COUNTER EXTREMISM PROJECT

France: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

On January 3, 2019, a man armed with a knife stabbed multiple people in the Des Hautes-Bruvètes park in the Paris suburb of Villejuif, killing one and wounding two others. Police shot and killed the assailant, fearing that he was wearing an explosive vest. There were no immediate claims of responsibility. (Sources: France 24 [1], ABC News [2], Reuters [3])

France has experienced a series of deadly terrorist attacks in recent years, including the May 2019 explosion near a bakery in Lyon, the December 2018 shooting at a Christmas market in Strasbourg, the March 2018 attack in Carcassonne, the July 2016 Bastille Day attack in Nice, the November 2015 ISIS attacks in Paris, and the January 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* and kosher supermarket attacks. Since 2015, more than 240 people have been killed in France by people claiming allegiance to or inspiration from ISIS, spurring France to adopt a variety of preemptive and reactive counterterrorism measures. Among France's efforts, the government established and repeatedly extended a national state of emergency, bolstered its counterterrorism legislation, conducted a series of arrests, approved the creation of a National Guard, and begun to launch de-radicalization centers around the country.

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 [4]'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 [5]: one policewoman and four patrons at a kosher supermarket in Paris. (Sources: BBC News [6], CNN [7])

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* [8], *New York Times* [9])

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* [10], Reuters [11], *New York Times* [12], NBC News [13])

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 [14], *Atlantic* [15], France24 [16])

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* [17], Al Arabiya [18], Voice of America [14], *Wall Street Journal* [19])

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* [20], Gouvernement.fr [21], Reuters [22])

Radicalization and Foreign Fighters

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 [23], *Jerusalem Post [24]*, *Daily Mail [25]*, CNN [26], *Daily Mail [27]*)

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 [28], CNN [23], *Taipei Times* [29], *Economist* [30], Reuters [31], *Washington Post* [17], Al Arabiya [18], *New York Times* [32], *Guardian* [33], BBC News [34], *New York Times* [35])

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 [36], *Atlantic* [15])

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* [37], *L'Express* [38], *Telegraph* [39], Reuters [40])

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 [41])

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 [42])

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* [10], *New York Times* [43])

The armed assailant, identified as Tunis-born truck driver Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel [44], 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* [45], *Guardian* [10])

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* [10], *Wall Street Journal* [46])

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* [47], *New York Times* [48], BBC News [49])

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 [50] 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* [51], Encyclopaedia Britannica [52], *New York Times* [53], *Wall Street Journal* [54], BBC News [55], USA Today [56], ResearchGate [57], BBC News [58], CNN [59])

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 [60], the suspected ringleader of the attacks. Media reports have suggested that key ISIS members Abu Suleyman al-Firansi [61] and Oussama Atar [62] may have also played a role in coordinating the attacks. (Sources:

New York Times *[63]*, New York Times *[64]*, BBC News [65], New York Times *[66]*, Associated Press [67], ProPublica [68])

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 *[69]*, Al Jazeera [70], Guardian *[71]*, BBC News [72], Washington Post *[73]*, Telegraph *[74]*)

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. He is currently in a high-security prison in Paris awaiting a separate trial in France expected to take place in 2019. (Sources: Guardian *[75]*, CNN [76], New York Times *[77]*, La Dépêche *[78]*, La Dépêche *[79]*, Pulse [80])

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 *[81]*)

Charlie Hebdo Attack

On January 7, 2015, two gunmen—brothers Chérif Kouachi and Said 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 twelve people, including the magazine's editor-in-chief, Stéphane Charbonnier, magazine cartoonists, other staff, and two police officers. (Sources: Guardian [33], International Business Times [82], CNN [7], BBC News [83], BBC News [84], CNN [85], France24 [86], Reuters [40], New York Times [87])

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 [33], International Business Times [82], CNN [7], BBC News [83], BBC News [84], CNN [85], France24 [86], Reuters [40], New York Times [87])

Following the *Charlie Hebdo* attack, assailants Chérif and Said Kouachi 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 [33], International Business Times [82], CNN [7], BBC News [83], BBC News [84], CNN [85], France24 [86], Reuters [40], New York Times [87])

Kosher Supermarket Hostage Attack

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 a 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 a planting a car bomb in Paris. Police have linked Coulibaly to a shooting that severely wounded a jogger on January 7. (Sources: Daily Mail [88], Guardian [33], CNN [89], L'Obs [90], Guardian [33], Guardian [91])

Coulibaly was a convicted armed robber and drug dealer whose arrest history dates back to 2001. He was a convert to

Islam and a suspected Islamist who is believed to have been 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 share 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 [88], *Guardian* [33], CNN [89], L'Obs [90], *Guardian* [33], *Guardian* [91])

On January 9, French armed forces attempted a rescue mission, storming the kosher supermarket and killing Amédy Coulibaly. Coulibaly's live-in partner, Hayat Boumedienne, is the second suspect in the kosher supermarket attack. Boumedienne has reportedly fled to Syria. (Sources: Daily Mail [88], *Guardian* [33], CNN [89], L'Obs [90], *Guardian* [33], *Guardian* [91])

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* [92], *Le Figaro* [81], *New York Times* [93])

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* [94], *New York Times* [95])
- **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 [13])
- **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* [10], *Wall Street Journal* [46], *Wall Street Journal* [47])
- **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 [11], *New York Times* [12], NBC News [96], Reuters [97])
- **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 [98], *Independent* [99])

- **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 [100], CNN [101], TIME [102], *Independent* [103], *Telegraph* [104])
- **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* [105], The Local [106])

- **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 [107], WHAS11 [108], *Telegraph* [109])
- **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 [110])
- **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 [111], CNN [112], *Telegraph* [113], *Wall Street Journal* [114])

(Sources: BBC News [34], *Telegraph* [115], *Le Figaro* [81], *Guardian* [33], Daily Mail [88], *Telegraph* [116], *Guardian* [117], Reuters [118], *New York Times* [119], *New York Times* [95], BBC News [120], *New York Times* [121], *New York Times* [122])

Anti-Semitism

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 anti-Semitic violence. In May of 2014, a poll revealed that 74 percent of French Jews have considered emigration. (Sources: France 24 [123], Anti-Defamation League [124], *Tablet* [125])

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 anti-Semitic 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 [126], *Le Monde* [127], *Telegraph* [128])

According to reports published by the interior ministry in February 2019, anti-Semitic 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* [129], Reuters [130])

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* [131], France Diplomatie [132])

France: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

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 [133], *Le Figaro* [81])

- **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 [1], ABC News [2], Reuters [3]
- **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 [111], CNN [112], *Telegraph* [113], *Wall Street Journal* [114]
- **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 [134]
- **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 [110]
- **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 [135]
- **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 [136]
- **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 [137]
- **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* [138], Reuters [139], *New York Times* [140]
- **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 [141]
- **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 [142]
- **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 [143], BBC News [144], *Washington Post* [145], *New York Times* [146]
- **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](#) [107], [WHAS11](#) [108], *[Telegraph](#)* [109]

- **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](#) [147], [CNN](#) [148], *[Time](#)* *[149]*, [Reuters](#) [150], *[Washington Post](#)* [151], [BBC News](#) [152]

- **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](#) [153]

- **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](#)* [154], [Reuters](#) [155]

- **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](#)* [105]

- **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](#) [100], [CNN](#) [101], [TIME](#) [102], *[Independent](#)* [103], *[Telegraph](#)* [104]

- **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](#) [156], [CNN](#) [157]

- **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](#) [98]

- **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](#) [11], *[New York Times](#)* [12], [NBC News](#) [96], [Reuters](#) [97]

- **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](#)* [10], *[Wall Street Journal](#)* [46], *[Wall Street Journal](#)* [47]

- **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](#) [13]

- **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](#) [41]

- **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](#)* [158]

- **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* [94], *New York Times* [95]

- **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 [159]
- **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* [116], *Guardian* [117], Reuters [118], *New York Times* [119]
- **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* [33], *Daily Mail* [88]
- **May 24, 2014:** French-born jihadist Mehdi Nemmouche kills four at a Jewish Museum in Brussels.
  Source: *Guardian* [160]
- **May 25, 2013:** Muslim convert and Islamist Alexandre Dhaussy stabs a French soldier in a suburb of Paris.
  Source: Reuters [161]
- **March 2012:** Gunman Mohammed Merah goes on shooting spree in southern France, killing seven.
  Source: BBC News [34]
- **November 2, 2011:** *Charlie Hebdo* offices are firebombed.
  Source: *New York Times* [162]
- **2009 - 2011:** Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) kidnaps a number of French citizens.
  Sources: Christian Science Monitor [163], *National* [164], Al Arabiya [165], France24 [166]
- **October 2002:** A bomb explodes next to a French tanker in Yemen, killing one crew member.
  Source: NBC News [167]
- **May 2002:** A bomb explodes in Karachi, killing 11 French navy experts.
  Source: NBC News [167]
- **December 3, 1996:** A bomb explodes at Port Royal station in Paris, killing two and wounding seven.
  Source: *New York Times* [168]
- **October 1995:** 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* [169], *New York Times* [170]
- **September 1995:** 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* [171], *New York Times* [171], *New York Times* [172]
- **August 1995:** 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 [173], *Independent* [174], Reuters [173]
- **July 1995:** 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* [174], Associated Press [175]
- **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 [176]
- **1983:** Hezbollah bombs French Marine Barracks in Beirut, killing 58 French service members.
  Source: *New York Times* [131]
- **August 1982:** Gunmen open fire and throw grenades at a restaurant in the Jewish quarter of Paris, killing six and wounding 22.
  Source: Reuters [173]
- **June 18, 1961:** The OAS bombs a train, killing 28.
  Source: *Le Figaro* [81]

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* [15], Soufan Group [36])

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 [177], Stop-Djihadisme [178])

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 [177], Stop-Djihadisme [178])

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* [179], *Independent* [180])

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* [181], *VICE News* [182], *Daily Mail* [183], *Le Monde* [184], *New York Times* [185], Gouvernement.fr [186], *New York Times* [179], U.S. Department of State [159])

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* *[187],* Al Jazeera [188], Politico [189], NPR [190])

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 [191], Voice of America [192])

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 [193])

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 [194], Daily Telegraph [195], *Le Figaro* [81], Stop-Djihadisme [196], *Le Figaro* [197], *Washington Post* [198])

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* [199], International Business Times [200], *New York Times* [201], *Washington Post* [202], France24 [203])

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 [204], Stop-Djihadisme [196], education.gouv.fr [193], Associated Press [205], *Atlantic* [15])

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* *[17]*, Al Arabiya [18], Voice of America [14])

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* [17], Al Arabiya [18], *Wall Street Journal* *[19]*, Gouvernement [206])

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 [207], Voice of America [14])

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 [38], VICE News [182])

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 [182], France24 [208])

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 [209])

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* *[210]*)

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 [211], Newsweek [212])

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 [213])

In the aftermath of the January 2015 Paris attacks, the French government has pledged more money and resources to combating terrorism. (Source: Stop-Djihadisme [196])

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 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. (Sources: CNN [214], *New York Times* *[215]*, *Washington Post* *[216],* Voice of America [217])

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 [218], Daily Mail [183], *Wall Street Journal* [219], U.S. Department of State [159], U.S. Department of State [41])

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 [41])

Foreign Military Engagements

As of March 2016, France had dispatched over 5,000 military personnel for operations throughout the world. Of these, 3,500 military personnel were sent to the Sahel region in Africa for Opération Barkhane, a counterterrorism effort headquartered in Chad and launched in July 2014. Around 900 military personnel are engaged in counterterrorism efforts

in the Central African Republic. France has also dispatched 350 military personnel to the Gulf of Guinea, while 1,000 French military personnel are engaged in Iraq and 900 are engaged in Lebanon. When coalition forces evacuated Afghanistan, 150 French military personnel were among them. Less than 500 military personnel have been deployed to the Indian Ocean. (Sources: Le Ministère de la Défense [220], U.S. Department of State [159])
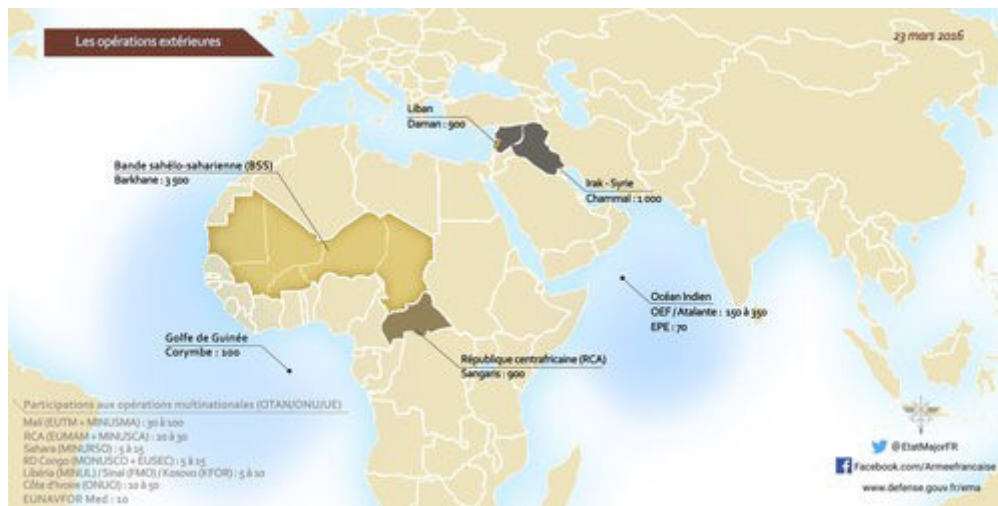
(Source: Le Ministère de la Défense [220])

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 [221], starting airstrikes [222] in January 2013. The operation lasted until July 2014, when it was replaced with a broader effort in North Africa called Opération Barkhane [223]. 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.

Recent 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. (Sources: BBC News [224], National Interest [225], Reuters [226], Reuters [227], Human Rights Watch [228], Associated Press [229])

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 [230] alongside the International Security Assistance Force, Opération Héraclès [231] for the naval and air components, Opération Epidote [232] to train of the Afghan Army, and Opération Arès [233] 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. (Sources: *New York Times* *[234]*, Reuters [235], Le Ministère de la Défense [220])

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 [236], 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* [237], Le Ministère de la Défense [220])

Public Opinion

France takes seriously the threats of extremism and terrorism. A Pew poll from the spring of 2017 showed that 88 percent of French citizens polled believe that ISIS poses a major threat to the country. This figure was down only three percentage points from the year before, when 91 percent of respondents characterized ISIS as a major threat to the country. (Sources: Pew Research Center [238])

The Counter Extremism Project's (CEP) polling data from 2014 has shown that the French public, relative to public opinion in the United States and other European countries, has long viewed Islamist-based extremism as one of its greatest threats. Immediately following the *Charlie Hebdo* attack in January 2015, the percentage of French citizens who believed that the threat of terrorism was "high or very high" was at 93 percent. One year later, 95 percent of respondents believed that the threat from terrorism is high. These figures are commensurate with polls from 2015 and 2016, which indicated that at least 85 percent of French citizens believed that the threat from terrorism was elevated. (Sources: Le Journal du Dimanche [239], Le Journal du Dimanche [239], Reuters [240])

	USA	UK	Spain	France	Germany	Netherlands	Sweden
1	Taliban 73%	Taliban 75%	Taliban 66%	**Taliban 74%**	Taliban 78%	Taliban 66%	Taliban 44%
2	Muslim Brotherhood 53%	Muslim Brotherhood 58%	Muslim Brotherhood 50%	**Muslim Brotherhood 68%**	Muslim Brotherhood 62%	Muslim Brotherhood 53%	Shi-ite extremism 39%
3	Palestinians 47%	Shi-ite extremism 53%	Shi-ite extremism 48%	**Islamic Revolutionary Guard 66%**	Hezbollah 58%	Shi-ite extremism 46%	Muslim Brotherhood 37%
4	Hezbollah 46%	Hezbollah 47%	Islamic Revolutionary Guard 45%	**Hezbollah 65%**	Shi-ite extremism 56%	Hezbollah 45%	Sunni extremism 35%
5	Shi-ite extremism 46%	Sunni extremism 46%	Sunni extremism 44%	**Boko Haram 64%**	Hamas 54%	Islamic Revolutionary Guard 45%	Islamic Revolutionary Guard 31%
6	Islamic Revolutionary Guard 43%	Islamic Revolutionary Guard 46%	Hamas 44%	**Shi-ite extremism 60%**	Islamic Revolutionary Guard 52%	Hamas 43%	Hezbollah 30%
7	Sunni extremism 42%	Boko Haram 42%	Hezbollah 39%	**Sunni extremism 58%**	Sunni extremism 49%	Sunni extremism 42%	Hamas 28%
8	Hamas 38%	Hamas 41%	Boko Haram 34%	**Hamas 55%**	Palestinians 41%	Boko Haram 40%	Boko Haram 24%

CEP survey and polling data from 2014 showed that 30 percent of respondents in France believed the government was not spending enough to combat extremism. When responding to the question of policies they considered to be most effective in dealing with countries that permit extremism, French respondents answered as follows:

- Imposing tough economic sanctions against that country, 28 percent
- Engaging in aggressive diplomacy with the country to resolve the issue, 16 percent
- Taking military action in the country to root out the Islamic extremists, 14 percent
- Providing direct economic aid to the government to stabilize their economies, 6 percent
- Supporting opposition or moderate forces with money and other tools, 7 percent
- Ignore them, 10 percent
- Supporting opposition or moderate forces with arms, 7 percent

The majority of French respondents favored imposing tough economic sanctions against a country that allows extremism when polled in 2014. Finally, compared to other European countries, most French respondents (52 percent) believed that fighting Islamist extremism should be a top priority. (Source: Counter Extremism Project [213])