

One dead, four injured Saturday night in Islamist terror attack in Paris

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On the night of Saturday May 14, just before 9 p.m., a young man wielding a knife attacked passers-by in downtown Paris while screaming “Allah akhbar!” according to eyewitnesses.

Tragically, one man—aged 29—was killed in the attack and four others were wounded, of which two were seriously wounded in the terror attack. Three of the four victims were taken to the Georges Pompidou Hospital, with one requiring surgery. It was announced Sunday morning that all of the injured were going to recover.

The attack occurred in the 2nd arrondissement of Paris, a few blocks from the Opéra Garnier. The opera house is a well-known tourist attraction. The neighborhood, full of restaurants and bars, is typically bustling on a Saturday night.

The assailant, a Frenchman of Chechen origin born in 1997, was shot and killed, apparently execution style, by police. When a group of three policemen arrived on the scene, the assailant reportedly brandished his knife. After one policeman shot the attacker with a Taser, another shot him twice with his pistol, fatally wounding him.

The assailant did not have a police record, but he was known to the intelligence services. As is the case in virtually every IS attack in France since the Charlie Hebdo shootings in January 2015, the perpetrator had an “S File” (Fiche S), meaning that he was identified as a threat to the security of the state by the French intelligence services.

The Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for the attack almost immediately afterwards. According to the SITE intelligence group, the Islamic State’s AMAQ press agency cited an IS “security source” as stated that “the author of this knife attack in Paris is a soldier of the Islamic State, and the operation was lead in retaliation against the states of the [US-led] coalition.”

Leading French politicians all immediately released statements. President Emmanuel Macron tweeted, “All of my thoughts go to the victims and the injured of the knife attack perpetrated tonight in Paris, and also to their loved ones. I salute in the name of all the French the courage of the police who neutralized the terrorists. France pays once again the price of blood but will not cede an inch to the enemies of liberty.”

Interior Minister Gérard Collomb tweeted, “I salute the composure and the reactivity of the police forces who neutralized the assailant. My first thoughts go to the victims of this despicable attack”.

The Socialist Party (PS) mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, said: “Tonight, our city was injured.”

Saturday night’s terror attack is a bloody and reactionary crime. Political responsibility for it rests, however, with the same ruling elite that is now using it to sing hymns of praise to the French police and Internet surveillance apparatus.

In conjunction with Washington and the Persian Gulf sheikdoms, French imperialism and its European allies have utilized and given tacit official protection to Islamist networks as they waged its bloody war for regime change in Syria since 2011. The forces these networks recruited and sent to Syria served as the European powers’ main ground troops in the war against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

This fact was thoroughly exposed by the 22 March 2016 attacks in Brussels, when the Turkish, Israeli and Russian intelligence services all reported that they had identified the attackers as well as their targets to Belgian and European intelligence before the attacks took place. After the IS terror attack last year in Barcelona, masses of people demonstrated and denounced the Spanish government for working with the attackers.

There can be little doubt, however, that as the Macron government faces rising strikes and student protests against its austerity measures, it will react as French governments have to all the previous attacks: with calls for stepped-up militarism and attacks on democratic rights.

The previous Socialist Party (PS) government of President François Hollande imposed a two-year state of emergency suspending democratic rights after the 13 November 2015 Paris attacks. While the state of emergency formally ended on November 1 of last year, a draconian anti-terror law had just been signed on October 30.

This anti-terror law legally codified the “temporary” antidemocratic measures imposed in the wake of the November 13th attacks, effectively making the state of emergency permanent.

Due to this law, the French state can: carry out arbitrary searches and seizures in private homes or any area declared a “security zone”; impose house arrest and electronic monitoring of individuals for up to one year at a time without charges; carry out warrantless identity checks in areas around borders, train stations, and airports; and collect and store all electronic, telephone, and email data of anyone police believe could be connected in the present or future to a “serious crime.”

These powers were already used to monitor and detain individuals and threaten to ban protests during the 2016 struggle against the PS labor law. As Macron provokes strikes and protests by using this labor law to attack wages and conditions in industries across France, there is little doubt that these powers will rapidly be turned against workers and youth if these protests mount into a direct political challenge to his government.



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