

April 2020 Terror Attacks

In April 2020 there were two attacks in Europe

April 4th, Romans-sur-Isere, France: Two people were killed and five others wounded in a mass stabbing. The attacker was identified as 30 years-old Sudanese asylum seeker Abdallah Ahmed Usman. Two other Sudanese citizens, both from Usman’s same household, were also arrested. The attacker stole a knife from a local shop, he proceeded onto the streets where he shouted “Allahu Akbar” (God is great) while randomly stabbing passers-by. During a search of the suspect's home, handwritten documents with religious connotations were found, in which the author complains in particular that he lives in a country of “non-believers”. The attack caused the death of two people and the injury of five. ^{1 2 3 4}

April 27th, Paris, France: Two police agents were seriously wounded in a terror attack in the Paris commune of Colombes. According to reconstructions, at around 5:40 pm a black BMW class 1 rammed into two police motor-bikers proceeding with a check on a Peugeot 508, smashing one of them against a police car and flinging the other one in the middle of the road. The attacker, who survived the crash, was identified as 29- years-old French citizen Youssef Tihlah, who stated to have conducted the attack in the name of Isis after seeing a video on Palestine. ^{5 6 7 8}

Summary table

Location	Site	Year, month	Day	Target	Attacker(s)	Sex	Weapon(s)	Nationality	Age	Mental ill.	Motivation	Dec. attackers	Dec. vict.	Inj. vict.	Previous Conviction
Romans-sur-Isère (France)	Shop, urban	2020/04	4	Civilians	1	M	knife	Sudanese	33	n/a	islamist	0\1	2	5	no
Colombes (France)	Urban	2020/04	27	Police	1(3)	M	car	French	29, (22, 23)	no	islamist	0\3	0	3	yes

¹ <https://www.francebleu.fr/infos/faits-divers-justice/drome-un-homme-interpelle-apres-avoir-poignarde-plusieurs-personnes-a-romans-sur-isere-1585993439>

² <https://www.rt.com/news/484961-stabbing-attack-france-romans-sur-isere/>

³ <https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/1893615/three-sudanese-arrested-over-french-terror-stabbing>

⁴ <http://www.rfi.fr/en/france/20200408-france-terrorist-knife-attacker-hauled-before-paris-court-romans-sur-isere-sudanese-refugee>

⁵ https://www.lepoint.fr/societe/terrorisme-un-voisin-du-suspect-de-l-attaque-de-colombes-en-garde-a-vue-29-04-2020-2373454_23.php

⁶ <https://www.leparisien.fr/hauts-de-seine-92/impliques-malgre-eux-dans-l-attaque-de-colombes-deux-fuyards-entre-les-mains-de-la-justice-28-04-2020-8307678.php>

⁷ <https://www.lci.fr/police/colombes-hauts-de-seine-ce-que-l-on-sait-de-l-homme-qui-a-fonce-sur-deux-policiers-pour-les-tuer-2152261.html>

⁸ <https://www.estrepublicain.fr/edition-luneville/2020/04/28/le-terroriste-presume-de-colombes-a-vecu-a-luneville>

Comments

While the previous month turned out rather quiet, with only one episode occurring in Spain, in April activities have increased in relation to a series of counter-terror operations in Spain, Germany and Denmark, while two terror attacks were perpetrated on French soil. Firstly, it is worth mentioning that on April 21st Spanish police arrested the British rapper turned jihadist Abdel-Majed Abdel-Bary; he had been hiding in the city of Almeria, most likely after entering the country via Algeria.¹² On April 15th the German police arrested a cell of four Tajik citizens plotting attacks against US bases in the country and critics of Islam. Another Tajik jihadist was arrested in Albania on April 29th.^{9 10 11}

On April 30th the German authorities banned the Lebanese militant organization and political party, Hizbullah, blacklisting the group as a terrorist organization. The police raided several mosques and cultural centers believed to be linked to Hizbullah in Berlin as well as North Rhine-Westphalia and Bremen. Apartments occupied by their leaders, treasurers, and tax advisers were also searched. On the same day a counter-terror operation was carried out in Denmark.^{12 13 14}

These are all signs that something within Europe is moving. Regarding the two attacks that occurred in France, while the one perpetrated on April 4th seems more of an instinctive action conducted without any type of sophisticated planning, the one perpetrated in Colombes on April 27th shows some interesting elements, such as the timing. In fact, the black BMW that rammed against the police motor-bikers arrived on the scene just as they were checking a Peugeot 508, with one of the passengers that had fled to avoid control. It is yet unclear if the attack was planned by the BMW driver and the two on board the Peugeot or if Tihlah acted alone (in the chart the data regarding the potential involvement of the other two has been placed under brackets for this reason).

⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/21/spanish-police-arrest-former-british-isis-extremist>

¹⁰ <https://www.rt.com/news/485842-germany-arrests-suspected-isis-terrorists-tajiks/>

¹¹ <https://shqiptarja.com/lajm/24vjecari-nga-taxhikistani-pjese-e-isis-arrestohet-ne-tiraneishte-nw-kwrkim-nga-gjermania>

¹² <https://www.rt.com/news/487307-germany-bans-hezbollah-raids/>

¹³ <https://www.jpost.com/international/germany-bans-hezbollah-conducts-police-raids-on-possible-members-626364>

¹⁴ <https://www.jpost.com/International/Suspect-charged-in-Denmark-with-preparing-Islamist-attack-626462>