Counter Extremism Project

France: Extremism and Terrorism

On December 2, 2023, a 26-year-old man armed with a knife and a hammer killed a German tourist and wounded two other people at the Quai de Grenelle near the Eiffel Tower in Paris. After the suspect attacked the German tourist and his wife, a taxi driver reportedly intervened and saved the life of the wife. The attacker fled and attacked two others, a French man and a British tourist who was struck in the eye with a hammer. Police tasered and arrested the suspect, who confessed to being angry about the war in Gaza and the fact that "so many Muslims are dying in Afghanistan and in Palestine." Police discovered a previously recorded video of the suspect pledging allegiance to ISIS. French President Emmanuel Macron labeled the attack terrorism. The suspect had previously been arrested and sentenced to four years in prison in 2016 for planning another attack. Police took others into custody, including members of the attack suspect's family. (Sources: Reuters, BBC News)

The Paris attack came with France at its highest alert level after an October 13, 2023, attack in which a 20-year-old Russian national of Chechen origin stabbed and killed teacher Dominique Bernard and wounded two others at the Lycee Gambetta high school in Arras. The two wounded victims were a security guard and another teacher. Witnesses reported hearing the attacker shout "Allahu Akbar." Police arrested the attacker, whom they identified as Mohamed Mogouchkov, a former student at the school. Mogouchkov was reportedly on a state watchlist of people known as a potential security risk. Police also detained one of the attacker's brothers, a sister, his mother, and an uncle. Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin linked the attack to events in the Middle East, since Hamas carried out a largescale attack on Israel on October 7. Darmanin also said, however, that the decision to raise France's alert level was not in response to a specific threat. On October 14, France mobilized 7,000 soldiers for increased security patrols. The Louvre Museum in Paris is closed for security reasons. (Sources: Reuters, Reuters, BBC News)

On November 27, 2023, a trial began of six teenagers in relation to the October 16, 2020, murder of teacher Samuel Paty by Abdoulakh Anzorov in the Paris suburb of Conflans-Sainte-Honorine. Five students were charged with premeditated criminal conspiracy or ambush for pointing out Paty to Anzorov or helping monitor Paty's exit from school. The sixth student was charged with making false allegations against Paty in relation to the allegations that he had asked Muslim students to leave the classroom. That student had falsely accused Paty of asking Muslim students to leave the classroom before showing caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad in class. The student's father allegedly began a social media campaign following the incident due to the belief that his daughter was suspended for disagreeing with Paty. However, she was in fact suspended due to her repeated absence from school. The student later admitted to the false accusation against Paty. Prosecutors claimed that the social media campaign had a "direct causal link" to Paty's murder. (Sources: *Washington Post*, *Guardian*, *Telegraph*, BBC News, Associated Press, *New York Times*, *Times*, Sky News, *New York Times*, Reuters)

Overview

The first major terrorist attack on French soil in recent years took place on January 7, 2015, when assailants operating on behalf of al-Qaeda's Yemeni branch stormed the offices of French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* with assault rifles, killing 12 people. In the coming days, an associate of the gunmen killed five people in the name of ISIS: one policewoman and four patrons at a kosher supermarket in Paris. (Sources: BBC News, CNN)

The *Charlie Hebdo* attacks were the deadliest on French soil for 50 years, but even they were surpassed. On November 13, 2015, eight ISIS gunmen and suicide bombers targeted a variety of locations throughout Paris and its environs—cafes, restaurants, the national stadium, and a concert hall—collectively killing 130 people and wounding 350 more in the deadliest attack on French soil since World War II. (Sources: *Washington Post*, *New York Times*)

France is the largest source of Western fighters to Iraq and Syria, with an estimated 2,000 French nationals having traveled to the conflict zone as of May 2016.

Since then, ISIS has continued to inspire French residents to terror. On July 14, 2016, a Tunisian-born resident of Nice drove a truck into a crowd celebrating Bastille Day at Nice's beachside promenade, killing 86 people and wounding more than 430 others. The attack came between two other ISIS-claimed attacks: on June 13, a convicted terrorist stabbed two police officers at their home in Magnanville, and on July 26, two ISIS assailants stormed the Saint-Etienne parish church in Normandy, killing an elderly priest. (Sources: *Guardian*, Reuters, *New York Times*, NBC News)

These attacks and other attempts—including a September 2016 attempt by female jihadists to explode gas canisters near the Notre Dame cathedral—have highlighted the major strain on France's counterterrorism infrastructure as it struggles to monitor an estimated 15,000 terrorism suspects in the country. France is the largest source of Western fighters to Iraq and Syria, with an estimated 2,000 French nationals having traveled to the conflict zone as of May 2016. The country also suffers from a major radicalization problem within its prisons, where an estimated 1,400

inmates are believed to be radicalized. (Sources: Voice of America, *Atlantic*, France24)

These attacks have also spurred France to systematically confront the threat from violent extremism. In January 2015, the government launched its Stop-Djihadisme ("Stop Jihadism") campaign, which includes online resources to help French citizens identify and report terrorist suspects, as well as educate French citizens on the scale of the danger and what to do in the event of an attack. In an effort to confront the threat from prison radicalization, the government began an experiment to quarantine major terrorist suspects from the rest of the prison population. The government announced an end to the short-lived experiment in late October 2016, after concerns emerged that the program would serve to deepen radicalization amongst extremist suspects, rather than contain it. (Sources: *Washington Post*, Al Arabiya, Voice of America, *Wall Street Journal*)

In September 2016, the government opened the first of 12 planned de-radicalization centers in a small town west of Paris. This de-radicalization program, unlike the prison experiment, works to rehabilitate individuals who may be early on the path to radicalization, though it has also seen setbacks. In January 2017, one of the program's participants was arrested after it was discovered that he had previously attempted to travel to Syria, speaking to the program's vetting and security constraints. As part of its effort to combat terrorism at home and internationally, France has meanwhile approved legislation to create a National Guard, which is expected to include up to 85,000 personnel by 2018. Meanwhile, French President Emmanuel Macron has named counterterrorism as his primary foreign policy goal. (Sources: *Le Monde*, Gouvernement.fr, Reuters)

Radicalization and Foreign Fighters

Islamist Recruitment and Radicalization in France

Jihadists have been successful in radicalizing and recruiting French nationals both online and in person. In November 2014, ISIS released a recruiting video aimed at French Muslims, calling on jihadists to execute attacks in France if they could not make it to ISIS-held territory. The group has also launched a French language magazine, *Dar al Islam*. Girls from Marseilles and elsewhere in France have left the country to join ISIS. Many were radicalized and recruited online via propaganda videos targeting teenage girls. In late 2016, France uncovered and arrested an all-female ISIS cell that had attempted a car bomb attack close to Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. According to the cell's leader, the women had originally sought to attack the Eiffel Tower. (Sources: CNN, *Jerusalem Post*, *Daily Mail*, CNN, *Daily Mail*)

In addition to online radicalization and incitement, Islamist radicalization also often transpires in prisons, where Muslims constitute a disproportionate percentage of the inmate population, and where an estimated 1,400 people are believed to be radicalized. There are a number of notorious French-born jihadists who have allegedly been radicalized in France's prisons, including:

- *Charlie Hebdo* assailant Chérif Kouachi and kosher supermarket gunman Amédy Coulibaly. The two assailants spent significant time in prison before they executed attacks in January 2015. The two are reported to have met each other in prison at some point between 2005 and 2006.
- Mehdi Nemmouche, who attacked the Jewish Museum in Brussels in May 2014. Nemmouche spent five years in a French prison for robbery and was "known to have moved in radical Islamist circles."
- 2012 Toulouse gunman Mohammed Merah. Merah had also engaged in petty crime—theft and driving offenses—that landed him in prison. It was within France's prisons that Merah began reading the Quran and, according to reports, may have been radicalized.

(Sources: Daily Mail, CNN, *Taipei Times*, *Economist*, Reuters, *Washington Post*, Al Arabiya, *New York Times*, *Guardian*, BBC News, *New York Times*)

Far-Right Radicalization in France

A driving ideology of the far right in France is the philosophy of identitarianism, which is the idea of the nationalist celebration of an ethnic identity—typically white European—and the belief that identity is under threat. In France, the identitarian movement is spearheaded by two groups, Les Identitaires and Generational Identity (GI). Les Identitaires is a far-right anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant group created in 2003 as Bloc Identitaire to defend the French identity from what it considered harmful foreign influences. The group changed its name in 2016, promising to be a "centre of agitation and training." Les Identitaires members consider themselves to be patriots and nationalists rather than anti-Muslim or racist. Nonetheless, the group opposes globalization and believes that Muslim immigrants to Europe are invaders who threaten European identity. Les Identitaires has staged numerous demonstrations in and around France's majority Muslim areas in order to protest what it considers attacks on French values. (Sources: Les Identitaires, Associated Press, Generation Identity United Kingdom and Ireland (site discontinued), *Economist*, BBC News, *Telegraph*, *Guardian*)

Les Identitaires' youth wing, Generation Identity (GI) is a pan-European youth movement that originated in France in 2012 and has since spread to at least five other regions in Europe. GI believes that white Europeans are falling victim to "the Great Replacement"—"the process by which the indigenous European population is replaced by non-European migrants." GI seeks to stop what it views as the Islamization of Europe, stop globalization, and reverse the "Great Replacement." (Sources: Generation Identity (site discontinued), France 24, Conversation, *Economist*, France 24)

The Great Replacement concept was popularized by French writer Renaud Camus in his 2012 book, *Le Grand Remplacement*—"The Great Replacement." Camus postulated that black and brown immigrants were reverse-colonizing native "white" Europeans. According to Camus, "You have one people, and in the space of a generation you have a different people." Followers of Camus's theory believe that white Europeans are facing an extinction-level threat from mass immigrations. The Great Replacement theory has inspired white nationalists around the world who share Camus's belief that the white European culture is in danger. Brenton Tarrant—who killed 51 people at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March 2019—titled his manifesto after the theory and postulated that the white European identity is directly threatened by invading migrants who seek to replace the prevalent culture with their own. (Sources: *New Yorker*, *New York Times*)

In January 2021, French authorities began investigating GI on suspicion of incitement of racial hatred. On February 11, the French Interior Ministry sent a letter to GI accusing it of "openly hateful rhetoric." On February 13, French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin announced plans to ban GI within the next two weeks. Approximately 200 people rallied in Paris on February 20 to protest the ban. The ban went into effect on March 3, 2021, after approval from France's Council of Ministers. GI's leaders intend to launch a legal fight against the dissolution. (Sources: Al Jazeera, Al Jazeera, Associated Press, *Independent*, *Guardian*)

Foreign Fighters

France is the largest producer of foreign fighters out of any EU country. According to French officials, an estimated 2,000 French nationals have joined ISIS and other Syrian jihadist groups to date. (Sources: Soufan Group, *Atlantic*)

France has long been the site of deadly terrorist attacks from returning foreign terrorist fighters. French national Mehdi Nemmouche joined up with ISIS abroad before he returned to Europe and executed his May 2014 shooting attack at the Jewish Museum in Brussels. *Charlie Hebdo* assailant Chérif Kouachi and his brother Said both allegedly traveled to Yemen to train with al-Qaeda's affiliate there, AQAP. Several suspects connected to the November 2015 Paris attacks—including Abdelhamid Abaaoud, Bilal Hadfi, and Foued Mohamed-Aggad—are also reported to have spent time in Syria with ISIS before returning to carry out attacks. (Sources: *Le Figaro*, *L'Express*, *Telegraph*, Reuters)

In 2016, France witnessed fewer extremists attempting to leave the country to join ISIS and other terrorist groups abroad. However, this trend has prompted concerns that radicalized individuals from France are increasingly electing to stay in Europe to carry out domestic attacks, as per various ISIS recommendations. Indeed, France has been the scene of several major domestic terrorist attacks and attempts that did not involve returning foreign fighters. These included the deadly July 2016 Nice attack—which left 86 people dead and more than 430 others wounded—as well as various low-sophistication murders, including attacks targeting French police and clergy. (Source: U.S. Department of State)

On September 27, 2019, France's anti-terror task force reported that over 39 French militants have fled Syria's Idlib to join ISIS affiliates or " *wilayats*" in Southeast Asia, However, over 10,000 militants are still in Idlib—ISIS's last remaining stronghold. Despite the militant group's crushing territorial defeat in Iraq and Syria to western-backed forces, the extremist group is regrouping in remote parts of Asia and Africa, seen as safe havens for its leadership. (Source: Express)

France has demonstrated considerable hesitation towards repatriating French nationals who traveled to Iraq and Syria to fight with ISIS. According to a 2019 poll conducted by Dentsu Consulting, 89 percent of 1,000 French people polled were worried about the return of terrorists to France, with 82 percent of those polled stating they approved of the decision to let Iraq judge French terrorists. Additionally, over 67 percent of those polled approved of leaving the children of terrorists in Iraq and Syria. (Source: Denstu Consulting)

Rather than repatriating French nationals, the French government had taken on a strategy of "outsourcing" the prosecution of French foreign terrorist fighters. In October 2019, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian went to Baghdad to persuade local officials to prosecute 60 French terrorists detained in Syrian camps. That same month, 12 French people were sentenced in Baghdad for belonging to ISIS, a crime that is punishable by death. Among those charged were two women who were not given the death penalty but sentenced to life imprisonment. (Sources: L'Obs, Italian Institute for International Political Studies, *New York Times*)

However, starting in 2022, France has undertaken an apparent reversal of the country's stance on the repatriation of foreign fighters. On July 5, the French government repatriated 16 women and 35 children. According to the French Foreign Ministry, the children were placed under the care of

welfare services, while the women were turned over to judicial authorities and are expected to be charged in connection with joining ISIS. All of the women are French, except for two who have French children. France continued to repatriate women held in Syrian detention camps, and on October 3, France repatriated Sakina A. and her children. Sakina—who was placed into the custody of France's special intelligence service, Direction Générale de la Sécurité Intérieure (DGSI)—is the wife of Romain Letellier, considered the first cyber-jihadist presented to a court in France. Letellier, a convert to Islam, was arrested in 2013 for serving as the administrator of the Ansar al-Haqq forum, one of the few jihadist propaganda websites accessible at the time in French. On October 19 and 20, France repatriated 15 women and their children, later indicting 10 of the women on October 24. The women were charged for crimes against humanity and genocide as well as compromising their children's safety. Authorities claim 85 women remain in Syrian detention camps. Repatriation operations continued into 2023, and on January 24, France repatriated 15 women and 32 children from al-Roj camp in northeastern Syria. The minors were handed over to childcare services and the adults were transferred to the appropriate judicial authorities. The French Ministry of Justice and anti-terrorism department issued seven arrest warrants and placed eight of the women in custody. (Sources: *New York Times*, RTL, Europe 1, *Deutsche Welle*)

Major Extremist and Terrorist Incidents

July 2016 Attack in Nice

On July 14, 2016, at approximately 10:45 p.m. local time, a 31-year-old Tunisian-born resident of Nice drove a large white truck into a crowd celebrating Bastille Day at Nice's Promenade des Anglais, killing 86 people and wounding more than 430 others. Among the dead were 10 children, as well as foreign citizens, including two Germans, two Americans, two Tunisians, and one Russian. (Sources: *Guardian*, *New York Times*)

The armed assailant, identified as Tunis-born truck driver Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel, drove two kilometers down Nice's seafront promenade using a rented, 19-ton refrigerated truck, swerving to maximize his deadly impact, according to witness reports. After exchanging gunfire with police officers outside Nice's Hyatt hotel, the suspect was neutralized in the passenger seat of the vehicle. Lahouaiej-Bouhlel was discovered to be carrying a fake automatic pistol, two fake assault rifles, and a nonfunctioning grenade, along with a mobile phone and identity documents. (Sources: *New York Times*, *Guardian*)

Lahouaiej-Bouhlel was reportedly not on any terror watch list. He was, however, known to authorities due to a history of "threats, violence, and petty theft between 2010 and 2016," according to French prosecutor François Molins. In January 2016, Lahouaiej-Bouhlel was sentenced to six months in prison for assaulting a driver. (Sources: *Guardian*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Le Figaro*)

On July 16, ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack. The ISIS-linked Amaq News Agency referred to Lahouaiej-Bouhlel as a "soldier" of the Islamic State and stated that "he executed the operation in response to calls to target citizens of coalition nations, which fight the Islamic State." In response to the attack, France's National Assembly approved an additional six-month extension of the national state of emergency, which was declared after the November 2015 Paris attacks. (Sources: *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, BBC News)

More than six years later, on September 5, 2022, seven men and one woman stood trial at a Paris court in connection to the 2016 truck rampage. The defendants reportedly helped Louhaiej-Bouhlel get weapons, rent the truck used in the attack, or scout the attack location. None of the defendants are accused of carrying out the attack. On December 13, 2022, a Paris court found the suspects guilty of aiding in the bombing. The defendants were handed sentences ranging from two to 18 years in prison. (Sources: *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, Reuters)

November 2015 Paris Attacks

On November 13, 2015, assailants carried out a series of coordinated shootings and suicide bombings throughout Paris. The attacks claimed the lives of 130 victims and wounded more than 350 others. The first attack took place near the Stade de France during a soccer match attended by then French President Francois Hollande. A man carrying a fake Syrian passport bearing the name "Ahmad al-Mohammad," detonated an explosive belt after being prevented from entering the stadium by security guards. Shortly after, two other suicide bombings took place near the stadium. Bilal Hadfi is believed to have carried out one of the attacks but the identity of the other suicide bomber remains unknown. Around the same time, assailants armed with assault rifles opened fire at restaurants in central Paris: Le Carillon, Le Petit Cambodge, La Belle Equipe, Cafe Bonne Bière, and La Casa Nostra. Chakib Akrouh and Salah Abdeslam were suspected to be among the gunmen. A man later identified on CCTV footage as Brahim Abdesalam carried out a suicide bombing at the restaurant Comptoir Voltaire. Nearby, three assailants wearing suicide vests and armed with

guns and grenades attacked the Bataclan concert hall. After a standoff with the police that lasted over two hours, two of the assailants detonated their suicide vests. The third assailant's vest was activated during a shootout with police. The three have been identified as Ismael Omar Mostefai, Foued Mohamed-Aggad, and Samy Amimour. (Sources: *New York Times*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, BBC News, USA Today, ResearchGate, BBC News, CNN)

ISIS claimed responsibility for the attacks, calling them "the first of a storm." Witnesses reported one assailant shouting "Allahu Akbar" at the Bataclan music venue. One of the attackers reportedly told captives, "It's Hollande's fault, […] he should not have intervened in Syria." Investigations into the November 2015 Paris attacks have revealed that a number of the suspects had operated with ISIS in Syria, including assailants Mostefai, Amimour, and Hadfi, as well as Belgian-born Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the suspected ringleader of the attacks. Media reports have suggested that key ISIS members Abu Suleyman al-Firansi and Oussama Atar may have also played a role in coordinating the attacks. (Sources: *New York Times*, *New York Times*, BBC News, *New York Times*, Associated Press, ProPublica)

In response to ISIS's claim of responsibility, former French President Francois Hollande scaled up airstrikes against ISIS targets in Syria. Hollande labeled the attacks "an act of war" and declared a three-month national state of emergency, the first since 2005. Following the terror attacks, France and Belgium conducted a series of raids and crackdowns on suspected jihadist cells, seizing advanced weaponry and heightening scrutiny in the Brussels suburb of Molenbeek, an alleged hotbed of radicalization and criminal behavior. (Sources: *New York Times*, Al Jazeera, *Guardian*, BBC News, *Washington Post*, *Telegraph*)

On November 18, 2015, Abdelhamid Abaaoud was killed during a police raid in Saint-Denis. Another suspect tied to the attacks—Salah Abdeslam—who had remained at large for months was captured by Belgian police during a March 2016 raid. Abdeslam was extradited to France shortly thereafter and was sentenced by a Belgian court to 20 years in prison on April 23, 2018. On September 8, 2021, French authorities began a trial of Abdeslam and 19 others accused of aiding in the attacks. When asked to identify himself under oath, Abdeslam instead recited the Islamic declaration of faith that Allah is God and Muhammad is his servant. Abdeslam told the court he gave up his day job "to become an Islamic State soldier." On September 16, Abdeslam made his first statement on his motivation behind the Bataclan attack, telling the French court that the deaths of the victims were "nothing personal," and that the killings were a response to French airstrikes in Syria and Iraq. The trial was expected to last nine months, with September being dedicated to police and forensic evidence, October to victims' testimony, and November and December dedicated to the testimony of officials. Included among those officials were former French President François Hollande and the relatives of the attackers. (Sources: *Guardian*, CNN, *New York Times*, *La Dépêche*, *La Dépêche*, Pulse, Reuters, *New York Times*, Sky News)

On June 10, 2022, French prosecutors recommended that Abdeslam serve a life sentence without possibility for parole, a sentence that has rarely been handed out by French courts. In that scenario, the possibility of a reduced sentence will only be considered once Abdeslam serves 30 years, after which a judge can determine whether to grant parole under certain circumstances. On June 29, the Paris criminal court found Abdeslam guilty of terrorism and murder charges. He was sentenced to life in prison. All but one of the other 19 accused in the case were also found guilty. (Sources: France 24, *Wall Street Journal*, Reuters, BBC News)

The coordinated set of attacks, while horrifying, do not come without precedent. For years before the November assault, France suffered through violent attacks by Islamic extremists as well as nationalist terror groups and right-wing extremist groups. In January 2015, France suffered the worst attack on its soil to date in 50 years, when gunmen attacked the offices of French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* and later killed shoppers at a kosher supermarket. (Source: *Le Figaro*)

January 2015 Charlie Hebdo and Hyper Cacher Attacks

On January 7, 2015, two gunmen—brothers Chérif Kouachi and Saïd Kouachi—stormed the offices of French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, claiming to be associated with AQAP, according to witness reports. Witnesses report that the assailants cried out "Allahu Akbar" (God is great) and announced, "We have avenged the Prophet Muhammad." The assailants forced themselves into the *Charlie Hebdo* building and killed 12 people, including editor-in-chief Stéphane Charbonnier, magazine cartoonists, other staff, and two police officers. (Sources: *Guardian*, International Business Times, CNN, BBC News, BBC News, CNN, France24, Reuters, *New York Times*)

The Kouachi brothers had a history of engaging in criminal and terrorist activities. Before the *Charlie Hebdo* attack, Chérif had been arrested multiple times on jihadist-related charges. In 2005, he was arrested while attempting to travel to Syria to fight U.S. forces in Iraq. In 2008, he was arrested, charged, and convicted for his involvement in a local jihadist network in Paris. In 2010, he was arrested and charged for plotting to help former member of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) Smain Ait Ali Belkacem escape from prison. In 2011, Chérif's brother and fellow assailant, Said Kouachi, allegedly traveled to Yemen to link up with AQAP. It was then that he reportedly met with notorious AQAP cleric Anwar al-Awlaki.

(Sources: *Guardian*, International Business Times, CNN, BBC News, BBC News, CNN, France24, Reuters, *New York Times*)

Following the *Charlie Hebdo* attack, assailants the Kouachi brothers fled the scene and traveled to Dammartin-en-Goele, where on January 9 they besieged a printing building and took two hostages. One escaped and the other was freed when French armed forces stormed the compound, killing the Kouachi brothers. (Sources: *Guardian*, International Business Times, CNN, BBC News, BBC News, CNN, France24, Reuters, *New York Times*)

The *Charlie Hebdo* shooting was followed by two related acts of violence in Paris on January 8 and 9, 2015. On January 8, a French police officer was shot. On January 9, a gunman attacked the Hyper Cacher kosher supermarket and took multiple hostages. Both acts were carried out by extremist assailant Amédy Coulibaly, who pledged allegiance to ISIS in a video that emerged after the shootings. In the video, Coulibaly admitted links to the *Charlie Hebdo* attackers and also claimed responsibility for planting a car bomb in Paris. Police linked Coulibaly to a shooting that severely wounded a jogger on January 7. (Sources: Daily Mail, *Guardian*, CNN, L'Obs, *Guardian*, *Guardian*)

Coulibaly was a convicted armed robber and drug dealer whose arrest history dated back to 2001. He was a convert to Islam and a suspected Islamist who purportedly radicalized in prison, where he converted to Islam and met *Charlie Hebdo* attacker Chérif Kouachi at some point between 2005 and 2006. Kouachi and Coulibaly shared a mentor: Islamist prisoner Djamel Beghal, a terrorist convicted of plotting to bomb the U.S. Embassy in Paris. Like Kouachi, Coulibaly was arrested in 2010 for plotting to break former GIA member Smain Ait Ali Belkacem out of prison. (Sources: Daily Mail, *Guardian*, CNN, L'Obs, *Guardian*, *Guardian*)

On January 9, French armed forces attempted a rescue mission, storming the kosher supermarket and killing Amédy Coulibaly. Coulibaly's widow, Hayat Boumedienne, is the second suspect in the kosher supermarket attack. Boumedienne reportedly fled to Syria. Five years after the attacks, French authorities sought to prosecute Boumedienne and 13 other accused accomplices of the Kouachi brothers and Coulibaly. Three of the accused—Boumedienne and Mohamed and Mehdi Belhoucine—had previously fled to Syria. Unconfirmed reports claim Boumedienne was previously killed in a bombing campaign by coalition forces to defeat ISIS in Syria. French authorities arrested 11 others accused of facilitating the attacks, from securing an apartment to hide in to procuring weapons. The defendants argued they were only tangentially involved at best and did not know details of the attacks. (Sources: Daily Mail, *Guardian*, CNN, L'Obs, *Guardian*, *Guardian*, Barrons, BBC News, Reuters, *New York Times*, International Business Times, Associated Press)

On March 31, 2020, France pushed back the trial given confinement rules due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The trial began on September 2, 2020. On December 8, 2020, France's anti-terror prosecutors called for the defendants to be given long jail terms, including a life sentence for Ali Riza Polat, the main defendant and Coulibaly's alleged second-in-command. The prosecutors also asked that Boumedienne be given a 30-year sentence, while Mohamed Belhoucine be given a life sentence and his brother, Mehdi, should serve a 20-year sentence. Prosecutors requested that the 11 other defendants should be sentenced with prison terms of 13 to 20 years. On December 16, 2020, a French court found all 14 defendants guilty of criminal conspiracy or terrorist complicity in the January 2015 attacks. Boumedienne was sentenced in absentia to 30 years in prison. Mohamed Belhoucine received a life sentence in absentia. Mehdi Belhoucine was not sentenced because of what the court claimed to be overwhelming evidence that he was dead. Polat also received a 30-year sentence for an "essential role" in the attack but intended to appeal. (Sources: Associated Press, Barrons, BBC News, Reuters, *New York Times*)

Prior to the start of the trial on September 2, *Charlie Hebdo* republished the cartoons of Prophet Muhammad that led to the January 2015 attacks. According to *Charlie Hebdo* editors, the caricatures would serve as "pieces of evidence" to readers and citizens, claiming not republishing the cartoons would be an infringement on free speech. On September 25, 2020, Zaher Hassan Mahmood, a Pakistani national, stabbed and injured two employees of a documentary production company located on Rue Nicolas Appert, the same street where *Charlie Hebdo*'s office was located during the January 7, 2015, shooting. French police quickly arrested the suspect who claimed he sought to set fire to the *Charlie Hebdo* offices for republishing the cartoons. According to people associated with the suspect, Mahmood repeatedly watched videos of the founder of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan who organized a series of demonstrations in Pakistan following the republication of the cartoons. Mahmood is charged with attempted murder in relation with a terrorist enterprise. (Sources: *Wall Street Journal*, Voice of America, CNN, *New York Times*, *New York Times*, Associated Press)

Samuel Paty Beheading

On October 16, 2020, while shouting "Allahu akbar"—"God is great" in Arabic—Abdoulakh Anzorov decapitated history teacher Samuel Paty in the Paris suburb of Conflans-Sainte-Honorine. Anzorov ran off and police confronted him shortly after. Police shot and killed Anzorov, who was armed with a kitchen knife and an air gun. Paty had recently received death threats after showing caricatures of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad in class as part of a lesson on freedom of speech. Police identified Anzorov as 18-year-old Russia-born Chechen who had received residency in Paris as

a refugee, and whose sister had previously joined ISIS. Witnesses reported afterward that Anzorov had previously been seen at the school asking students about Paty. After searching Anzorov's cellphone, police found messages planning the attack and that Anzorov had uploaded a picture of Paty to Twitter prior to the attack. Police also discovered that prior to his own death, Anzorov had posted video and images of the attack to Twitter and to Russian-speaking ISIS supporters who disseminated the materials on Telegram. Those materials included a video confession. (Sources: *Washington Post*, *Guardian*, *Telegraph*, BBC News, Associated Press, *New York Times*, *Times*, Twitter)

Paris authorities arrested at least 11 additional suspects in connection with the attack. Police also launched investigations into multiple organizations suspected of promoting Islamism. The French government ordered the dissolution of the pro-Hamas Cheikh Yassin Collective after linking its founder to the attack. The government also ordered the temporary closure of a mosque in the Paris suburb of Pantin and announced that more closures of accused Islamist groups were forthcoming. On March 9, 2021, it was revealed that a French schoolgirl, known only as Z, had lied and wrongly accused Paty of asking Muslim students to leave the classroom before showing the caricatures of Prophet Muhammad. The girl's father allegedly began a social media campaign following the incident, due to his belief that she was suspended for disagreeing with Paty. However, she was in fact suspended due to repeated absence from school. Prosecutors claimed that the social media campaign was a "direct causal link" to Paty's murder. On November 27, 2023, a trial began of six teenagers in relation to Paty's murder. Five students were charged with premeditated criminal conspiracy or ambush for pointing out Paty to Anzorov or helping monitor Paty's exit from school. The sixth student was charged with making false allegations against Paty in relation to her allegations that he had asked Muslim students to leave the classroom. (Sources: *Washington Post*, *Guardian*, *Telegraph*, BBC News, Associated Press, *New York Times*, *Times*, Twitter, RFI, EuroNews, Associated Press, Sky News, *New York Times*, Reuters)

History of Violent Islamist Groups in France

From 1994 to 1996, France was the victim of a series of attacks by the Algerian-based Armed Islamic Group (GIA). In December 1994, the GIA hijacked a French airplane in Algeria, allegedly with the intention of crashing the aircraft into the Eiffel Tower or blowing it up over Paris. Through 1995 and 1996, the GIA carried out a series of bombings in France that in total killed 16 and wounded over 300. These bombings mainly targeted France's transit infrastructure, including the Paris metro and rail system, though one car bomb was set off near a Jewish school, wounding 14. (Sources: *New York Times*, *Le Figaro*, *New York Times*)

Violent Islamist 'Lone Wolf' Operations

France has been the victim of a series of lone wolf attacks in recent years. The attacks include:

- **November 2011**: *Charlie Hebdo*'s offices are firebombed, although no one is injured.
- **March 2012**: Over the course of 11 days, French-born Mohammed Merah goes on a shooting spree in Montauban and Toulouse in southern France, killing seven and injuring five.
- **May 2013**: A convert to Islam stabs French soldier Cedric Cordiez.
- **May 2014**: French-born jihadist Mehdi Nemmouche kills four at the Jewish Museum in Brussels.
- **January 2015**: On January 7, Cherif and Said Kouachi launch a deadly assault on the offices of French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, killing 12 in the name of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). In the days following the attack, gunman Amedy Coulibaly goes on a shooting rampage, killing a policewoman before taking and killing hostages at a kosher supermarket in the name of ISIS.
- **June 2015**: On June 26 a man, believed to be suspect Yassine Salhi, drives into an American-owned gas factory in southeastern France. He throws gas canisters in the yard outside, and decapitates a man (Salhi's boss), covering the victim's head in the Muslim declaration of faith, "There is no God but God and Muhammad is his prophet." A flag emblazoned with Islamist inscriptions is found at the site of the attack.
- **August 2015**: On August 21 a man, believed to be suspect Ayoub El Khazzani, boards a Thalys train from Amsterdam to France armed with a Kalashnikov assault rifle, pistol, ammunition, and a box cutter. Two U.S. servicemen and two Europeans observe the suspect preparing to attack and intervene, preventing the suspect from inflicting what then French President Francois Hollande said could have been "a true carnage." El Kahzani was kept on an international watch list and had reportedly traveled to Syria in 2014. (Sources: *Telegraph*, *New York Times*)
- **January 2016**: On January 11, a Turkish-Kurd teenager attacks a Jewish teacher with a machete in Marseille, allegedly in the name of ISIS.
- **June 2016**: On June 13, convicted terrorist Larossi Abballa stabs two married police officers in their home in Magnanville in an attack claimed by ISIS. Abballa holds the couple's three-year-old son hostage and live streams the murder of his parents to Facebook before police storm the home and rescue the child. (Source: NBC News)
- **July 14, 2016:** Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel, a 31-year-old Tunisian-born resident of Nice, drives a large white truck into a crowd celebrating Bastille Day on the French Riviera city of Nice, killing 86 people and wounding more than 430 others. The armed assailant drives 2 kilometers into a crowd on Nice's promenade before he is neutralized by police during a standoff. ISIS claims responsibility for the attack through the Amaq News Agency on July 16. (Sources: *Guardian*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Wall Street Journal*)

- **July 26, 2016:** Two assailants—19-year-old French citizens Abdel-Malik Nabil Petitjean and Adel Kermiche—storm the Saint-Etienne parish church in Normandy, slaying an elderly priest with a blade and taking five people hostage before being shot dead by police. ISIS's Amaq News Agency claims that the teenagers pledged allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi before carrying out the attack. (Sources: Reuters, *New York Times*, NBC News, Reuters)
- **February 3, 2017:** A man wielding a machete yells "Allahu Akbar" and lunges at police and soldiers outside the Louvre in Paris. A French soldier shoots at the alleged assailant, seriously wounding him. No one is killed. (Source: Reuters, *Independent*)
- **April 20, 2017:** A gunman—named by prosecutors as French national Karim Cheurfi— opens fire on policemen at the Champs-Élysées street in Paris, killing a police officer and critically wounding two others before being shot dead. ISIS claims responsibility for the attack, saying it was carried out by one of its soldiers. (Sources: France24, CNN, TIME, *Independent*, *Telegraph*)
- **June 19, 2017:** An armed assailant rams his vehicle at a police car at the Champs-Élysées street in Paris, seriously injuring himself but leaving no other casualties. (Source: *Telegraph,* The Local)

- **August 23, 2018:** A man with mental health issues stabs his sister and mother to death in the Paris suburb of Trappes. Police shoot and kill the assailant, who was known to police for advocating terrorism. French Interior Minister Gerard Collomb describes the man as "unstable" rather than someone who could follow orders from ISIS. ISIS claims responsibility for the attack but provides no evidence. (Sources: Reuters, WHAS11, *Telegraph*)
- **August 31, 2019:** A knife attack at a subway stop near Lyon, France kills one person and wounds eight others. The motive for the attack is unknown. The suspected attacker is a 33-year-old asylum seeker. (Source: CNN)
- **October 3, 2019:** Mickaël Harpon stabs and kills four officers and wounds another at the central police headquarters in Paris. Harpon was later shot dead by police. Police sources said the assailant was "in conflict" with his superiors. (Sources: BBC News, CNN, *Telegraph*, *Wall Street Journal*)

- **February 3, 2020:** An assailant armed with a knife attacks officers inside a police barracks in Dieuze, eastern France. Police immediately shoot and wound the attacker, Matthias R. According to reports, Matthias made a phone call to the police prior to the attack to say he was in the armed forces and was preparing an attack in Dieuze in the name of ISIS. Matthias, a young soldier two months into initial training at the time of the attack, has initiated new questions about how France will guard against radicalized individuals from entering its security services. (Sources: Reuters, Reuters)

(Sources: BBC News, *Telegraph*, *Le Figaro*, *Guardian*, Daily Mail, *Telegraph*, *Guardian*, Reuters, *New York Times*, *New York Times*, BBC News, *New York Times*, *New York Times*)

Antisemitism

France has seen a surge of attacks on Jews and Jewish sites, including the January 9, 2015 hostage attack on a kosher supermarket in Paris that killed four Jews. Several victims of Islamist-inspired lone wolf operations were Jewish, including four of the seven victims from the March 2012 shooting spree in southern France. Increasingly, Jewish businesses and sites have become targets of extremist attacks. In addition to the Jewish Museum in Brussels, Jewish synagogues and businesses in France were firebombed, besieged and vandalized, particularly in the summer of 2014, when protests in support of Gaza residents and against Israel escalated into violence. Jews have been increasingly emigrating from France in light of antisemitic violence. In May of 2014, a poll revealed that 74 percent of French Jews have considered emigration. (Sources: France 24, Anti-Defamation League, *Tablet*)

On November 18, 2015, following the November 13 Paris attacks, a Jewish school teacher was reportedly stabbed by three assailants in Marseilles. According to reports, the assailants declared themselves ISIS supporters and used antisemitic phrases while attacking the teacher. On August 19, 2016, a 62-year-old Jewish man was stabbed in what appeared to be an Islamist-inspired attack. (Sources: BFMTV, *Le Monde*, *Telegraph*)

According to reports published by the interior ministry in February 2019, antisemitic incidents have jumped by 74 percent in 2018, to 541, up from 311 in 2017. The problem was starkly underlined on February 19, 2019 with the discovery of more than 90 graves in a Jewish cemetery in eastern France desecrated with swastikas and other abuse. It remains unclear who carried out the attack. Furthermore, on February 16, 2019, a group of around 30 "yellow vest" protesters were filmed harassing Alain Finkielkraut, a well-known writer and son of a Holocaust survivor, as he walked through a Paris neighborhood. Some commentators have blamed the increasingly virulent criticism of Israel coming from France's far-left, unchecked incitement by fringe Islamist preachers, and the rise of anti-Zionism which has manifested into violent altercations. (Sources: *New York Times*, Reuters)

Islamic Extremist Attacks Abroad

French nationals have been victims of Islamic-extremist attacks abroad. In 1983, Hezbollah targeted the American and French Marine Barracks, killing 58 French service members and 241 Americans. In 2002, French expatriates were the victims of the bombing of a French naval defense contractor's bus in Karachi and an attack on a Limburg supertanker off Aden. In recent years, French civilians and service members have been kidnapped and murdered in Afghanistan, Algeria, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and Yemen. (Sources: *New York Times*, France Diplomatie)

Nationalist and Separatist Extremist Incidents in France

In the past, France has faced attacks from both extreme-right groups like the Organisation de l'Armée Secrète (OAS) in the 1950s and 1960s, and extreme-left groups such as Action Directe in the 1980s. Separatists, mainly Basque or Corsican ultra-nationalists, have also carried out terrorist attacks on France. (Sources: Encyclopedia Britannica, *Le Figaro*)

- **December 2, 2023:** A 26-year-old man armed with a knife and a hammer kills a German tourist and wounds two other people at the Quai de Grenelle near the Eiffel Tower in Paris.
  After the suspect attacks the German tourist and his wife, a taxi driver reportedly intervenes and saves the life of the wife. The attacker flees and attacks two others, a French man and a British tourist who is struck in the eye with a hammer. Police taser and arrest the suspect, who confesses to being angry and about the war in Gaza and that "so many Muslims are dying in Afghanistan and in Palestine." Police discover a previously recorded video of the suspect pledging allegiance to ISIS. Macron labels the attack terrorism. Police take others into custody, including members of the attack suspect's family. The suspect had previously been arrested and sentenced to four years in prison in 2016 for planning another attack. Sources: Reuters, BBC News
- **October 13, 2023:** A 20-year-old Russian national of Chechen origin stabs and kills teacher Dominique Bernard and wounds two others at the Lycee Gambetta high school in Arras.
  Witnesses report hearing the attacker shout "Allahu Akbar." The two wounded victims are a security guard and another teacher. Police arrest the attacker, whom they identify as Mohamed Mogouchkov, a former student at the school. The attacker was reportedly on a state watchlist of people known as a potential security risk. Police also detain one of the attacker's brothers, a sister, his mother, and an uncle. Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin links the attack to events in the Middle East since Hamas carried out a largescale attack on Israel on October 7. France raises its security level to its highest level. Darmanin says the alert level is not in response to a specific threat. On October 14, France mobilizes 7,000 soldiers for increased security patrols. The Louvre Museum in Paris is closed for security reasons. Sources: Reuters, Reuters, BBC News
- **February 17, 2023:** The Paris criminal court finds three men guilty of conspiring to prepare an act of terrorism against President Emmanuel Macron.
  In November 2018, the men planned to attack the president with a knife during the World War One memorial ceremony in eastern France. The men, who are also suspected of plotting attacks against mosques and migrants, are reportedly members of Les Barjols, a far-right group. The defendants will serve sentences ranging from three to four years, with one to two years suspended each. Ten other members were charged, but eight of them are acquitted due to inadequate proof of their participation in the terror plot, and one other is handed a six-month suspended sentence. Les Barjols advocates for overthrowing the government using weapons and targeting pro-immigration politicians, but none of their plots have ever been carried out. Source: Reuters
- **January 24, 2023:** In the third repatriation operation since July 5, 2022, France repatriates 15 women and 32 children from al-Roj camp in northeastern Syria.
  The minors are handed over to childcare services and the adults are transferred to the appropriate judicial authorities. The French Ministry of Justice and anti-terrorism department issue seven arrest warrants and place eight of the women in custody. Source: Deutsche Welle
- **December 23, 2022:** An elderly man opens fire at a Kurdish cultural center and a hairdressing salon in Paris before being arrested.
  The attack kills three and injures three others. The assailant, who is reportedly a French national named William M., has previously been charged with racist violence and has also been linked to two attempted murders in 2016 and 2021. In December 2021, the assailant used a sword to violently attack migrants in tents in the Bercy area of Paris, ultimately injuring two. Source: France 24
- **October 24, 2022:** French authorities indict 10 women who were repatriated to France from an ISIS detention center in Syria.
  The women are charged for crimes against humanity and genocide as well as compromising their children's safety. The women were in a group of 15 who arrived in France from Syria between October 19 and 20. This repatriation is France's second operation of the year as 16 mothers and their children were repatriated in July. Authorities claim 85 women remain in Syrian detention camps. Source: RTL
- **October 18, 2022:** Lafarge SA, a French-owned building material manufacturer, pleads guilty to paying $10.24 million to ISIS, al-Nusra Front, and affiliates of the group from August 2013 through October 2014.
  The payments were made to keep a cement plant operating in Syria. Although no individuals have been charged in the case, a federal court in New York charged the company with one count of conspiring to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization. Lafarge was indicted by French authorities in 2018 on charges of being complicit in crimes against humanity. The company agrees to pay $777.8 million to resolve the U.S. federal criminal charge. Source: CNBC
- **October 17, 2022:** A criminal court in Lille sentences a man to three years imprisonment for apology of terrorism in recidivism.
  The man was previously released a few months earlier but had later called for jihad on a Telegram forum shortly afterwards. The man was previously sentenced to seven years imprisonment for trying to fight in Syria. Source: Ouest France
- **October 3, 2022:** France repatriates Sakina A. and her children from a detention camp in Syria.

Sakina—who was placed into the custody of France's special intelligence service, Direction Générale de la Sécurité Intérieure (DGSI)—is the wife of Romain Letellier, considered the first cyber-jihadist put on trial in France. Letellier, a convert to Islam, was arrested in 2013 for serving as the administrator of the Ansar al-Haqq forum, one of the few jihadist propaganda sites accessible at the time in French. Source: Europe 1

- **March 9, 2022:** A Paris court sentences three men to sentences between eight and 13 years imprisonment for their links to Adel Kermiche and Abdel Malik Nabil-Petitjean.
  Kermiche and Nabil-Petitjean were two ISIS-linked assailants who murdered Catholic priest Jacques Hamel during morning mass in Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray, northern France, in July 2016. Kermiche and Nabil-Petitjean forced Hamel to his knees and repeatedly stabbed him before they were killed by police as they attempted to exit the church. The three men—Jean-Philippe Steven Jean-Louis, Farid Khelil, and Yassine Sebaihia—admitted to the court that they were voluntarily associated with individuals who were preparing to commit terrorist crimes. Jean-Louis is sentenced to 13 years, Khelil receives 10 years, and Sebaihia receives eight years. Sources: RFI, BBC News

- **November 30, 2021 - December 3, 2021:** In late November, French police arrest two men on suspicion of planning a "jihadist-inspired" stabbing spree during the Christmas holidays.
  The suspects are detained by France's domestic intelligence service, the DGSI, in separation locations outside of Paris. During the arrest, Islamist literature and ISIS propaganda is found. On December 3, the two are charged with terrorism-related offenses. A judicial source states that French authorities detected "[online] exchanges between them and…that led us to believe that their plan was serious and imminent." Sources: The National, Euro News

- **November 8, 2021:** A knife wielding man stabs a police officer in Cannes, claiming to act "in the name of the prophet."
  The officer survives the attack unscathed due to his bulletproof vest. The assailant, who is an Algerian national with an Italian residency permit, suffers life-threatening injuries after he was shot at by other officers. The next day, French police arrest three people linked to the assailant. Sources: France 24, France 24

- On October 9, a French anti-terrorist judge charges four men with suspected links to former politician and far-right conspiracy theorist, Remy Daillet-Wiedemann.
  Daillet-Wiedemann allegedly plotted a series of attacks, including attacks that would target COVID-19 vaccination centers. Two of the men, including Daillet-Wiedemaan, are also accused of involvement in the kidnapping of an eight-year-old girl in April. The anti-terrorist judge ordered the arrests of as part of an ongoing investigation into the group known as "Honneur et nation" (Honor and nation) which was launched in May. On October 23, Daillet-Wiedemann is charged with terrorism for plotting right-wing attacks and the kidnapping of the young girl. Following the recovery of the girl, Dillet-Wiedemann was arrested in June in Malaysia and was deported back to and jailed in eastern France. Sources: Agence France Press, Sky News

- **May 28, 2021:** A radicalized French ex-prisoner stabs and wounds a policewoman inside her station in Chapelle-sur-Erdre, in western France. The attacker is shot and killed following a shootout with police forces. According to reports, the assailant was released from prison in March after serving an eight-year sentence for violent crimes. Additionally, he was on a security register for posing a terrorism risk due to a "strict practice of Islam." Source: France 24

- **April 28, 2021:** French antiterrorist police detain eight people in Strasbourg, eastern France, for their alleged connection to a terrorist financing network in Syria.
  Six of the suspects were Russian and one was Georgian, all affiliated with the Chechen community. The detained reportedly were not planning an attack, but are suspected of having sent funds to Iraq and Syria. Source: RFI

- **April 28, 2021:** In a joint effort between French and Italian police forces, seven Italian nationals were arrested at their homes in France.
  The suspects are convicted of left-wing domestic terrorist crimes in the 1970s and 1980s. Among those arrested were former members of the Red Brigades—a group that regularly carried out killings and kidnappings—and a far-left militant who killed a prominent police chief in 1972. Source: Associated Press

- **April 24, 2021:** A man armed with a knife fatally stabs a policewoman, reportedly named Stephanie, outside of a police station in the commuter town of Rambouillet.
  During the stabbing, the assailant—a Tunisian national who arrived in France several years ago—screamed "Allahu Akbar." The assailant was immediately shot dead by police. The attacker was previously unknown to security agencies, but had illegally lived in the country before obtaining a residency card that was set to expire later this year. Anti-terrorism prosecutors have taken over the investigation due to the attacker's remarks and the fact that he targeted a police official. Three other people, reportedly a part of the assailant's "entourage," were arrested following the attack. Sources: BBC News, Reuters, France 24

- **April 5, 2021:** French police arrest four women and a girl in Benziers on suspicion of plotting a terror attack in the city of Montpellier.
  The General Directorate for Internal Security (DGSI) and the national anti-terrorist prosecutor's office are handling the case. The 18-year-old girl allegedly "boasted" to neighbors about watching ISIS videos. Source: CBS News

- **March 8, 2021:** Italian police arrest a 35-year-old Algerian citizen in Bari on suspicion of "directly supporting" the 2015 Paris terror attacks.
  The suspect is allegedly a member of ISIS and reportedly supplied falsified documents to the assailants of the coordinated attacks in Paris on November 13, 2015 which killed 130 people. According to Italian authorities, the suspect—who was also reported by British and French authorities in Schengen and Interpol for activities related to terrorism—is set to serve a two-year sentence for possessing and manufacturing false documents. Upon searching his phone, Italian authorities discovered unreported evidence of his "direct support activity to the perpetrators of the Paris terrorist attacks." Source: Euronews

- **October 29, 2020:** Armed with a knife and shouting "Allahu akbar," Tunisian immigrant Ibrahim Issaoui stabs and kills three people at Notre Dame Basilica in Nice.
  Issaoui beheads one victim and slits the throat of another. Police shoot and wound Issaoui and take him into custody. Nice officials label the attack an act of terrorism, making it France's third terror attack since September. According to Tunisian prosecutors, a previously unknown

group called Al Mehdi of Southern Tunisia claims responsibility for orchestrating the attack. French police detain five additional suspects for questioning. On the same day, police in Avignon shoot and kill an armed man waving a gun and reportedly wearing a "Defend Europe" jacket from the far-right group Generation Identity. A man reportedly stabs and wounds a guard at the French consulate in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, before he is taken into custody. Police did not immediately comment on whether the Jeddah attack was related to or inspired by ISIS's new video calling for attacks against France. The attacks occur on the day coinciding with the birthday of Islam's Prophet Muhammad on the Islamic calendar. France raises its national alert to its highest level after the Nice attack. Sources: Associated Press, Associated Press, BBC News, *Wall Street Journal*, Associated Press, Reuters, *Independent*, Twitter, Twitter

- **October 16, 2020:** Shouting "Allahu akbar"—"God is great" in Arabic— Abdoulakh Anzorov decapitates history teacher Samuel Paty in the Paris suburb of Conflans-Sainte-Honorine.
  Anzorov runs off and police confront him shortly after. Police shoot and kill Anzorov, who is armed with a kitchen knife and an air gun. Paty had recently received death threats after showing caricatures of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad in class as part of a lesson on freedom of speech. Police identify Anzorov as 18-year-old Russia-born Chechen who had received residency in Paris as a refugee, and whose sister had previously joined ISIS. Witnesses report afterward that Anzorov had previously been seen at the school asking students about Paty. After searching Anzorov's cellphone, police find messages planning the attack and that Anzorov had uploaded a picture of Paty to Twitter prior to the attack. Police also discover that prior to his own death, Anzorov had posted video and images of the attack to Twitter and to Russian-speaking ISIS supporters who disseminated the materials on Telegram. Those materials included a video confession. Paris authorities arrest at least 11 additional suspects in connection to the attack. On November 27, 2023, a trial begins of six teenagers in relation to Paty's murder. One teenager faces false accusation charges. Five others are charged with premeditated criminal conspiracy or ambush for pointing out Paty to Anzorov or helping monitor Paty's exit from school. Sources: *Washington Post*, *Guardian*, *Telegraph*, BBC News, Associated Press, *New York Times*, *Times*, Twitter, RFI, EuroNews, Associated Press, Sky News, Reuters
- **September 25, 2020:** Armed with a meat cleaver, Pakistani national Zaher Hassan Mahmood stabs and injures two employees of a documentary production company located on Rue Nicolas Appert, the same street where *Charlie Hebdo*'s office was located during the January 7, 2015, shooting.
  French police quickly arrest the suspect who claims he sought to set fire to the *Charlie Hebdo* offices for republishing a series of cartoons featuring the Prophet Muhammad. Mahmood is charged with attempted murder in relation with a terrorist enterprise. In December 2020, French authorities detain and charge four Pakistani men suspected of being aware of the plot and encouraging Mahmood. Sources: *Wall Street Journal*, Voice of America, CNN, *New York Times*, Associated Press, Agence France-Presse
- **August 9, 2020:** Jihadist militants on motorcycles ambush a tour group at the Koure Giraffe Reserve in Niger.
  The attack kills six French aid workers as well as their Nigerien tour guide and driver. The foreign victims worked for the French non-governmental organization Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED). A month later, ISIS claims responsibility for the attack and credits its West Africa Province (ISWAP) affiliate. According to French President Emmanuel Macron, however, ISIS in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) leader Adnan al-Sahrawi personally ordered the attack. Sources: *Wall Street Journal*, France 24, Reuters
- **July 4, 2020:** A Paris court sentences French-born Tyler Vilus, who is accused of formerly being a senior figure in ISIS, to 30 years in prison. The case is France's first successful prosecution related to extremist crimes carried out in Syria. Vilus was found guilty of "aggravated murder," being part of a terror organization, and leading a group of ISIS soldiers. Vilus was a member of ISIS from 2013 until 2015 when he was arrested in Turkey. Source: Deutsche Welle
- **June 23, 2020 - December 13, 2022:** In June, France's counterterrorism prosecutors make a formal request for nine suspects to face trial in connection to the 2016 Bastille Day attack in Nice.
  The attack killed 86 people. The suspects are charged with terrorist conspiracy for links to the attacker, Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel.More than six years later, on September 5, the seven men and one woman stand trial at a Paris court in connection to the 2016 rampage. The defendants reportedly helped Louhaiej-Bouhlel get weapons, rent the truck used in the attack, or scout the attack location. On December 13, 2022, a Paris court finds the suspects guilty of aiding in the bombing. The defendants were handed sentences ranging from two to 18 years in prison. Sources: Times of Israel, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, Reuters
- **April 27, 2020:** A 29-year-old Frenchman drives his car into a group of police cars and motorcycles in the Paris suburb of Colombes, injuring three officers.
  The suspect is arrested at the scene. While searching the suspect's car, police find a knife and a letter pledging loyalty to ISIS. Police identify the attacker as Youssef T. He reportedly tells police he was inspired by watching videos about Palestine and the Gaza Strip. Sources: Associated Press, Reuters, *Jerusalem Post*
- **April 4, 2020:** An assailant armed with a knife attacks passersby in Romans-sur-Isere, southeastern France.
  The attacker kills two and wounds five others before being apprehended by police. Following a search of the suspect's home, security forces discover documents where the suspect complained of living in a country of disbelievers. The suspect, a Sudanese national, is taken into custody on charges of assassination and attempted assassination in connection with a terrorist enterprise, and criminal terrorist association. Sources: ABC News, BBC News
- **February 3, 2020:** An assailant armed with a knife attacks officers inside a police barracks in Dieuze, eastern France.
  Police immediately shoot and wound the attacker, Matthias R. According to reports, Matthias made a phone call to the police prior to the attack to say he was in the armed forces and was preparing an attack in Dieuze in the name of ISIS. Matthias, a young soldier two months into initial training at the time of the attack, has initiated new questions about how France will guard against radicalized individuals from entering its security services. Sources: Reuters, Reuters
- **January 21, 2020:** France's domestic intelligence agency in Brest arrest seven men believed to be planning a terror attack in France.

The suspects were also allegedly preparing to travel to conflict zones in Iraq and Syria. Some of the men were already linked to Islamic extremists and were on France's "Fiche S" list of potential security risks. Source: Japan Times

- **January 3, 2020:** A man armed with a knife stabs multiple people in the Des Hautes-Bruvètes park in the Paris suburb of Villejuif, killing one and wounding two others.
  Police shoot and kill the assailant, fearing that he is wearing an explosive vest. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Sources: France 24, ABC News, Reuters

- **October 3, 2019:** Mickaël Harpon stabs and kills four officers and wounds another at the central police headquarters in Paris.
  Harpon was later shot dead by police. Police sources said the assailant was "in conflict" with his superiors. Sources: BBC News, CNN, *Telegraph*, *Wall Street Journal*

- **September 23, 2019:** Five women go on trial at a special Paris court for attempting to blow up a car near Notre-Dame Cathedral in 2016 in what prosecutors say was a failed jihadist attack.
  If convicted, the women face between 30 years and life in prison. According to court documents, the women were active on Telegram and sent Oumar Diaw, a notorious Normandy-based jihadist, videos of them pledging their allegiance to ISIS. Source: France 24

- **August 31, 2019:** A knife attack at a subway stop near Lyon, France kills one person and wounds eight others.
  The motive for the attack is unknown. The suspected attacker is a 33-year-old asylum seeker. Source: CNN

- **July 7, 2019:** The Paris Criminal Court sentences Janna C., a radicalized young woman, to seven years in prison for planning a terrorist attack on French soil in 2016.
  Her accomplice, Djelika S., was also found guilty of planning to travel to Syria to join ISIS. She had searched on the Internet for the technique to making TATP, a highly unstable improvised explosive that is prized by jihadists. Source: France 24

- **July 5, 2019:** French police arrest a 16-year-old teenager in the eastern city of Strasbourg as part of an investigation into a suspected plot to attack security forces and possibly the presidential Élysée Palace.
  The teenager, of Chechen origin, is the fifth person to be arrested in relation to the investigation. The attack was allegedly planned to coincide with the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Officials said the suspects had scouted out areas near the Élysée and a police station in the Parisian suburb of Aulnay-sous-Bois. Source: RFI English

- **June 2, 2019:** An Iraqi court sentences two French men to death after finding them guilty of being members of ISIS.
  President Emmanuel Macron's government has said France respects Iraqi sovereignty, but opposes the death penalty. Along with the two sentences, over nine French citizens are facing the death penalty. Source: Reuters

- **May 24, 2019 - May 27, 2019:** On May 24, a suspected explosive device detonates in front of a bakery in Lyon.
  The explosion injures 13 people. On May 27, French police arrest four suspects. The suspected bomber, a 24-year-old Algerian IT student, was among those arrested. He was the target of an extensive manhunt after an explosive device filled with screws and ball bearings was placed in front of a bakery on a busy pedestrian street. ISIS has been behind many of the attacks, but no one has claimed responsibility for the Lyon blast. Sources: *Guardian*, Reuters, *New York Times*

- **March 20, 2019:** Business partners of French sugar giant Tereos file a complaint against the firm for allegedly supplying an artificial sweetener to Syria, where it is being used to make weapons.
  Tereos, is accused of "acts of terrorism and complicity in acts of terrorism." The plaintiffs allege that Tereos had vowed to halt deliveries to conflict zones after an EU-mandated NGO found dozens of the company's bags containing sorbitol in a warehouse manned by ISIS. Sorbitol, when mixed with potassium nitrate, can be used to make rocket propellants. Source: France 24

- **January 9, 2019:** Belgian authorities arrest Mohammad E., another suspect in connection with the Paris terror attacks of November 2015, charging him with participating in the activities of a terrorist group.
  The suspect is believed to have been involved in the supply of automatic rifles used in the attacks that killed 130 people and wounded hundreds of others. Mohammed E. was linked to Mohammed Bakkali, the alleged logistics coordinator for the Paris attacks. Source: France 24

- **December 11, 2018:** A gunman opens fire at a Christmas market in Strasbourg, France, killing four individuals and wounding 12 others.
  After a shootout with French security forces, the assailant flees the scene via a commandeered taxi with a gunshot wound to the arm. Two days later, on December 13, the perpetrator is located by police and shot dead in the Neudorf district of Strasbourg. French media sources identify the attacker as a 29-year-old ex-convict named Cherif Chekkatt. ISIS claims responsibility for the attack. Sources: BBC News, BBC News, *Washington Post*, *New York Times*

- **August 23, 2018:** A man with mental health issues stabs his sister and mother to death in the Paris suburb of Trappes.
  Police shoot and kill the assailant, who was known to police for advocating terrorism. French Interior Minister Gerard Collomb describes the man as "unstable" rather than someone who could follow orders from ISIS. ISIS claims responsibility for the attack but provides no evidence. Sources: Reuters, WHAS11, *Telegraph*

- **March 23, 2018:** A gunman hijacks a car in the southern town of Carcassonne, killing a passenger and wounding the driver.
  The gunman then shoots and wounds a nearby police officer. The gunman, identified as 26-year-old Redouane Lakdim, then drives to the nearby town of Trebes and enters a Super U supermarket, reportedly shouting that he is a "soldier of Daesh." Lakdim kills two people and takes several others hostage. He reportedly demands the release of Salah Abdeslam, the surviving suspect in ISIS's November 2015 Paris attacks who is on trial in Belgium. After Lakdim exchanges a hostage for a police officer, police storm the supermarket and shoot Lakdim dead, rescuing the remaining hostages. Four are killed in the attack, including the officer who exchanged himself for a hostage, and three others are wounded. Police later find three homemade explosive devices in the supermarket. ISIS quickly claims the attack through its Amaq news agency. During a search of Lakdim's home, police find notes referencing ISIS. Sources: CNN, CNN, *Time*, Reuters, *Washington Post*, BBC News

- **October 1, 2017:** An assailant stabs to death two women at a railway station in Marseille, in a suspected terrorist attack.
  ISIS claims responsibility. Source: Reuters

- **August 9, 2017:** An assailant rams a car into a group of soldiers in Levallois-Perret, a Paris suburb, injuring six. Following a manhunt, authorities arrest the suspect. Levallois-Perret is home to France's domestic intelligence agency. Sources *New York Times*, Reuters
- **June 19, 2017:** An armed assailant rams his vehicle at a police car at the Champs-Élysées street in Paris, seriously injuring himself but leaving no other casualties.
  Source: *Telegraph*
- **April 20, 2017:** A gunman—named by prosecutors as French national Karim Cheurfi— opens fire on policemen at the Champs-Élysées street in Paris, killing a police officer and critically wounding two others before being shot dead.
  ISIS claims responsibility for the attack, saying it was carried out by one of its soldiers. The attack comes days after French authorities arrest two men in Marseille who had pledged allegiance to ISIS and were allegedly planning an "imminent terrorist attack" during France's April 23 presidential elections. Sources: France24, CNN, TIME, *Independent*, *Telegraph*
- **March 18, 2017:** A 39-year-old man who had been on a police watch-list violently attempts to seize a weapon from a female soldier at Paris's Orly airport before he is shot dead by nearby security forces.
  Hours earlier, the perpetrator had been involved in a shooting at a checkpoint in Garges-les-Gonesse, north of Paris, where he fired at police with a steel pellet gun before fleeing in a car that was later found deserted. Authorities believe that the assailant then stole another car at gunpoint in Vitry, south of Paris, and drove that vehicle to the Orly airport. The man had previously been known to police for armed robbery and drug trafficking. Sources: BBC News, CNN
- **February 3, 2017:** A man wielding a machete yells "Allahu Akbar" and lunges at police and soldiers outside the Louvre in Paris.
  A French soldier shoots at the alleged assailant, seriously wounding him. No one is killed. Sources: Reuters, *Independent*
- **July 26, 2016:** Two assailants—19-year-old French citizens Abdel-Malik Nabil Petitjean and Adel Kermiche—storm the Saint-Etienne parish church in Normandy, slaying an elderly priest with a blade and taking five people hostage before being shot dead by police.
  ISIS's Amaq News Agency claims that the teenagers pledged allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi before carrying out the attack. Sources: Reuters, *New York Times*, NBC News, Reuters
- **July 14, 2016:** Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel, a 31-year-old Tunisian-born resident of Nice, drives a large white truck into a crowd celebrating Bastille Day on the French Riviera city of Nice, killing 86 people and wounding more than 430 others.
  The armed assailant drives 2 kilometers into a crowd on Nice's promenade before he is neutralized by police during a standoff. ISIS claims responsibility for the attack through the Amaq News Agency on July 16. Sources: *Guardian*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Wall Street Journal*
- **June 13, 2016:** Convicted terrorist Larossi Abballa stabs two married police officers in their home in Magnanville in an attack claimed by ISIS. Abballa holds the couple's three-year-old son hostage and live streams the murder of his parents to Facebook before police storm the home and rescue the child. Source: NBC News
- **January 7, 2016:** Moroccan assailant Tarek Belkacem attempts to attack a police station, armed with a knife and a fake explosive vest. Belkacem—who carried a handwritten note pledging allegiance to ISIS—was shot and killed by police before he was able to carry out any attack. Source: U.S. Department of State
- **November 13, 2015:** ISIS terrorists simultaneously attack public sites in Paris, killing 130 and wounding more than 350 in the worst attack on France's soil since World War II.
  ISIS claims responsibility, calling the attacks the "first of the storm." Source: *New York Times*
- **August 21, 2015:** Ayoub El Kahzani boards a Thalys train from Amsterdam to France armed with a Kalashnikov assault rifle, pistol, ammunition, and a box cutter.
  Two U.S. servicemen and two Europeans observed the suspect preparing to attack and intervened, preventing the suspect from inflicting what French President Francois Hollande said could have been "a true carnage." El Kahzani was kept on an international watch list and had reportedly traveled to Syria in 2014. Sources: *Telegraph*, *New York Times*
- **April 19, 2015:** Algerian extremist Sid Ahmed Glam attempts to gun down a church in the suburbs of Paris.
  Source: U.S. Department of State
- **June 26, 2015:** Yassine Salhi, drives into an American-owned gas factory in southeastern France.
  He throws gas canisters in the yard outside, and decapitates a man (Salhi's boss), covering the victim's head in the Muslim declaration of faith, "There is no God but God and Muhammad is his prophet." A flag emblazoned with Islamist inscriptions is found at the site of the attack. Sources: *Telegraph*, *Guardian*, Reuters, *New York Times*
- **January 7, 2015 - January 9, 2015:** Brothers Cherif and Said Kouachi launch a deadly assault on the offices of French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, killing 12 in the name of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).
  The *Charlie Hebdo* attack is the deadliest on French soil in over 50 years. In the days following the attack, from January 8 to January 9, gunman Amedy Coulibaly goes on a shooting rampage, killing a policewoman before taking and killing hostages at a kosher supermarket in the name of ISIS. Sources: *Guardian*, *Daily Mail*
- **May 24, 2014:** French-born jihadist Mehdi Nemmouche kills four at a Jewish Museum in Brussels.
  Source: *Guardian*
- **May 25, 2013:** Muslim convert and Islamist Alexandre Dhaussy stabs a French soldier in a suburb of Paris.
  Source: Reuters
- Gunman Mohammed Merah goes on shooting spree in southern France, killing seven.
  Source: BBC News
- **November 2, 2011:** *Charlie Hebdo* offices are firebombed.
  Source: *New York Times*

- **- :** Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) kidnaps a number of French citizens.
  Sources: Christian Science Monitor, *National*, Al Arabiya, France24
- A bomb explodes next to a French tanker in Yemen, killing one crew member.
  Source: NBC News
- A bomb explodes in Karachi, killing 11 French navy experts.
  Source: NBC News
- **December 3, 1996:** A bomb explodes at Port Royal station in Paris, killing two and wounding seven.
  Source: *New York Times*
- On October 6, a bomb explodes at a metro station in Paris, injuring 12.
  On October 17, a bomb explodes in a train in Paris, injuring 29. Sources: *New York Times*, *New York Times*
- On September 3, a bomb explodes in an open-air market in Paris, injuring four.
  On September 4, police find an unexploded bomb in a public toilet in Charles Vallin square in Paris. On September 7, a car bomb explodes near a Jewish school in Lyons, wounding 14. Sources: *New York Times*, *New York Times*, *New York Times*
- On August 17, GIA bombs Paris's Arc de Triomphe, wounding 17.
  On August 26, police find an unexploded bomb on a railway track near Lyons. Sources: Reuters, *Independent*, Reuters
- On July 11, The GIA assassinates Muslim cleric Abdelbaki Sahraoui at a mosque in northern Paris.
  On July 25, a bomb claimed by the GIA explodes at the Saint-Michel metro station in Paris, killing eight and injuring around 150. Sources: *Independent*, Associated Press
- **December 24, 1994:** The GIA hijacks Air France Flight 8969 and kills three hostages before France's GIGN storm the aircraft in Marseilles, freeing the remaining passengers.
  Source: BBC News
- Hezbollah bombs French Marine Barracks in Beirut, killing 58 French service members.
  Source: *New York Times*
- Gunmen open fire and throw grenades at a restaurant in the Jewish quarter of Paris, killing six and wounding 22.
  Source: Reuters
- **June 18, 1961:** The OAS bombs a train, killing 28.
  Source: *Le Figaro*

Domestic Counter-Extremism

France has become the largest source of foreign fighters to Iraq and Syria out of any EU country, with 2,000 French nationals having traveled to join Syrian jihadist groups as of May 2016. The government estimates that another 9,000 radicalized individuals are currently living in France. (Sources: *Atlantic*, Soufan Group)

In response to the French extremist threat, and following the January 2015 and November 2015 ISIS attacks, France has reworked and bolstered its overarching counterterrorism and counter-extremism effort, making sweeping changes to a number of its outlets and programs.

Legislative Efforts

France tries a broad range of crimes as terrorism-related offenses, in a network of non-jury courts. Since 1986, France has escalated its counterterrorism efforts through legal means, enacting more than a dozen bills to improve its counterterrorism infrastructure. In November 2014, French parliament passed the French 'Patriot Act,' which authorizes a travel ban on suspected terrorists, criminalizing attempts to leave France to commit "terrorist activities, war crimes or crimes against humanity" abroad, and authorizing the government to block websites that "glorify terrorism." (Source: Gouvernement Francais, Stop-Djihadisme)

Since the January 2015 attacks, elements of the French Patriot Act have been enforced. France suspended the passports of six would-be jihadists on February 23, 2015. The first case of a government-censored jihadist site was also reported on March 16, 2015. In March 2015, five websites were censored by the French government. Since then, France has continued to censor websites that "apologize for terrorism." The country's Ministry of Interior has used social media to both advertise its online counter-jihad efforts, and appeal to the public for help in reporting suspicious websites. (Source: Gouvernement Francais, Stop-Djihadisme)

Following the November 2015 attacks in Paris, then French President Francois Hollande called for new and speedy legislation that would allow the police to conduct raids without a warrant and place people under house arrest. Hollande also called for amendments to the French Constitution that would allow the state to take exceptional security measures when needed. Additionally, he appealed to French courts for broader surveillance

powers and the right to strip citizenship from convicted French terrorists with dual citizenship. President Hollande also sought—and received—approval to extend France's state of emergency for three months, which was again extended in December 2016, and on several occasions since. In extending the state of emergency, the French Senate also voted to amend France's 1955 "state of emergency" law in order to:

- Be able to extend the house arrest regime to any person suspected of constituting a threat to security and public order;
- Use electronic bracelets for in cases of house arrest wherein the person arrested has been previously convicted for acts of terrorism;
- Dismantle groups that have involved, facilitated or incited acts that constitute a serious breach of public order; and
- Enable France's interior ministry to employ "all measures" to block websites that glorify or incite terrorism.

The amendments also included additional safeguards to civil liberties, including:

- Removal of a section of the law that allowed for governmental control of the press and radio during a national state of emergency; and
- Heightening penalties for breaching the law on search and house arrests.

On May 26, 2016, France's Senate approved a law granting the country's police and judicial branches more authority to counter terrorism, including extending police officers' authority to hold terrorist suspects without access to a lawyer to four hours, and authorizing police officers to place suspected returning foreign fighters in house arrest for up to one month. French police are also now allowed to carry a gun, even when off-duty. In airports, police can also search suspicious passengers and their bags at will. (Sources: *New York Times*, *Independent*)

The law also grants additional surveillance capabilities to police, prosecutors, and prison authorities. According to the law, police and prosecutors are now authorized to employ electronic eavesdropping technology that had previously only been accessible to France's intelligence communities. Prison authorities are also authorized to employ additional surveillance measures, including tapping prisoners' cellphones, employing hidden cameras, and examining their electronic communications. (Sources: *Le Monde*, VICE News, *Daily Mail*, *Le Monde*, *New York Times*, Gouvernement.fr, *New York Times*, U.S. Department of State)

In October 2017, the French Parliament voted to advance a new counterterrorism bill that would transfer certain emergency security measures that are only permitted under a state of emergency into permanent law. These measures include allowing police to conduct house raids without a warrant and to set up checkpoints at will. The law also calls for the creation of a new anti-terrorism task force partially modeled after the U.S. Joint Terrorism Task Force. The new task force is expected to coordinate domestic and foreign intelligence agencies. The new anti-terrorism law went into effect on November 1, 2017. France simultaneously lifted the two-year state of emergency that had been in place since the November 2015 Paris attacks. (Sources: *New York Times*, Al Jazeera, Politico, NPR)

On July 15, 2021, the French government created the Interministerial Committee to replace the Observatore de la Laicité—an office that was criticized for not cracking down hard enough on Islamism. The Interministerial Committee was established in an effort to better control how state secularism is taught and disseminated. The new committee will place a *laicité* specialist in each public administration to guide public employees on what they are allowed and not allowed to do, how to behave with the public, and how to identify risks to secularism and aggressions in the name of religion. (Source: RFI)

Stop-Djihadisme

France launched its "Stop-Djihadisme" (Stop Jihadism) campaign in late January 2015, in an effort to counter the threat of Islamic extremism throughout French society. As the campaign's government-run website boasts, France has instituted counter-jihadism measures to its education and prison systems, allocate additional resources to its counterterrorism agencies, and enforce the country's November 2014 anti-terror law. France has also announced plans to invest $45 million into creating de-radicalization programs throughout the country. (Sources: Stop-Djihadisme, Voice of America)

France's Stop-Djihadisme campaign aims to give French citizens the tools to spot and prevent radicalization. The government-run website promoting this campaign holds a number of resources and info-graphics geared to help citizens spot and prevent jihadism. In light of the program, the government has begun to institute changes to the following sectors of French society:

- **Education**: France's Ministry of Education has presented 11 measures to prevent radicalization and promote secular, republican values within France's school system.
- **Prison**: The French government has announced numerous measures to address the jihadist networks and radicalization crisis within its prison system. Most notably, the government engaged in a short-lived experiment to segregate suspected extremist inmates from the rest of the prison population.

- **Legislation and law enforcement**: France has begun to enforce its November 2014 anti-terror law. As authorized by the new law, France has started to rescind the passports of suspected jihadists, and censor websites that promote jihadist ideology. The country has promised to allocate more resources and jobs to its counter-intelligence apparatus in order to better monitor the jihadist threat. Immediately following the January 2015 attacks, France made dozens of arrests against suspected jihadists. On March 17, 2015, France's interior minister announced that the government has cut welfare benefits to 290 French citizens who have left the country to join jihadist groups in Iraq and Syria. (Source: Gouvernement.fr)

Counterterrorism Infrastructure and Law Enforcement

The French counterterrorism unit "Groupe d'Intervention de la Gendarmie Nationale" (GIGN), formed in 1973, conducts counter-terrorist operations and hostage rescue operations both in France and abroad. France has managed to thwart a number of attempted terrorist attacks on its soil, including plots to target the Eiffel Tower. In response to the *Charlie Hebdo* and hostage attacks, GIGN forces led a counterattack. On January 9, 2015, France's armed forces killed the suspected assailants in both attacks and reportedly freed their respective hostages. Following the January 2015 attacks, France has announced its plans to direct additional resources to France's counter-intelligence infrastructure. France also mobilized troops and deployed upwards of 10,000 security personnel to protect 830 "sensitive sites," including synagogues, airports, railway stations and major tourist attractions. Nearly half of the security officers were sent to protect Jewish schools. (Sources: GIGN, Daily Telegraph, *Le Figaro*, Stop-Djihadisme, *Le Figaro*, *Washington Post*)

France has carried out a number of raids since the attacks in 2015 that have allowed the government to thwart existing terror networks, pursue suspects, and preempt further attacks. Paris's police and counterterrorism forces have arrested more than 400 terror suspects—and claim to have foiled 17 terrorist plots—in 2016 alone. In November 2016, the government claimed that it prevented a major ISIS-directed attack when police conducted a series of raids in Marseille and Strasbourg. The government also claims to have thwarted attacks on Euro Disney, the Champs-Elysées, and the Notre Dame Cathedral, among other targets. (Sources: *Independent*, International Business Times, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, France24)

Pharos is the French police service that monitors extremist content online. The service receives public reports of pedophilia, incitement to racial hatred, terrorism, and fraud, and then delegates reports to police for follow-up. Since its creation in 2009, Pharos has received more than one million reports. As of October 2020, however, Pharos had a staff of only 30 people reviewing an average of 4,400 reports received per week. This led to increased scrutiny after the October 16, 2020, beheading of Samuel Paty in a Paris suburb by Abdoulakh Anzorov. According to media reports, Anzorov's tweets had been flagged for Pharos as early as July 2020. An October 10 tweet by Anzorov was also submitted to Pharos for review but there was no follow-up because Anzorov did not appear on France's terrorism watch list. (Sources: *Telegraph*, France Ministry of the Interior, *Financial Times*, Pledge Times)

Recruitment and Radicalization

Following the January 2015 attacks, the country's Ministry of Education has adopted a series of measures to counter radicalization and promote secular values in France's schools. In September 2016, the government also opened the first of 12 scheduled de-radicalization centers throughout the country. The launch is part of a $45.5 million-dollar plan announced by former Prime Minister Manuel Valls in May 2016 to address the danger posed by France's radicalized population. According to Valls, these centers would house—and seek to rehabilitate—individuals who "have repented and who we will test the sincerity and willingness to be reintegrated back into society for the long term." The centers are also scheduled to house and rehabilitate individuals whom a French judge deems to be at-risk of radicalization, and are run by the country's Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Prevention of Delinquency and Radicalization. (Sources: Congressional Research Service, Stop-Djihadisme, education.gouv.fr, Associated Press, *Atlantic*)

In addition to countering extremism in France's school system, France is increasingly working to counter Islamic extremism in its prisons. Muslims make up a disproportionate percentage of the prison population in France. In 2008, an estimated 60-70 percent of the prison population in France were Muslim, though Muslims were estimated to comprise only 12 percent of the population. A report from October 2014 found that 60 percent of France's prison population comes from "Muslim origin or culture." By 2016, nearly 1,400 inmates were believed to be radicalized, more than 300 of whom were incarcerated on terrorism charges. (Sources: *Washington Post*, Al Arabiya, Voice of America)

After the January 2015 attacks, France began to reorganize its prison system in order to isolate extremist inmates from the rest of the inmate population. The program—based on a 2014 experiment conducted in France's Fresnes prison—involved grouping together radicalized inmates in units that were isolated from the other inmates. France announced that it would end the program after concerns emerged that the effort was helping

to deepen radicalization networks within prisons. (Sources: *Washington Post*, Al Arabiya, *Wall Street Journal*, Gouvernement)

Despite efforts, prison radicalization remains a major concern in France. In 2016, homemade weapons were discovered in the cell of an inmate who was suspected to have been radicalized. In France's Fleury-Merogis prison, 10 Islamists were removed from the prison system out of fear of an uprising. In September 2016, two guards were stabbed by an inmate who then drew a heart on the wall using one of the victim's blood before beginning to pray. (Sources: Reuters, Voice of America)

Radicalization has also been suspected to take place in a number of France's mosques. In 2013, France's Interior Minister announced the deportation of a handful of radical imams who allegedly incited their congregations to violence against France. To combat online terrorist recruitment, France's 'Patriot Act' bill authorizes its government to monitor and block forums and websites that "glorify terrorism." (Sources: France24, VICE News)

On February 18, 2020, Macron launched a campaign against Islamist "separatism" and political Islam in France. The French president announced measures that would tighten controls on foreign financing of mosques; end the nomination of imams to France from countries such as Algeria, Morocco, and Turkey; and cease providing permission for foreign governments to provide language courses in Arabic and Turkish. According to Macron, the imams are allegedly linked to Salafism or the Muslim Brotherhood, and they "preach against the republic" as well as neglect to "learn the language and the laws of the republic." On October 2, Macron outlined a new law for government review to combat "Islamist separatism." According to Macron, the law would allow the government to monitor the foreign funding sent to French mosques, ban home schooling for young children to prevent the creation of Islamic schools, and create a certification program for French imams. The French government unveiled draft legislation on December 9 to combat radical Islamism. The legislation seeks to curb online hate speech, punish doctors who provide "virginity certificates," and require community associations to sign declarations of allegiance to the "values of the republic," while also imposing new funding restrictions on those associations. (Sources: *Financial Times*, *Washington Post*, *Washington Post*, *New York Times*)

In the aftermath of the October 16, 2020, beheading of Samuel Paty, French police launched investigations into multiple organizations suspected of promoting Islamism. The French government ordered the dissolution of the pro-Hamas Cheikh Yassin Collective after linking its founder to the attack. The government also ordered the temporary closure of a mosque in the Paris suburb of Pantin and announced more closures of accused Islamist groups were forthcoming. Anti-Macron and anti-France protests broke out around the Middle East following accusations that Macron was spreading anti-Muslim sentiments. (Sources: RFI, EuroNews, Associated Press, Al Jazeera)

France has also pressured the European Union to toughen legislation on social-media companies. In December 2020, the European Union is expected to reveal the Digital Services Act to increase specific content moderation rules for digital platforms. After the October 2020 attack, France also called on the European Union to consider more stringent rules for social media companies to monitor extremism on their platforms. The French government pointed to an online hate campaign against Paty prior to his murder and called for the EU regulations to include disinformation and other harmful content, rather than just specifically illegal content. Critics argue that legislating the removal of harmful content in place of just illegal content would damage freedom of speech. (Sources: *Politico*, EURACTIV)

On April 29, 2021, the EU Parliament approved the Regulation on the dissemination of terrorist content online. The new regulation will target content such as texts, images, sound recordings, and videos that include live transmissions that incite, solicit, or contribute to terrorist offenses. According to the new regulations, social media platforms and hosting service providers in all member states will have up to one hour to remove or disable access to flagged terrorist content. Penalties will consider the nature of the content and the size of the company involved. (Source: European Parliament)

Foreign Fighters

France's 'Patriot Act' institutes a travel ban to prevent aspiring terrorists from leaving the country to fight abroad. The Act also sanctions the government to monitor and block jihadist websites, which is expected to combat the ability of recruiters to facilitate the travel of French nationals to Iraq and Syria.

In March 2015, France's interior minister announced that the government cut welfare benefits for 290 French citizens who had left the country to fight with jihadist groups in Iraq and Syria.

(Sources: VICE News, France24)

List of Notable Designated Entities

The GIA, AQAP, and ISIS are included under France's list of designated terrorist groups. (Source: La Direction Générale du Trésor)

Extremist and Terrorist Financing

Although France claims it does not pay ransom, hostages have credited the French government for funding their release. In July 2014, the New York Times reported that French nationals made up a third of 53 hostages taken by al-Qaeda over the past five years. In the fall of 2013, $40 million was allegedly paid to free four French nationals held by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). From 2010-2011, $17.7 million was allegedly paid to free three hostages held by AQIM, one of which was a French national. In 2011, $10 million was allegedly paid to free three French nationals held by AQAP, though the source of the payment was not determined. According to the Times, France typically delivers ransom money through intermediaries like state-controlled French company Areva, a nuclear giant. The company has denied funneling ransom fees on behalf of the French government. (Source: *New York Times*)

AQAP is funded primarily through robberies and hostage operations. On French TV, *Charlie Hebdo* attacker Chérif Kouachi claimed that his operations were financed by AQAP radical cleric Anwar al-Awlaki. (Sources: U.S. Department of State, Newsweek)

In addition to extremist groups based abroad, France is grappling with the growth of radical Islamist charities and organizations on its soil. The government's strong ties to Qatar, which stands accused of financing radical Islamist organizations abroad, has led to growing criticism by the French right.

According to CEP surveys and polling data from 2014, 30 percent of respondents in France believed the government is not spending enough to combat extremism. (Source: Counter Extremism Project)

In the aftermath of the January 2015 Paris attacks, the French government has pledged more money and resources to combating terrorism. (Source: Stop-Djihadisme)

Tech and Terrorism

Following the deadly Christchurch shootings in March 2019, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and French President Emmanuel Macron hosted tech CEOs at a summit of world leaders in May 2019 to agree on ways of preventing terrorists from using their platforms. Macron, who hosted Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and other top execs at a "Tech for Good" summit in Paris last year, has been pushing the fight against hate speech online. The meeting in Paris invited world leaders and tech executives to sign a pledge called the Christchurch Call, which aims to "end the use of social media for acts of terrorism." On May 14, 2021, the second anniversary summit of the Christchurch Call to Action, Ardern and Macron hosted an online meeting of world leaders and technology company executives. The United States also joined in the meeting, which included discussions of better ways to stop extremist violence from spreading online while also respecting freedom of expression. Among the topics discussed, Ardern stated that part of the solution requires equipping younger generations of Internet users to better deal with and prevent the response to radical content and disinformation online. (Sources: CNN, *New York Times*, Voice of America, Associated Press)

On July 9, 2019, France's National Assembly adopted a bill designed to curtail online hate speech, giving social media platforms 24 hours to remove hateful content or risk fines of up to 4 percent of their global revenue. The bill encourages users to report any online statements they deem racist, sexist or homophobic, or that might incite terrorist violence or harassment. Social media platforms must then review flagged content and remove objectively offensive items within a day. (Source: *Washington Post*)

On April 25, 2021, France's interior minister, Gerald Darmanin announced that France will introduce new anti-terrorism legislation that would expand the use of intelligence algorithms and technological surveillance to detect terror threats online. The new bill, *loi relatif à la prévention d'actes de terrorisme et au renseignement* (law on the prevention of terrorist acts and intelligence) was tabled on April 28 and was announced in the wake of recent lone-wolf attacks—such as the attack against Samuel Paty in October 2020 and the stabbing of a policewoman in Rambouillet on April 24, 2021—carried out by radicalized individuals who were previously unknown to intelligence services. Once adopted, the law will permanently enforce anti-terror measures taken in the wake of the 2015 Paris terror attacks. Specifically, the proposed permanent measures will increase the duration of administrative follow-ups from one year to two years for those released from prison on terror charges, improving access to socio-psychiatric resources for potentially dangerous individuals, allowing authorities to close places of worship for a maximum of six months if they are considered to endorse terrorism, and allowing police to get a warrant from a judge to enter the homes of people suspected of posing a terror threat. On June 3, the French National Assembly voted in favor of the new bill and will incorporate the emergency regulations as full parts of

common law. On June 29, the Senate began reviewing and amending the bill, however, the Senate has yet to approve the bill. (Sources: Anadolu Agency, The National, The Local, RFI, Senat, Legifrance)

Government Restrictions

France's security code forbids "combat or private militia groups" and groups that "provoke discrimination, hate or (racial) violence." French law allows the Council of Ministers to ban organizations by decree if they incite discrimination, hatred, or violence against a person or a group of people because of ethnicity, nationality, or religion, or if they justify or encourage such discrimination, hatred, or violence. As such, the French government has taken steps to ban multiple Islamist and white nationalist groups. (Sources: Al Jazeera, Associated Press, *Independent*)

After the October 16, 2020, murder of Samuel Paty in the Paris suburb of Conflans-Sainte-Honorine, authorities launched investigations into several French groups suspected of promoting Islamism. Prosecutors found no direct link between radical French Islamist movements and the attacker, but they pointed to a hateful atmosphere on social media and identified an indirect link between these groups and the crime. On October 19, 2020, French Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin called for the dissolution of French Islamist groups BarakaCity and the Collectif Contre l'Islamophobie en France (CCFIF), calling both organizations enemies of the state. Darmanin accused BarakaCity and its founder, Idriss Sihamedi, of "disseminating...hateful, discriminatory and violent ideas" over social media. On October 28, the French government dissolved BarakaCity and dissolved CCIF that December. Human Rights Watch, as well as representatives of both groups, pledged to fight the dissolution in court, calling the ban a threat to human rights. On October 21, 2020, the French government ordered the dissolution of the pro-Hamas Cheikh Yassin Collective after linking its founder to the attack on Paty. The government also ordered the temporary closure of a mosque in the Paris suburb of Pantin and announced more closures of accused Islamist groups were forthcoming. (Sources: EuroNews, RFI, RFI, Twitter, Middle East Eye, Anadolu Agency, Human Rights Watch, Al Jazeera, Al Jazeera, Associated Press)

Given the extremist attacks in late 2020, the French National Assembly approved an "anti-separatism" bill on July 24, 2021, that contains measures on the neutrality of the civil service, the fight against online hatred, and the protection of civil servants. Introduced as a way to fight against those who seek to undermine secularism in France, the new law—which is officially known as the law comforting the principles of the republic—has measures that include having associations sign a republican commitment contract to qualify for state subsidies, and sentences of up to three years for those who willfully endanger the life of others through spreading information about a person's private life. The conservative party has opposed the bill calling it dull and unambitious, while left-wing parties claim the law infringes civil liberties and targets Muslims. (Sources: RFI, RFI)

Within the far-right sphere, the French government has notably taken multiple steps against Generation Identity (GI). GI has staged numerous public protests, beginning with occupying the site of a future mosque in Poitiers, France, in October 2012. Several of the perpetrators were sentenced to a year in prison in December 2017 on charges of incitement to discrimination and property destruction related to this incident. In March 2016, police arrested 14 GI members after they lit tires on fire during a protest near refugee camps in Calais, France. The GI protesters claimed that they were defending Europe from a "migrant invasion." In December 2020, French authorities convicted three GI members of incitement to terrorism, incitement to religious hatred, and assault after they were filmed discussing their wishes to attack Arabs and then assaulting a 13-year-old Muslim girl. On February 13, 2021, the government announced plans to ban GI for promoting "openly hateful rhetoric," which "contributes to heightening tensions within the national community" and "provokes violent attacks." The move came two years after French President Emmanuel Macron announced that France would move to ban the neo-Nazi skinhead group Combat 18. The ban against GI took effect on March 3, 2021. (Sources: Al Jazeera, France 24, Southern Poverty Law Center, *Independent*, BBC News, Associated Press, *Independent*, *Guardian*)

International Counter-Extremism

France was the first country to join the international coalition to fight ISIS. On January 13, 2015, the French Parliament voted almost unanimously (488 to 1) to continue anti-ISIS airstrikes in Iraq. Since the January 2015 attacks, France has also deployed its sole aircraft to use in the fight against ISIS, and raised the number of its deployed military personnel to more than 3,500. In the aftermath of ISIS's November 13 attacks, France expanded its airstrikes to Syria, targeting ISIS's so-called capital in Raqqa. According to the U.S. State Department, France participates "fully" in counterterrorism operations, and has provided training to security forces in Iraq. (Sources: Associated Press, Daily Mail, *Wall Street Journal*, U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of State)
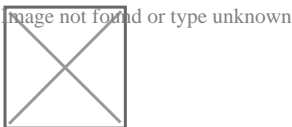
In addition to participating in foreign military engagements intended to counter terrorism abroad, France has also been instrumental in spearheading EU-wide initiatives designed to reduce the threat of transnational terrorist activity. Among these initiatives, France has successfully advocated for

legislation requiring the use of Passenger Name Record (PNR) information for travelers among EU countries, and for legislation requiring stricter arms trafficking controls. (Source: U.S. Department of State)

Foreign Military Engagements

As of April 2020, France had dispatched around 7,400 military personnel for operations throughout the world. Of these, 5,100 military personnel were sent to the Sahel region in Africa for Opération Barkhane, a counterterrorism effort headquartered in Chad and launched in July 2014. Opération Barkhane was temporarily suspended on June 3, 2021. On June 10, French President Emmanuel Macron announced France would reduce its troops within the next few months. The following month, Macron announced France would end Opération Barkhane by early 2022 and instead focus on bolstering the international Takuba Task Force in Western Africa. However, on July 6, 2021, France resumed joint military operations and national advisory missions with Mali given increasing jihadist attacks in the country. As of February 2022, 2,500 French soldiers remain in Mali. On February 17, 2022, France and its allies in the Takuba Task Force, announced that they will shift their anti-terrorism campaign in the Sahel towards Niger and the Gulf of Guinea. Around 150 military personnel are engaged in counterterrorism efforts in the Central African Republic. France has also dispatched 250 military personnel to the Gulf of Guinea, while 1,000 French military personnel are engaged in Iraq and 700 are engaged in Lebanon. When coalition forces evacuated Afghanistan, 150 French military personnel were among them. Less than 200 military personnel have been deployed to the Indian Ocean. (Sources: Le Ministère de la Défense, U.S. Department of State, France 24, France 24, Reuters, Euronews, Voice of America, *Financial Times*)

(Source: Le Ministère de la Défense)

French Forces in Africa

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has executed attacks in Algeria, Libya, Mali, and Niger. French forces responded to Islamist extremists in Mali with Opération Serval, starting airstrikes in January 2013. The operation lasted until July 2014, when it was replaced with a broader effort in North Africa called Opération Barkhane. The force is made up of about 3,000 French troops working alongside soldiers from Mali, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, and Chad. The mission's main objective is counterterrorism, according to France's defense minister. Opération Barkhane, based in the Chadian capital N'Djamena, has the authority to cross borders as it targets Islamic extremism in Mali, Chad, and Niger. Barkhane will also create regional military bases in north Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. Accompanying the French soldiers are six fighter jets, 20 helicopters, and three drones. Following the November 2015 attack in Bamakao, then French President Francois Hollande pledged to provide additional "necessary support" to Mali.

French intervention in the Central African Republic (CAR) has taken the form of peacekeeping operations under the auspices of the United Nations. In March 2013, the rebel Seleka coalition overthrew the CAR government and in the following months carried out "grave human rights abuses against civilians, including pillage, summary executions, rape, and torture." The predominantly Muslim group then faced reprisals from "anti-balaka" Christian militias. In response, the French-led Operation Sangaris was launched in December 2013, under U.N. Security Council Resolution 2127. By December 2014, France began to withdraw troops as the U.N. peacekeeping force reached its peak strength but retains a rapid reaction force in its former colony. However, France has since recommitted to the fighting jihadism in Africa. Between 2015 and 2019, French troops killed 600 jihadists, according to the French foreign ministry. (Sources: BBC News, National Interest, Reuters, Reuters, Human Rights Watch, Associated Press, *Wall Street Journal*)

In January 2020, French President Emmanuel Macron hosted a meeting with the leaders of Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mauritania, and Chad to address increased jihadist activity in Africa's Sahel region. The leaders pledged to increase their military campaigns against jihadists. On February 2, 2020, Paris announced that France would deploy an additional 600 troops to the border zone between Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, to counter jihadi violence. At the time, France already had 4,500 troops deployed across the Sahel region. France has a significant troop presence in Mali via Operation Barkhane to target ISIS and al-Qaeda affiliated fighters. The French Armed Forces have launched counterterrorism missions particularly in Mopti where during two operations conducted on February 9 and 17, they "neutralized" over 50 insurgents associated with Katiba Macina—a group associated with Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM), which is a jihadist group that has pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda. On June 4,

2020, French troops in Mali killed al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb leader Abdelmalek Droukdel near the border with Algeria. As of January 2021, France had more than 5,000 troops in Africa. At least 47 French troops have been killed in anti-terrorism operations in Africa since 2013. Some critics of France's involvement in Africa have labeled the engagement in the Sahel region as France's forever war. (Sources: France 24, Deutsche Welle, Defense Post, Agence France-Presse, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*)

On June 3, 2021, France announced that it would temporarily suspend Opération Barkhane. On June 10, Macron announced France would begin drawing down the military operation and conclude it by early 2022. According to the French president, the mission will be replaced by a more international effort that would focus on supporting and cooperating with armies in the region that seek assistance. Central to the new effort will be the Takuba Task Force—the France-led European military task force that advises, assists, and accompanies Malian Armed forces in the Sahel. On July 6, France resumed joint military operations and national advisory missions with Mali given the increasing number of jihadist attacks in the country. On July 9, Macron announced that over the long term, France will reduce its force from 5,000 troops to somewhere between 2,500 and 3,000 troops in the region. By early 2022, the French military will shut down bases in Timbuktu, Tessalit, and Kidal in Mali and will instead focus on border areas where Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso meet. On July 14, Macron announced France would conclude Opération Barkhane by the end of the first quarter of 2022. (Sources: CNN, Reuters, France 24, Reuters, Euronews, Associated Press, France 24)

The Takuba ("sabre" in Tuareg) Task Force originated in March 2020 when the governments of France, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Mali, Niger, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, and the United Kingdom agreed to support Malian forces in conjunction with U.N. and other foreign mission forces in the region. The task force deployed in the summer of 2020 to combat armed groups in Western Africa, particularly in Mali and Niger. The task force also deployed to the Liptako region between Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali. Takuba was initially placed under the command of Opération Barkhane. With Barkhane concluding its mission by early 2022, France will shift its resources to supporting Takuba and form the "backbone" of the task force, according to Macron. (Sources: Government of Sweden, Al Jazeera, Associated Press, France 24)

On September 15, 2021, Macron tweeted French forces had killed Adnan al-Sahrawi, leader of Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and a "major enemy" of France. Macron provided no further details of the operation. According to French Defense Minister Florence Parly, French forces, operating under the country's Opération Barkhane anti-terrorism force in Africa, used a drone to kill Sahrawi on his motorbike on the border between Mali and Niger that August. Parly called it an "opportunistic hit," meaning the drone observed two armed individuals on the motorbike and eliminated them. (Sources: Associated Press, France 24, BBC News)

Given deteriorating relations with Mali's military leaders, on February 17, 2022, France and its allies in the Takuba Task Force announced that they will shift their anti-terrorism campaign in the Sahel towards Niger and the Gulf of Guinea after being pushed out of Mali by an uncooperative military junta. As of February 2022, 2,500 French soldiers remain in Mali. Macron also announced that French bases in Gossi, Menaka, and Gao would close but stated the withdrawal would be carried out in an "orderly" manner. On August 15, 2022, the last contingent of French troops left Mali, completing France's military withdrawal from the country. (Sources: *Financial Times*, France 24, Defense Post)

Despite withdrawing from Mali, on October 18, 2022, Mali's Foreign Affair Minister Abdoulaye Diop, announced that Bamako's military government would exercise its right to self-defense if France allegedly continued to violate Mali's airspace and deliver arms to Islamist militants. Mali first accused France of supporting Islamist militants on August 18, three days after the last French unit left Mali. According to Diop, there were 50 "flagrant violations of Malian airspace…used by France to collect intelligence" and to drop ammunitions to terror groups. France has denied the allegations, and despite Mali's accusations, reports released by the United Nations have accused Malian soldiers and Russian mercenaries collaborating with the military government of committing human rights abuses against civilians with jihadists. (Sources: Reuters, Voice of America)

In a move similar to Mali, on January 21, 2023, Burkina Faso's junta government ordered hundreds of French troops to depart the country within a month. The decision, which suspended a 2018 military accord with Paris, was reportedly made on January 18, 2021, to end French military deployment in the West African country. Around 400 French special forces were stationed in Burkina Faso, with tensions coming to a head the previous week when protestors took to the streets of Ouagadougou to demand the removal of the French ambassador and the closure of the French military base in the north of the country. The French army officially ended their operations on February 19, 2023. (Sources: Associated Press, Reuters, France 24)

French Forces in Afghanistan

France has been involved in the war in Afghanistan since 2001. It has participated in operations both through NATO and as part of coalition forces led by the United States. France has participated in Opération Pamir alongside the International Security Assistance Force, Opération Héraclès for

the naval and air components, Opération Epidote to train of the Afghan Army, and Opération Arès from August 2003 to January 2007 for special operations within Operation Enduring Freedom. After an Afghan soldier killed four French troops in 2012, then-President of France Nicolas Sarkozy threatened to suspend French operations. His successor, François Hollande, withdrew 2,000 of the 3,400 French troops in Afghanistan in June 2012. France reported 150 military personnel in Afghanistan before complete withdrawal. France completed its withdrawal of combat troops from Afghanistan in December 2012. In November 2020, France urged the United States not to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan or Iraq. (Sources: *New York Times*, Reuters, Le Ministère de la Défense, TOLOnews, Agence France-Presse)

French Forces against ISIS

On September 19, 2014, France became the first country to join the U.S. in airstrikes against ISIS. The country has deployed thousands of military personnel for Opération Chammal, and reaffirmed its commitment to fight ISIS following the January 2015 attacks. In the aftermath of the deadly attacks on November 13, 2015, France has conducted a set of airstrikes against ISIS targets in the terrorist group's stronghold of Raqqa, Syria. (Sources: *Guardian*, Le Ministère de la Défense)

Public Opinion