



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on December 26, 2018

Street Vendor Masterminded Beheadings; Women Spotted With Three Men Before Murders

[Cops collared](#) five more suspects on Monday  in the beheading of two young Scandinavian women, and identified the mastermind of the savage attack. Now, 18 are in custody.

On Friday, [cops arrested](#) nine suspects in connection with the murder and uncovered bomb-making paraphernalia that could have been used in a terror attack.

[Moroccan authorities also say](#) the suspects did not act upon orders of the Islamic State, or ISIS, despite their connection to the crazed terror outfit, and that the murder of the two Scandinavian beauties apparently inadvertently foiled a much larger crime.

And in what might be another confirmation of the imprudence of the women, a witness or witnesses spotted them at their hotel with three men.

Arrests Stopped Terror Attack

The victims of the four Moroccan “shepherds” arrested in the murders were Louisa Vesterager Jespersen, 24, of Denmark, and Maren Ueland, a 28-year-old Norwegian. The pair were in Morocco to hike and scale Mount Toubkal, near Marrakesh.

Tourists found the two at their campsite, an “unguarded and remote area on the mountain range,” [CNN reported](#).

The mastermind of the attack, Moroccan authorities now say, was one of the men [collared last week](#) trying to flee the city on a bus, Abdessamad Ejjoud, a 25-year-old street vendor.

Abdelhak Khaim, head of Morocco’s central office for judicial investigation, [told AFP](#) that Ejjoud was the “emir” of the group.

He “formed a kind of cell that discussed how to carry out a terrorist act inside the kingdom,” Khaim told the news service. The killers, he said, “agreed under the influence of their emir to carry out a terrorist act ... targeting the security services or foreign tourists.”

“The two victims were stabbed, had their throats slit and were then beheaded,” Khaim told AFP.

A few days ago, [Reuters reported](#), police said the murders likely helped foil a terror plot.

The arrest of the nine on Friday, said Boubker Sabik, spokesman for the Muslim country’s security service, “spared Morocco a terrorist plot,” the news agency reported.

Authorities said “electronic devices, an unauthorized hunting rifle, knives and materials that could be used for bomb-making were found in the course of those raids.”

Citing Moroccan television, [CNN reported](#) that authorities seized “suspicious substances that could potentially be used in making explosives.”

Sabik did not offer details about foiled terror attack.

Moroccan authorities, Reuters reported, have arrested 242 of 1,669 Moroccans who joined ISIS, and “some fighters were using false passports and trying to hide among refugees heading for Europe as the jihadists suffer setbacks in the Middle East.”



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More on Beheadings

As well, [Reuters reported](#), “Sabik described the four [suspects in the murders] as ‘lone wolves.’ ‘The crime was not coordinated with Islamic State,’ he said. ‘Lone wolves do not need permission from their leader,’” he added, without explaining how the authorities had come to their conclusions.

Authorities first said the four suspects were connected to ISIS, and confirmed the authenticity of a video in which they pledged allegiance to the terror organization. But when they beheaded the women, they were apparently not acting on orders from the terror outfit.

The four suspects, ages 25 to 33, were heading to the area where the young women were, “intent on committing a crime but without selecting their target in advance.”

Sabik also said, [CNN reported](#), that the suspects “claimed they were on a picnic, and filmed a ‘pledge’ tape inside a tent in that area, without any contact with [ISIS] outsiders.”

One of the suspects “was arrested in 2013 as part of a crackdown on individuals who wanted to join extremists abroad,” Sabik told reporters. He radicalized the others.

Authorities arrested one of the suspects in the double-murder in Marrakesh and collared three others, including Ejjoud, trying to flee on a bus.

The *British Sun* newspaper reported that Moroccan police “identified the suspects through CCTV in local shops in the village” and that one left his ID at the campsite.

The authenticity of the video purporting to depict the beheading of one of the women is not certain.

Seen With Men

Had the women exercised more caution, they’d likely still be alive.

They compounded the first mistake of traveling in the wilds of Morocco alone by entertaining three men at their hotel. “Both women had been spotted with three men in their hotel in Marrakesh before heading to the Atlas Mountains to hike,” [CNN reported](#).

The network did not say whether three men were suspects arrested in connection with the murder.

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