

# President Hollande gives French army, intelligence “green light to kill”

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Last week, *Le Monde* published extracts of *Erreurs fatales*, a book released a week ago by investigative journalist Vincent Nouzille. After his first book on this subject in 2015, *The Killers of the Republic*, Nouzille gives further details in his new book on how President François Hollande and top army staff regularly order extrajudicial murders, including of French citizens.

According to *Fatal Errors*, the Socialist Party (PS) government has vastly stepped up the French state’s murder program, assassinating at least 40 people on Hollande’s “kill list.” This program, carried out behind the backs of the French people and violating basic constitutional rights in a country where the death penalty is illegal, underscores the enormous dangers posed by the crisis of French democracy.

Nouzille writes, “Since his election in May 2012, François Hollande intends to pursue a more martial policy than his predecessors, even if the price to be paid is leaving the strict framework of legality. He has decided to systematically react in this fashion to hostage-taking situations and to attacks that impact on French people throughout the world.”

Hollande has given a green light to the army and external intelligence agency, the General Directorate for External Security (DGSE), to kill individuals identified as High Value Targets (HVT) or High Value Individuals (HVI).

The French daily *Le Monde* reported, “Surrounded by military advisers who tend towards aggressive action, including his personal chief of staff General Benoît Puga, and members of [Defense Minister] Jean-Yves Le Drian’s staff, François Hollande has given clear directives on the matter to the military general staffs and to the DGSE: they have a green light to kill abroad, including through clandestine operations, terrorist leaders and other alleged enemies of France.”

*The Killers of the Republic*, Nouzille exposed the assassination programme of successive French governments. He revealed the existence of a clandestine cell in the DGSE whose commandos are trained to carry out “Homo [i.e., homicide] operations.”

Hollande himself admitted that he had ordered targeted assassinations. Speaking to journalists Gérard Davet and Fabrice Lhomme in their book *A president should not say that*, released last October, he said: “The army, the DGSE have a list of people who presumably were responsible for hostage taking or acts against our interests. I was asked. I said, Well, if you catch them, of course,” Hollande said. He has approved at least four targeted killings of Islamists abroad.

Nouzille states, however, the extent of the program has been minimized: “At least 40 HVT were executed overseas between 2013 and 2016—by the army, or the DGSE, or even more directly by allied countries based on intelligence provided by France. This is a tempo of about one operation per month—a tempo not seen since the end of the 1950s, during the Algerian war.”

According to Nouzille, French extrajudicial murders are carefully prepared, based on electronic intelligence, interrogation of prisoners, and imaging analyses. Once identified, the target is tracked in order to select the most opportune time to trigger the assassination.

The French army deliberately targeted and extrajudicially murdered a Frenchman, Salim Benghalem, near Raqqa, Syria, on the night of 8-9 October 2015, during the bombing of an Islamic State (IS) training camp.

Several relatives of Mokhtar Belmokhtar, the Islamist who took responsibility for a hostage-taking after the attack on the Tiguentourine gas field near Aménas, Algeria, were apparently killed on PS orders. They include Abu Moghreh Al-Tounsi, in September 2013;

Fayçal Boussemane and the Mauritanian Al-Hassan Ould Al-Khalil, the son-in-law and spokesman of Belmokhtar, in November 2013; and Belmokhtar's right-hand man, Omar Ould Hamaha, in March 2014.

The PS government has defended and promoted extrajudicial killings, claiming that this aims to defend the population from terrorist attack. In opposition to accusations by sections of the judiciary that Hollande is effectively reintroducing the death penalty and moreover without trial, *Le Monde* notes, "As the Elysée [presidential palace] and the general staffs see it, on the other hand, war against far-off, fanatical enemies justifies the primacy of military operations rather than uncertain recourse to French courts."

The admission by *Le Monde*, a paper politically aligned with the PS, that Hollande and his top officials are ordering extrajudicial murders of people a court of law would not convict—acting quite literally as judge, jury, and executioner—is a warning to the working class. In line with the turn to drone murder and mass surveillance by the United States government and its allies across Europe, Hollande is giving extraordinary powers to the military/intelligence apparatus, laying the basis for the transformation of France into an authoritarian police state.

The state murder campaign takes place amid a state of emergency imposed after the 2015 Paris terrorist attack, and amid the development of an unprecedented mass spying program by US and European intelligence agencies, including French intelligence, targeted at the entire population. The observation that the French state is murdering people at a tempo unseen since the Algerian war, when it deployed mass torture against the Algerian people, itself testifies to the escalating criminality of official French politics.

No faction in the political establishment is campaigning against the assassinations arbitrarily decided by the executive without even the fig leaf of a legal decision. Extrajudicial executions are systematically hidden from the public. Pseudo-left parties like the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA), which called for a Hollande vote in the 2012 presidential elections and backed the war in Libya and Syria, are silent on the French state's assassination program.

The program is not aimed at stopping Islamist terrorist groups, which continue to serve as tools of French and NATO foreign policy in the Syrian war and

beyond. Rather, the French state is using the continuing activities of terror networks it is well acquainted with and closely monitors in order to justify the build-up of its police powers—including, most threateningly, the head of state's ability to order murders at will.

The terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015 were committed by individuals, like the Kouachi brothers involved in the attack on the Charlie Hebdo editorial office, who were well-known to French intelligence authorities. The Islamist networks they were a part of were cultivated by France and other NATO powers as they backed various Islamist elements in the regime change war in Libya and Syria.

Speaking on Thursday to Europe1, Nouzille said that many terrorist operatives, from Toulouse shooter Mohamed Merah to the Kouachi brothers who carried out the attack on *Charlie Hebdo*, were spotted but then "disconnected" by French intelligence.



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