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France to press for extradition of Palestinian mastermind behind Jewish restaurant attack

18 GIUGNO 2015 BY ANDREA SPADA



The suspected mastermind of an attack on a Paris Jewish restaurant in 1982 that left six people dead and 22 injured has been arrested, officials in Amman and Paris confirmed on Wednesday.

The man, Zuhair Mohammed Hassan Khalid al-Abbasi, 62, was taken into custody on June 1. French authorities are set to seek his extradition.

Zuhair Mohamad Hassan Khalid al-Abassi, alias "Amjad Atta" was one of three men whom France issued an international arrest warrant earlier this year.

He is suspected of having a commanding role in the attack, that left six people dead and twenty-two people injured.

In 1982, Chez Jo Goldberg, a Jewish deli in Paris, located on the Rue de Rosiers in the heart of the Marais- a vibrant Jewish hub- was attacked by two terrorists wielding grenades and machine guns.

One of the attackers threw a grenade into the restaurant while others fired guns at customers; they then fled on foot.

The assault was believed to have been planned and carried out by members of the Abu Nidal Organization, an international Palestinian terrorist group, and took place when Arafat and the PLO were under Israeli siege in Beirut.

At the time, the attack was considered one of the most lethal anti-Semitic attacks in France since the end of World War II.

For years, France has struggled to bring the three men to justice. It wasn't until 2007 when revered counter-terror judge Marc Trevedic took over the case, did things start to improve.

Especially when Trevedic began working with French intelligence services, who were able to get confessions from members of the Abu Nidal Organization. The latter directly implicated Abassi as being the mastermind of the Jewish deli attack.

Abbasi was apprehended by Jordanian intelligence and police officers in Zarqa on June 1, a town that lies about 15 miles northeast of Amman. It has been known in recent years as a breeding ground for terrorism.

The suspect is currently out on bail, but is barred from traveling. French authorities are already moving to extradite him to France for trial, but are awaiting for the relevant documents to be translated.

It's not sure how long it will take for Jordan authorities to comply with the extradition request.

Meanwhile, Palestine and Norway, where the remaining suspects are hiding have so far not responded to France's request.

Theresa May issues warning to Britons considering joining IS

18 June 2015 | **UK**



Britons travelling to Syria and Iraq to join Islamic State militants face a "life of war, famine and hardship", Home Secretary Theresa May has warned.

She made the direct appeal to those "tempted" to travel at an international counter-terrorism conference in London.

It comes as three Bradford sisters are feared to have travelled to Syria with their nine children.

Their "devastated" parents have issued a statement urging anyone considering making such a journey "not to go".

Family plea

Efforts are continuing to trace Khadija, Sugra and Zohra Dawood and their children, who disappeared after travelling to Saudi Arabia to take part in a religious pilgrimage.

They took a flight to Istanbul and there are indications they have now crossed the border into Syria.

The women's parents and other relatives said on Thursday that they were "devastated" and in "great distress".

"We are very worried about the children who could now be in a dangerous place," they said.

"We do not support the actions of the sisters leaving their husbands and families in the UK and of taking their children into a war zone where life is not safe to join any group.

"We plea to anyone thinking about a similar journey not to go."

The women's brother, Ahmed Dawood, is believed to be fighting with extremists in Syria, parts of which are controlled by IS militants.



Sisters Sugra, Zohra and Khadija Dawood went missing on 9 June

The conference, organised by Met Police Commissioner Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, also comes after Talha Asmal, 17,

from Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, is thought to have become the UK's youngest-ever suicide bomber.

The home secretary said: "In the past week we have heard separate and equally shocking media reports about dangerous radicalisation.

"Some of these cases have not been confirmed. But while I cannot comment in detail I do want to say this to the parents, siblings, faith leaders and community groups whose loved ones may be at risk: I want to work with you to stop this from happening."

"A real partnership" is needed to defeat the "poisonous" and "twisted" ideology of IS, Mrs May said at the event, organised following terrorist attacks around the world, including in Paris and Sydney.

At least **700 people from the UK** are believed to have travelled to Syria or Iraq to support or fight for jihadist organisations. About half have since returned.

Mrs May said there was a "very serious threat that returnees may carry out attacks on home soil, radicalise others or fund or facilitate terrorism in other ways."

Groups like Boko Haram and al-Qaeda also posed a danger, she said, and "the threat from Northern Ireland-related terrorism and far-right extremism" should not be forgotten.

'Turning backs on families'

The home secretary said IS wanted to "lure" young women and families to Syria and Iraq, through the "powerful allure of propaganda".

Appealing to those thinking of travelling, Mrs May said they would be going to a place with "no democracy, no rule of law, no equality".

She said: "If you travel, you reject those freedoms. You turn your back on your families and your communities and instead embrace hatred, intolerance and brutality."

Mrs May added: "Do not travel. Do not engage in dangerous activities."

Speaking to the police from 20 countries and 100 law enforcement officials attending the event, she warned: "If you do not follow this advice, if you become involved in illegal and harmful activities, we will do everything in our power to keep the people of this country safe from terrorism."



Sir Bernard, speaking before the conference, said there was a "growing phenomenon" of British people taking their families to Syria.

The commissioner said: "How could anybody want to go to a war zone? Why would you take a child there? This is a worry."

"We're just struggling to understand what drives people to do this."

He said more research was needed to understand why people were attracted to the Islamic State regime that most people regarded as "barbaric".

The commissioner welcomed recent legal changes which allow police to seize the passports for 28 days of people they suspected might be travelling to engage in fighting.

Mrs May told the conference that the new powers of temporary seizure had been used and "proved effective".

The Middle East And North Africa: Adapting To A New Paradigm – Analysis

By **James M. Dorsey**



Middle East

James M. Dorsey June 19, 2015 1, Analysis No Comments

The military strategies of the United States and its regional allies focused on bombing campaigns, support for local militias, and inherently weak military forces to fight potential ground battles, have failed to defeat rebel forces in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya. Calls for the introduction of ground forces against Islamic State (IS), the jihadist group that controls a swathe of Syria and Iraq, and the Houthis in Yemen, or pumping up the number of US military personnel advising and training the Iraqi armed forces are unlikely to turn the tide.

If anything, the Marxist notion that things will get worse before they get better is nowhere more applicable than in the Middle East and North Africa. Countries like Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Algeria, despite influxes of large numbers of refugees and/or occasional jihadist attacks, have so far succeeded in keeping strife beyond their borders.

Carve-ups are inevitable

Egypt is waging a ruthless campaign against jihadist and Bedouin groups in the northern Sinai; coupled with its brutal repression of dissent, this has turned the peninsula’s population against the regime of general-turned-president Abdel Fattah Al Sisi and threatens a rise in violence in major population centres. Bahrain, where a Saudi-backed minority

regime suppressed a majority Shia revolt in 2011, is a powder keg waiting to be lit.

At the heart of the region's multiple wars and the rise of jihadist, ethnic and sectarian forces as dominant players in areas of conflict, is the quest for political transition that started off peacefully in 2011 with popular uprisings. With few exceptions like Morocco, these were countered with either brute force as in Syria and Bahrain, or counterrevolutionary moves like the 2013 military coup in Egypt, and Saudi undermining of a real political transition in Yemen. The only exception is Tunisia where transition towards a democracy has progressed.

Ironically, disparate forces of change like IS, the Houthis, and the Kurds, and counterrevolutionary forces headed by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, agree tacitly on one thing: pursuing their divergent goals involves a violent and bloody process that will carve up various states into ethnic and sectarian entities. Syria and Iraq are effectively nation states of the past. Yemen could split into two or three states. Libya faces a similar prospect.

Most analysts have written off the popular protests of 2011 that toppled the leaders of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen as a blip in history. That view is reinforced by the rise of jihadist forces and the exponential increase in number of foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq from all corners of the world, with the fear of blowback in Southeast Asia and the West. The reality may be very different.

Fuelling radicalisation

Refusal to nurture peaceful political change and address failed social and economic policies of autocratic regimes across the Middle East and North Africa, as well as towards Muslim immigrant communities in Europe, has cut off avenues of non-violent political expression and the venting of frustration and pent-up anger. Brutal, repressive policies fuel radicalisation with many youth vacillating between apathy that could explode at any minute, and despair that often projects religiously-packaged, nihilistic violence as their only option.

A recent report by the Institute for the Study of War warned: "The overall threat to US interests in the Middle East, abroad, and at home is rapidly accelerating. ISIS (Islamic State) has done much to undermine the paradigm that statehood yields security, a condition once reinforced by the international system... States will be challenged more often in the coming years... Threats are rising in more places globally because states have been proven vulnerable."

Military strategies that are not grounded in acceptance of the Middle East and North Africa's new realities are likely to exacerbate rather than ameliorate forces of political change. That acceptance would have to involve a plethora of US and Western policies that

uncompromisingly link military aid to adoption of inclusive, non-sectarian, and non-repressive policies at home and in the region by its Middle Eastern and North African allies. It would also have to involve acceptance that extremist and jihadist groups are, at the end of the day, political animals.

Today, there may be no basis for discussion with IS. There may never be, despite the fact that IS is a political reality that is not about to disappear soon. Nonetheless, extremist groups are dynamic, not static; they adapt to political realities. IS' successful military adaptation to realities on the ground is a case in point. So are changing, if only tactical, approaches by Jabhat al-Nusra, the Al Qaeda affiliate in Syria, in areas it controls. Israeli officials privately concede that Hamas, the Islamist militia that controls the Gaza Strip, has accepted a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The problem is lack of political will on both sides and disagreement on the terms of negotiation.

Short-term deterioration v long-term stability

US-led negotiations with Iran to resolve the nuclear crisis have served as a lightning rod that justifies sectarian policies which Saudi Arabia adopted on a global scale after the Iranian popular revolt in 1979 toppled the Shah. That has translated into discrimination of Shiite communities in the kingdom, Bahrain and Kuwait, and an unproductive, devastating bombing campaign in Yemen. The rise of Shiite nationalism in Iraq constitutes the writing on the wall.

The implications of such a stance are not that they will further empower an allegedly expansionary, imperial Iran and jihadist groups, and threaten the stability of US allies. Things will get worse in the Middle East and North Africa no matter what, and the stability of autocratic regimes remains in question.

Military strategies need to recognise that the Middle East and North Africa are in the throes of a brutal process of change that is likely to play out over the years. Attempting to halt the process is futile; nurturing it with policies that encourage non-violent, non-sectarian change – even if it means a redrawing of the region's map and regime change – will ultimately far better serve the reestablishment of regional peace and security. Short-term deterioration may be the price for long-term stability.



Rebel fighters advance in Syria's Aleppo

Several factions pushed into government-held Khaldiyeh neighbourhood, sources say, but state TV denies.

18 Jun 2015 16:50 GMT | [War & Conflict](#), [Syrian crisis](#), [Middle East](#), [Syria](#)

Syrian rebels have advanced into a second government-held neighbourhood in the northern city of Aleppo, activists have said, a claim denied by state TV.

The reported push into the Khaldiyeh neighbourhood came on Thursday, a day after rebels captured the eastern neighbourhood of Rashideen from troops and pro-government gunmen.

Ahmad al-Ahmad and Bahaa Halaby, Aleppo-based activists, said several factions entered Khaldiyeh, which has a large Kurdish community, early on Thursday.

State TV denied the claims of the takeover and aired a report from Khaldiyeh. It had earlier denied the capture of Rashideen without providing any proof.

State TV and the activists said Rashideen was relatively quiet on Wednesday afternoon after heavy fighting overnight.

Ahmad and Halaby said a fuel shortage in Aleppo and nearby villages has worsened in recent days after the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) group, which controls much of Syria's oilfields, prevented tanker trucks from supplying rebel-held neighbourhoods.

[RELATED: Syria overtook Afghanistan to become the world's biggest source of refugees](#)

ISIL has battled both government forces and the rebels, but in Aleppo the rebels say it is effectively helping the government by attacking their supply lines.

Ahmad said the fuel shortages have driven up bread prices and caused power cuts in hospitals relying on generators.

"There is a humanitarian crisis. Some bakeries have closed and fewer vehicles are in the streets," Ahmad said.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said on Thursday that some 40,000 people are in "urgent need of basic services including water and electricity" in the Damascus suburb of Moadamiyeh.

The ICRC and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent managed to enter Moadamiyeh this week to deliver aid for the first time since December, the statement said.

"The humanitarian situation is desperate," said the head of the ICRC in Syria, Marianne Gasser. "The streets are totally empty, shops closed. There is virtually no water and food is hard to come by. There has not been electricity in the city for two years. There is virtually no access to proper health care."

The ICRC and SARC brought in medicines for chronic diseases to treat around 5,000 patients, medicines for children, and medical equipment to help pregnant women during delivery.

Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb says Mokhtar Belmokhtar is 'alive and well'

 longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/06/al-qaeda-in-the-islamic-maghreb-says-mokhtar-belmokhtar-is-alive-and-well.php

Thomas Joscelyn

Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), an official branch of al Qaeda, has posted a statement on Twitter saying that Mokhtar Belmokhtar, a veteran jihadist, is "alive and well." AQIM refers to Belmokhtar as Khaled Abou El Abbas, a name he has long used, in the message.

AQIM accuses the media of lying about Belmokhtar's death in order to justify American airstrikes on the "innocent" people in Libya's tribes. The statement is, therefore, an attempt to portray the bombings as targeting the Libyan populace, not just the jihadists.



On June 16, AQIM issued its first statement on the airstrikes. According to a translation by the SITE Intelligence Group, AQIM said that an "elite group from among the sincere sons of Libya and its resplendent knights" were killed. However, there was no mention of Belmokhtar.

US officials have said that Belmokhtar was targeted in bombings last weekend (June 13 – 14), but they were not sure whether or not he had perished. In the days since, there has been uncertainty concerning Belmokhtar's fate. The fog of war frequently makes it difficult to determine whether or not a senior al Qaeda leader has been killed.

Belmokhtar and AQIM's leadership have often disagreed. In late 2012, he left AQIM's ranks to form his own battalion. However, Belmokhtar's spokesman told the press that Belmokhtar [remained loyal to al Qaeda's senior leadership](#) and he simply wanted to lead his own organization. In January 2013, Belmokhtar commanded the terrorists responsible for the raid on the In Amenas natural gas facility in Algeria. Belmokhtar [claimed responsibility for the attack](#) on behalf of al Qaeda.

In August 2013, Belmokhtar [merged his group](#), the al Mulathamun Battalion, with the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO). Together, they [formed the al Murabitoon Brigade](#).

A MUJAO leader named Adnan Abu Walid al Sahrawi recently [broke with Belmokhtar and pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr al Baghdadi](#), who leads the Islamic State. Although al Sahrawi claimed to speak on behalf of the entire Al Murabitoon organization, it quickly became apparent that he [represented only a splinter faction](#).

Al Murabitoon released its own statement denying Belmokhtar's death earlier today. "We announce to our mujahideen brothers everywhere in the world that the news of the death of commander Khaled Abou El Abbas in an American air strike is false," the group's statement reads, [according to Reuters](#). The statement was first published by *Al Akhbar*, a Mauritanian news agency that regularly receives similar messages from the group. Reuters notes that it could not independently verify the authenticity of Al Murabitoon's statement, but *Al Akhbar* has been a reliable conduit in the past.

Earlier in the week, Ansar al Sharia Libya posted a message implying that Belmokhtar is alive. The SITE Intelligence Group translated Ansar al Sharia's statement.

Several Ansar al Sharia members were killed in the bombings that targeted Belmokhtar in Ajdabiya, Libya. And Ansar al Sharia listed seven of its "martyrs," excluding Belmokhtar.

According to SITE's translation, Ansar al Sharia's media arm denied "the killing of any characters [figures] other than the ones which we mentioned from among sons of this country at the beginning of the statement." Similar to AQIM's statement, Ansar al Sharia accused the US and its allies of trying to deflect attention away from "their heinous

crime...against our Muslim people, and to find an unpalatable justification for this insidious bombardment.”

Still another jihadist group, the Ajdabiya Shura Council (ASC), has released a statement concerning the bombings. The ASC also listed the “martyrs,” but said nothing about Belmokhtar.

Therefore, the jihadists have now released five statements concerning the airstrikes. Two of them have been explicit denials of Belmokhtar’s demise, with the other three implying that he is alive.

Ansar al Sharia and Belmokhtar

Some press reports out of Libya have claimed that Belmokhtar was attending a meeting held at a farm owned by Al Sadi al Nawfali al Maghrebi, who is the spokesperson for ASC.

The ASC is an alliance of jihadist groups that includes Ansar al Sharia. Indeed, the Ansar al Sharia members killed in the bombings likely operated under the ASC’s banner.

The ASC coalition is similar to the [Mujahideen Shura Council \(MSC\) in Derna](#) and the [Benghazi Revolutionaries Shura Council \(BRSC\)](#). The latter is led by Ansar al Sharia’s branch in Benghazi.

Regardless of whether Belmokhtar attended the meeting, and narrowly escaped death, or didn’t attend it all, there are good reasons for intelligence officials to suspect that he is working with Ansar al Sharia.

In November 2014, the United Nations designated Ansar al Sharia Benghazi as a terrorist organization, [recognizing its ties to both AQIM and Belmokhtar’s group](#) in the process. The UN [found](#) that “[a]t least 12 of the 28 individuals involved in the In Amenas attack,” which was orchestrated by Belmokhtar, “were trained during the summer of 2012 in...camps run by” Ansar al Sharia in Benghazi. AQIM has supported Ansar al Sharia’s suicide attacks, while Ansar al Sharia has returned the favor by providing “training and logistical support to AQIM.”

Ansar al Sharia first gained international infamy following the Sept. 11, 2012 terrorist attack on the US Mission and Annex in Benghazi. Ties between the group and Belmokhtar were uncovered during the investigation into that assault, which left four Americans dead. Members of Ansar al Sharia [called Belmokhtar afterwards to offer their congratulations](#) on the successful operation.