

Three killed in terrorist attack on church in Nice, France

Will Morrow
30 October 2020

A terrorist attack yesterday morning killed three people inside the Notre-Dame church of Nice, on the southern coast of France.

A lone attacker entered the building at 8:30 a.m. armed with a knife and attacked churchgoers who were attending the morning mass. The bodies of two people were found inside the church: a 60-year-old woman, almost fully decapitated, and a man. Another 55-year-old woman died from stab wounds shortly after fleeing the church. Police arriving on the scene shot the attacker, who reportedly cried “Allah Akbar.” He is under arrest, reportedly in a critical condition.

The attacker is reported to be Brahim A., a 21-year-old Tunisian migrant. He reportedly arrived on the Italian island of Lampedusa last September after crossing the Mediterranean, and travelled to Paris earlier this month. No connections to any terrorist organisation have been reported, and the police have so far stated they have not found evidence that he had collaborators.

The attack took place two weeks after the October 16 terrorist attack near a middle school in Conflans, northwest of Paris. Samuel Paty, a geography teacher, was stabbed and decapitated. He was targeted for having shown students in his class an anti-Muslim caricature as part of a class discussion on “freedom of expression.”

The latest terrorist attack is likewise a horrific crime. It reveals yet again the bankruptcy and politically reactionary character of terrorism. Not only are three innocent people tragically dead. The attack has handed the Macron administration and the political establishment an opportunity to escalate their ongoing racist anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant campaign, confuse and divide the population, and to deepen the inroads into the democratic rights of millions of

working people.

The government is due to make a series of announcements later today. Macron announced yesterday that more than 4,000 military soldiers from the “Sentinel” operation were being deployed across the country.

Christian Estrosi, the right-wing mayor of Nice, told *France Inter* that “Islamofascism has once again struck.” He called for a violent crackdown, declaring that “it is time that we put away our arms of peace and pass to arms of war.”

Right-wing deputy Eric Ciotti reported that he had requested that the government immediately cease all migration into France, including an illegal ban on all requests for asylum. Marine Le Pen, the leader of the neo-fascistic National Rally, tweeted that the attack “imposes upon our leaders a global response aimed at eradicating Islamism from our soil.”

In his speech yesterday, Emmanuel Macron declared that “if we have been attacked, once again, it is because of the values that are ours, our taste of freedom, for this possibility in our land to believe freely and to cede nothing to the spirit of terror.” This fraud is aimed at covering up the political responsibility of the French ruling class for terrorist attacks.

France, a historic colonial power over much of Africa and the Middle East, has participated in two decades of unending wars across the region, from Afghanistan to Syria, Libya and the Sahel. Paris launched neo-colonial operations aimed at asserting French interests over the region’s natural resources and geostrategic position. Millions have been killed, creating the greatest refugee crisis since World War II as a result.

Starting in 2011, in both Libya and Syria, France backed and helped arm Islamist groups, including groups directly tied to Al Qaeda, as its proxies in the

regime-change wars to overthrow the governments of Muammar Gaddafi and Bashar al-Assad. The type of atrocity that occurred in Nice yesterday was a weekly and even daily occurrence amid the sectarian bloodshed unleashed in Syria by the French state's "democratic" allies. Members of terrorist groups travelled freely between Europe and the Middle East, under the eyes of NATO intelligence agencies.

These two decades of unending neo-colonial wars have profoundly impacted the domestic politics of France and all of Europe. The same period has seen an unrelenting campaign by the French political establishment to persecute and vilify immigrants and Muslims, including the ban on headscarves in schools in 2004, and the ban of the burqa in public places in 2010.

Macron has escalated all these policies since he came to office. He is currently pushing through a law under the banner of "anti-separatism" and "secularism" which imposes restrictions on Muslim religious educational institutions, but no equivalent restrictions on other religious schools, and gives the state the power to dissolve institutions that are declared to be in violation of the "values of the Republic." Macron declared that Islam was in a "crisis" and "radical Islam" aimed to conquer France.

Since the beginning of January alone, 71 mosques have been shut down by French police, on the basis that they are supposed potential sources of "radicalization" and "terrorism." Last week, the Pantin mosque just outside Paris was closed on the sole grounds that it had shared the Facebook videos by the parent of one of Samuel Paty's students criticizing him. The mosque removed the video immediately following the terrorist attack, which it condemned.

These actions serve not only to terrorise and stigmatise the Muslim population. The closure of houses of worship is aimed at inciting a far-right atmosphere in which all Muslims, just under 10 percent of France's population, are treated as a potential source of terrorist attacks.

Since Paty's murder on October 16, the Macron administration's anti-Muslim campaign has reached a fever pitch. It must be stated that if it had set about to incite terrorist attacks, it would not have acted any differently than its escalating anti-Muslim campaign.

Last week, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin

declared he was "shocked" when he walked into supermarkets and saw international—i.e., halal and kosher—foods in dedicated aisles, and insisted that "this is how communalism begins."

Education Minister Jean-Michel Blanquer blamed "Islamism," i.e., those who oppose the government's anti-Muslim policies, as "intellectual accomplices" of terrorism.

Macron's anti-Muslim policies have triggered anti-French demonstrations across Muslim countries, including in Bangladesh, Tunisia, Afghanistan, and Mali. Macron has been denounced this week by Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan amid an intensifying geo-political conflict between France and Turkey.

The latest diplomatic standoff followed the publication of a provocative, fascist anti-Muslim cartoon by *Charlie Hebdo*. The image depicts Erdogan in his underpants lifting up the skirt of a Muslim woman wearing a veil and exposing her body from behind. Macron cynically declared that its defence of the image is part of its defence of "freedom of expression."

Macron, who in 2018 hailed France's Nazi-collaborationist dictator Philippe Pétain as a "great soldier," is consciously working to promote the far right. The impact of this campaign is indicated by reports yesterday of an attempted fascist terrorist attack in Avignon. A 33-year-old member of the fascist "Identitaire" movement, wearing a "Defend Europe" jersey, threatened a North African storeowner with a gun and made a Nazi salute, before being shot and killed by police.



To contact the WSW and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)