy wars for regime change in Libya and Syria, encouraging its citizens to join these militias by widely presenting them in the media as “revolutionaries” fighting Gaddafi and Assad. Now these forces, trained to carry out terrorist attacks and guerrilla warfare in the Middle East, are returning home. This has created a political environment in which terrorism can flourish and spread rapidly, and as a result the war has come home to France.

“The danger comes from a more or less large team of guys from theaters of operation where they were blooded, maybe Syria or Libya, Yemen, who find

weapons at home (in France) and go into action,” commented Yves Trotignon, the head of French foreign intelligence’s anti-terrorist services, to AFP. “Guys who are determined and ready to die, who have studied the target and are solid from an operational point of view can do enormous damage. The number of veteran jihadists is increasing every day.”

Since the Kouachi brothers waged their deadly terrorist attack on *Charlie Hebdo* in January, the ruling elite has reacted to such dangers not by shifting away from the policy of war for regime change in Syria, but by building up the state’s anti-democratic police powers.

After Hollande’s announcement, reporters on *iTélé* repeatedly said that France is at war, and that numerous harsh measures specified by the 1955 state of emergency law would be put into effect. The law allows French authorities to impose curfews, carry out arbitrary searches of private homes at any time, censor the press, impose military tribunals, order the house arrest of individuals without trial, close public places, and collect private weapons.

The last time the state of emergency was invoked was in 2005, when it was partially invoked in response to mass suburban riots provoked by the electrocution of two youth fleeing police. However, the last time all these powers were invoked by the French state was in the years after its promulgation, when it was used to impose a state of emergency in Algeria in a failed attempt to crush the revolt against French colonial rule in Algeria.

Media reported that there are plans for mass searches in the Paris area later today. Schools and universities, as well as all Paris public facilities, are to be closed and some political parties are closing down their campaigns for next month’s regional elections.



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