

Europe Terror Attacks Summary for the Year 2020



For the year **2020**, we have identified **24 terrorist attacks within Europe**, 20 of which have been classified as **Islamist**, 2 as perpetrated by **Suprematists**, and 2 more that have **no clear motivation**.

As to countries involved, **10** attacks have been perpetrated in **France**, 5 in Germany, four in the United Kingdom, and 1 respectively in Austria, Belgium, Italy, Spain, and Switzerland.^{1 2}

The **first quarter** of 2020 has been the one with **the higher number of attacks (10)**, followed by the fourth quarter (6), while the second and third quarters both registered 4 attacks. During the months of May and July, no attacks were recorded.

In **6** out of the **24** attacks, the targets were **law enforcers** or **private security**, while the rest were civilian targets.

The total number of **deceased victims** is **24**; the deceased terrorists are 6, while the others have been apprehended.

Weapons

The weapon most commonly used is once again the **cold steel weapon** (may it be a kitchen knife, an all-purpose knife, or a machete), in some cases combined with a vehicle utilized as a “ram” against pedestrian targets. A common modus operandi known as “**vehicle-ramming**”, used on plenty of occasions in Europe by terrorists such

¹ The December 1st car-ramming in Trier has not been included in the list as the motivation has been linked exclusively to the consumption of alcohol and drugs, combined with mental issues, that most likely have caused the action <https://luxtimes.lu/european-union/42427-driver-kills-five-in-trier-attack-may-have-mental-problems>

² The Hackney terror attack that occurred in June has been classified by authorities as a hate crime, but not terror-related <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/rabbi-murder-charge-police-stabbing-stoke-newington-a9564726.html>

as Anis Amri in Berlin (December 19th, 2016) and Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel in Nice (July 14th, 2016), as already exposed by Stratfor Global Intelligence. ³

This technique had already been utilized by terrorists at least since 2006, when Mohammed Reza Taheri-Azar, a University of North Carolina graduate, drove an SUV against a popular campus gathering spot, injuring nine people. ⁴

Ramming attacks had also been suggested in the fall of 2010 issue on al-Qaeda's English-language online magazine *Inspire*, specifying how easy it is to find a vehicle and drive it at high speed against a crowd; a technique that can maximize the number of victims without much preparation. ^{5 6}

Another interesting observation can be made in relation to the weapons used in the [Vienna terrorist attack](#) on the night of November 2nd. As already exposed to *Sec-Ter* by an Italian weapon expert, the AK-47 and the Tokarev pistol used by Kujtim Fejzulai (see photo below) are a classic of the black market, and largely available in the Balkans, where the terrorist was originally from.



Researcher Asya Metodieva from the *Institute of International Relations Prague* indicated that there is an understanding among experts who follow jihadism in Europe that Vienna has been utilized by jihadists as a strategic hub in terms of logistics and networks, due to the fact that Vienna is a connector between Western Europe, the Balkans and the Middle East. Following this important observation by Metodieva, it is therefore legitimate to go beyond the jihadist issue and consider the connections between Austria and the Balkans in relation to the weapons black market, which could be crucial in this case.

³ <https://publicintelligence.net/ufouo-dhs-fbi-warning-terrorist-use-of-vehicle-ramming-tactics/>

⁴ <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna11660817#.VFpd9fTF9lw>

⁵ <https://info.publicintelligence.net/DHS-TerroristRamming.pdf>

⁶ <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2014/11/car-attack-in-jerusalem-why-are-terrorists-ramming-vehicles-into-crowds-of-people.html>

France's role in fighting Islamists

As initially exposed, ten out of the twenty attacks classified as “Islamists” targeted France. This can be attributed to France's strong effort in fighting Islamist extremism both domestically and on an international level. It is essential to recall how Paris has been active in the Sahel region since July 2014 with Operation “*Barkhane*”, with the objective of fighting jihadist groups active in the area, such as *Jamat Nusrat al-Islam*, *Aqim*, *al-Mourabitoun* and *Ansar Dine*. In November, French troops in Mali eliminated Ba Ag Moussa, leader of the al-Qaeda aligned group *Gsim* (*Group to Support Islam and Muslims*).^{7 8}



It is also interesting to notice how attacks against France have once again increased in September after a new satirical publication by magazine *Charlie Hebdo* depicting the Muslim prophet Muhammed. One of these attacks targeted the magazine's former headquarter on September 25th. Two other attacks that took place on October 16th and 29th respectively in Paris and Nice included two beheadings.

Overall, between September and December, France was targeted by five attacks, with three concentrated in October.

A few further considerations

It is also interesting to notice the similarity between the February 2nd attack in London's Streatham High Road and the one that occurred on April 4th in Romans-sur-Isere.

⁷ <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20201113-french-forces-kill-jihadist-commander-in-mali>

⁸ <https://www.thedefensepost.com/2020/11/13/france-kills-ag-moussa-mali/>

In both cases, the attackers stole a knife from a shop and then attacked pedestrians while yelling Islamist slogans. However, while London attacker [Sudesh Amman](#) was well known to British authorities, with a long radicalization path that had begun in 2018, very little is known about the Sudanese asylum-seeker Abdallah Ahmed Usman, who hit in Romans-sur-Isere.

Amman had also been wearing a fake suicide vest during the attack, which indicates two factors: 1- the will to be shot and consequently die as a martyr; 2- the preparation of the attack.

Ahmed Usman's attack might instead have very limited preparation, if not none. This could raise a question: was the Romans-sur-Isere attack an emulation of the London terror attack? Did Usman inspire himself from Amman's action?

One additional element that emerged from the London attack is how the UK's prevention programs once again failed in rehabilitating an extremist, just like in the case of Usman Khan, as already exposed by the BBC.⁹

Sudesh Amman had been sentenced in December 2018 to three years and four months of prison, on terror charges, and he had also been subjected to some de-radicalization initiatives while in custody; however, he was released early, on January 23rd, shortly before perpetrating the attack.¹⁰

⁹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-54573750>

¹⁰ <https://www.thenationalnews.com/opinion/comment/the-last-two-attacks-in-london-indicate-uk-s-approach-to-de-radicalisation-is-failing-1.975113>