

November 2020 Terror Attacks

In November 2020 two terror attacks were registered in Europe

November 2nd, Vienna, Austria: an individual of ethnic Albanian origin with dual Austrian and North Macedonian citizenship, identified as 20-year-old Kujtim Fejzullai, opened fire in the streets of Vienna's historical center and against the Stadttempel synagogue. In the attack, four people were killed and 23 injured.

The perpetrator was heavily armed with an AK-47 rifle, a Tokarev handgun, a machete, and a fake suicide vest. The shooting took place four hours before the midnight start of a nationwide lockdown as new COVID-19 restrictions came into force in Austria, including a curfew from 8 pm to 6 am.

The following day, ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack and released a video of Fejzullai pledging allegiance to the jihadist Organization with the "nom de guerre" Abu Dujana al-Albani.

The individual had been sentenced to 22 months of prison in April 2019, after he had tried to cross the Turkish border into Syria to join ISIS; however, he was paroled in December 2019, eight months into the sentence. Fejzullai had also taken part in a deradicalization program managed by the DERAD association.^{1 2 3}

November 24th, Lugano, Switzerland: a 28-year-old Swiss female who had converted to Islam attacked two women in a department store at approximately 2 pm, injuring them both before being taken down by customers and then placed under arrest by the police. Thanks to the intervention, the attack did not cause any deaths.

The perpetrator lived in the area and was already known to authorities; in 2017 she had maintained a social media relationship with a jihadist from Syria and had even tried to reach Syria to visit him, but she was turned back on the Syrian border by Turkish authorities. Fedpol revealed that the woman also had mental health problems and had been treated in a psychiatric center. Since 2017 she hasn't appeared in any terror-related investigation.^{4 5 6}

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
Vienna (Austria)	Urban	2020, 11	2	Civilians	1	M	Rifle, handgun, machete	Austrian/North Macedonian	20	no	Islamist	1\1	4	23	yes
Lugano (Switzerland)	Urban	2020, 11	24	Civilians	1	F	Knife	Swiss	28	yes	Islamist	0\1	0	2	n/d

Comments

The Vienna attack shows elements that indicate a clear planning phase. Kujtim Fejzullai knew how to get around in the center of the city and was heavily armed with an AK-47 rifle, a Tokarev

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/04/police-investigate-if-vienna-attacker-was-part-of-wider-network>

² <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/vienna-terrorist-kujtim-fejzullai-a-football-crazed-boy-who-became-a-cold-blooded-gunman-pmpjbpn99>

³ <https://nypost.com/2020/11/04/vienna-terrorist-kujtim-fejzullai-sent-charlie-hebdo-attack-video/>

⁴ <https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/swiss-police-investigate-terrorist-motives-of-lugano-knife-attack/46182782>

⁵ <https://www.de24.news/en/2020/11/suspected-terrorist-attack-in-lugano-a-radicalized-swiss-woman-was-stabbed.html>

⁶ https://www.cdt.ch/ticino/lugano/a-lugano-non-si-esclude-l-atto-terroristico-AI3479424?_sid=Hi6fiiUQ

handgun, a machete, and a fake suicide vest; this could indicate that he would have continued to kill if he hadn't been taken down by police 9 minutes after the attack had begun.

Slovak authorities had warned their Austrian counterparts that Fejzullai had visited Slovakia in the summer in search for ammunitions. Additionally, he had also met with known Islamists from Germany and Switzerland that same month in Vienna.

While Fejzullai shows connections to a network of extremists and the capability to acquire specific weaponry, the perpetrator of the Lugano attack is obviously improvised as the woman grabbed a knife being used by an employee at the supermarket and used it against her victims before being taken down by a couple of customers. The perpetrator's only known contact with extremist networks dates back to 2017 when she had been in touch with a jihadist operating in Syria and had even tried to reach him.