

Quebec City mosque assailant identified with ultra-right

Jacques Richard
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New information continues to come to light confirming the chauvinist, ultra-right wing views of Alexandre Bissonnette, the 27 year-old Laval University student who has been charged with five counts of murder and six of attempted murder over Sunday evening's attack on a Quebec City mosque.

Bissonnette contacted police only minutes after the assault on the Islamic Cultural Center of Quebec and surrendered to them shortly thereafter. Weapons, including an AK-47 automatic rifle and a high-powered hand-gun, were found in his car.

According to eye-witnesses, the masked gunman who opened fire on Muslims at evening prayer reloaded his weapon twice during the attack.

Sunday's shooting left six Muslim-Canadians dead and caused nineteen other to be hospitalized. The dead included Canadians of Algerian, Moroccan, and Guinean origin. Most, if not all, were longtime Canadian residents. One was a professor at Laval University. Several others worked for the Quebec government.

Two of the wounded remain in a critical condition. Doctors have stated that they may suffer lifelong impairment.

According to authorities, at his arrest Bissonnette expressed remorse, or at least concern about the fatalities, and spoke about taking his own life.

Police claim he has given no explanation for his actions. Nor apparently did he leave any on his computer or social media.

However, he was clearly acting on the basis of ultra-right wing political views.

Since Sunday night, numerous people who encountered Bissonnette in recent years, from the spokesman for a refugees support group, to fellow Laval University students, have said he was virulently

anti-immigrant and an unabashed admirer of Marine Le Pen, the leader of France's neo-fascist National Front, and of US President Donald Trump.

Both Le Pen and Trump have systematically stoked anti-immigrant chauvinism and Islamophobia.

Last Friday, just two days before the mosque massacre, Trump signed a patently anti-democratic and discriminatory executive order, excluding refugees, visitors and US permanent residents from seven Muslim countries from entering the US.

According to several associates of Bissonnette, Le Pen's high-profile visit to Quebec last spring served to radicalize him.

Those who viewed Bissonnette's Facebook page before it was taken down on police order, report that in addition to confirming his support for Le Pen, the National Front and Donald Trump, it showed him to be an admirer of the Israeli Defense Forces and a gun-enthusiast.

Olivier Banville, the former president of the Parti Québécois (PQ) club at Laval University, told the Montreal daily *Le Devoir* that Bissonnette was in discussion with him for a time in 2014 about joining the pro-Quebec independence party.

Significantly this was when the PQ was championing a so-called Quebec Charter of Values— chauvinist legislation that would have banned public sector workers, at the cost of their jobs, from wearing religious head-coverings and other “ostentatious” religious symbols. An exception was to be made for “discrete” crucifixes.

Media reports have portrayed Bissonnette as an introvert and a loner who had been subjected to bullying throughout much of his youth.

That he is likely psychologically troubled in no way detracts from the political character of his actions and,

even more importantly, the culpability of the political establishment and capitalist elite.

In Canada, as in and the other imperialist “democracies,” the ruling elites have promoted a noxious political and social environment through their phony “war on terror” narrative. They have carried out wars of aggression in the Middle East, sweeping attacks on democratic rights, and policies aimed at redistributing wealth to the most privileged sections of society.

Canada’s current prime minister, the Liberal Justin Trudeau, denounced the Harper Conservative government’s open appeals to Islamophobia as “divisive.” However, Trudeau and the Liberals voted for Harper’s Bill C-52, which in the name of fighting “Islamic terror,” has armed the national security apparatus with what even the *Globe and Mail*, the traditional mouthpiece of Toronto’s Bay Street banks, describes as police-state powers.

Now Trudeau is bending over backwards to placate Trump, because the Canadian ruling elite views a close alliance with Washington as vital to aggressively pursuing its own imperialist interests on the world stage. Trudeau has scrupulously avoided criticizing Trump for his ban targeting Muslim travelers to the US, his plans to militarize the Mexican border and other flagrantly anti-democratic and chauvinist actions.

For the past ten years Quebec’s political establishment and corporate media have promoted the lie that immigrants, especially from Muslim countries, are a potential threat to “our democratic values.”

The amalgam between Muslims and terrorists is never far away. Last August, for example, Jean-François Lisée, the new leader of the Parti Québécois, the alternate governing party of the Quebec ruling class since the 1970s, issued a demand on his Facebook page for the “banning of the burka BEFORE a jihadist uses it to hide his or her movements for an attack.”

In the aftermath of Sunday’s atrocity some journalists have acknowledged, if only very partially, its connection to Quebec’s reactionary debate over “excessive accommodation” to minorities. Michèle Ouimet, a columnist with the Montreal daily *La Presse*, pointed to an “unhealthy climate fueled by trash radios that allow themselves to say anything and chroniclers who vomit on Muslims and Jews.”

In an official statement, Philippe Couillard, the

Liberal Premier of Quebec, obliquely referred to this climate by saying: “The words that are spoken and the words that are written are not insignificant.”

The two parties most openly associated with the chauvinist discourse on Quebec “identity,” the PQ of Lisée and the Coalition Avenir Québec of Francois Legault, immediately rejected any link between their anti-immigrant appeals and the horrific act carried out by an ultra-rightist most likely influenced and encouraged by their positions. The two have promised to continue to demand a public debate on banning the chador and the burka in public—although Lisée thought it politic concede that his earlier warning that a burka could be used to conceal an AK-47 assault rifle was “not a good idea.”

Couillard’s statement, however, was entirely demagogic. His government has mounted an all-out assault on workers by slashing social programs and pensions, while cutting taxes on the rich and big business. At the same time, it has tabled legislation that directly targets the Muslim community by forbidding access to health care, education, and other essential public services (except in emergencies) to women who cover their faces for religious reasons.



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