

September 2020 Terror Attacks

In September 2020, two terror attacks were registered in Europe

September 13th, Stolberg, Germany: A 21-year-old German citizen of Iraqi origins was arrested for the stabbing of a 23-year-old German with Turkish background whose father had previously appeared in a political ad for the far-right AfD party. According to reconstructions, the attacker opened one of the car doors while the victim was inside the vehicle and stabbed him in the arm while shouting "Allahu akbar". The victim survived but sustained serious injuries that required emergency surgery. According to German prosecutors, the suspected attacker had already attacked someone in a similar manner in March 2020. ^{1 2 3}

September 25th, Paris, France: 25-year-old Pakistani citizen Zahir Hassan Mahmoud approached the former headquarter of the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo, armed with a large butcher knife and stabbed four people. All four victims survived the attack but two of them sustained serious injuries.

According to statements made by the attacker after the arrest, the action was carried out in retaliation for the new publication of satirical cartoons picturing prophet Mohamed. The decision was taken by Charlie Hebdo's editorial staff in concurrence with the beginning of the trial against fourteen individuals accused of supporting the terrorists who struck France in 2015. The attacker was not aware that the Charlie Hebdo's HQ had moved to another location. ^{4 5}

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
Stolberg (Germany)	Urban	2020, 09	13	Civilians	1	M	Knife	German (Iraqi origin)	21	n/a	Islamist	0\1	0	1	yes
Paris (France)	Urban	2020, 09	25	Civilians	1	M	Knife	Pakistani	25	n/a	Islamist	0\1	0	4	n/a

Comments

Both terror attack indicate an Islamist background, but while the one occurred in Germany is linked to local elections in the North Rhine-Westphalia, the attack perpetrated against the former Charlie Hebdo HQ is obviously a retaliation against the new publication of the satirical cartoons. There are a serious of elements that should be acknowledged: 1- the Pakistani nationality of the attacker is in line with the heavy anti-French protests that broke out in major cities such as Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, and Multan at the beginning of the month. French flags were burned and many asked for the interruption of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Pakistan was indicated by media and analysts as the Muslim country where the heaviest protests against the new C.H. publications

¹ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/driver-stabbed-in-german-town-in-possible-terror-attack/>

² <https://www.dw.com/en/german-investigators-say-stabbing-may-be-linked-to-afd-political-ad/a-54927742>

³ <https://www.foreigner.fi/articulo/news/suspected-islamist-knife-attack-thought-linked-to-german-election/20200914155948007925.html>

⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/25/world/europe/paris-knife-attack.html>

⁵ <https://www.france24.com/en/20200925-four-injured-in-knife-attack-outside-charlie-hebdo-s-former-office-in-paris-suspects-at-large>

took place. Jamaat Ulema, Islami Baluchistan, and Tehreek e-Labbaik Pakistan were among the radical political groups joining the demonstrations.^{6 7 8}

Regarding the Pakistani attacker, it is interesting to notice how he had entered French soil in 2018, pretending to be an accompanied minor (DOB 2002) by the name Hassan Ali, while investigations revealed that the individual's real name is Zahir Hassan Mahmoud and his DOB 1995. The real identity was revealed as investigators found a Pakistani ID in his cell phone, but it still has to be confirmed by the authorities in Islamabad. Zahir had managed to obtain social aid for infancy from the French government under false name and age.^{9 10 11}

⁶ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/charlie-hebdo-protests-grow-across-pakistan/articleshow/77934430.cms>

⁷ <https://www.france24.com/en/20200903-pakistan-backlash-grows-over-charlie-hebdo-cartoons>

⁸ <https://www.timesnownews.com/international/article/protest-against-charlie-hebdo-proves-pakistan-as-breeding-ground-for-terror-recruits-report/657719>

⁹ https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2020/09/29/attaque-a-paris-l-assailant-admet-une-autre-identite-il-va-etre-presente-a-un-juge-d-instruction_6054083_3224.html

¹⁰ <https://tvi24.iol.pt/internacional/zaheer-hassan-mahmoud/suspeito-do-ataque-junto-ao-charlie-hebdo-acusado-de-tentativa-de-homicidio>

¹¹ <https://www.euronews.com/2020/09/29/charlie-hebdo-suspected-paris-knife-attacker-to-be-charged-with-attempted-murder>