



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on July 26, 2016

## Two ISIS-linked Attackers Slay Priest in French Church

Two attackers who had pledged allegiance to ISIS entered a Catholic church in the French town of Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray, in Normandy, on July 26, and seized four hostages before fatally slitting the throat of a priest as he offered morning Mass.



The priest, Father Jacques Hamel (shown), was 86 years old. Before slashing his throat, the terrorists held him captive along with four others, two of whom were nuns. They severely injured one hostage, whom the Paris-based AFP news agency said was “fighting for life.” The pair of attackers were shot dead by police commandoes who responded, and their identities are already known to the authorities, but have not been released to the public. However, extensive information about them has been made public.

A CNS News report quoted a nun, identified as Sister Danielle, who witnessed the attack on Father Hamel. “They forced him to his knees. He wanted to defend himself. And that’s when the tragedy happened,” said the nun in an interview with French-based BFM television. “They recorded themselves. They did a sort of sermon around the altar, in Arabic. It’s a horror.”

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The ISIS-linked Amaq news agency said two of its “soldiers” had carried out the attack.

The Paris prosecutor’s office, which oversees investigations involving terrorism, said that one person has been detained in the investigation into the attack. Since the two attackers were killed at the scene, this indicates that others are suspected of involvement.

French President Francois Hollande, speaking to the press outside the church, described the event as a “dreadful terrorist attack” and told reporters the attackers had pledged allegiance to ISIS. “[ISIS] has declared war on us,” said Hollande. “We must fight this war by all means, while respecting the rule of law — what makes us a democracy.”

A report published in both the *Irish Mirror* and Britain’s *Daily Mail* cited information about one of the attackers provided by authorities to the French TV news channel I-Tele, revealing that he was a convicted terrorist, under restrictions requiring him to be living with his parents and to wear an electronic ankle bracelet.

The man reportedly left for Syria in 2015 with the intention of joining ISIS but was arrested in Turkey. After returning to France, he was jailed after being convicted of conspiracy to prepare acts of terrorism, but was paroled on March 2 this year.



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Under the conditions of his parole, he was ordered to live with his parents, wearing an electronic ankle bracelet, and to report periodically to his local police station. According to his parole conditions, he was only allowed out unsupervised between 8:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. The attack at the church took place between 9:45 a.m. and 11 a.m.

The *Daily Mail* reported that French security services have been regularly criticized for allowing known terrorists to be released after being found guilty of crimes of terrorism.

The vicious attack on the French priest also generated a statement from Vatican spokesman Reverend Federico Lombardi, who said in a July 26 statement that it hits particularly hard “because this horrific violence took place in a church, a sacred place in which the love of God is announced, and the barbaric murder of a priest and the involvement of the faithful.”

Lombardi called the attack “more terrible news, that adds to a series of violence in these days that have left us upset, creating immense pain and worry.”

The pope, said Lombardi, has expressed “pain and horror for this absurd violence, with the strongest condemnation for every form of hatred and prayer for those affected.”

France has been hard-hit by a series of terrorist attacks since two shooters killed 11 people at the *Charlie Hebdo* newspaper offices in Paris on January 7, 2015. An even deadlier attack occurred when suicide bombers and shooters, in a series of coordinated attacks, killed 130 people last November 13; and then there was the most recent one in Nice on July 14, when a lone attacker deliberately drove an 18-ton truck into crowds celebrating Bastille Day, killing a least 84 people. ISIS has claimed responsibility for all of these attacks, as well as the March 22 attacks in Brussels that killed 32 people.

A report from CNN on July 26 noted the growing total of fatalities attributed to ISIS. It said:

Since declaring its caliphate in June 2014, the self-proclaimed Islamic State has conducted or inspired more than 140 terrorist attacks in 29 countries other than Iraq and Syria, where its carnage has taken a much deadlier toll. Those attacks have killed at least 2,043 people and injured thousands more.

Hollande may have described today’s killing as a “dreadful terrorist attack,” but following the devastating attacks in Paris last November, he said that France would continue to welcome refugees from the ongoing civil war in Syria despite the security concerns voiced by many of his countrymen. “Life should resume fully,” Hollande told a gathering of France’s mayors on November 18. “France should remain as it is. Our duty is to carry on our lives.”

He added that “30,000 refugees will be welcomed over the next two years. Our country has the duty to respect this commitment.”

However, those November attacks in Paris caused as many as 27 American governors to announce that they were opposed to allowing refugees from Syria to settle in their states — because of the threat of terrorists entering with the refugees.

These objections caused President Obama, while on a trip to the Philippines, to make light of the governors’ concerns, which he dismissed as mere “rhetoric” that plays into the hands of the Islamic State and “it needs to stop.”

“Apparently they’re scared of widows and orphans coming into the United States of America,” said Obama, adding that the United States does not make good decisions “based on hysteria or an exaggeration of risks.”



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Despite what has happened in Europe, and ignoring the legitimate concerns among U.S. governors and others that terrorists might infiltrate the United States amidst the refugees, the Obama administration has committed to admitting 10,000 Syrian refugees by the end of September.

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