



**Solution to Enhance Interfaith
Protection of Places of Worship
from Terrorist Danger**

D2.1 State of the art analysis



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7	SPIN SYSTEM	SPIN	Belgium
8	HOCHSCHULE FÜR DEN ÖFFENTLICHEN DIENST IN BAYERN	BayHfoD	Germany
9	MUNICÍPIO DO BARREIRO	MBAR	Portugal
10	EUROPE ISLAMIC ASSOCIATION	EIA	Italy
11	INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF GLOBAL ANTISEMITISM AND POLICY - EUROPE	ISGAP	Italy
12	EUROPEAN ORGANISATION FOR SECURITY	EOS	Belgium
13	POLSKIE TOWARZYSTWO OCENY TECHNOLOGII	PTOT	Poland
14	ITALPOL VIGILANZA SRL	ITLP	Italy
15	CENTRO INTERNAZIONALE DI RICERCA SISTEMICA	CIRS	Italy
16	FONDAZIONE AMICI DELLA CATTEDRALE DI NOVARA	FACN	Italy
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Authors:

Organisation	Author
Z&P	Alessandro MARANI
Z&P	Paola FRATANTONI
Z&P	Alexandre LAZAROU
Z&P	Irene MARRONE

Contributors:

Organisation	Author
CIRS	Laura CASERTA
CIRS	Alberto D'ANGELI
CIRS	Mattia RACCAH
FACN	Edoardo MATTIELLO
SOF	Bartłomiej MAJCHRZAK
SOF	Marcin JEWOKIMOW
SOF	Wojciech SADLON
FUNDEA	Dimitris PAPANIKOLAOU
FUNDEA	José M. GONZALÉZ RIERA
EIA	Massimo COZZOLINO
EIA	Abbas KIWUWA
BUJS	Gábor WERNER
SYNYO	Niklas HAMANN
SYNYO	Francine MARTIN
IIT	Calin RUS
IIT	Oana NESTIAN SANDU
PTOT	Aleksandra KUZIOR
PTOT	Katarzyna POSTRZEDNIK-LOTKO
PTOT	Bartłomiej KNOSALA

Reviewers:

Reviewer n°	Organisation	Reviewer Name
1	SYNYO	Francine MARTIN; Niklas HAMANN
2	EIA	Massimo COZZOLINO

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Executive Summary

SHIELD's aim is to protect places of worship from terrorist attacks. To this purpose, the project will gather EU public and private actors - Christian, Jewish and Muslim organisations, security practitioners, LEAs, municipalities, experts in risk detection and technological partners - to identify, for each religion, critical points in places of worship (e.g. holy water fonts, matroneums, muşalla) as well as circumstances and rituals (e.g. Sunday mass, Shabbat, Jumu'a) that are more subject to the risk of terrorist attacks. In addition, SHIELD will identify the religious buildings (e.g. schools) that are potentially more vulnerable, as well as the types of terrorist attack (e.g. gunmen raids, bioterrorism, etc.) that would be more likely to be perpetrated.

Such risks and sensitive points - backed by an analysis of past attacks - will be tackled by developing new measures and by suiting already existing technologies (e.g. CCTV, sensors) to the above attacks. In addition, tailored recommendations and guidelines for LEAs and religious leaders will be outlined to favour prevention (e.g. identification of suspicious behaviour) and the implementation of common protocols to mitigate the impact of the attacks (e.g. standard evacuation procedures). Moreover, SHIELD will produce and distribute factsheets and leaflets to religious leaders, who will actively spread them and raise awareness on terrorist threat among respective communities. Furthermore, training sessions for practitioners and religious leaders will be organised to prove the practical feasibility of recommendations as well as the effectiveness of new solutions and methodologies, which will be tested and validated in joint simulations (e.g. to be carried out through the use of virtual reality).

Finally, SHIELD will foresee two workshops in Brussels, with the aim to share and disseminate the results of the project among relevant stakeholders, including EU policymakers and the general public.

Deliverable 2.1 reflects Task 2.1, which has the objective of carrying out a review of past terrorist attacks to Christian, Jewish and Islamic places of worship happened in Europe in the XXI^o century. The task will identify structural differences between buildings, the most frequent modalities of action from terrorists (e.g. raid of armed men, bioterrorism, contamination with poisonous substances, suicide bombings, etc.), the vulnerabilities exploited by them and the reaction of each religious community to such attacks, with the aim to identify differences as well as best practices and gaps in security procedures.

In the introduction, in the chapter 1, we will propose some definitions of 'terrorism', both by international organisations and by states. The basic idea is that the idea and concept of terrorism were not sufficient to group together the cases that will be dealt with in the project, and in particular for the protection of places of worship. In fact, in the introduction, a list of different terminologies useful for the project will also be proposed, such as fundamentalism, extremism, violent extremism, religious extremism and radicalisation. This introduction to the terms will serve to understand why the more generic concept of 'violent attack' was chosen, both in the historiography of past attacks and in the analysis of future threats in the securing of places of worship.

In Chapter 2, instead, we shall review the terrorist attacks which have happened in the EU since the XXI Century and, in particular, with a focus on the violent attacks against the three great monotheisms. Since it is impossible to analyse in detail all the single events, it has been decided to proceed with typical attacks to understand the context of the attack, the different modalities of attack, the structure itself, the vulnerabilities exploited by the attacker, the strength or weakness of the security measures put in place, the reaction of the communities. In this sense, four attacks were analysed for each religion, trying to diversify the geographical distribution, the chronology, the size of the community and the violence. Chapter 3 will deal with attacks directed against Christian places of worship. Chapter 4 deals with attacks on Jewish places of worship. Finally, chapter 5 will look at attacks directed against Muslim places of worship.

In Chapter 6, the differences and similarities between the attacks will be considered in order to make a comparison.

In Chapter 7, interviews with representatives of religious communities will be carried out in order to gain an even more comprehensive picture of the security of places of worship.

1. Introduction

In the introduction of this deliverable, we will dwell both on the definition of terrorism, and on the definition of other terms such as fundamentalism, extremism, intolerance, radicalisation.

This extension on definitions is not an end in itself. The purpose of the WP is to undertake a risk assessment on terrorist attacks to places of worship and religious buildings, respectively for Christianity, Judaism and Islam; consequently, recent terrorist attacks must be taken into account and analysed, in order to have a proper prevention and mitigation strategy in WP3.

Now, restricting the field to only terrorist attacks occurred in places of worship would have been a bit problematic, as it would have missed a whole series of "violent attacks" that, although not classified as terrorism, could have been very useful to understand the violent dynamics towards places of worship and the people who attend them. The problem of the exclusive use of the term "terrorist attack" is of a semantic but also political nature: on the one hand, there is no official and universally accepted definition of terrorism, thus resulting in each state having its own definition of a terrorist attack; on the other hand, choosing whether or not to consider a violent event as a terrorist attack is a choice with ideological and political consequences. The objective of this WP, and indeed of the project, is neither to give a definition of what is a terrorist attack, nor to make a choice in order to decide what is or is not a terrorist attack.

This deliverable is the result of Task 2.1, in which we carried out a review of past terrorist attacks to Christian, Jewish and Islamic places of worship happened in Europe in the XXI^o century. The task has identified structural differences between buildings, the most frequent modalities of action from terrorists, the vulnerabilities exploited by them and the reaction of each religious community to such attacks, with the aim to identify differences as well as best practices and gaps in security procedures. In this sense, we decided to give a broader meaning to the idea of "terrorist attack", thus including in the category all those violent events that involved places of worship and/or the people present inside, regardless of whether they are labelled "terrorist attack" or not.

1.1. Definition of terrorism

There is no single official and universally accepted definition of terrorism. For the purpose of this deliverable and the entire project, it is worth illustrating some of these definitions, thus showing what can be included under the broad umbrella of the word "terrorism". This activity would allow gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, pointing out its several features.

It should be added that for the purpose of SHIELD, no specific definition of terrorism will be taken as a benchmark. On the contrary, violent acts, in general, will be taken into consideration in order to carry out research on past terrorist attacks (as per task T2.1). The rationale behind this choice is not to rule out relevant events that may not tick all the boxes of a definition but could be relevant for the analysis. In addition, this general approach permits drawing additional conclusions on similarities, differences, recurrent elements across events without remaining blocked into the boundaries of a single definition.

Overall, terrorism is considered any use of violence or terror to achieve a political goal. Recalling the definition of Boaz Ganor, deputy dean of the Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) in Herzliya (Israel) "*terrorism is the deliberate use of violence aimed against civilians in order to achieve political ends*".¹

¹ Ganor, Boaz. "The Relationship Between International and Localized Terrorism". In Jerusalem Issue Brief, vol. 4, No. 26, June 2005, 28th. Available on <http://www.jcpa.org/brief/brief004-26.htm> (last access on 29/04/2019).

This section presents a few definitions provided by multiple international actors and organisations.

1.1.1. Definition of terrorism from International Organizations

1 - United Nations

The United Nations (UN) offers a definition in the General Assembly adopting the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy² (Resolution A/RES/60/288 adopted on 8 September 2006). The resolution states that “*acts, methods and practices of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations are activities aimed at the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy, threatening territorial integrity, security of States and destabilizing legitimately constituted Governments*”. In addition, it is mentioned that “*terrorism cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group*”, thus refraining from associating these characteristics as the main qualities of terrorism.

It is also worth mentioning the judgment of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon in 2011, which recognised that since at least 2005, a definition of “transnational terrorism” has existed within customary international law. This customary rule requires “*the following three key elements: (i) the perpetration of a criminal act (such as murder, kidnapping, hostage-taking, arson, and so on), or threatening such an act; (ii) the intent to spread fear among the population (which would generally entail the creation of public danger) or directly or indirectly coerce a national or international authority to take some action, or to refrain from taking it; (iii) when the act involves a transnational element*”.³ This finding is based on information taken from UN policies, practices, and norms, including those of the General Assembly, as well as upon national and international jurisprudence.

2 - European Union

At the EU level, it is relevant the EU Directive 2017/541 on combating terrorism.⁴ This document enlists numerous and diverse serious offences that “*EU countries must classify as terrorist offences in their national law when they are committed or there is a threat to commit them for a particular terrorist aim*”.

According to the directive, terrorist aims are:

- “seriously intimidating a population;
- unduly compelling a government or an international organization to perform or abstain from performing any act;
- seriously destabilising or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structure of a country or an international organisation”.

3 - NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) provides a detailed definition, indicating terrorism as “*the unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence, instilling fear and terror, against individuals*”.

² UN General Assembly. Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 8 September 2006 [without reference to a Main Committee (A/60/L.62)] 60/288. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy 60/288. <https://undocs.org/A/RES/60/288>

³ Interlocutory Decision on the Applicable Law: Terrorism, Conspiracy, Homicide, Perpetration, Cumulative Charging, STL-11-01/1, Special Tribunal for Lebanon, 16 February 2011, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/cases,STL,4d6280162.html> (last accessed 21 February 2022). <https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/terrorism/module-4/key-issues/defining-terrorism.html>

⁴<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3A4322328;> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017L0541&from=EN>

*or property in an attempt to coerce or intimidate governments or societies, or to gain control over a population, to achieve political, religious or ideological objectives”.*⁵

EUROPOL and INTERPOL recognise that the means adopted to perpetrate terrorist attacks are multiple and could be carried out either by groups or individuals; therefore, they have classified events and actions in multiple categories of terrorism.

4 - EUROPOL

The European Police Office (EUROPOL) provides five categories⁶ of terrorism in Europe: Jihadist terrorism, ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorism, left-wing and anarchist terrorism, right-wing terrorism and single-issue terrorism.⁷ Numerous actors are included in this scenario, such as returned foreign fighters, home-grown extremist Jihadists, lone actors, returnees who come from war zones, separatist groups or others. Similarly, different means and tactics can be identified, each of them related to the type of terrorist actor and its specific aims.⁸ Hence, EU vulnerabilities and the related risks are to be assessed in relation to the type of terrorism analysed.

5 - INTERPOL

According to the International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL), “*terrorism encompasses a range of complex threats: organized terrorism in conflict zones, foreign terrorist fighters, radicalized ‘lone wolves’, and attacks using chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive materials*”.⁹ Moreover, a characteristic feature is the way terrorist groups manage to incite individuals and recruit new people: in the latest years, social media and digital channels have become the primary means for engagement and radicalisation of individuals.

6 - United States of America

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) distinguished between international terrorism and domestic terrorism.

The expression international terrorism refers to activities that:

- a. *involve violent acts or acts dangerous to human life that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any State, or that would be a criminal violation if committed within the jurisdiction of the United States or of any State;*
- b. *appear to be intended -*
 - (i) *to intimidate or coerce a civilian population;*
 - (ii) *to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or*
 - (iii) *to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping; and*
- c. *occur primarily outside the territorial jurisdiction of the United States, or transcend national boundaries in terms of the means by which they are accomplished, the persons they appear*

⁵ NATO. *Military Committee Concept for Counter-Terrorism*. 2016, January 6th. Available on https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/topics_pdf/20160905_160905-mc-concept-ct.pdf (last accessed on 23/05/2019).

⁶ This categorisation is based on the referent actors involved; however, considering the means used in pursuing the political goals two additional forms should be added, namely bioterrorism and cyber-terrorism. These two forms will be explained respectively in the environmental and technological threats’ sections.

⁷ EUROPOL. *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2018*. Available on file:///C:/Users/Utente/Downloads/tesat_2018_1%20(1).pdf (last accessed on 29/04/2019)

⁸ EUROPOL. *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2018*.

⁹ <https://www.interpol.int/Crimes/Terrorism>

*intended to intimidate or coerce, or the locale in which their perpetrators operate or seek asylum”.*¹⁰

Domestic terrorism, instead, includes activities:

- *“involving acts dangerous to human life and that are a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any State;*
- *Appearing to be intended to:*
 - *Intimidate or coerce a civilian population ;*
 - *Influence the policy of government by mass destruction, assassination or kidnapping and*
- *Occurring primarily within the territorial jurisdiction of the United States”.*¹¹

Similarly, the Homeland Security Act definition of terrorism can be found in art 6 USC 101(18), including any activity that:

- *“ involves an act that*
 - *is dangerous to human life or potentially destructive of critical infrastructure or key resources; and*
 - *is a violation of the criminal laws of the United States or of any State or other subdivision of the United States and*
- *Appears to be intended:*
 - *To intimidate or coerce a civilian population;*
 - *To influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or*
 - *To affect the conduct of a government by a mass destruction, assassination or kidnapping”.*¹²

The FBI and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in alignment with the US Government, have defined threat categories that should help better understand the type of threats and thus allow implementing more efficient strategies.

Domestic terrorism is thus articulated following the subsequent division:

- a. radically or ethically motivated Violent Extremism
- b. anti-government or anti-authority Violent Extremism
- c. animal Rights/Environmental Violent Extremism
- d. abortion-related Violent Extremism
- e. other domestic terrorism threats, related to ideological issues, religion, gender topics or sexual orientation.¹³

1.1.2. Definition of terrorism from national states

7 - United Kingdom

Another precise definition is included in the United Kingdom Terrorism Act 2000, where terrorism is defined as

1. *the use or threat of action where -*
 - a. *the action falls within subsection (2),*

¹⁰ USC Title 18 - CRIMES AND CRIMINAL PROCEDURE, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2009-title18/html/USCODE-2009-title18-part1-chap113B-sec2331.htm>

¹¹ Domestic Terrorism: Definitions, Terminology, and Methodology — FBI, <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/fbi-dhs-domestic-terrorism-definitions-terminology-methodology.pdf/view>

¹² *idem*

¹³ *idem*

- b. *the use or threat is designed to influence the government (or an international governmental organization) or to intimidate the public or a section of the public, and*
- c. *the use or threat is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause.*
- 2. *Action falls within this subsection if it -*
 - a. *involves serious violence against a person,*
 - b. *involves serious damage to property,*
 - c. *endangers a person's life, other than that of the person committing the action,*
 - d. *creates a serious risk to the health or safety of the public or a section of the public, or*
 - e. *is designed seriously to interfere with or seriously to disrupt an electronic system.*
- 3. *The use or threat of action falling within subsection (2) which involves the use of firearms or explosives is terrorism whether or not subsection (1)(b) is satisfied.*
- 4. *In this section -*
 - a. *"action" includes action outside the United Kingdom,*
 - b. *a reference to any person or to property is a reference to any person, or to property, wherever situated,*
 - c. *a reference to the public includes a reference to the public of a country other than the United Kingdom, and*
 - d. *"the government" means the government of the United Kingdom, of a Part of the United Kingdom or of a country other than the United Kingdom*
- 5. *In this Act a reference to action taken for the purposes of terrorism includes a reference to action taken for the benefit of a proscribed organization".¹⁴*

8 - China

In China, the first official document that set a definition of terrorism is the Anti-terrorism Law Draft (ATLD), a document that aims to provide legal basis for the future anti-terrorism activities. Before the ATLD, there was no clear definition of terrorism in China's legislations or regulations, and few guidance on anti-terrorism legislative activities and judicial activities.

The ATLD establishes the concept of terrorism in legislation for the first time. The first edition of the ATLD as *"thoughts, speech, and behaviour that attempt to create public scare, affect national policy decision, provoke ethnic hatred, subvert the political power of the state, and split the state through violence, destruction, or threat"*. The second edition of the ATLD, instead, defines terrorism as *"proposition and behaviour that create public scare, endanger public safety, and coerce national organs or international organizations through violence, destruction, or threat."* This second definition clarifies more precisely that *"proposition and behaviour"* is the specific content of terrorism crime and extends the range threatened and affected by terrorism to international organizations.¹⁵

9 - Russian Federation

The Russian Federation illustrates in Federal Law No. 35-FZ on Counteraction against terrorism the concept. According to the Federal law:

1. *"terrorism shall mean the ideology of violence and the practice of influencing the adoption of a decision by public authorities, local self-government bodies or international organizations connected with frightening the population and (or) other forms of unlawful violent actions;*
2. *terrorist activity shall mean the activity including the following:*
 - a. *arranging, planning, preparing, financing and implementing an act of terrorism;*
 - b. *instigation of an act of terrorism;*

¹⁴ Section 1 Terrorism Act <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/11/section/1#commentary-c16756551>

¹⁵

<http://en.pkulaw.cn/DisplayJourn.aspx?lib=qikan&Gid=0a0f687b90aa2e537387eed938de2e20bdfb&keyword=>

- c. *establishment of an unlawful armed unit, criminal association (criminal organization) or an organized group for implementation of an act of terrorism, as well as participation in such structure;*
 - d. *recruiting, arming, training and using terrorists;*
 - e. *informational or other assistance to planning, preparing or implementing an act of terrorism;*
 - f. *popularisation of terrorist ideas, dissemination of materials or information urging terrorist activities, substantiating or justifying the necessity of the exercise of such activity;*
3. *terrorist act shall mean making an explosion, arson or other actions connected with frightening the population and posing the danger of loss of life, of causing considerable damage to property or the onset of an ecological catastrophe, as well as other especially grave consequences, for the purpose of unlawful influence upon adoption of a decision by public authorities, local self-government bodies or international organizations, as well as the threat of committing the said actions for the same purpose".¹⁶*

10 - France

Theoretically, France supports the definition of the UN High Level Panel. However, the definition given in Article 421-19 of the Penal Code¹⁷ is much broader as it is not limited to political aims or attacks against civilians:

"The following offences constitute acts of terrorism, when they are intentionally related to an individual or collective enterprise aimed at seriously disturbing public order through intimidation or terror:

- deliberate attacks on life, [...] on the integrity of the person, kidnapping and sequestration as well as the hijacking of aircraft, ships [...];
- theft, extortion, destruction, damage and deterioration, as well as computer-related offences [...];
- certain offences relating to combat groups and disbanded movements [...];
- certain offences relating to weapons, explosives or nuclear materials [...];
- receiving the proceeds of any of the [prece ding] offences;
- certain money laundering offences;
- certain insider trading offences.

Article 421-211 adds any act of poisoning the atmosphere, soil, food, water and Article 421-2-112 adds any organised complicity, i.e. "participating in a grouping formed or a cartel established with a view to preparing ... acts of terrorism ...", while Article 421-2-213 adds the financing of a terrorist undertaking.¹⁸

11 - Israel

On 23 June 2016, the Israeli Parliament approved a new counter-terrorism law, the Counter-Terrorism Law 2016, which will come into force on 1 November 2016.¹⁹ This law is the most important legislative contribution since 1948. It contains over 100 articles. In Israel, an "act of terrorism" is defined as an offence committed for nationalistic, religious or ideological reasons and which is intended to cause fear or panic among the population or to seek to compel the government or another authority to act,

¹⁶ <https://rm.coe.int/16806415f5%3E>

¹⁷ https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/section_lc/LEGITEXT000006070719/LEGISCTA000006136045/

¹⁸ https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/section_lc/LEGITEXT000006070719/LEGISCTA000006136045/

¹⁹ <https://www.lawfareblog.com/israels-counterterrorism-designation-regime-process-need-reform>

or refrain from acting, in a particular manner. In this way, in addition to the specific offences set out in the Anti-Terrorism Act itself, any ordinary offence can be considered an act of terrorism and the derogatory rules of procedure and evidence will apply.

These definitions provide a general understanding of terrorism but also highlights the lack of a common definition of the phenomenon, which make it more difficult to set a regulatory framework. Some definitions address terrorism in more general terms, while others are focused on specific features. The following summarises the main features of each definition.

1.1.3. Summary of the definitions of terrorism

Three main features emerge as common characteristics across (almost) all definitions:

1. Terrorist actions entail an act of violence / the (threat of) use of force;
2. They have the purpose of installing fear and intimidating;
3. the aim/ability to influence governmental actions and decision-making processes.

As anticipated, for the purpose of SHIELD, an extended definition of terrorism will be taken into consideration, as the general category of “violent acts” will be considered and analysed, independently from the presence of other relevant traits (e.g. motivation, transnational feature, etc.).

Table 1 - Summary of the definitions of terrorism

Authority/entity	Source	Core elements
United Nations	UN GA Resolution 60/2888 Interlocutory Decision on the Applicable Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - actions to determine destruction of human rights, fundamental rights, democracy - threat to territorial integrity and States' security - association to religion, ethnic groups, nationalities - perpetration of criminal act - intention to spread fear - transnational in nature
European Union	EU Directive 2017/541	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - threat or offence for terrorist aim - intimidation of population - paralysis of governmental or international organisations' response - destruction/destabilisation of fundamental political, constitutional, economic, social structure of a country
NATO	Military Committee Concept for Counter-terrorism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use of force or violence - purpose of installing fear and/or terror - intimidation of a response - political, religious, ideological goal
EUROPOL	EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use of violence - multiple motivations - groups or individuals - different types of tactics

INTERPOL	Interpol crime of terrorism definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use of violence - different and complex security threats - groups or individuals
United States of America (FBI)	US Code Title 18	<p>Difference between international and domestic terrorism</p> <p>1) International terrorism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use of violence - violation of US or any other state's law - intimidation of civilian population and governments <p>2) Domestic terrorism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - violent action against lives - violations of laws (US or other country) - intimidation of the population - national territory
United States of America (Homeland Security)	Homeland Security Act	<p>Difference between international and domestic terrorism</p> <p>1) International terrorism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - danger to lives and/or infrastructures - violation of US law (or any other state) - intimidation/coercion of civilian population - intimidation/coercion of governments <p>2) domestic terrorism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - violent extremism with different motivations: ethnical, animal, environmental, religious, anti-governmental
United Kingdom	UK Terrorism Act 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (threat of) violence - intimidation of population - intimidation of government - political, religious, ideological aims - also outside UK territory
China	Anti-terrorism Law Draft (ATLD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (threat of) violence/destruction - actions to create public fear - intimidation of population and government - influence on political decision-making
Russian Federation	Federal Law n°35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - violence - influence on decision-making - fear to population - danger to lives/properties
France	Penal Code Art. 421	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - individual or collective

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - intention of seriously disturbing public order - intimidation or violence
Israel	Counter Terrorism Law 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - any offence committed for nationalistic, religious or ideological reasons - intention to cause fear/panic among population - intimidation to the government

1.2. Terrorist attacks, violent extremism, religious intolerance: a clarification on terms

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon in Europe's history, and throughout the years, increasing and decreasing trends have alternated. The word 'terrorism' first originated during the French Revolution (1789-1799) and was used to describe the government; by 1848, it was used to describe violent revolutionaries. By the end of the 1800's and early 1900's, the meaning had again changed to describe the violent acts of several organized groups, such as labour organizations of socialism inspiration, anarchists, nationalistic groups, and ultra-nationalistic political organizations.²⁰ Since 1970s, terrorist attacks have been carried out throughout European countries, with consistent peak of activity in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.²¹

Following 9/11 events, the perception of this threat – especially in relation to Jihadist terrorist groups, increased among Europeans: however, the numbers of attacks remained below the levels of the previous years. Eventually, nationalism became the main motivation behind acts of terrorism; however, a clear shift had already begun as religion came to the forefront of terroristic reasoning.

Terrorism has, then, been a protagonist of the EU environment for decades: it may have changed targets or means to carry on the violence but has remained a constant. Most likely, it will continue to occupy the scene also in the future. Methods and objectives differ, and new forms of terrorism may emerge in the future, perhaps exploiting new technological developments. New forms of terrorism could grow within a nation, but most probably would have cross-border nature, given the increasing connectivity and multilateralism that will characterise the future international environment. This would require the EU to adapt modalities and means to properly address the new threats, which could range from more resilient cyber capabilities to space-based counterterrorism strategy, reaction teams, training and multilateral or joint operations. In order to be able to tackle this phenomenon properly, it is fundamental to understand its features, its actors and its goals.

Some of the previous definitions associate specific motivations to the carrying out of a violent action, such as political or religious beliefs. Several scholars have provided taxonomies and categorization of different types of terrorism. As an illustration, this paper recalls the work of Hirschmann,²² who identifies five types of terrorism:

- *Ideological*, associated to a desire for revolutionary changes within political or social structures;

²⁰ Rausch, Cassandra. "Fundamentalism and Terrorism" in the Journal of Terrorism Research, Volume 6, Issue 2, May 2015.

²¹ Cordesman, Anthony. "Trends in European Terrorism: 1970 – 2016", . Available at https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/170818_european_terrorism_trends_1970_2016.pdf (last accessed on 05/11/2019).

²² Hirschmann, K. (2000). The changing face of terrorism. *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft*, (3), 299-310.

- *ethno-political*, in which ethnic minorities aim to set their own state within an existing state or to achieve some degree of political and cultural autonomy;
- *religious*, fostered by a desire to impose religion-based norms of conduct appears and often leading to form of fanaticism;
- *single issue*, involving the extremist militancy of groups/individuals protesting a perceived grievance;
- and “*chosen ones*”, who are mentally disturbed/deranged individuals with a certain mission or social philosophy who are not connected to a network.

All these forms of terrorism are worth attention and have had an impact on societies across the time. Since 9/11, religious terrorism has gained more focus, thus entering the decision-makers agenda at national and international levels, despite not being the only form of terrorism perpetrated nowadays. Nationalism has been replaced by fundamentalism, meaning the religious motivation behind the act of terrorism. Multiple factors could have paved the path for this change: a lack of political capabilities in developed countries, a wicker need for political action in the Western societies, and the resurgence of religion.²³

Based on these considerations and the overarching scope of SHIELD, the focus of this analysis will be terrorist acts related or inspired by religious motivations: this section, therefore, aims to clarify some expressions that are associated with this topic, such as fundamentalism, extremism, religious extremism, violent extremism, and religious intolerance.

1.2.1. Fundamentalism

Fundamentalism refers to the wish of groups to have their religion practiced purely, such as groups pushing for an overhaul of the national or global political system with a cultural connection to a religion. From an ideological perspective, fundamentalists strive for defence of tradition, selective choice in doctrine, dualistic morality, absolutism, and messianism.²⁴

Echoing the definition of the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, fundamentalism include “*any movements – not simply religious ones – that advocate strict and literal adherence to a set of basic beliefs or principles*”. In line with this approach, fundamentalism cannot be merely reduced to terrorism, extremism or religion but it is more broadly “*a mindset based on intolerance and difference*”.²⁵

However, as religion has assumed a more capillary role in terms of terrorists’ motivation, fundamentalism has progressively been seen as a politicization of religion in order to pursue nonreligious goals, such as political ones. In late 20th and early 21st century, this is the most common acceptance of fundamentalism.²⁶

From 1980 onward, religious groups were responsible for ever-increasing violent conflicts in comparison to non-religious nationalist groups, allowing one to argue that the new ‘religious’ terrorism

²³ Ross, J.I., & Gurr, T.R. (1989). Why terrorism subsides: A comparative study of Canada and the United States.

²⁴ Emerson, M.O., & Hartman, D. (2006). The rise of religious fundamentalism, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 32, 127-144.

²⁵ UN General Assembly. Report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights. A/HRC/34/56. 16th January 2017, available at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/007/43/PDF/G1700743.pdf?OpenElement> [last accessed on 24/02/2022].

²⁶ Tibi, B. (1998). *The challenge of fundamentalism: Political Islam and the new world disorder*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

is due to the increasing prevalence of religion in the ideology of terrorist organizations, subsequently working to influence the increase of indiscriminate violence.²⁷

1.2.2. Extremism

The expression extremism is often associated – and also used interchangeably – with the word “fundamentalism”. However, there is a slightly difference in these two expressions. Extremism, indeed, refers to a “*vocal or active opposition to fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs*”.²⁸ Extremism includes also movements not drawing from religion, thus having “*a broader and more fluid concept than fundamentalism but also more vague and liable to abuse*”.²⁹ Shortly, fundamentalism is a form of extremism and extremism can also be fuelled, but it is not mandatory, by religious dogma.

Social scientists at the UN Office on Drugs and Crime have identified a set of indicators that help recognizing extremism. According to this study, extremists tend to (and aim to):

- re-establish what they consider the natural order in society (would it be based on race, class, religion, faith, ethnicity);
- accomplish an ideological plan that could lead to taking political power;
- discredit and reject universal human rights;
- refuse diversity and pluralism;
- perceive themselves as threatened and victim of some form of injustice.³⁰

1.2.3. Violent extremism

There is no universally recognized definition of violent terrorism. This expression is usually used in combination with terrorism and radicalization. A research paper by Schmid highlights multiple and sometimes contradictory definitions of violent extremism, choosing to assign this expression the meaning of “*an ideology that accepts the use of violence for the pursuit of goals that are generally social, racial, religious and/or political in nature*”.³¹ A similar definition is shared by several scholars (e.g. Neumann, Southers).

Violent extremism is, hence, associated to multiple ideological motivations:

- race ideology (e.g. black separatists, Ku Klux Klan, Neo-nazis, etc.);
- religious ideology (e.g. Christian identity, Muslim Identity, Aryan nations, etc.);
- issue-oriented ideology (e.g. anti-government, anti-abortion, environmentalists, etc.).³²

Violent extremism, hence, could be also inspired by religious motivation: however, this does not represent a distinctive feature. With regards to violence associated to religious terrorism, suicide tactics usually prevail, as the idea of self-sacrifice one’s own life in the name of a deity is considered a badge of honour. Martyrdom, death, suicide, and violence are perceived as acceptable and successful instruments to glorify the religious belief, with actors not fearing the risks of repercussion from authorities.³³ It is interesting to note the detail highlighted by Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN). Violent extremism embraces acts of violence committed for ideological reasons; however, it is “*the nature and scale of the violence is what distinguishes extremism from terrorism*”.³⁴

²⁷ Bergensen, A.J., & Lizardo, O. (2004). International terrorism and the world-system. *Sociological Theory*, 22(1), 38-52.

²⁸ UK HM Government. PREVENT Strategy. PREVENT Programme. London: The Stationery Office Limited, 2011.

²⁹ UN General Assembly. Report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights. A/HRC/34/56. Op. Cit.

³⁰ Schmid, Alex. P. “Violent and Non-Violent Extremism: Two Sides of the Same Coin?” *The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague* 5, no. 5 (2014)

³¹ *ibidem*

³² *ibidem*

³³ Stern, J. (2003). *Terror in the name of god: Why religious militants kill*. New York, NY: Harper Collins

³⁴ RAN (2018). RAN - EX POST PAPER Police prevention and countering of far-right and far left

1.2.4. Religious extremism

Religious extremism is any behaviour, attitude, or belief outside the norm of religious beliefs or practices. This type of extremism often resorts to violence and may lead to the creation of smaller groups or cults. Religious extremism is present in all religions, thus cannot be considered as a unique characteristic of one single faith.³⁵

With regards to religious extremism, individuals are bound by norms that make them conform in ways of behaviour, violence, intolerance, and self-destruction in order to achieve the group's goals. Such behaviours and attitude, even when violent, legitimise their interpretation of the religious doctrine. Furthermore, these groups tend to reject the political goals of their society and community, opposing the ruling power. Any action is legitimised as it is perpetuated in the name of a religious ideal in order to comply to the abovementioned rules, independently from its acceptability in the mainstream form of the religion. As an illustration, from a Jihadist terrorists' perspective, jihad legitimises any action against mankind; however, this understanding is not shared by all Islam believers.³⁶

Ideologies behind religious extremism are multiple and variegated in their core features:

- *Islamic extremism* reckons that traditional Islamic values must be universally adopted in order to destroy the Western influence and restore the pure form of Islam. Western culture, its governmental and economic postures are seen as violations of the Koran by act of illegitimate Muslims that have turn their backs to the values of the faith and people.
- *Christian extremism* prescribes that Christianity and its teaching should be the foundation of all political decisions and teachings. Ecumenical Marxism and the Christian Identity Movement belong to this category;
- *Antiabortion/right to life* is a political and social movement that considers abortion, at any stage of pregnancy, as a murder. In this light, violent actions such as bombing of abortion clinics is considered motivated, acceptable and moral.
- *Militant Zionism* derives from a Jewish movement arisen in the late 19th century in response to the growing anti-Semitism in Europe. Representatives of this ideology believe strive for the reestablishment of Palestine as the homeland of Jewish people. They are clearly concerned with the support and the continuation of the State of Israel.
- *Hindu extremism* is a henotheistic religion: it recognises one god and also its manifestation in multiple deities. Although Hinduism condemns the use of violence in any of its forms, Hindu extremism allows it in the form of self-defence against the "evils". They support the perpetuation of the Hindu religion majority over the Muslim and Sikh minorities.³⁷
- *Sikh extremism* is a branch of Hinduism that promotes equality among people and no distinctions based on race, caste or creed. Sikh extremists believe in the transmigration of the soul after death as a result of a person's deed during his/her life. A Sikh minority in northern India is trying to establish an independent state - Khalistan - carrying out several attacks, including the killing of India Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984.
- *Messianic salvation/apocalyptic cultism* trusts the return of Jesus Christ on Earth to save the worthy followers of his Credo. These believers assume an inevitable apocalypse and, thus, dedicate their effort to get prepared to a final confrontation between good and evil.

extremism. 13 April 2018. https://ec.europa.eu/homeaffairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ranpapers/docs/ran_pol_police_prevention_and_countering_of_far-right_and_farleft_extremism_rome_12-13_april_2018_en.pdf

³⁵ https://malala.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs1061/f/downloads/OVPR_1617_2_lamMalalaTookit_4-Religion-and-Religious-Extremism_FINAL.pdf

³⁶ Pech, R.J., & Slade, B.W. (2006). Religious fundamentalism and terrorism: Why do they do it and what do they want? *Foresight*, 8(1), 8-20.

³⁷ The ethnic conflict in India has led to the emergence of multiple indigenous and opposite terrorist groups, such as the Hindu extremists and the Sikh extremists.

- *Occultism* is a type of belief and practice that seeks to establish contact with the dead, thus entering the paranormal world. Occultists believe to be able to go beyond the laws of physics, being them custodians of an esoteric knowledge precluded to common men.
- *Paganism/animism* are beliefs that attributes life to all beings, also inanimate ones. Life originates from souls, which are separate beings before birth and after death. Holy men, trances and idols are typical features of animistic societies, while Earth-centred polytheism characterises pagan societies.³⁸

1.2.5. Religious intolerance

According to Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR),³⁹ *“everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance”*. The same principle is restated in other treaties and declarations regarding human rights, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Article 10.1).⁴⁰ Despite the acknowledgement of these rights, history and news prove another reality. There are multiple examples of violations of the freedom of religion across centuries and countries: from the persecution of different beliefs during the Ottoman or the Roman empire, to the witch hunting in the Middle Age, to the ongoing fighting between Sunni and Shiite Muslims.⁴¹

The expression religious intolerance, hence, follows in this domain: as the UN GA Resolution 36/55 (November 1981) states, *“intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief” means any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on religion or belief and having as its purpose or as its effect nullification or impairment of the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis”*.⁴²

Religious intolerance, hence, is not directly or necessary associated with violence but identifies an attitude, a behaviour, that hinders and marginalises groups of people or individuals based on their religion or belief. This phenomenon can be witnessed in limited environments (such as at schools, among children or young people) but can also affect the society on a larger scale, leading to social discrimination (e.g. access to public institutions or health systems) or even worse to violent actions (e.g. attacks on religious places).

³⁸ Nance M.w. Terrorist Recognition Handbook. A Practitioner’s Manual for Predicting and Identifying Terrorist Activities. (Boca Raton: CRC Press,).

³⁹ The UDHR was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 december 1948 with over 50 Member States participating in the drafting. The document represents a milestone in the recognition and protection of human rights and has inspired several human rights treaties, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. United Nations (UN). Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights> (last accessed on 01/03/2022).

⁴⁰ *“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes freedom to change religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or in private, to manifest religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance”*. European Union. Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf (last accessed on 01/03/2022).

⁴¹ Martin, G. *“Violence in the name of the Faith: Religious terrorism”* in Understanding Terrorism: Challenges, Perspectives, and Issues. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2006).

⁴² OHCHR. Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief”. 25th November 1981. Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/religionorbelief.aspx#:~:text=For%20the%20purposes%20of%20the,of%20the%20recognition%2C%20enjoyment%20or> (last accessed on 01/03/2022).

1.2.6. Radicalisation

The word radicalisation lacks a common definition as well. The European Parliament defines radicalisation as “*the phenomenon of people embracing intolerant opinions, views and ideas which could lead to violent extremism*”.⁴³ The European Commission position is aligned, stating that radicalisation “*is understood as a complex phenomenon of people embracing radical ideology that could lead to the commitment of terrorist acts*”. Similarly, the USA Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs defined it as “*the process of adopting an extremist belief system, including the willingness to use, support, or facilitate violence, as a method to effect societal change*”.⁴⁴

Radicalisation is, hence, closely interrelated with the concepts previously illustrated, and could be understood as the turning point that sets off a shift from a belief or an ideology to the adherence to its more extreme versions, potentially leading to the adoption of violent behaviours.

This brief overview aims to clarify some expressions that are often used interchangeably or in a superficial way, associating the most appropriate meaning to each of them and highlighting their relations. The following section will be dedicated to religious terrorism, providing more information and specific features of this phenomenon.

1.3. Religious terrorism in a global perspective

Religious terrorism represents a specific portion of the phenomenon “terrorism”, which has its root in religious beliefs. It has ancient roots and history offers plenty of examples that can be associated with multiple and diverse faiths.

As an illustration, during the Roman Empire, the Zealots were members of a Jewish sect that opposed pagan Rome and its polytheism. The Zealots were an aggressive political party whose concern for the national and religious life of the Jewish people led them to despise even Jews who sought peace and conciliation with the Roman authorities. According to historians, a census of Galilee ordered by Rome in AD 6 spurred the Zealots to rally the populace to noncompliance on the grounds that agreement was an implicit acknowledgement by Jews of the right of pagans to rule their nation. Extremists among the Zealots opted for terrorism and assassination and became known as Sicarii (Greek *sikarioi*, “dagger men”). They frequented public places with hidden daggers to strike down individuals friendly to Rome. They played a major role in the Jewish rebellion against Rome in AD 66–70 and in the excavation of Masada in the 1960s and 70s, where they committed suicide rather than surrender the fortress.⁴⁵

In the Middle Ages, Western Christians launched several invasions of the Middle East. Such actions are known as the Crusades, taking their name from the Cross that people fought for. The goal of the Crusades was to free the Holy Lands from the Muslims (the Saracens). According to the Christian church, by fighting and dying in the name of the Cross (and of God), the Crusaders would have obtained a place in Heaven; thus, violence was accepted and justified for a noble cause. During the Crusades, Muslim, Jewish and Orthodox Christian residents in the attacked territories were massacred.⁴⁶

⁴³ EP (2015). European Parliament resolution of 25 November 2015 on the prevention of radicalisation and recruitment of European citizens by terrorist organisations (2015/2063(INI)). Retrieved from http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2015-0410_EN.html

⁴⁴ US SCHSGA (2007). Threat of the Islamic radicalisation to the Homeland. Written testimony to the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Washington, D.C., March 17, 2007, by E. Allen, Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis and Chief Intelligence Officer, U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

⁴⁵ Applebaum, S. (1971). The Zealots: The Case for Reevaluation. *Journal of Roman Studies*, 61, 155-170.

⁴⁶ Martin, G. “Violence in the name of the Faith: Religious terrorism”. Op. cit.

Another pertinent example is offered by the Order of Assassins (also called the Brotherhood of Assassins), founded by Hasan ibn al-Sabbah in Persia in 11th century. Al-Sabbah was a caliph of the Ismaili sect of Islam, who followed a radical interpretation of the faith. He founded the Order to protect this interpretation. The name has its origins in the word *hashish*, as it is passed on that al-Sabbah and its followers used to eat hashish before conducting acts of violence. *Hashashins* or *hashishis* – where the order's name comes from – literally means “hashish eaters”. The Assassins operated in modern Iraq, Syria and the occupied land of Palestine and can be held accountable for violence against Muslims (Sunnis) and Christians.⁴⁷

Examples can be easily found also in more recent times. In 1979, for instance, around 200 armed Sunni Muslim militants from all over the world seized control of the Grand Mosque in Mecca (Saudi Arabia) where 50.000 believers were reunited for the dawn prayers. The attack was led by a 40-year-old preacher called Juhayman al-Utaybi. The militants announced the arrival of the *Mahdi*, a prophesied saviour, whose name was Mohammed bin Abdullah al-Qahtani.⁴⁸ The Mahdi would have “*reign with justice and fairness on Earth after it has been filled with injustice and oppression.*”⁴⁹ The seizure, indeed, was a protest against the royal family, whose behaviour and lifestyle were not perceived as adherent to the Islamic principles.

Besides the violence perpetuated, this event had a significant symbolic relevance: the Grand Mosque in Mecca is the holiest place of Islam and the resort to armed men in a place where the Koran strictly prohibits violence was as surprising as outrageous. The siege lasted two weeks until the Saudi military recaptured the mosque, killing Al-Qahtani and lately arresting and beheading al-Otaybi and his followers. After this event, the Saudi royal family implemented stricter enforcement of Shariah and adopted a more conservative approach in policy building.⁵⁰

After 9/11, the number of attacks claimed by Islamic fundamentalists sharply increased, grabbing the spotlight in international politics. Different groups have been involved: from al-Qaeda to ISIS, including minor branches or cells associated with or close to these groups. Common factors were, and still are, the use of violence against civilians in the name of Allah, the opposition and condemnation of Western cultures and values, and the instrumental use of social media to support their cause.

Several scholars and policy makers are still trying to understand whether it is the religion that guides the violent act or the opposite, being violence the glue to gather consensus and attract people. What is quite acknowledged is that religiously-motivated terrorism is one of the most pressing problems several countries, including America and other Western nations, are facing nowadays.⁵¹

It is worth mentioning that the 21st century has witnessed a significant change in the perception and awareness of this phenomenon. The 9/11 events and the greater availability of media have facilitated the “globalization of terrorism”.

⁴⁷ *ibidem*.

⁴⁸ Nance M.w. Terrorist Recognition Handbook. A Practitioner's Manual for Predicting and Identifying Terrorist Activities. Op.Cit.

⁴⁹ BBC. “Mecca 1979: The mosque siege that changed the course of Saudi history”. 27 Dec 2019.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/stories-50852379> (last accessed on 03/03/2022).

⁵⁰ BBC. “Mecca 1979: The mosque siege that changed the course of Saudi history”. Op. Cit.

⁵¹ See, e.g., MARK JUERGENSMEYER, TERROR IN THE MIND OF GOD: THE GLOBAL RISE OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE 6 & n.3 (2000) (noting that Warren Christopher, among others, has characterized “terrorism in the name of religion and ethnicity” as “the most important security challenge we face in the wake of the Cold War”); BRUCE HOFFMAN, INSIDE TERRORISM 86-88 (2d ed. 2006) (documenting the recent rise in religiously motivated terrorism and suggesting that religious terrorism is often more intensely violent, with higher fatalities, than secular terrorism).

9/11 has marked a new era: the “war on terror” launched by the United States has unified most of the Western countries and contributed to throwing terrorism on a global scale. People across the globe started feeling the fear of terrorism and its violent manifestations, sharing the sense of not feeling safe in their own country. In this context, social media has played a crucial role. On the one hand, social media allows sharing of information faster and broader, thus reaching a greater audience across the entire globe. Consequently, the images from the Twin Towers, as well as the video posted by Islamist terrorists claiming the attacks or the kidnapping of journalists in the following months, have managed to enter the houses (and lives) of common people, bringing the peril “closer” to them but also creating a common “enemy” to stand against.

Simultaneously, social media has been largely adopted by terrorist groups themselves, not only to show the brutality of their actions and their ability to hit the heart of civilisations but also to send their message for propaganda, recruitment and fundraising purposes, representing an efficacious way to reach a broad audience. Several young people have, indeed, embraced the terrorist cause, based on a religious belief and an idea of redemption from a frustrating social condition. Furthermore, the use of the internet and social media facilitates the availability of bomb-making instructions: despite national and European institutions trying to intervene promptly to remove these contents from the internet, several sources still exist where everyone interested can acquire valuable information and produce his/her terrorist weapon.

Religious terrorism has, hence, grown and proliferated across countries and range of age, creating a *fil rouge* across societies. Although there is a lack of consensus on its definition too, religious terrorism can be defined as “a type of political violence motivated by an absolute belief that an otherworldly power has sanctioned – and commanded – terrorist violence for the greater glory of faith”.⁵² Religious terrorism is, hence, itself characterised by political tension and cannot be relegated merely to the religious sphere. The definition provided by Heather Gregg is quite interesting: “the threat or use of force with the purpose of influencing or coercing governments and/or populations towards saliently religious goals”.⁵³ Although the researcher recognises some similarities with traditional terrorism (e.g. use of violence, political goal, etc.), a peculiarity of religious terrorism is the use of sacred texts and historic examples in its narratives.

A comparison with other types of terrorism is also offered by Bruce Hoffman, who illustrates the core features of religious terrorism by comparing it to secular terrorism (non-religious). The table below⁵⁴ illustrates the findings of his research.

Table 2 - Activity Profile Environment

Environment	Quality of violence	Scope of violence	Constituency Profile	Relationship to Existing System
Religious	Unconstrained scale of terrorist violence <i>Result:</i> Unconstrained choice of weapons and tactics	Expansive target <i>Result:</i> Indiscriminate use of violence	Narrow, insular, and isolated <i>Result:</i> No appeals to a broader audience	Alienated “true believers” <i>Result:</i> Completely reconfigured social order

⁵² Martin, G. “Violence in the name of the Faith: Religious terrorism. Op. Cit.

⁵³ Gregg Heather S. “Defining and Distinguishing Secular and Religious Terrorism” in Perspectives on Terrorism, Vol. 8, No. 2 (April 2014), pp. 36-51.

⁵⁴ Hoffman B., Inside Terrorism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

Secular	Constrained scale of terrorist violence <u>Result:</u> Relative constraint in choice of weapons and tactics	Focused target definition <u>Result:</u> Relative discrimination in use of violence	Inclusive for the favoured group <u>Result:</u> Appeals to actual or potential supporters	Liberators <u>Results:</u> Restructured or rebuilt society
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Other factors are relevant to have a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

As already mentioned, terrorism is a means to achieve a goal. It is, therefore, a tactic that can be employed both by government and non-state actors. Religious terrorism can be perpetuated by organised groups, individuals acting as lone wolves, clandestine cells, groups of people organised as dissident movements, and governmental authorities. Moreover, it can have specific orientations, thus being revolutionary or conservative, nihilistic, communal or genocidal⁵⁵. In the analysis of Gregg, three major categories of terrorism are identified based on the overarching goal they aim to achieve:

- *Apocalyptic terrorism* - the core aim is to cause cataclysmic destruction to people, property and the environment, thus contributing to triggering the end of the world and initiating a new and better one. This type of terrorism is extremely dangerous as it also contemplates the resort to Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in order to achieve its goal. Examples of apocalyptic terrorism are the Gush Emunim in Israel or the Aum Shinrikyo cult in Japan.
- Terrorism aiming at the *creation of a religious government* - the guiding principle is to abolish the secular state and establish a state governed by religious doctrine and law. Usually, the creation of a religious government is contemplated within a state (e.g. Hezbollah in Lebanon or Hamas in Israel; however, this type of terrorism may also have a transnational orientation, thus aiming to create religious regions or super-states (e.g. the Islamic State).
- Terrorism aiming at a *religious cleansing* - the main goal is to establish a religiously pure state, thus eliminating all the unfaithful (both within the same religion or in others). This type of terrorism can be easily associated (or confused) with terrorism pursuing ethnic cleansing. Although there might be some similarities, the crucial feature is religion - not ethnicity - which distinguishes both terrorists and their targets. Al-Qaeda, for instance, gathers Muslims from all over the world, independently of their ethnic origin: they are all Muslims.

Religious terrorism, hence, stems from religious beliefs and is linked to the achievement of political and/or social objectives. In reaching this end, installing fear is instrumental, as it contributes to destabilising the existing order, thus making it easier to establish a new equilibrium based on different pillars.

The following sections refer to the type of target that religious terrorists can hit, considering two main categories: places and people. In performing this analysis, both tactical and symbolic targets will be taken in consideration: the former refer to targets that serve the purpose of specific, earthly goals, while the latter embrace those that pertain to a more abstract level and are related to religious goals.

1.3.1. Religious terrorism in places

Places are amongst the possible targets of religious terrorists, independently of their religious nature. Recalling the previous paragraph, places could be both tactical and symbolic targets. The first group embraces, for instance, foreign embassies and other religious places. Hitting these places has a specific tactical aim: it shows the vulnerability of the “others”, undermining their organisation and potentially

⁵⁵ Martin, G. “Violence in the name of the Faith: Religious terrorism”. Op. cit.

destabilising their order. By attacking these places, terrorists manage to reach the heart of the political or religious system, undermining its strength and power.

Foreign embassies are also home to politicians and representatives of other countries - and thus cultures/religions - within a specific country: in this case, the attack can be used to jeopardise the image and the perception of that specific country in the territory.

Other groups' religious sites can also be targets of terrorist attacks. This type of target is quite unique to religious terrorism, and can also support the abovementioned cleansing approaches. Attacks on religious sites allow destroying fundamental referent points in others' beliefs, thus contributing to setting the ground for the foundation of a new order.

In addition to these tactical targets, religious terrorism can hit symbolic targets, which belong to a more abstract sphere; terrorists, indeed, aim to attack someone else's culture, norms, set of values and principles, as they do not consider them conform to their religious ideals. Examples of these targets include bars, discos, movie theatres or other social gathering points, as they may represent the immorality of the culture terrorists are rejecting and fighting.⁵⁶ Examples could be the attack at the hands of Muslim extremism on a hotel in Turkey in 1993, targeting "leftist writers and intellectuals", or the bombing of a bar popular among the LGBT community in Atlanta by a group of Christian Identity activists in 1997. The massacre of the Bataclan or the attack at Charlie Hebdo in Paris in 2015 can be associated with this same group.

1.3.2. Religious terrorism against people

People could also be the target of terrorist attacks, would they be hit as individuals or as part of a group. Recalling the previous distinction, they can represent both tactical and symbolic targets.

Considering individuals, terrorists can choose to hit a specific person based on his/her role in society or in the opposed religion/culture. Heads of state or government officials, for instance, belong to this category: they, indeed, could represent a political power that is not accepted or recognised as legitimate. Therefore, targeting these figures clearly points out the refusal of that authority and shows the vulnerability of such power, thus potentially undermining the societal consensus and support. Targeting religious personalities could have a twofold meaning: on the one hand, it can have a relevant symbolic value as these people personify a specific religion or culture; on the other, they could represent a role model and a guide in their community, as well as the glue that keeps the community together and anchored to some principles and values. Although a violent, offensive action against them may trigger passion and revenge in the followers, it cannot be excluded that it may lead to the opposite outcome, i.e. the disintegration of the community's bond.

In terms of collectivises, groups can be targeted as part of the strategy to pursue religious cleansing: as mentioned, religious cleansing can be expressed as cleansing of culture or ideas, as well as the annihilation of another group, which has different religious beliefs. As an illustration, the Jewish

⁵⁶ Gregg Heather S. "Defining and Distinguishing Secular and Religious Terrorism". Op.Cit.

colonists associated with the JDL /Kach movement⁵⁷ in the West Bank aim at expelling non-Jews from those territories, assigned to them by divine will.⁵⁸

Other potential targets of religious terrorism could be military forces stationed on specific territories, whose presence is considered illegitimate, either as they witness the presence of a foreign state, or they personified an opponent religious/culture and thus are *infidelis* to be eradicated. The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF), for instance, has been hit by Palestinian Islamic militants in their strategy to liberate the Holy Land from the foreign occupiers.

Another example of groups as targets of religious terrorism are those that are defined as *apostates*, i.e. people embracing the same religion but that are considered to be deviating from the pure rules and principles that the cult prescribes. The above-mentioned siege of the Grand Mosque is an example, as well as the long-standing fight between Sunnis and Shiites mostly in the Middle East.

1.4. Content of this report

The information provided in the previous sections has pointed out how difficult it is to define and delimitate the concept and phenomenon of terrorism. The existence of multiple and diverse definitions creates difficulties in demarcating the phenomenon and setting a regulatory framework. Moreover, there are numerous types of events and actions that could be included under the umbrella of the word “*terrorism*”. Therefore, for the purpose of this deliverable (and in the entire project), the consortium has agreed to adopt a broad definition of terrorism, thus considering in general “violent events”.

The following sections provide an analysis of violent events in general in order to delineate the characteristics of the attacks, the driving factors, common features and recurrent elements, thus potentially establishing correlations among events, type of attack, location, etc.

It might be challenging to retrieve information about some attacks, as some information may be classified or non-accessible. However, the analysis tries to include as many events as possible in order to cover the greatest range of varieties. It should be stressed, however, that this analysis does not claim to be exhaustive, reckoning the limitations it incurs into.

Subsequently, a more in-depth analysis of some of these events is performed. The events are selected in order to represent different types of attacks, i.e. an attack on a Christian church, one on a synagogue, the action of a fundamentalist or that of a political extremist, etc. This activity would allow a better understanding of the specific features of different types of attack, thus having a more comprehensive overview of the complexity of this phenomenon.

⁵⁷ Kach (meaning "This is the Way") was an extreme right-wing anti-Arab party founded in 1971 by Rabbi Meir Kahane and the Jewish Defense League, an organization that he had established in the United States several years earlier. The Kach Movement had openly declared racist orientation. Representatives of this group push for the transfer of the Arab population from Israel before it would have become a majority and called off the Jewish state. The group also supported: i) the recognition of Israeli sovereignty over all territories of Israel west of the River Jordan (including the West Bank and the Gaza Strip); ii) a transition to a state governed by Jewish law; and iii) a radical change in the educational system that would emphasize Torah study and religious revivalism. In 1990, Kach split into two factions, one that continued to carry the name “Kach” and a second called “Kahane Hai” (also “Kahane Chai,” meaning “Kahane Lives”). In 1994, after the massacre in the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron committed by Dr. Baruch Goldstein—who was on the party’s list and represented the party in the Kiryat Arba local council—both Kach and Kahane Hai were declared terrorist organizations and were made illegal. The Israel Democracy Institute. Kach. <https://en.idi.org.il/israeli-elections-and-parties/parties/kach/> [last accessed on 07/03/2022].

⁵⁸ *ibidem*

1.4.1. Failed and foiled attacks: an important issue

In the analysis of violent events linked to terrorism, the report also takes into consideration two additional categories, i.e. failed attacks and foiled attacks.

The expression *failed attacks* refer to those plots that failed because either the would-perpetrators made a mechanical mistake or they changed intention. A failed attack could be due to the technical failure of an explosive device, as happened in the Faisal Shahzad's failed Times Square car bombing attempt in 2010. It is likely that there are many more failed plots than those there is publicly available information, especially if the failure is related to perpetrators choosing to abandon their plan of action.

Foiled attacks are those attacks that turn out to be unsuccessful because of some kind of intervention, could that be from the general public, the perpetrator's friends or family, or government authorities. Attacks can be foiled at different stages of the operations, such as during the planning (e.g. the authorities manage to find out about the plot through intelligence operations) or during the implementation of the attack (e.g. special forces intervene timely to stop the perpetrators), etc. It is relevant to monitor how plots can be foiled, whether the public or the authorities played a major role in the intervention, whether surveillance or informants were relevant, or again whether the government that directly interrupted the plot had assistance from a foreign government or not. This information is important to study terrorism but also to develop counterterrorism policies.

The report, hence, takes into account also failed and foiled attacks to retrieve useful information to gain a more comprehensive picture of those factors and elements that may jeopardise the successful realisation of an attack, thus being crucial elements for terrorism management and countering strategies.

1.4.2. Vulnerability versus lack of awareness

Our focus exceeds the actual approach to religious terrorism. We demonstrate that vulnerability to terrorist attacks is conditioned not only by 'objective' risk but also by subjective (social) resilience and awareness of the threat. In this part, we characterize the vulnerability of regions that conventionally are not under threat and demonstrate that lack of awareness of risk in regions may result in 'blind-spots' that need consideration as well.

In addition, the analysis in this report focuses on the concept of *vulnerability*, considered as relevant as other factors, to have a complete overview of the situation and identify those gaps where policy intervention can come to the rescue.

Vulnerabilities can be defined as "*the inherent weaknesses of a potential target*", "*the conditions determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors or processes which increase the susceptibility of an individual, a community, assets or systems to the impacts of hazards*".⁵⁹ Assessing vulnerabilities in the context of attack scenarios is relevant as it contributes to determining the level of risk to which a specific asset (in SHIELD case, places of worship) is exposed. According to the ISO/IEC definition, a risk is "*the potential that a given threat will exploit vulnerabilities of an asset or group of assets and thereby cause harm to the organization*",⁶⁰ where "vulnerability" is intended as a condition of weakness of an asset or group of assets that can be exploited by one or more threats. Risk (R) can be evaluated as the product of three factors, vulnerability (V), impact (I) and likelihood (L).

Based on this function, by reducing the vulnerability, it is possible to reduce the level of risk; vice-versa, if the vulnerability increases, the level of risk could rise. Consequently, this information is crucial as it

⁵⁹ <https://www.undrr.org/terminology/vulnerability>

⁶⁰ ISO/IEC PDTR 13335-1 Proposed Draft Technical Report.

will apprise decision-makers of effective deterrence and mitigation measures, strategies to minimise exposure, emergency management plans and enhanced resilience.⁶¹

Recalling the definition of the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management, of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, “*Vulnerability describes the characteristics and circumstances of a community, system or asset that make it susceptible to the damaging effects of a hazard. There are many aspects of vulnerability, arising from various physical, social, economic, and environmental factors*”.⁶²

There are four main types of vulnerability:

1. *Physical Vulnerability*: it is related to physical, tangible and quantifiable aspects, such as population density levels, remoteness of a settlement, the site, design and materials used for critical infrastructure and for housing;
2. *Social Vulnerability* refers to the inability of people, organizations and societies to withstand adverse impacts to hazards due to characteristics inherent in social interactions, institutions and systems of cultural values. It is highly influenced by the quality of life and well-being of individuals, communities and society. It embraces the levels of literacy and education, access to basic human rights, good governance, social equity, customs and ideological beliefs and overall collective organizational systems;
3. *Economic Vulnerability*: It is linked to the economic status of individuals, communities and nations. Traditionally, people with lower income are more vulnerable to disasters because they have no resources to build adequate structures to protect themselves from the negative effects of disasters;
4. *Environmental Vulnerability*: Natural resource depletion and resource degradation are key aspects of environmental vulnerability.⁶³

This definition is particularly relevant for the purpose of SHIELD as it shows how vulnerability cannot be restricted to a merely physical condition but in it is highly influenced by multiple factors. In performing the analysis, hence, all these factors will be taken into account, thus determining their relevance in defining the level of vulnerability and consequently the exposure to the risk of a specific building. The research also pays attention to the level of awareness and attempts to establish a correlation between this factor and the vulnerability of the related territories, thus investigating how a lack of awareness of the risk exposure may result in “blind-spots”.

⁶¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/pps/items/674909>

⁶² <https://www.odpm.gov.tt/node/162>

⁶³ <https://www.odpm.gov.tt/node/162>

2. Violent attacks with religious objectives in Europe: an overview of XXI century

2.1. Terrorist attacks in Europe in the last decade: a general overview

The graph below shows the terrorist attacks that took place in Europe between 2010 and 2020. Obviously, within these figures, there are different types of motivations: religious (most of them jihadist), far-right, far-left, anarchist, ethnic, nationalist, separatist, single-issue and especially many unspecified ones (which may be due to mental illness, violence and crime, etc.). Within this heterogeneity of attacks, only attacks aimed at places of worship and people inside them or in their immediate vicinity will be analysed in the next chapter, and throughout the rest of the deliverable.

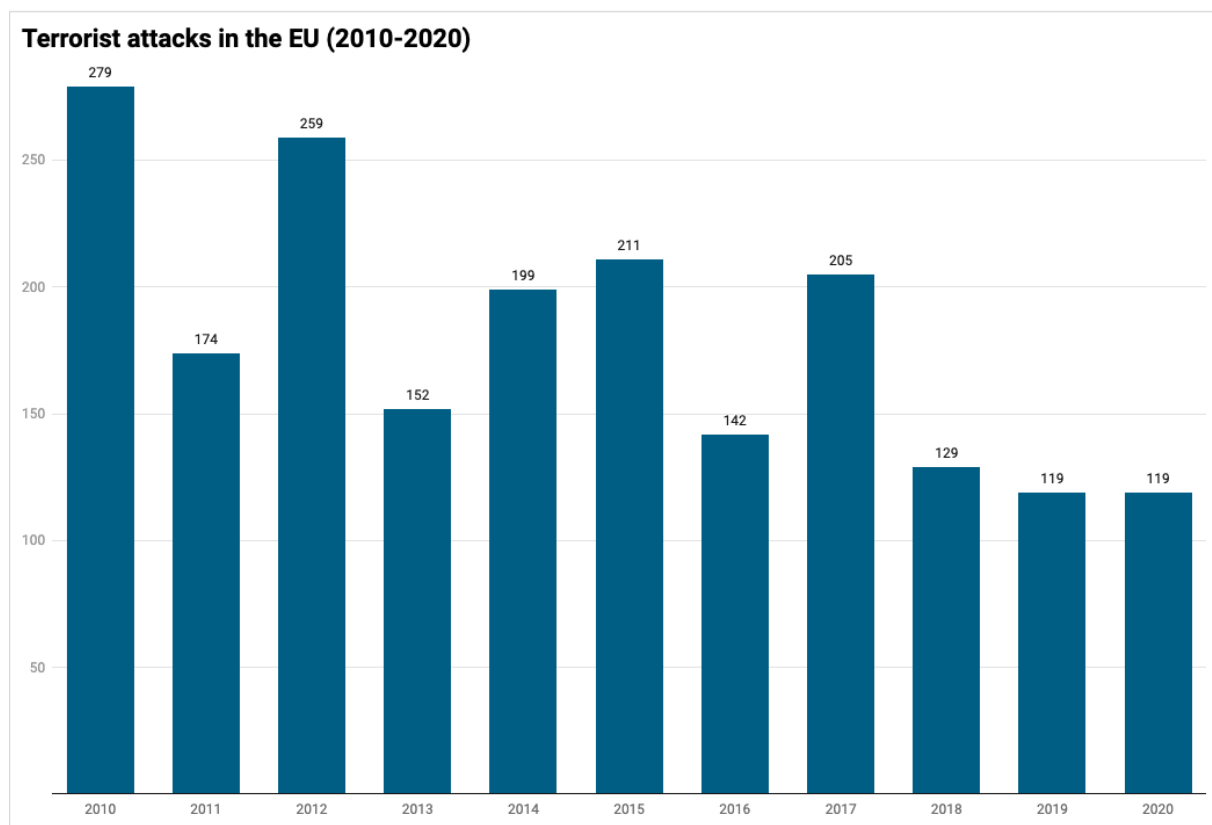


Figure 1 – Terrorist attacks in the EU (2010-2020)⁶⁴

These data are only indicative and try to show a trend on events classified as 'terrorism' in Europe by the respective nation states. They do not therefore take into account all those 'violent attacks' against places of worship presented in the next section and instead contain many types of attacks which will not be covered.

⁶⁴ source: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/it/infographics/terrorism-eu-facts-figures/>

2.2. Violent attacks in Europe: religious objectives

Figure 2 shows the countries in the EU that have experienced at least one violent attack on religious buildings (with or without people inside). As it can be seen, almost all European countries have, over the last 20 years, suffered a direct violent attack on a religious building. The problem of the security of places of worship and their protection against the terrorist threat is obviously asymmetrical since not all countries are affected in the same way. Even if they have not always been the main target of the most serious terrorist attacks in recent years, or those that have caused the greatest number of victims, places of worship have a highly symbolic value, both as places of spirituality and as places of art, history and culture. Places of worship are among the elements that characterise the European landscape. The protection of places of worship should be ensured since these places are one of the physical contexts where, as a matter of course, people exercise their fundamental right to freedom of religion, particularly in its community dimension.

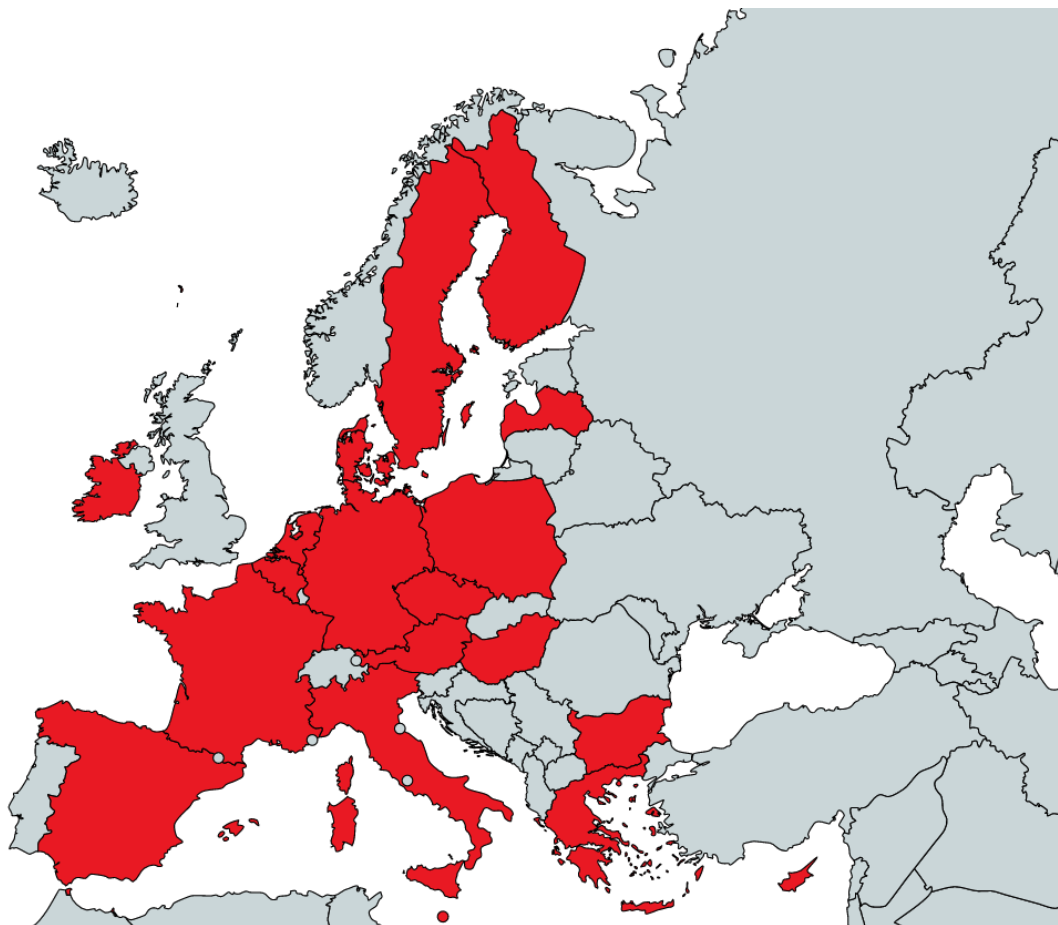


Figure 2 – EU Countries that have experienced at least one violent attack on religious buildings

Figure 3 below shows the distribution of attacks against the three analysed religions, by country.

Number of violent attacks per country per targeted religion

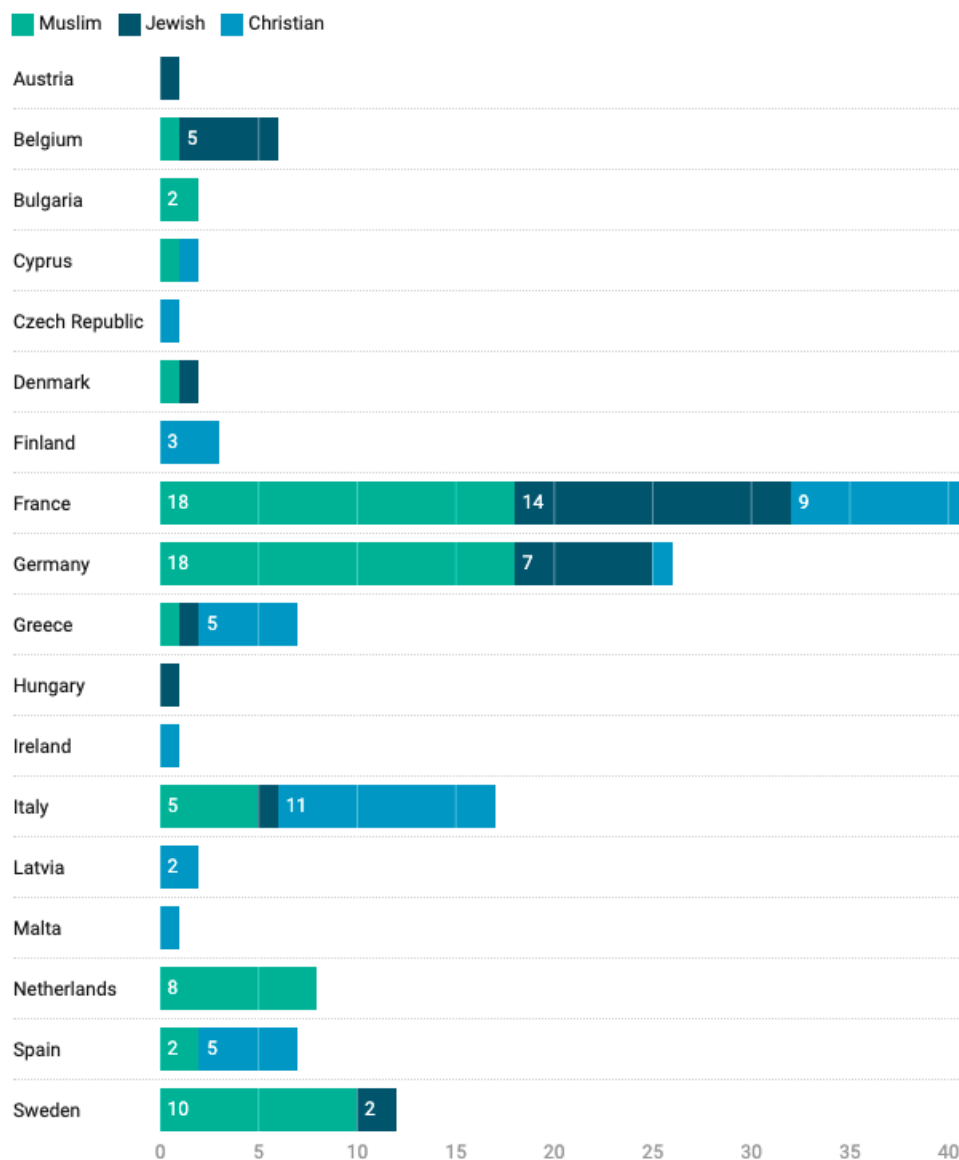


Figure 3 – number of violent attack per country per targeted religion

This graph (which does not distinguish between attacks on buildings and attacks on people) allows various hypotheses and considerations:

1. Anti-Semitism and attacks against the Jewish community are recurrent problems in several states in Europe, especially in those countries where there is a strong presence of Muslim minorities, such as France, Germany, Belgium and Sweden. At the same time, some of the violent attacks against Jewish communities are carried out by extreme right-wing extremists.
2. Attacks against Muslim places of worship (rather than against Muslims themselves, since there have not been many victims of Muslim worship in Europe) are more prevalent where the Muslim community is most present: France, Germany and Sweden. Italy and Holland represent peculiar cases: attacks on Muslim communities have been significant despite the low percentage of Muslims present in the territory.
3. Finally, it can be seen that attacks on Christian places of worship are more or less transversal throughout the European Union and have the most disparate motivations, from anarchism to jihadist Islam, making them a target opposed by several actors.

Percentage of violent attacks toward the 3 monotheisms in the EU

■ Christian ■ Muslim ■ Jewish

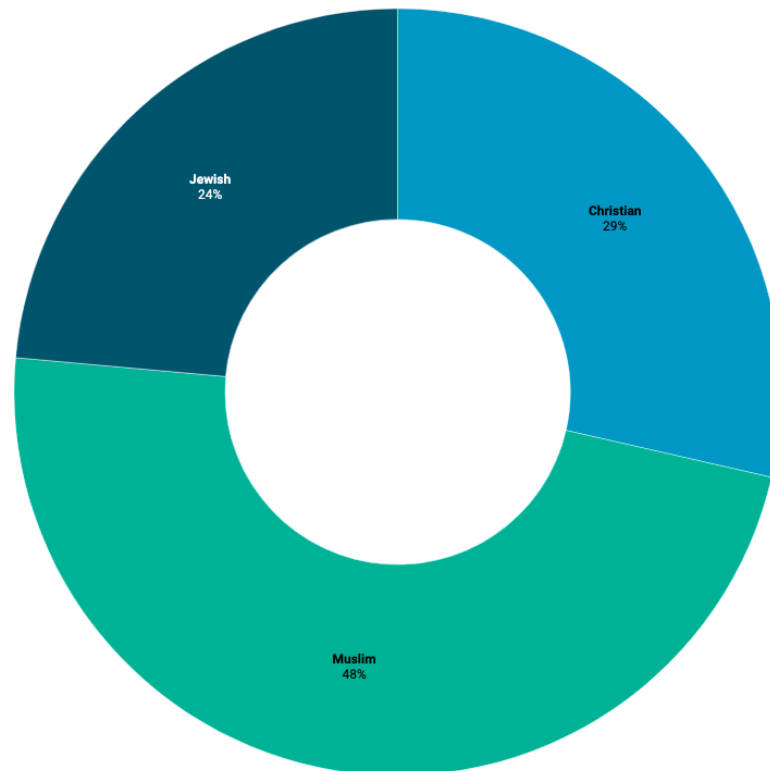


Figure 4 – percentage of violent attack toward the 3 monotheisms in the EU

In Figure 4 we can see the percentage of violent attacks against the three monotheisms in the European Union. As can easily be seen, almost half of the recorded violent attacks were against the Muslim community. It should be borne in mind that these attacks are multiple and include both those directed against people and against buildings. The rest of the attacks are equally divided between the Christian and Jewish communities.

Here again, some considerations are possible and some assumptions can be drawn:

1. Most of the attacks hitting the Muslim community are concomitant or subsequent to jihadist attacks on European soil. When they are not, what most likely influenced the attacks (if there is a political and/or religious motivation) is certainly the image of a part of the Muslim community that would be conniving or silently supporting jihadist attacks in Europe. Most attacks on the Muslim community are carried out in the form of attacks on places of worship.
2. Attacks on the Christian community are manifold and perhaps very difficult to analyse, since there is a mixture of typologies and motivations behind them: vandalism (as also for all other communities), extreme left-wing or anarchist groups (especially in Greece and Italy), and above all Islamic jihadism, with a clear will both to destroy and undermine strong symbols important for European identity, and sometimes to hit people directly.
3. The attacks against the Jewish community are surprising: although they are only 25% of the total, thus the lowest number, they have been very violent attacks and often with victims. Moreover, Jews are only about 0.2% of the entire population of the European Union⁶⁵: they are extremely over-represented in violent attacks that still see them as a target of a variety of actors, in particular, the extreme right and jihadist Islam.

⁶⁵ <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jewish-population-of-the-world>

Number of violent attacks on places of worship between 2000 and 2020

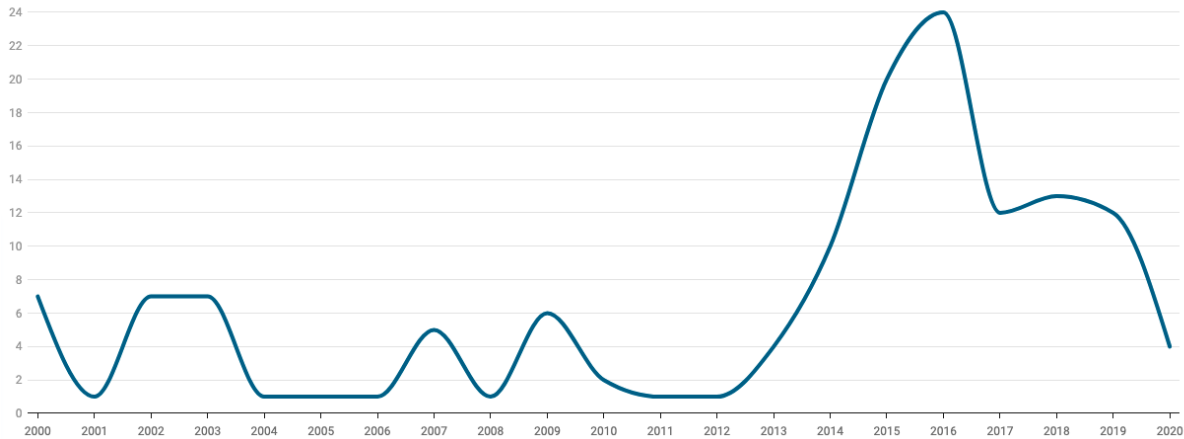


Figure 5 – number of violent attacks on places of worshio between 2000 and 2020

This graph illustrates the trend of violent attacks on places of worship in Europe between 2000 and 2020. The curve shows a fluctuation in the first ten years of the twenty-year period, a peak between 2013 and 2017 and, then, a new drop again. This trend can be associated with two major factors: on the one hand, the years of greatest activity of the Islamic State⁶⁶ (thus assuming an increase in perpetual attacks on Christian and Jewish places of worship); on the other, a more significant influx of refugees - often Muslims – in the same years,⁶⁷ which would also explain the increased number of attacks on Muslim places of worship.

Compositions of the attacks per weapon type

Explosives ■ Firearms ■ Incendiary ■ Melee ■ Unknown

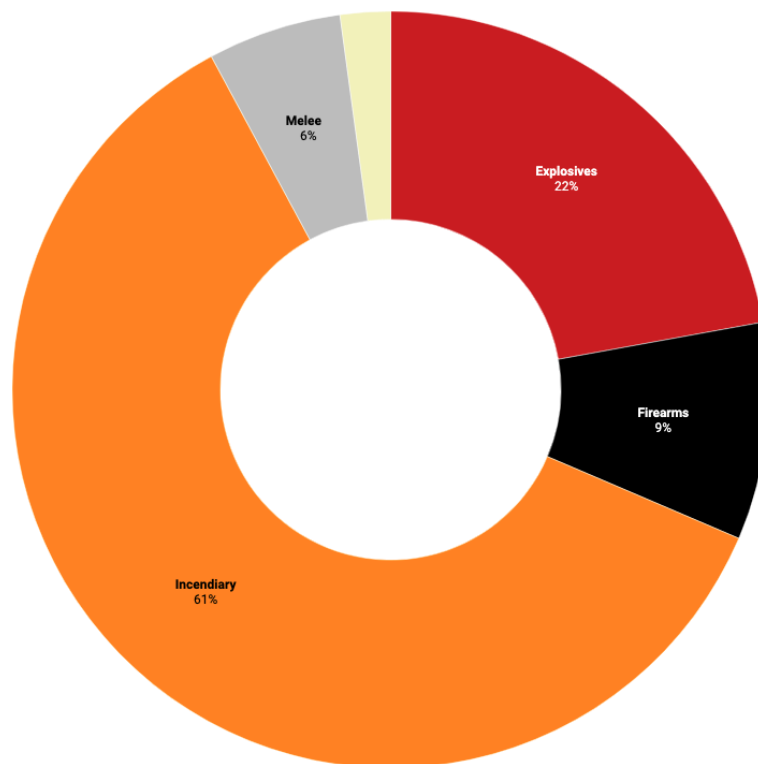


Figure 6 – composition of the attacks per weapon type

⁶⁶ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/isis-declares-new-islamic-state-in-middle-east-with-abu-bakr-albaghdadi-as-emir-removing-iraq-and-syria-from-its-name-9571374.html>

⁶⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2015_European_migrant_crisis

In Figure 6 we can see the different types of weapons used during violent attacks. Most of the attacks were made with incendiary means or bombs, thus accounting together for more than 80% of the total types of attacks. The majority of attacks carried out using these modalities are directed toward buildings. Explosives are often planted at night, with the aim of intimidating rather than physically striking since most victims of violent attacks are victims of firearms and/or bladed weapons. These considerations will be useful in the upcoming tasks and in WP3 (“Identification of security measures”) to better define risk assessment and security measures to be proposed.

Firearms, on the other hand, are used in 9% of cases and are obviously the ones that risk making the most victims since explosives are mainly used in the absence of people in places of worship. Therefore, despite a low percentage of firearms use, their potential negative effect on people's lives is very high, and this will also be an element to be taken into account when formulating security measures and strategies.

A similar analysis can be made for bladed weapons (usually knives), which are also potentially lethal and undoubtedly aimed at hitting people and not places. It should be noticed that procuring a weapon (if one is not a permit holder) reveals superior logistical and organisational skills and, therefore, lends itself less to the action of 'lone wolves'. White weapons, on the other hand, which can potentially be acquired by anyone (just think of the knives used in the kitchen) seem to indicate the actions of a more isolated subject, less able to organise himself logistically and without a network of contacts, but with the same will to act and inflict damage. This profile is more likely to be categorised as a 'lone wolf'.

The phenomenon of “lone wolf” terrorism, which has increasingly attracted the attention of scholars, consists of terror attacks perpetrated without the operational involvement of terrorist organizations in initiating, planning, or executing the attack. The “lone wolf” phenomenon is not new; throughout history, individual independent terrorists have perpetrated attacks without any guidance, operational involvement, or organizational support from terrorist organizations. However, it would appear that the expanding use of the Internet has significantly contributed to the growth of this phenomenon. The Internet has enabled terrorists worldwide to be part of virtual communities of like-minded people, contributing to the radicalization of their members, educating one another on planning and executing attacks, all without ever physically meeting one another. It has also enabled terrorist organizations to post and disseminate propaganda and offer instructions on how to produce weapons, ammunition, and explosives. Members of such virtual communities and other potential “lone wolves” who are exposed to this material might be inspired to perpetrate terrorist attacks. The ability of the terrorist propagators (organizations and other entities) to directly communicate (locally and internationally) with radical youngsters all over the world enables them to further radicalize and also motivates these individuals to execute “lone wolf” attacks in different countries.⁶⁸

It becomes, hence, relevant to understand how the actions of “lone wolves” can have consequences on violent attacks and their importance.

⁶⁸ Boaz Ganor, *Understanding the Motivations of “Lone Wolf” Terrorists*, *Perspectives on Terrorism*, April 2021, Vol. 15, No. 2 (April 2021), pp. 23-32
https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/27007294.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Ad86dd9c4230c7b428d88cf35264cf30f&ab_segments=&origin=

Percentage of lone-wolf attacks per religion, based on the total number of attacks per religion

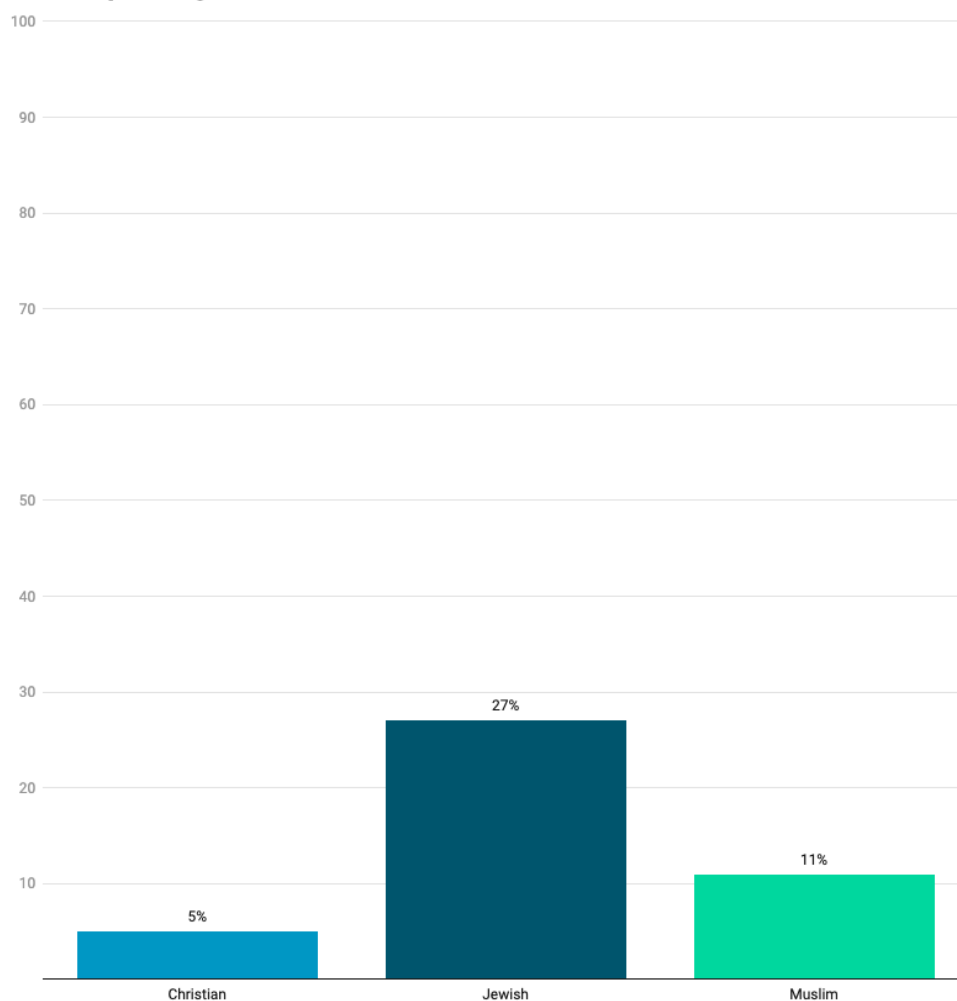


Figure 7 – percentage of lone-wolf attacks per religion, based on the total number of attacks per religion

Figure 7 illustrates the percentage of "lone wolves" in the total number of attacks. However, it must be remembered that these percentages must also include all the events when the number and/or organisation of the attackers is not known. In the case of attacks against Christians, for example, 5% are lone wolves: however, this does not mean that the remaining 95% are organised violent actions. It is relevant to highlight that, if for the Christian and Muslim religions, the percentage of violent attacks carried out by "lone wolves" is not very high, the opposite holds true for the Jewish community, against which almost 30% of the attacks were carried out by "lone wolves". This element must be taken into consideration in the adoption of adequate security measures that seek to mitigate the negative effects of the action of the "lone wolves". It must be remembered, indeed, that the "lone wolves" have caused a good part of the victims of the terrorist attacks in Europe even though it may be thought that they are less logistically efficient and not affiliated to any organization (at least not officially).⁶⁹

⁶⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/202110/ran_lone_actors_as_challenge_for_pcve_july_2021_en.pdf

Type of attack per target religion

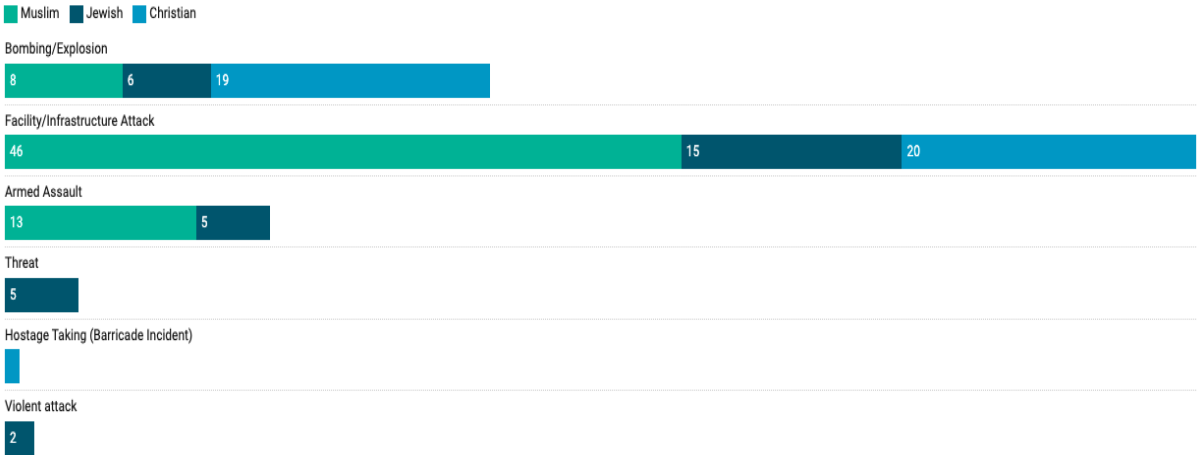


Figure 8 – type of attack per target religion

This graph (Figure 8) attempts to point out any substantial difference or correlation between the religion under attack and the type of weapon used. The distribution seems to provide only a few elements for reflection. All three religions could be victims of any kind of attack. In particular, the Jewish community has indeed experienced all possible types of violent attacks, and the threat is amplified in their case. Finally, several places of worship of the three monotheisms have suffered attacks of different types. This element will be useful to proceed with the risk assessment, as the multiplicity of attacks will be taken into consideration, as well as the fact that there is no substantial difference and/or correlation between the type of attack and the targeted religion.

3. Attacks to Christian religious buildings

3.1. Attack n°1: analysis of the bomb attack on two churches near Padua, Italy (2003)

3.1.1. Introduction

In February 2003, two bombs exploded forty minutes apart at the Catholic churches of Reschigliano Campodarsego and Villanova di Camposampiero, two small communities very close to the city of Padua. In the second explosion, a nun was slightly injured in an eye due to the explosion of the church's windows. The two bombs exploded during the night. The first bomb was placed in front of the door of the church in Reschigliano Campodarsego, 5 kilometres near Padua. The explosion caused damage to the external wall of the church and broke a window glass. The other explosion, which took place in Villanova di Camposampiero, 14 kilometres from Padua, shattered the door of the church and broke the windows of the nearby parochial kindergarten, where a nun who was sleeping was injured.⁷⁰

3.1.2. Spatial framework

Reschigliano Campodarsego is a small Italian municipality of 14,000 inhabitants, while Villanova di Camposampiero has about 10,000. Both small municipalities have experienced a significant increase in population, given their proximity to the city of Padua, with more than 200,000 inhabitants. The province of Padua, in turn, has almost 1 million inhabitants, despite its small territorial extension.⁷¹

As far as religious distribution is concerned, Padua has traditionally been one of the main centres of Italian Catholicism, despite a very small but constant Jewish community, which has never exceeded 250 members.⁷² The migratory waves of the late 1990s and early 2000s profoundly changed the religious composition of the province. While before the 2000s, the percentage of foreigners was insignificant, in 2003 it was about 30,000 individuals, rising to more than 100,000 in 2021, about 9% of the total population. In the city of Padua alone, more than 15% of the inhabitants are foreigners. Most of them come from Romania and Moldova, while others come from Morocco, Nigeria, Tunisia and Senegal, the latter altering the almost exclusively Catholic composition of the province. At the regional level, there are around 150,000 Muslims in Veneto (almost exclusively foreigners or those who have subsequently obtained citizenship), representing 10% of all Muslims resident in Italy.⁷³ Although the composition of faiths and citizenships has become heterogeneous over the years, there is no official mosque in Padua or Veneto, but only places of worship, either locally recognised (not nationally) or not recognised but informally used as places of worship.⁷⁴ The areas of the attacks and, in general, those of Padua have never known violent attacks with religious motivations, having instead been the scene of bloody clashes and attacks by both right and left extremists.⁷⁵ The choice to analyse these two attacks comes from three core factors:

- i. these events are among the least recent occurred in the region,
- ii. the method used is quite peculiar (explosion of a bomb),

⁷⁰ "Bombe davanti a due chiese. Ferita suora nel padovano", La Repubblica, 09/02/2003.

https://www.repubblica.it/online/cronaca/bombechiesa/bombechiesa/bombechiesa.html?refresh_ce

⁷¹ <https://www.amministrazionicomunali.it/provincia-di-padova/andamento-popolazione>

⁷² Ioly Zorattini P.C., L'archivio antico della comunità ebraica di Padova, Firenze, ed. Olschki, 2004.

⁷³ ISTAT - National Institute of Statistics <http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?QueryId=19106>

⁷⁴ "Moschee: tanti cantieri aperti ma solo 4 luoghi di preghiera ufficiali per 1 milione 600 mila musulmani", La Repubblica, 09/12/2014 <https://www.repubblica.it/solidarieta/diritti-umani/2014/12/09/news/moschee-102473423/#:~:text=Le%20moschee%20ufficiali.,D'Elsa%2C%20Segrate%20Milano>

⁷⁵ Bisaro F., Ragno F., Brigate rosso sangue. Mazzola e Giralucci, il primo omicidio delle BR, ed. Ferrogallico, collana anni'70, 2019.

- iii. mystery persists about those responsible for the attacks and the various attributions of responsibility.

3.1.3. Modality of action: progression of the attack

Not much is known about how this happened, as the investigation is formally unresolved and archived, and the perpetrators have never been identified. What is evident in this case is that at least two people had to be in two different places and coordinate on the explosion, one occurring about 40 minutes apart. Moreover, it cannot be excluded that the same person and/or group moved first to one place and then to another, the road between the two places of worship being passable in much less than 40 minutes. Firstly, an explosive device was detonated in Reschigliano at around 11 p.m. in front of the Reschigliano church, seriously damaging the façade and exploding the glass. The second explosion, which occurred about 40 minutes later, damaged the side of the church in Villanova and shattered the glass in both the church and the surrounding buildings, in particular a kindergarten where there was a nun, who was slightly injured.⁷⁶

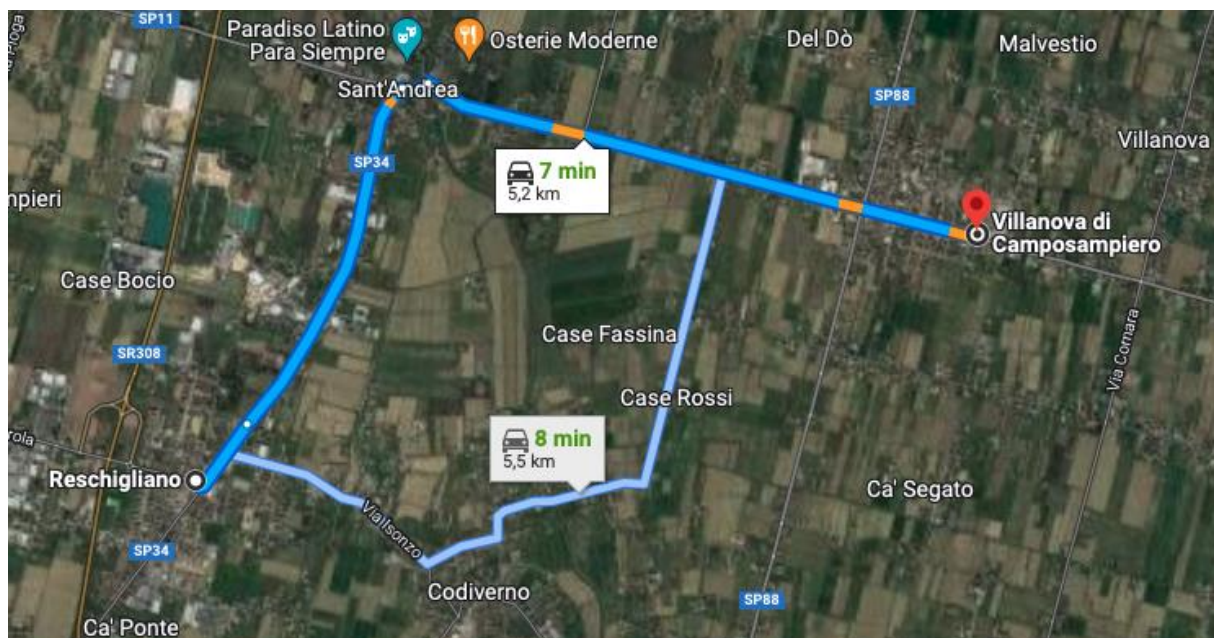


Figure 9 – Driving distance and travel time between the first place of attack and the second one

Another element to take into account is that the two attacks are quite undoubtedly linked since the type of device is the same for both the attacks: a mixture of TNT pressed into metal containers, detonated with a fuse and a physical detonator. This element allows assuming that only one or more persons with a background and experience in handling explosives (since the devices were not 'home-made' because of their complexity) could have carried out such an attack with this explosive device.

Motivation and responsibility remain unclear: two churches at close range were hit during the day and at a time when they were notably empty. Moreover, the two small churches are located in the Italian countryside, quite out of the news. At first glance, this event may seem very small: however, the potential of the device could have been fatal, had it been detonated during Sunday mass.

It could also be assumed that the two bombs were used by the person or group responsible for testing the effectiveness of the intended device. In this case, however, there should have been other explosive

⁷⁶ Bombe davanti a due chiese. Ferita suora nel padovano”, La Repubblica, 09/02/2003.

https://www.repubblica.it/online/cronaca/bombechiesa/bombechiesa/bombechiesa.html?refresh_ce

devices planted later, perhaps in more distant and crowded locations and apparently unrelated to these two, causing casualties. This eventuality did not happen.

3.1.4. Building structure and surroundings

The first building, where the first device exploded, which caused no injuries, was the church in Reschigliano, whose façade was seriously damaged and all the glass in the church exploded. The device did not cause any other damage and did not hit or pass by people (there was probably no one there at the time) or damage any other buildings.

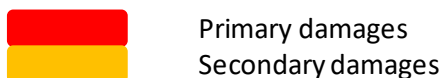
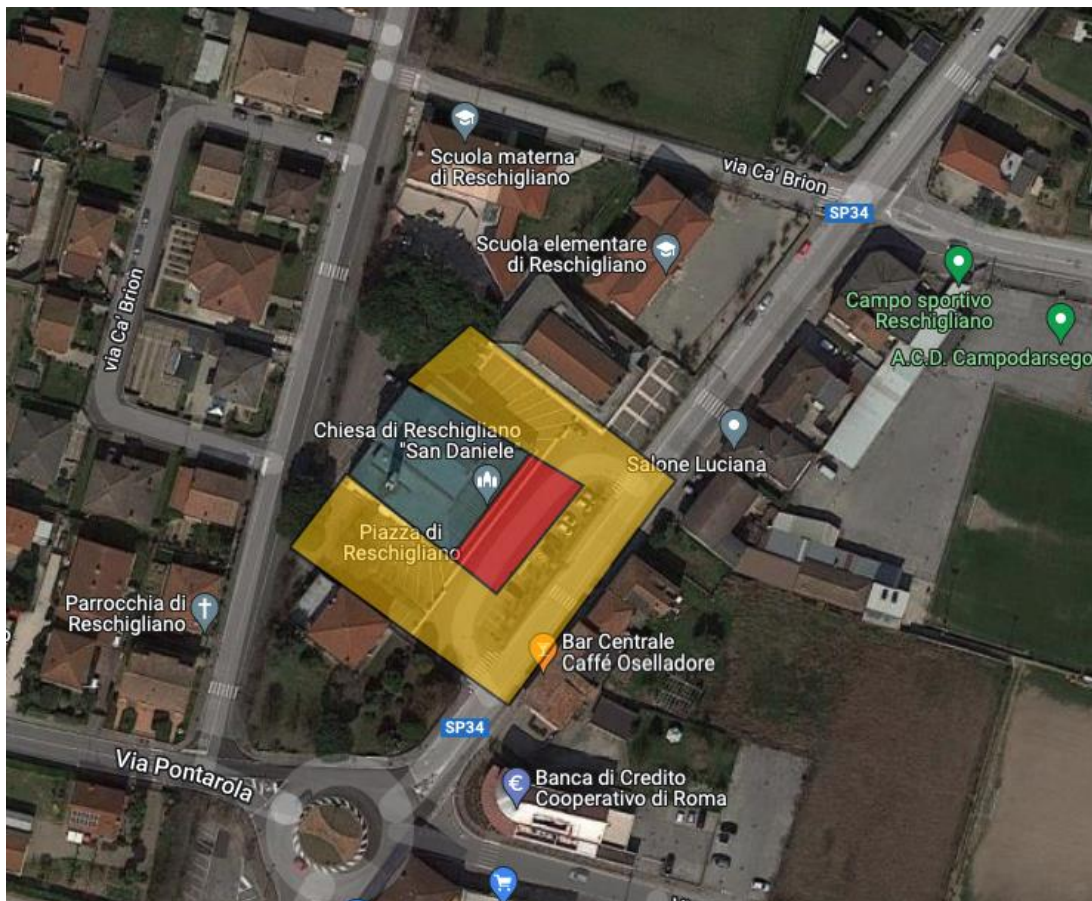


Figure 10 – map with the endamaged areas of the church of Reschigliano

The red area delineate the most severe effects of the device's explosion and its range: being within this perimeter would have been life-threatening. In yellow, it is indicated the secondary range, where people would have not been directly hit by the explosion but would have suffered its effects, i.e. objects and materials thrown at great speed and in all directions, glass, air displacement etc. In this perimeter, injuries could have been from slight to severe.

possible target. Consequently, this leads to underestimate the need to adopt security measures to prevent what it is considered an essentially unrealistic event.

Relatively speaking, it is therefore quite normal that there were no surveillance cameras watching the area in front of the church. This, however, favoured the perpetrators of the attack, who, thanks to the night and the weekday, the absence of surveillance cameras or other security measures, acted practically undisturbed, most likely arriving in the area by car, placing the bomb, detonating it, and leaving. The only destabilising factor could have been the human presence: a simple passer-by, for example, who was evidently not there during the night of the attack.

If there had been surveillance cameras, the attack would have been logistically more difficult: attackers would have not been able to get too close in the car, hence, they would have had to park it further away, increasing the risk of being noticed and filmed by the surveillance cameras, then perhaps identified, or having the car's number plate read, etc. In short, all elements that could have helped the investigators during the investigation, which was instead unsuccessful.

3.1.6. Communities' reactions

Responsibility for the attack could never be attributed either to an individual or to a specific group. At the time, the representatives of the two affected communities had neither suspicions nor clues that might have facilitated the attribution of responsibility. They had not received any threat in the past and had not reported any significant or unusual events. The reaction of the religious communities, after an initial moment of shock, was one of firm condemnation of the incident and an invitation to the community not to be afraid and to meet again in the churches, obviously wondering who had been responsible and why.⁷⁸

A few weeks after the attack, the Carabinieri arrested five Moroccan nationals in the surrounding area, accused of being adherents of radical Islamism and of having organised a militant cell whose targets were churches and military barracks. Kilograms of explosives (different from the one used in the two analysed attacks) and maps with precise targets were found in their homes. However, no correlation has been made between these arrests and the explosion of the devices in the churches.⁷⁹ Having abandoned the fruitless trail of radical Islam, the investigators explored that of anarchist groups: these groups had addressed serious threats to the religious communities of Padua during the Jubilee; however, no precise correlation could be established between the group and these attacks, since there was no real motive, and above all, no clue that could link the anarchist extremist groups with the attack. Finally, the last track explored was that of the extreme right: right extremists have long been critical of the Church in Italy for its openness towards the first waves of immigration to Italy; however, this trail was not enough to assume the organisation of a bomb attack. The perpetrator of the attacks is still unknown.⁸⁰

3.1.7. Conclusion

The analysis of this attack may seem misleading and the motivation not immediately understandable since it concerns a small rural community; however, the interest of this analysis lies precisely in these characteristics as well as in the manner of execution. There is no doubt that the perpetrator did not want anyone to be killed or injured, and the nun's injury was an uncalculated risk, because otherwise, he would not have chosen to strike at night and on a day when there was no religious service in sight.

⁷⁸ <https://www.agensir.it/quotidiano/2003/2/10/attentati-a-due-chiese-nel-padovano-la-diocesi-atti-criminosi-che-colpiscono-il-popolo/>

⁷⁹ "Bombe alle chiese a Padova: le ipotesi dei carabinieri. Improbabile la piste dell'integralismo islamico", *La Repubblica*, 10 febbraio 2003. <https://www.repubblica.it/online/cronaca/bombechiesa/ipotesi/ipotesi.html>

⁸⁰ *idem*

The two churches were therefore empty. What is interesting to analyse the destructive potential of the device: if the explosion had occurred on a Sunday morning during the service, the results could have been much more serious. Furthermore, this attack is interesting because it proves that even small rural communities can be victims of severe attacks, despite the lack of perception of danger in this regard. Finally, this attack shows that the lack of perception of danger and the consequent absence of security measures make small communities more vulnerable to attacks that usually affect larger urban centres and much more sensitive targets.

3.2. Attack n°2: attempted firearms attack on the Saint-Cyr-Sainte-Juliette Church in Villejuif, France (2015)

3.2.1. Introduction

This section illustrates an attempted firearms attack carried out on the Saint-Cyr-Sainte-Juliette Church in Villejuif on April 19th, 2015. As already mentioned earlier in the deliverable, it is relevant to analyse also those attacks that eventually did not end up successfully or according to the original plan. This analysis, indeed, can provide useful information to structure preventive and mitigation strategies. The attacker was born in Algeria in 1991. His family moved to France in 2001, but he was sent back to Algeria in 2003 due to problems with his immigration documents. After graduating in 2010, the attacker returned to France. In France he began teaching Arabic at the El-Fath Mosque in Saint-Dizier associated with the Great Mosque of Paris.

In September 2014, he enrolled at Pierre and Marie Curie University, but did not participate in courses. The university opened a criminal case against him for falsifying grades. According to the information gathered, some family members had approached Islamic fundamentalism. His brother and sister-in-law belonged to the Tabligh fundamentalist movement. He stayed in 2013 and 2014 in the Red Cross area of Reims. According to the police, the attacker may have collaborated with the "Buttes-Chaumont" sector, which was an organization that aimed to send jihadists to Iraq to fight in favour of the Iraqi section of Al-Qaeda.⁸¹ In 2013 and 2014 the attacker lived a few tens of meters away from the house of Saïd Kouachi, one of the terrorists who carried out the massacre of Charlie Hebdo in 2015.

In February 2014, the attacker went to Turkey for a week and, upon his return, he was placed under surveillance by intelligence because he was suspected of wanting to leave to fight in Syria. Despite his phone calls being monitored, nothing suspicious was found. This was due, according to the Minister of the Interior, Bernard Cazeneuve, to the fact that "*The technological means used are becoming more and more sophisticated*". It can be supposed that he was practicing Taqîya which, according to the doctrine of Daesh, represents the art of hiding one's true thought to obtain victory.

In 2015 he lived in a student residence, rue Julie-Daubier near the Bibliothèque nationale de France, in the 13th arrondissement of Paris. On weekends, he used to join his family in the sensitive Ver-Bois area of Saint-Dizier.

On October 15th, he went to Algiers, as he was regularly doing for reaching his country of origin, but then, on October 29th, the terrorist travelled for a second time to Turkey and then stayed for a month in Istanbul. The return trip to France was paid by a French jihadist who gave him 2000 euros.

In 2015 he studied in detail how to attack the two main churches of Villejuif: the church of Saint-Cyr-Sainte-Juliette in the city centre and the church of Sainte-Thérèse in the north. The name of the municipality, according to a theory, refers to Villa Judea, the Latinized version of the old French expression meaning 'Jewish settlement'. An attack on one of the two churches would, therefore, have had a double symbolic value for both the Christian and Jewish communities. The attacker also planned to attack the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Montmartre, Paris. After the January 2015 attacks that

⁸¹ <https://www.europe1.fr/faits-divers/Les-enqueteurs-sur-la-piste-de-connections-Ghiam-Kouachi-935800>

killed 17 people at the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo and a kosher supermarket, on Saturday, April 18th, 2015, the terrorist received several messages from Syria urging him to act. On Sunday, April 19th, early in the morning, he killed a young woman in Villejuif. The lady was sitting in the passenger seat of her car with a computer in her lap. After killing her, he set fire to the victim's car and body and returned, wounded, to his apartment in the tourist district of the 13th arrondissement of Paris.⁸²

According to police, he shot the young woman because he thought she was a secret service agent and not, as initially suspected, because he wanted to steal her car. At 8:50 on Sunday he called the ambulance and said he had been injured in his hip and kneecap by two bullets. According to police and expert reports, he shot himself unwittingly with his Sphinx Pistol (a weapon often used by special forces) while attempting to slip it into his belt after killing the woman.⁸³

After detecting the call, police reached a building near the church of Saint-Cyr-Sainte-Juliette in whose basement Kalashnikov loaders and blood traces were found. Police also found a Kalashnikov assault rifle and Sphinx pistol in a stolen Renault Mégane parked in a parking lot in Aulnay-sous-Bois (about 25 kilometres from the scene of the attack). After raiding the assailant's apartment, police found three more Kalashnikovs, bullet-proof vests and notes containing planning attacks on churches.

The injured terrorist was arrested and hospitalized. It seems that he was in contact with another person in Syria with whom he was planning the attack and who was asking him to target above all a church. The planning and logistics of the attack would be prepared in a snack bar in the Val-de-Mame area (in which is also located Villejuif). The owner and many of his employees at this bar were suspected of being jihadists. During the trial, the attacker stated that he had renounced alone to commit the attack after seeing the woman die and then voluntarily shot himself in the leg so as not to suffer repercussions from the other accomplices. He blamed the young mother's murder on another accomplice named "Hamza", but his version was not trusted by the authorities (traces of her blood was found on one of Ghلام's jackets). The terrorist also had at his disposal a second car, type BMW 318 that was probably stolen too. It seems that the attacker had a connection of some kind with a French woman converted to radical Islam who, after the facts, was arrested but then released. It seems that he told his Syrian contact that after the attack he would have run away with her (or hide with her). From this, it can be deduced that he did not want to carry out a suicide attack (in fact it was ascertained that he had studied in detail the reaction times of the police to have time to escape).⁸⁴

The trial highlighted the meticulous preparation of the attack based on what was wanted by the instigators who were in Syria.⁸⁵ According to the reconstruction, the terrorist wanted to cause as many victims as possible among the faithful present at the Sunday service (about 300 in the church of Saint-Cyr-Sainte-Juliette). Nine other defendants were being tried alongside him. Seven were believed to have provided logistical assistance such as weapons and protective vests. The other two were extremists accused of guiding his attempted attack, who are believed to be in Syria and possibly dead. The third sponsor, was killed by police after allegedly coordinating the multiple assaults on November 13th, 2015, on the Bataclan concert hall in Paris, France's national stadium and multiple cafes. Among the accomplices there is also the alleged sponsor of the gunman in the January 2015 kosher supermarket attack. During his detention, the intelligence services arranged for the subject to have a mobile phone and intercepted him while he was in prison. He made a lot of phone calls, but they

⁸² <https://www.parismatch.com/Actu/Societe/Les-deux-visages-de-Sid-Ahmed-Ghلام-754406>

⁸³ <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/french-islamic-terrorist-suspects-alleged-5566913>

⁸⁴ <https://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2015/06/19/01016-20150619ARTFIG00417-villejuif-sid-ahmed-ghلام-affirme-avoir-empeche-l-attentat.php>

⁸⁵ https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2020/10/13/au-proces-de-sid-ahmed-ghلام-l-ombre-des-logisticiens-de-l-etat-islamique_6055827_3224.html

stopped abruptly on November 13, 2015, when the Bataclan attack and other multiple attacks were carried out.⁸⁶

3.2.2. Spatial framework

Villejuif had already been the subject of an attack by Amedy Coulibaly on 8 January 2015 at 8.30 p.m. At that moment, the terrorist blew up a commercial vehicle inside the town. He later became an accomplice to the terrorists who had attacked the headquarters of Charlie Hebdo and had attacked a Hyper Cacher where food was sold to members of the Jewish religion. During this attack, on 9 January 2015, he was killed by the special police forces.

The name of Villejuif may have been born in many ways. There is, however, a hypothesis, rather widespread even at the popular level, according to which the name derives from "city of the Jews" (in French, *juif* means "Jewish"). Moreover, according to some studies, the city was founded by Jews expelled from Paris. An attack to a church in this municipality would therefore have a double symbolic value of attack on both the Christian and Jewish communities.

Villejuif is in the northwest of the department of Val de Marne, about 8 km from the centre of Paris (Notre-Dame Cathedral) and its northernmost point is 1.5 km from the Porte d'Italie. So, this municipality is close to the heart of France, but, reasonably, it is less protected than the capital. At the same time, the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Montmartre is located above Montmartre (Mount of the Martyrs), within the urban area of the 18th arrondissement of Paris, north of the city centre. It is the highest place in the city after the Eiffel Tower, the skyscraper of Montparnasse and Les Invalides. In this contest it is very clear the importance of the symbolism in the planning of the attack.

3.2.3. Modality of action: progression of the attack

It is not clear what happened, but it can be assumed that the terrorist was about to begin the attack at the church of Saint-Cyr-Sainte-Juliette when he confused a 30-year-old young mother who was about to start a Pilates class with a secret service agent and killed her. This behaviour seems to be dictated by fear and inexperience.

It is a failed attack because the terrorist, probably not very experienced in the use of weapons, shot himself unwittingly after killing his first victim, while he was in a panic. The gun he used, in fact, being designed for skilled handling personnel (it is used by special forces and sports shooters), was probably equipped with few safety mechanisms against accidental shooting or had a very light release mechanism. It can be assumed that the terrorist, by his express statement frightened because it was the first time he saw a person killed, tried to put the weapon in his belt, perhaps with his finger on the trigger or rubbing the trigger against the buckle, and injured himself. It is unclear why he set fire to the victim's car instead of leaving it there. Maybe he tried to cover his tracks. In any case, at least four Kalashnikov rifles, two handgun and three bulletproof vests were found in all. He also appeared to have had two stolen cars. These details, in addition to the fact that he was in contact with the attackers of 13 November 2015 (Bataclan and other public places), suggest that an attack with multiple targets was planned and, perhaps, put in place by a commando of more terrorists and not just one. The tactic used on 13 November had in fact been to carry out various attacks around Paris with the intention of confusing and dispersing the police forces. It cannot be ruled out that the arrest by the police of the attacker caused the others to abort the operation completely.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ <https://www.20minutes.fr/justice/2901311-20201104-attentat-dejoue-villejuif-pouvez-acquitter-plaide-avocat-sid-ahmed-ghlam>

⁸⁷ <https://www.leparisien.fr/archives/sid-ahmed-ghlam-avait-fait-des-reperages-autour-des-eglises-25-04-2015-4722733.php>

3.2.4. Building structure and surrounding

The Church of Saint-Cyr-Sainte-Juliette is a Roman Catholic church and is listed as a Historic Monument. It is located on the town hall square and is adjacent to the town hall. It was dedicated to two martyrs of the 4th century and was founded in the 13th century. The Basilica of the Sacred Heart in Montmartre is located above Montmartre (Mount of the Martyrs), within the urban area of the 18th arrondissement of Paris, north of the city centre. It is the highest place in the city after the Eiffel Tower, the skyscraper of Montparnasse and Les Invalides. The church of Sainte-Thérèse is a Catholic parish church located north of Villejuif. This church, dedicated to Saint Therese of the Child Jesus, was built in 1934.



Figure 12 – Church of Saint-Cyr-Sainte-Juliette in Villejuif



Figure 13 – Sacré Coeur in Paris



Figure 14 – The church of Sainte-Thérèse in Villejuif

It is evident that all three of these buildings have a powerful symbolic value and can be a target of strong interest for a terrorist. The first two have an important value in themselves, but if after the church of Saint Cyr Sainte Juliette, which hosts up to 300 people during Sunday Mass, had also been attacked the other church of Saint Therese (distant from the first about 1.5 kilometres), the psychological impact would have been very violent.

3.2.5. Vulnerabilities exploited by the attacker(s) and weaknesses in security measures

As a vulnerability exploited by the attacker, it can be said that the failure of the attack is due to the lack of experience of the attacker who seems to have shot himself accidentally and killed a woman for no apparent reason other than fear. His thesis, instead, associates the failure of the attack failed because of his second thought. According to this position, he would have decided to intentionally injure himself in order not to have to kill innocent people (attributes the murder of the woman to an accomplice). In this way, he would have had a justification at the eyes of the other accomplices. As a vulnerability in security measures, it should be mentioned that, even though ten people were tried and convicted and four assault rifles, guns, bulletproof vests, and detailed attack planning were found, it does not seem that the intelligence was aware of what was happening. On the other hand, it should be noted that, at the time, the real threat of the Jihadism in France was still not well known and the intelligence apparatuses still had to organize themselves adequately.⁸⁸

3.2.6. Communities' reactions

Prime minister Manuel Valls says in an interview with a French radio station that the planned attack on one or more churches in the town of Villejuif was the fifth to be thwarted since 2013. "*The threat has never been as high. We have never had to face this kind of terrorism in our history*".⁸⁹ On the night between 23rd and 24th April 2015, an arson devastates the Muslim prayer hall of Pargny-sur-Saux in the Marne, the sister of the attacker gave lectures there.

3.2.7. Conclusion

This event should be analysed with greater depth, visiting the places and talking with potential witnesses as it appears very interesting from the technical point of view. Anyway, the attacker does

⁸⁸ <https://www.rtl.fr/actu/debats-societe/la-taqiya-l-art-de-dissimuler-la-menace-terroriste-aux-services-de-reenseignement-7778417289>

⁸⁹ <https://www.france24.com/fr/20150422-manuel-valls-premier-ministre-visite-eglise-villejuif-attentat-dejoue-paris-catholiques-chretiens-religion>

not appear to be a Lone Wolf. In addition to having too many weapons for just one person, he has got *“the order to act, even alone, even if ‘he’ doesn’t join him”*⁹⁰. The prevention of this type of attack, planned with such care and by several accomplices cannot be carried out only at local level, but requires the intervention of national security forces. Surely, however, the development of emergency management procedures can mitigate, at least in part, the effects. It is also important to highlight the importance of symbolism of places in the choice of targets. It can therefore be inferred that churches and places with a particular symbolic value can be particularly vulnerable targets (e.g., the meaning of the name of the area or the history of the place).

3.3. Attack n°3: arson in Saint-Louis church in Fontainebleau, France (2016)

3.3.1. Introduction

The fire was set on January 10, 2016 during the night between 9 and 10. On Sunday morning at 7.20 am the parish priest was warned by a guard that something serious was happening in the church of Saint-Louis in Fontainebleau (Seine-et-Marne) near which he lived and which had been built between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. As soon as he reached the church the priest realized that there was a fire inside and calls the firemen who managed to put it out only at 14. The investigation will show that someone set three fires inside the church. The main altar (17th century) was completely destroyed. It was decorated with bas-reliefs depicting the descent from the cross and saints. Various valuables were destroyed by fire or stolen. Among the 12 missing objects there was a Virgin with child in polychrome wood of the fourteenth century. Many of these objects were listed as Historic Monuments.⁹¹

According to the Mayor of Fontainebleau *“The fire was lit at the foot of the most valuable and symbolic goods. So these are people who knew their heritage and religious value”*. During the night of 10 January, less than 10 kilometres from Fontainebleau, another church, Saints-Philippe-et-Jacques de Veneus Les Sablons, caught fire,⁹² but the investigation immediately showed that the fire was not arson and was caused by a failure of the electrical panel.⁹³

On Tuesday (12 January 2016), it was reported that a local man known to have psychiatric problems had been arrested in connection with the case of Fontainebleau. The subject was a 48-year-old man who had long been helped by the parish and who had threatened the parish priest in the past. The attacker had already committed some robberies in that church in the past that had never been reported and shortly before Christmas 2015 had a violent quarrel with the priest. During the trial he was found guilty, but he was not convicted because he was deemed mentally sick.⁹⁴

As the facts unfolded, it is possible to make two hypotheses: first, it was a coincidence that on the same night two fires developed in neighbouring churches; second, the fire of Veneus Les Sablons was noticed by the subject who was then arrested and inspired him to commit the attack at Fontainebleau at a time when religious tensions were very strong in France.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ <https://www.europe1.fr/faits-divers/Les-enqueteurs-sur-la-piste-de-connections-Ghlan-Kouachi-935800>

⁹¹ <http://web.archive.org/web/20160115104432/http://theartnewspaper.com/news/conservation/suspected-arson-at-fontainebleau-church/>

⁹² <https://www.leparisien.fr/seine-et-marne-77/veneux-les-sablons-77250/veneux-les-sablons-la-these-de-l-incendie-accidentel-de-l-eglise-se-confirme-12-01-2016-5443581.php>

⁹³ <http://www.ancoraonline.it/2016/01/12/francia-due-chiese-a-fontainebleau-e-a-veneux-les-sablons-incendiate-e-profanate-non-ci-sono-vittime/>

⁹⁴ <https://www.leparisien.fr/seine-et-marne-77/fontainebleau-77300/fontainebleau-le-marginal-suspecte-d-avoir-incendie-l-eglise-ecroue-16-03-2016-5632439.php>

⁹⁵ <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2016/01/13/suspected-arson-at-fontainebleau-church>

According to the mayor of Fontainebleau *“Because of the national context, it is easy to blame acts like these on terrorism. But if that were the case, there would probably be a claim. We must not hide behind our little finger for all that: what happened in Fontainebleau is clearly an act of desecration .”*

The perpetrators of anti-Christian attacks - which include acts of arson, defecation, desecration, looting, derision, Satanism, theft, urination and vandalism - are rarely captured. When they are, police and media often censor information. Several suspects are said to have mental disorders. According to the research carried out, the reasons behind the attacks seem to fall into four broad categories: vandalism, theft, politics, and religion.

1. **Vandalism:** most attacks on Christian sites in Europe consist of vandalism. These often do not want to be direct attacks on religious belief, even if they involve the desecration of sacred objects and symbols.
2. **Theft:** many attacks have financial reasons. Thieves stole church bells, sacred metal objects, and even drain pipes, apparently with the aim of selling those items to scrap dealers. Several of the crimes have been attributed to highly organized gangs.
3. **Politics:** some attacks, especially those against Roman Catholicism, are political in nature. Such attacks include defacing churches and religious symbols with political graffiti, largely of an anarchist or feminist nature.
4. **Religion:** many attacks that appear to be religious or spiritual in nature reflect a deep hostility towards Christianity. Such attacks include smearing faces on representations of Jesus Christ or statues of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Other attacks concern the contamination or theft of hosts, which Roman Catholics believe to be transformed into the real presence of Christ when they are consecrated. Some of these attacks may be the work of Satanists, who use the consecrated host in a ritual called the Black Mass.

In the specific case, as it can be seen from the photo below, the fire was set at the main altar and during the night between Saturday and Sunday. If as for Sunday (the day of celebration for Christians), in this specific case, the symbolism could only be a hypothesis (if the attacker was inspired by the fire at the other church); however, it seems highly probable that the attack on the main altar had a precise meaning.

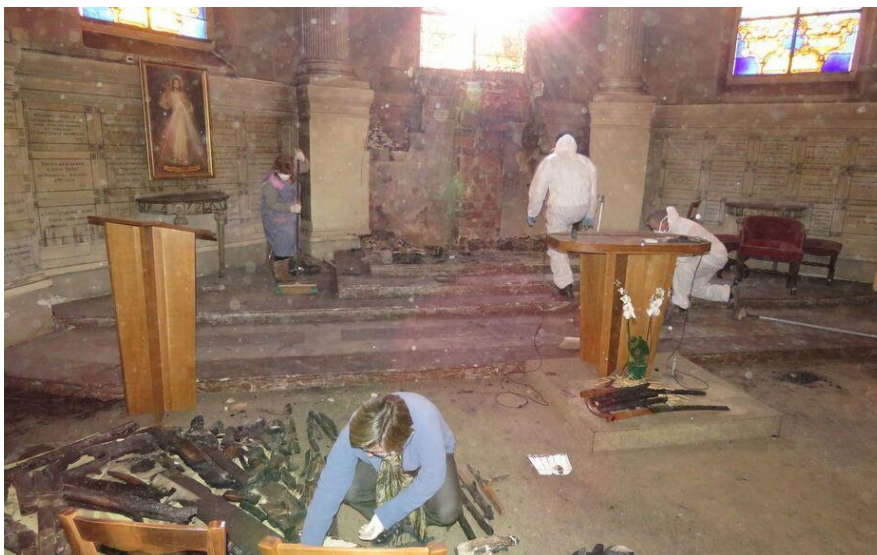


Figure 15 – The damages caused by the arson of the church of Saint-Louis in Fontainebleau⁹⁶

⁹⁶ <https://www.leparisien.fr/seine-et-marne-77/fontainebleau-77300/fontainebleau-le-marginal-suspecte-d-avoir-incendie-l-eglise-ecroue-16-03-2016-5632439.php>

3.3.2. Spatial framework

The population of Fontainebleau counts 14,839 people. The municipality is located in the department of Seine and Marne in the region of Île-de-France and is the capital of arrondissement and canton. The name comes from Fontaine Belle Eau or Fontaine Belleau (fountain from the beautiful water). In the beginning it was a hunting lodge for King Louis VII and later Louis IX built a personal cottage and a hospital. Over the centuries, many kings have stayed there for the beauty of the surrounding forest and the tranquillity that could be found so close to Paris. The place has no other special features.

In an interview with La Croix, Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve said that attacks on Christian places of worship and cemeteries had gone up by 20 per cent in 2015, with 810 recorded. Anti-Muslim attacks had tripled since the January 2015 attacks on Charlie Hebdo and the Jewish kosher supermarket, he said, and while there was a five per cent decrease in anti-Semitic attacks they remained at a high level.⁹⁷

The events have therefore taken place in this socio-political context and in a place that is particularly well known and symbolically representative and, therefore, have attracted much attention. This was also due to the extent of the damage suffered by the building as assets of great historical value were destroyed.⁹⁸

3.3.3. Modality of action: progression of the attack

According to the reconstruction, the attacker had already threatened at the end of December the priest and was known by the locals for his aggressive temperament. It was also known that he suffered from mental disorders. The attack happened during the night. It is not clear whether the accidental fire of the church of Venus Les Sablons inspired the attacker or whether it was just a coincidence. It cannot be excluded, however, that the climate of religious tension present in France at that time somehow inspired the attacker to the action even if he had already committed thefts in the church in the past and, therefore, was not new to this type of behaviour.

The priest was warned at 7:20 in the morning by a guard that something was wrong and only after reaching the church he realized that there was a fire inside. This clearly indicates that neither the guard nor the priest had been warned by any fire alarm nor had been able to see the scene through cameras.

According to Internet searches, the fires were set in three places. Three areas were devastated, that of the main altar and those of the two chapels placed on the sides of the same. In addition, some sacred objects were found overturned. It is, therefore, evident the symbolic value of the areas where the altars and the sacred hosts are located (the main altar and the two side chapels).

3.3.4. Vulnerabilities exploited by the attacker(s) and weaknesses in security measures

The event comes from the gesture of a madman. The violent temperament, mental disorders, previous thefts in the church and threats made in the previous weeks were potential indicators of risk and, most likely, led investigators to identify the culprit (who later confessed) in a short time. It follows that the subject had in no way tried to hide his tracks. At the same time, the development of the facts as they have been reconstructed so far, seems to show that:

- The church did not have a fire alarm system to signal the fire and extinguish it in the bud.
- There was also a lack of an anti-theft alarm system that signalled the presence of a stranger in the church during the closing time, as well as a camera system that would allow to see what was happening inside the same, as well as someone who would check that system (the guard

⁹⁷

<https://www.christiantoday.com/article/attacks.on.churches.are.increasing.says.french.interior.minister/79718.htm>

⁹⁸ https://www.francetvinfo.fr/faits-divers/eglise-incendiee-a-fontainebleau-mon-coeur-s-est-serre-quand-j-ai-compris-que-c-etait-un-acte-criminel_1263675.html?msclkid=885b1abaaad611ec98acf14c699c84ee

had called the priest saying that something was wrong and did not specify well what was wrong).

- Sources speak of a guard; however, it is unclear whether he was the infrastructure keeper or a guard passing by on the street. In any case, unless the fire was started early in the morning, an eventuality that cannot be excluded, it seems that the guard service was present only during the day and not when the church was closed.

3.3.5. Communities' reactions

Reactions to the arson highlight that it was an act of profanation and an example of "christianophobia", hence, aiming at cultural values, including Christian symbols. Strong words have been pronounced, as *"these attacks show a desire to attack our culture, but also [to damage] strong Christian symbols"*;⁹⁹ *"ce qui s'est passé est un acte de profanation"*;¹⁰⁰ or also *"acte of cristianophobia"*.¹⁰¹ From a political perspective, the right party *Les Républicains* said that *"These attacks show a desire to attack our culture, but also [to damage] strong Christian symbols"*. Also, there has been a controversy over the fact that the Minister of the Interior, instead of going to Fontainebleau, went to visit a mosque that had also been desecrated¹⁰². At the same time, the Minister did issue a communiqué sometime Sunday expressing his great concern and indicating that the prefect of the department of Seine-et-Marne had been dispatched to the scene. Then, he went to Fontainebleau on Monday. However, the media stressed that the act did not seem to be of terrorist nature, and rather criminal, vandalism aiming at profanation: *"Because of the national context, it is easy to blame acts like these on terrorism. But if that were the case, there would probably be a claim, explains the mayor of Fontainebleau. We must not hide behind our little finger for all that: what happened in Fontainebleau is clearly an act of desecration."*¹⁰³ On January 24, in the presence of Nicolas Sarkozy and the president of Île-de-France, the bishop of Meaux celebrated the "Mass of reparation".

3.3.6. Conclusion

This event shows how, during moments of intense terrorist activity, even episodes that are not attributable to terrorism risk, at first, are mistaken for such and amplified by the media. Indeed, the media headlines initially gave the impression that the two fires were connected and, perhaps, in a terrorist context. This is one of the objectives of a terrorist (creating divisions between the population and the concept of "the other"). The controversy over the immediate presence of the Minister of the Interior at a desecrated mosque rather than at the church of Fontainebleau clearly demonstrates the achievement of this aim (a typical objective of Daesh). At the same time, it cannot be excluded that the climate of religious and political tension at the national level has somehow inspired the attacker. On the other hand, it is clear that the statements made by the mayor of Fontainebleau were extremely important in order to prevent what had happened from being misunderstood and, therefore, the importance of proper communication during crises is extremely clear. It can also be noted that religious buildings that normally contain large historical and artistic heritage are subject to significant risks even by rudimentary and unorganized attacks.

3.4. Attack n°4: the attack to the Nice Cathedral, France (2020)

⁹⁹ <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/political-outrage-over-fontainebleau-church-fire/?msclkid=d53635a0aad511eca8420c4069d9177e>

¹⁰⁰ in English: this is an act of profanation" https://www.francetvinfo.fr/faits-divers/eglise-incendiee-a-fontainebleau-mon-coeur-s-est-serre-quand-j-ai-compris-que-c-etait-un-acte-criminel_1263675.html?msclkid=885b1abaaad611ec98acf14c699c84ee

¹⁰¹ <https://fr.novopress.info/196815/christianophobie-leglise-fontainebleau-incendiee/?msclkid=885b948eaad611ecabbd88a5a20eb4ba>

¹⁰² <https://www.leparisien.fr/val-d-oise-95/saint-ouen-l-au-mone-95310/bernard-cazeneuve-prend-le-the-a-la-mosquee-de-saint-ouen-l-aumone-10-01-2016-5437883.php>

¹⁰³ <https://www.connaissancesarts.com/monuments-patrimoine/eglises-cathedrales/leglise-saint-louis-de-fontainebleau-devastee-par-les-flammes-1133986/?msclkid=885b4017aad611ec9e3a99aafbfe2613>

3.4.1. Introduction

The attacker, a 21-year-old man, had grown up with eight sisters and two brothers in a modest house in the industrial zone of Sfax, an important port on the east coast of Tunisia. Sfax is located 130 km from the small Italian island of Lampedusa and is a place from which migrants try to reach Europe illegally. The attacker had dropped out of high school and had worked as a bicycle mechanic before starting to sell gasoline to motorists along the way illegally. He was known to the local police for episodes of violence in which he had been a protagonist and because he used drugs and alcohol, but he was not known to the security forces, neither Tunisians, nor Italians, nor French for links with terrorist organizations.¹⁰⁴

In the last two years before the attack, he started praying regularly as a Muslim, staying at home and avoiding friends. On 14th September 2020, during the pandemic, the attacker (who had already tried at least once to reach Italy), suddenly boarded a boat with 20 other immigrants without saying anything to his family and reached Lampedusa on 20th September. Here he was interrogated by the police, who noticed no sign of danger. The attacker was then quarantined for COVID 19, and according to other migrants, he spent most of his quarantine talking to someone (probably in Tunisia) on the phone about how he could reach France.

At the end of the quarantine, the attacker had been expelled from Italy but had been left free to circulate because, for logistical reasons, he could not be repatriated directly to Tunisia. On October 9th or 10th, the attacker took a train from Italy to Paris and then moved, early in the morning, by another train, to Nice.

This journey was made on the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad and shortly after the murder of Prof. Samuel Patì, who had been beheaded in Conflans-Sainte-Honorine on 16th October by an eighteen-year-old Chechen extremist who accused him of having shown his students some images of the Prophet Muhammad.

The last contact the attacker made with his family was at 8:00 on Wednesday evening (28th October).¹⁰⁵ He told them that he had gone to France to look for work and intended to stay in a building opposite the church of Notre-Dame in Nice. The city of Nice, on 14th July 2016 (Bastille Day) suffered a terrorist attack by another Tunisian citizen who with a truck killed 86 people and injured many others while they were walking on the tourist route of the Promenade des Anglais (less than a kilometre from the church of Notre Dame). That same month, in Rouen, on 25th July, 2016, two terrorists cut Father Hamel's throat, while he was celebrating Mass at the foot of the altar in his church in Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray. According to a newspaper, two weeks before the 2020 attack, intelligence had heard voices about potential attacks at places of worship (but it is not clear if such voices had been considered credible or not). The attacker arrived in Nice at 6:47 AM on 29th October, went to pray in a mosque near the train station, returned to the station where he changed his shoes and turned his coat upside down (according to some sources) and then went towards the Basilica of Notre Dame de Nice. This building is a Roman/ Catholic Basilica, located on Avenue Jean Médecins and is about 400 meters from the station. The Basilica is in the city centre and, therefore, symbolically, in the heart of Nice.

The attacker carried a backpack that contained two knives, two cell phones and a Quran. He also had a kitchen knife (30 cm) used for the attack, but it is not clear whether he hid it on him or in his backpack. In total, he had 3 knives. At 8.26 am he was waiting for the opening of the church. He was wearing a red and black cap, surgical mask, red jacket, jeans and sneakers. At 8.30 am, he met the sexton and entered the church. At 8:50 a.m., the third victim fled the church (using the door just at the right side of the main door - looking at the church from outside). The woman panicked and fell on rue Jean

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.counterextremism.com/extremists/ibrahim-issaoui>

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/nice-terror-attack-tunisia-family-france-suspect-ibrahim-issaoui-b1455858.html>

Médecin. At 8:51 a.m. the Municipal Police emergency call terminal, at the corner of Jean Médecin and rue d'Italie, was activated. At 8:52 am, two municipal policemen entered through the main entrance and found the body of a 60-year-old woman. Four other policemen, after the general alert was given, entered the right door. In 20 minutes, the attacker had stabbed the sacristan, a 55-year-old man. He had stabbed him several times and inflicted a mortal wound on his throat. The attacker also stabbed a woman about 60 years old, killing her and unsuccessfully attempting to behead her near the source of the Holy Water. Finally, the terrorist had stabbed several times also a 44-year-old woman, a French citizen, but of Brazilian origin who, before dying, had managed to escape despite her injuries and to reach a bar nearby.¹⁰⁶ The terrorist had remained in the church 22 minutes before the arrival of the policemen. When the police arrived, he attempted to attack the police while shouting "Allahu Akbar". The officers had first used a taser but were unable to stop the terrorist and then fired 14 shots, seriously injuring him (probably, however, did not hit him 14 times). During transport to the hospital, he continued to repeat "Allahu Akbar".¹⁰⁷ Immediately after the attack, a bomb squad and special police forces arrived on site. In the days following the attack, a 47-year-old man who had had contact with the terrorist the night before was arrested.¹⁰⁸

3.4.2. Spatial framework

On the eve of the start of the trial for the January 2015 attacks in Paris, the satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo, on September 1, 2020, announced its intention to republish the cartoons of Muhammad that had made him the target of Islamic terrorists. This decision sparked violent protests in the Arab world, also because of the political positions taken by the French President in this regard.

The attack carried out is part of this temporal context of religious and social tension at world level that had been concretized in other episodes of religious violence in the world. At the same time, the Basilica of Notre-Dame de l'Assomption is the largest church in Nice and was the first modern religious building in the city. It has, therefore, a particular symbolic value for a potential terrorist because it is located right in the city centre and, therefore, in the heart of the community.

The symbolism appears very important in this attack because, just as the cartoons of Charlie Hebdo were perceived by Muslims as profanity of Islam, similarly, an attack in a church represents a profanation of the sacredness of the place of worship that, in the Christian religion, it is based on Love and Forgiveness. The atrocity of the methods used against subjects who happened to be there seems to represent, more reason, an additional means of desecration.

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/29/two-dead-in-french-city-nice-several-hurt-live-news>

¹⁰⁷ <https://metro.co.uk/2020/10/29/one-dead-and-several-injured-in-knife-attack-in-nice-13498464/>

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8892233/Multiple-people-stabbed-terrorist-knife-attack-church-Nice.html>



Figure 16 – Stages of the journey of the attacker from Tunisia to France¹⁰⁹

3.4.3. Modality of action: progression of the attack

Based on the temporal consecution of the events, the attack seems to have been decided following the situation of social and religious tension that has arisen internationally. Apparently, the terrorist did not act alone because he spent most of his time in Italy talking to someone (perhaps in Tunisia or in France) about how he was going to get to France.¹¹⁰ The interlocutor does not turn out to be a family member because they have declared to have become aware of the move to France only after the same had happened. Basically, the terrorist left with the intention of carrying out the attack by carefully hiding his intentions from his family and third parties. The constant telephone contacts of the subject with "somebody" seem to represent a way, by a potential organizer/ controller to prevent the determination of the attacker from failing during the trip.¹¹¹

The attacker was a subject known to the Tunisian police for episodes of violence and use of drugs and alcohol. He then appears to have radicalised. This aspect should be deepened with specialized personnel. However, it seems quite likely that the violent behaviour and the potential psychological fragility related to drug use may have facilitated the process of manipulation by third parties to lead the subject to perform extremely brutal and unpleasant actions (e.g. killing various people with a knife and behead them). In addition, the subject had spent years of radicalization in Tunisia,¹¹² training in the gym in combat sports, perhaps, with the intention of acquiring specific skills for attacks based on hand-to-hand combat.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ <https://the arabweekly.com/nice-attackers-journey-illegal-migrant-terrorism-suspect>

¹¹⁰ <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/28247/nice-church-attacker-a-journey-from-tunisia-to-italy-to-france>

¹¹¹ <https://www.insider.com/nice-attacker-was-tunisian-came-to-europe-via-migrant-route-2020-10>

¹¹² <https://www.itstime.it/w/brahim-aouissou-radicalization-might-have-very-well-occurred-back-in-tunisia-by-giovanni-giacalone/>

¹¹³ <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/digging-up-the-past-of-the-nice-attacker-who-killed-three-french-citizens-41229>

The terrorist arrived in Nice already equipped with three knives and two cell phones, therefore, he had already decided to carry out the attack in that location. In addition, he had told the family that he would sleep in a building in front of the Basilica of Notre Dame ; even the target had already been selected and studied. For this reason, it is possible to assume that he was helped by a resident in France to carry out the planning. When he arrived in Nice, the subject first went to pray in a mosque near the station (he had also brought a Quran with him as part of the tactical equipment, which shows the importance of the religious dimension in this act).

Later, the terrorist returned to the station and appeared, according to some sources, to have changed his shoes and turned his coat inside out. It seems that this behaviour had a symbolic value, such as taking a new path. It is not clear whether the red colour of the jacket and the white colour of the shirt had a particular symbolic value. Since the weekly mass is celebrated at 11.00 am, it is likely that the attacker decided to start the attack on 8.30 am because he expected that at that time there were few people, especially on a weekday, and then be able to kill, as they entered the church, more victims. From what has been reconstructed, the attacker appears to have been inside the Basilica for about 20 minutes. He was probably waiting for more victims to enter. It is reasonable to think that the last victim, probably entering the church after the other two, of which at least one has been killed near the church block, was attacked near the front door and, therefore, she managed to escape. In this way the alarm was given and innocent lives were saved. This strategy would also explain why the terrorist had brought three knives with him: he probably wanted spare knives in case the one he was using had lost the thread, for example, because of the attempt to make a beheading. The fact that the terrorist did not leave the church after the escape of the third victim indicates that he expected to be captured or killed because, otherwise, he would have fled. Instead, he waited for the police, who had to use a taser and shoot fourteen times to stop him. It cannot be ruled out that he was dragged at the time of the attack. This way, he would feel much less the pain inflicted by the wounds.¹¹⁴

3.4.4. Building structure and surroundings

The church of Notre Dame de l'Assomption is a solid structure located in the city centre and surrounded by other buildings. On the back side, there is a park. On the front side, it is the Avenue Jean Medecin, which is one of the main traffic arteries of the city and the main shopping street of Nice. This street is called "The Avenue" by residents. It is likely that, with the attack taking place inside the church, the thick walls softened the victims' cries for help. In addition, the attack modes that were most likely a series of stab wounds to the abdomen and then the slit of the throat most likely muffled the screams of the victims as they were killed.

The attacker let slip a victim who managed to call for help. The reason behind this is unclear, but it is believed that this happened because the victim was assaulted as soon as she entered. At least one body was found near the Holy Water tank, therefore, near the door. The terrorist was probably waiting for his victims in that area. For the rest, the plan, although carried out with rudimentary means, seems to have been organized effectively and, if the third victim had not managed to escape, probably the number of deaths would have been even greater.

The main vulnerability detected, in the specific case, is the fact that the terrorist remained in the church for about twenty minutes without anyone noticing anything. A camera system inside the church and in contact with an operations room would have allowed the rescue team to be alerted much earlier.

The presence of a guard and a metal detector at the entrance would have prevented access, but the use of such a mitigation tool would have impacted strongly on the perception of the safety of the place by the faithful, therefore, this measure should be evaluated very carefully.

¹¹⁴ <https://www.tunisiefocus.com/politique/la-matinee-sanglante-de-brahim-aouissaoui-a-la-basilique-de-nice-239989/>

It seems, according to a newspaper, that the intelligence had heard voices of risk in the two weeks preceding the event regarding this type of attack in French churches. It is not known whether the rumours were considered credible and whether the notice was brought to the attention of the ecclesiastical authorities that ran the Basilica. If this had been done, temporary measures could have been taken (for example, guarding the entrance).

A specific training of the sacristan for the protection from attacks with a knife, would have given him more chance of surviving, especially if he had been equipped with self-defence tools.



Figure 17 – View of the church of Notre Dame de Nice

3.4.5. Communities' reactions

In the afternoon, in Avignon (about 260 km from Nice), a man with a bareback threatened passers-by with a knife shouting the same phrase as the terrorist: "Allahu Akbar". The police shot him dead. It is unclear whether the man was a copycat or an accomplice. In any case, the symbolism of clothing should be evaluated. In this case, the attacker was bareback, while in the first, he had changed his shoes and turned his coat inside out.

The following day (Friday), the attack was claimed by a Tunisian extremist group unknown until then to the Tunisian security forces (but known in Morocco) and who calls himself, Al Mehdi of Southern Tunisia. No other terrorist organization has made any claims.

International leaders have pledged solidarity with France, with the heads of Spain, Italy, Turkey, the UK and the European Parliament among those condemning the violence. The Vatican said Pope Francis was praying for the victims. "*Terrorism and violence can never be accepted,*" he said in a statement. The French Council of the Muslim Faith also condemned the incident, as did the French Bishop's Council, which said Catholics across France "*refuse to give in to fear*" following the attack. Authorities in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt's highest religious authority Al-Azhar condemned

the deadly knife attack in France on Thursday. The Turkish government's communications director, Fahrettin Altun, also condemned the attack but criticized the French leadership saying they should avoid inflammatory rhetoric against Muslims. Tensions have been tense between the two countries, with Turkey particularly critical of the treatment of Muslims in France.

3.4.6. Conclusion

This event should be analysed with greater depth, visiting the places and talking with potential witnesses as it appears very interesting from the technical point of view. An attack, apparently rudimentary, seems to have been planned with extreme care and has produced, as it was carried out in a moment of international tension, severe consequences. It seems particularly interesting to analyse both the methods of radicalization of the terrorist and the fact that he appeared to have left Tunisia to carry out the attack. It is assumed that the attacker was supported /led by at least one accomplice; however, the attack was claimed by a terrorist organization unknown in Tunisia until then. There were no other claims nor any further information about the fate of the potential accomplice. All this data should be further investigated and analysed.

3.4.7. Annex: additional information about Ansar el-Mehdi

Tunisian authorities have authorized an investigation into whether a group called the Mahdi Organization exists and carried out the Nice attack, based on social media claims of responsibility or not.¹¹⁵ The person who released the video called himself “Ansar Al Mahdi” chief of the group. The Ansar El Mahdi Organization, which was established by Hassan el-Khattab, alias Abu Osama, in Morocco, was charged with setting up training camps in the Rif mountains, with several cells in Sale, Sidi Yehia El Gharb, Sidi Slimane, Al-Yousifiah and Casablanca, to establish an Islamic government in Morocco. Suspected targets included hotels, foreign missions and vital facilities in various coastal towns frequently visited by tourists. El-Khattab was believed to have links with Salafia Jihadia, as well as with al-Qa’eda operatives in Europe and the GSPC (Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat). Till now, there has been no such link which could define a relationship between the group in Morocco and the shady group El Mahdi from Tunisia. It could be that the one in Tunisia is some sort of sleeper cell who are operating only when they activate them. Alternatively, it could be a random person claiming to be one of them to create hype out of this event. So far, there has been no confirmation or any link to suggest otherwise. 44 persons of the Moroccan group were arrested and charged in 2006, and the group has been considered dismantled. This was followed by a case involving nine members of the Mesahel cell, which was implicated in an alleged plot to target the US Embassy in Rabat. A court on 2nd March 2007 convicted Mohamed Ben El Hadi Mesahel, a Tunisian suspected of being the leader of the group, to 15 years’ imprisonment. Mesahel was alleged to have acted as a coordinator between Islamist groups in Algeria, Morocco and Libya. He was also implicated in the recruitment of Moroccans to join the armed resistance in Iraq after taking them to Algeria with the assistance of illegal migration networks. Mesahel was also alleged to have lived in Italy, where he acted as coordinator between al-Qa’eda members in France, Italy and Syria planning operations including the bombing of the Milan metro, targeting the French intelligence headquarters in Paris and overseeing the operation of transporting fighters to Iraq through Syria. In January 2006, Mesahel was believed to have returned to Morocco and had contact with extremists in Casablanca and Sale who intended to participate in the insurgency in Iraq.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-security-nice-mahdi-idUSKBN27F1RV>

¹¹⁶ <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/jihadist-attacks-nice-tunisian-connection>

4. Attacks to Jewish religious buildings

4.1. Attack n°5: analysis of the arson on a synagogue in Warsaw, Poland (1997)

4.1.1. Spatial framework

The Nożyk Synagogue (Synagoga im. Zalmána i Rywki Małżonków Nożyków) is located in the center of the capital of Poland (Warsaw), at Twarda 6 street (52° 14' 9.6" N, 21° 0' 3.6" E 52.236, 21.001).



Figure 18 – Overview of Warsaw and the location of Nożyk Synagogue

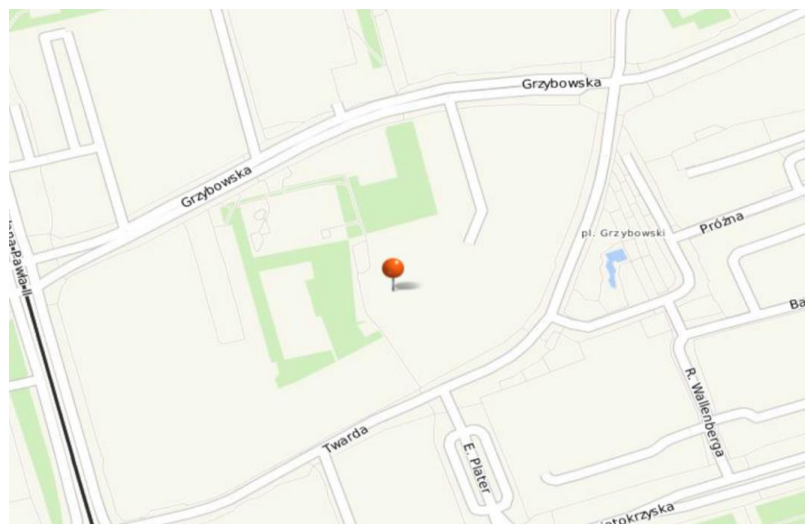


Figure 19 – Exact location of the Nożyk Synagogue in Warsaw

The synagogue is the only pre-war Jewish house of prayer (built between 1898-1902) that survived the World War II in Warsaw (Poland) as one of 400 which functioned in Warsaw before 1945 – other synagogues were destroyed by Germans. It was completely rebuilt between 1977 and 1983. The synagogue was in use until 1968 and opened again in 1983. It still functions housing the Warsaw Jewish

Commune and other Jewish organizations (the Union of Jewish Communities in the Republic of Poland)¹¹⁷. Prayers are held regularly in the synagogue. It is also a centre of Jewish culture, where numerous concerts, exhibitions and lectures on Jewish culture take place.



Figure 20 – A photo of the Nożyk Synagogue captured from the TV documentary “Magazyn Śledczy Anity Gargas” TVP Info¹¹⁸

According to the official data the Jewish national minority in Poland accounts for 7,353 Poles (National Population and Housing Census in 2011), and 2,690 in the Mazowieckie Voivodship where the capital of Poland (Warsaw) is located. Before the World War II around 3.5 million Jews lived in Poland but only around 300,000 survived due to German persecutions. *“During the period of the Polish People's Republic, most Polish Jews left in several waves of emigration. After 1989 there was a revival of Jewish life in Poland. Many people have returned to their Jewish roots. New organizations working for the development of life of the Jewish community in Poland were created”*.¹¹⁹

In the 90s when the attack took place there were also other antisemitic accidents in Poland but no other attacks on the Jewish community buildings. For instance, two days before the attack there was an anonymous call to the Lauder foundation which was located in the neighbourhood of the synagogue informing about allegedly planted or to be planted bomb in the synagogue. Commenting on the arson, Paweł Wildstein, chairman of the Union of Jewish Communities, commented that the leaders of the Jewish community in Poland had been receiving phone calls insulting their religious and human feelings for several years.¹²⁰

4.1.2. Building structure and surroundings

¹¹⁷

<https://web.archive.org/web/20120930133631/http://www.sztetl.org.pl/en/article/warszawa/11,synagogues-prayer-houses-and-others/5,nozyk-synagogue-twarda-street-6/?view=1>

¹¹⁸ <https://www.tvp.info/36324879/ktos-chcial-wrobic-lige-republikanska-w-podpalenie-synagogi-w-warszawie-wideo>

¹¹⁹ <https://www.gov.pl/web/mniejszosci-narodowe-i-etniczne/zydzi#:~:text=Liczba%20C5%BByd%C3%B3w%20w%20Polsce%20tradycyjnie%20oscylova%C5%82a%20w%20okolicach,Polskiej%20Rzeczypospolitej%20Ludowej%20w%20kilku%20falach%20emigracyjnych%20?msclkid=081e55c2a79c11ecb645dd094fe46e14>

¹²⁰ Gazeta Stołeczna 1997.

The synagogue is located in the strict centre of Warsaw where shops and offices, block and facilities such as schools are located. On the one side, it is very close to a building with offices, on the other to the small open green area. Hence, even though it is located in the city centre, it is also aside, not easily visible from main streets: Twarda and Grzybowska (compare Figure 18 and Figure 19). In 1997, the object was not under surveillance, hence, every member of the public could have easily accessed it, also inside when it was open. In comparison, today the synagogue is under 24/7 surveillance by both the police (with a police station located nearby), a private security company, and the CCTV system. Before entering the location, everyone is controlled. It means that today everyone who passes by this religious site is not anonymous. Additionally, today it is also partially secured by the fence and with solid cement which stops cars (they were not located in 1997 when the attack took place). So, today the access to the synagogue is partially restricted and under surveillance.

Additionally, the synagogue is a historical building which attracts not only followers but also tourists. Hence, several anonymous individuals pass by the building and some of them also treat it as their main destination as a heritage object and not only as a religious site. Yet, it is also natural that they take pictures or differently record the build. The building itself is solid, made of bricks. The Nożyk Synagogue is erected on the plan of the letter T, with a vestibule slightly wider than the main nave.¹²¹

Even though the attack took place in 1997, so 25 years ago, the surrounding of the synagogue has not changed too much, except a modernization of main streets and growing of skyscrapers in the close distance. However, these transformations do not affect drastically the surrounding. Compare Figure 21, Figure 22 and Figure 23 in the appendix to attack n°5.

4.1.3. Modality of action: progression of the attack

The Nożyk Synagogue at Twarda Street was set on fire by unknown perpetrators on the night of 25th to 26th February 1997. They broke the window above the main, but not used entrance, threw two cans of paint into the vestibule and set fire to it. The perpetrators broke a window above the door, the only one that did not have armoured windows. Most likely they used a wooden peg, which was found nearby. Then, they threw two cans of oil paint inside and set them on fire. A bag of sawdust was also found, which was probably intended to fuel the fire.¹²² The fire was noticed by an employee of the Lauder Foundation living next door and a policeman who was on duty next to the Jewish Theatre. A permanent police station was created there recently. A policeman with two more people tried to extinguish the fire with a car fire extinguisher. The fire brigade arrived immediately.¹²³

In terms of damages, it was reported that the exterior door and carpet burned down almost completely, and the vestibule and interior doors were tanned. Three people were evacuated from the residential part of the building adjacent to the synagogue. One of them succumbed to a slight snag.¹²⁴ The perpetrators were noticed by passers-by. They described them as follows: the two persons were both about 20 years old. The man was tall. He was about 185 cm tall, with dark hair. He was dressed in a bright yellow jacket. The girl accompanying him was much shorter. She was wearing a dark jacket and light jeans.¹²⁵ The commander of the capital police set up a special group to find arsonists. Several dozen people were interviewed (about 60), some were searched. Supervision over the investigation

¹²¹ <https://sztetl.org.pl/pl/miejscowosci/w/18-warszawa/112-synagogi-domy-modlitwy-mykwy/89683-synagoga-nozykow-w-warszawie-ul-twarda-6>

¹²² The bag was characteristic. German inscriptions inform that it belonged to the municipality of Dintikon. Such bags are given to the inhabitants of the German municipality to throw into them things that they want to get rid of or give to the poor as gifts.

¹²³ Gazeta Stołeczna 1997.

¹²⁴ Gazeta Stołeczna 1997.

¹²⁵ Gazeta Stołeczna 1997.

was taken over directly by the Minister of the Interior Affairs, Leszek Miller. However, the perpetrators were not caught.¹²⁶ Please compare Figure 24 and Figure 25.

4.1.4. Vulnerabilities exploited by the attacker(s) and weaknesses in security measures

The place is easy to access by passers-by, in the city centre where lots of people walk by day and night. The synagogue is also a tourist site, frequently visited. In 1997, there was no surrounding fence, so the access to the building from the street was easy. The attackers accessed the building on foot, since there was no easy way to approach it by car. On the other hand, thanks to the localization in the populated city area, the fire was quickly spotted by a passer-by who also (together with a policeman) engaged in extinguishing the fire. Due to the central localization also the fire brigade conducted quick and effective action. Both actions stopped fire from spreading. Otherwise, the whole synagogue might have been on fire since the fire was quickly spreading. One has to remember that in 1997 the CCTV system was not as widespread as today. Today, security technologies are more advanced.

4.1.5. Communities' reactions

The attack drew attention of many parties and was condemned by politicians and religious representatives. It also drew attention of the foreign media. The then president of the Republic of Poland, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, condemned *“the act of barbarism that was the arson attack on the Synagogue in Warsaw, and expressed his regret for this”*.¹²⁷ He stated that *“It is an event inconsistent with Polish culture, the tradition of tolerance and respect for places of religious worship. This fact is all the more painful for us, Poles, because it was directed against the Jewish community in Poland, living in our country for 800 years and so painfully experienced by the history of the twentieth century, when it became a victim of the Nazi genocide [...] [and] emphasizes that the nation Polish and state authorities condemn all acts of racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia. Poles want to build good, friendly relations with Jews living in the country and around the world. This cannot be prevented by the criminal behaviour of individuals. The President assures that such actions will be prosecuted in Poland with all consistency and the force of law”*.¹²⁸

Some media and politicians suggested that the arson was a provocation set by police and intelligence services and aimed at framing activists of the anti-communist organization, the Republican League of Mariusz Kamiński, whose activists were accused. They pointed to an alleged lack of reaction of a policeman located nearby in the very first moments of the accident, conducting searches and detentions in the anti-communist Republican League without the consent of the prosecutor's office, and no final detention of perpetrators. As one journalist rhetorically asked in a TV documentary on the incident: *“Did the special services of the Third Republic of Poland play the card of anti-Semitism in order to discredit and exclude conservative circles from political life? Who currently wants Poland to be perceived in the world as a country of anti-Semites? Are the recent events aimed at maintaining the myth of the Pole - anti-Semite an element of the information war?”*¹²⁹.

“According to Mariusz Kamiński, the police action took place on the initiative of the SdRP (the post-Communist party in Poland who then had the majority in the Parliament - MJ), which wants to intimidate the members of the League. He believes that the police are using the arson attack on the synagogue as a convenient pretext to try to discredit the radical political opponents of the SdRP before

¹²⁶ Gazeta Stołeczna 1997.

¹²⁷ <https://www.prezydent.pl/archiwalne-aktualnosci/aktualnosci-rok-2000-i-starsze/pozar-warszawskiej-synagogi,32163,archive> [access: 19.03.2022]

¹²⁸ ibidem

¹²⁹ <https://wpolityce.pl/media/385046-magazyn-sledczy-anity-gargas-kulisy-tajemniczego-podpalenia-synagogi-im-nozykow-w-warszawie-wideo> [access: 19.03.2022] comp. <https://www.tvp.info/36324879/ktos-chcial-wrobic-lige-republikanska-w-podpalenie-synagogi-w-warszawie-wideo>

*the upcoming parliamentary election campaign. It is in the political interest of the SdRP that the name of our association should be mentioned in connection with such a shameful act”.*¹³⁰

4.1.6. Conclusion

The attackers wore clothes visible at night which indicates a lack of professional training, unprofessional preparation. Even though the attack was successful, selection of the unprotected window might be either a result of a concrete preparation and study of the target or a luck – perhaps it was the only window they were able to break.

Following the hypotheses of the unprofessional perpetrators allows for classifying them as the lonely wolves, not affiliated to organized terrorism, and the arson rather as popular or cultural terrorism, in a way similar to vandalism. Also, in the Polish media coverage the term terrorism was not applied. Unfortunately, attackers left no clue concerning their motivation. However, the selection of the Jewish religious site sent a clear message of religious motivation, interpreted by commentators as a case of anti-Semitism, a phenomenon which was visible in Poland in 90s but in discourse: anti-Semitic slogans during manifestations of the nationalists’ manifestations.¹³¹

Nevertheless, the case is relevant since it exposes vulnerabilities of the religious site in the Polish context where terrorist and violent attacks on the religious sites does not emerge. The very attack has also triggered development of security measurements for the Jewish objects in Poland in 90s. In comparison, the Catholic community in Poland is much underdeveloped in terms of security and this case may be regarded as a point of references for formulating measurements and recommendations related also to the Polish context.

4.1.7. Appendix to attack n°5: photos



Figure 21 – View of the side and back part of the synagogue

¹³⁰ Gazeta Stołeczna 1997.

¹³¹ <https://www.nigdywiecej.org/pdf/pl/brunatnaksiega.pdf>



Figure 22 – View of the side part of the synagogue



Figure 23 – View of the entrance of the synagogue



Figure 24 – Damage of the entrance door of the synagogue¹³²



Figure 25 – Damage of the interior door, carpets and vestibule of the synagogue¹³³

¹³² Source: a picture captured from the TV documentary “Magazyn Śledczy Anity Gargas” TVP Info. <https://www.tvp.info/36324879/ktos-chcial-wrobic-lige-republikanska-w-podpalenie-synagogi-w-warszawie-wideo>

¹³³ Source: a picture captured from the TV documentary “Magazyn Śledczy Anity Gargas” TVP Info <https://www.tvp.info/36324879/ktos-chcial-wrobic-lige-republikanska-w-podpalenie-synagogi-w-warszawie-wideo>

4.2. Attack n°6: Toulouse Jewish School Shooting, France (2012)

4.2.1. Introduction

On 22 March 2012, 23-year-old Mohammed Merah of Algerian origin was killed in a raid by French special forces in Toulouse. He was responsible for the murders of seven people in the same month between Toulouse and Montauban: on 11th March he killed a French paratrooper; on 15th he killed two other paratroopers in a shooting in front of an ATM and on 19th March a rabbi and three children in the attack in front of the Jewish school of Toulouse.

4.2.2. Spatial framework

Ozar Hatora is the main Jewish school in Toulouse. It is part of a national chain of at least twenty Jewish schools throughout France. It educates children of primarily Sephardic, Middle Eastern and North African descent, who with their parents have made up the majority of Jewish immigrants to France since the late 20th century. The school is a middle and secondary school, with most children between the ages of 11 to 17. It also serves as a transportation node for other schools. Many parents bring their younger children to Ozar Hatorah, to place them on shuttle buses that travel to the other schools in the area.

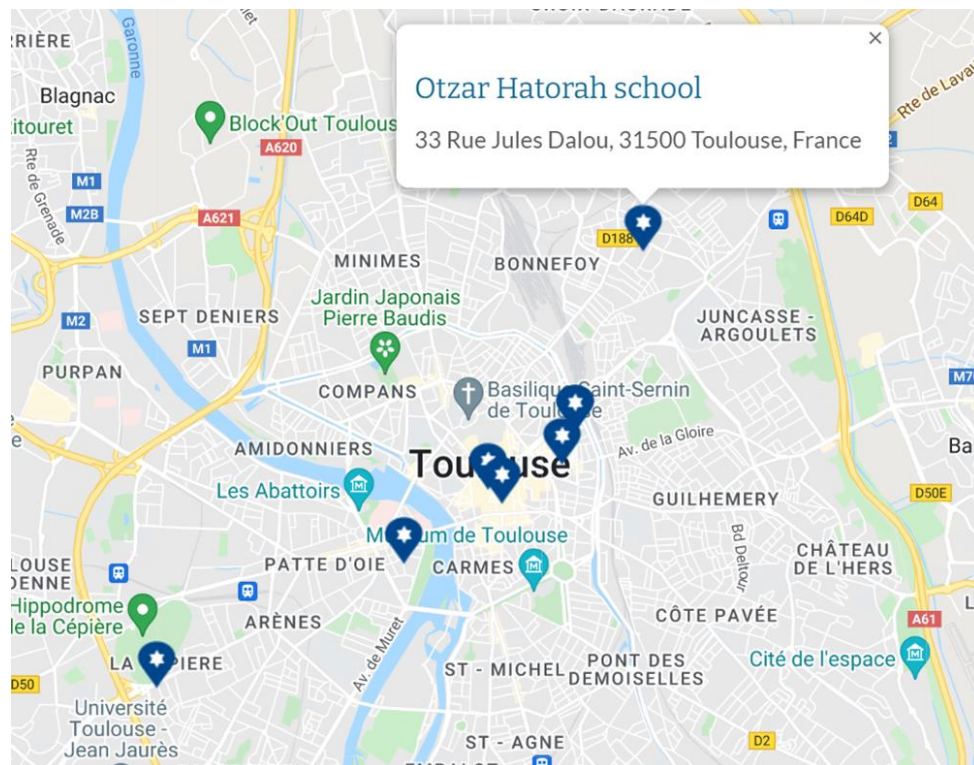


Figure 26 – Overview of Toulouse and the location of Otzar Hatorah school

4.2.3. Modality of action: progression of the attack

It was 8.30 am on 19th March 2012 when the attacker arrived in front of the Ozar Hatora private boarding school, the main Jewish school in the city. He acted at opening hours, at the time of day when the area is full of kids, not far from the school bus stop. First, he "*fired at everything in front of him*", then he also "*chased some children inside the school*," said the prosecutor Michel Valet. After the ambush, he fled aboard a scooter.

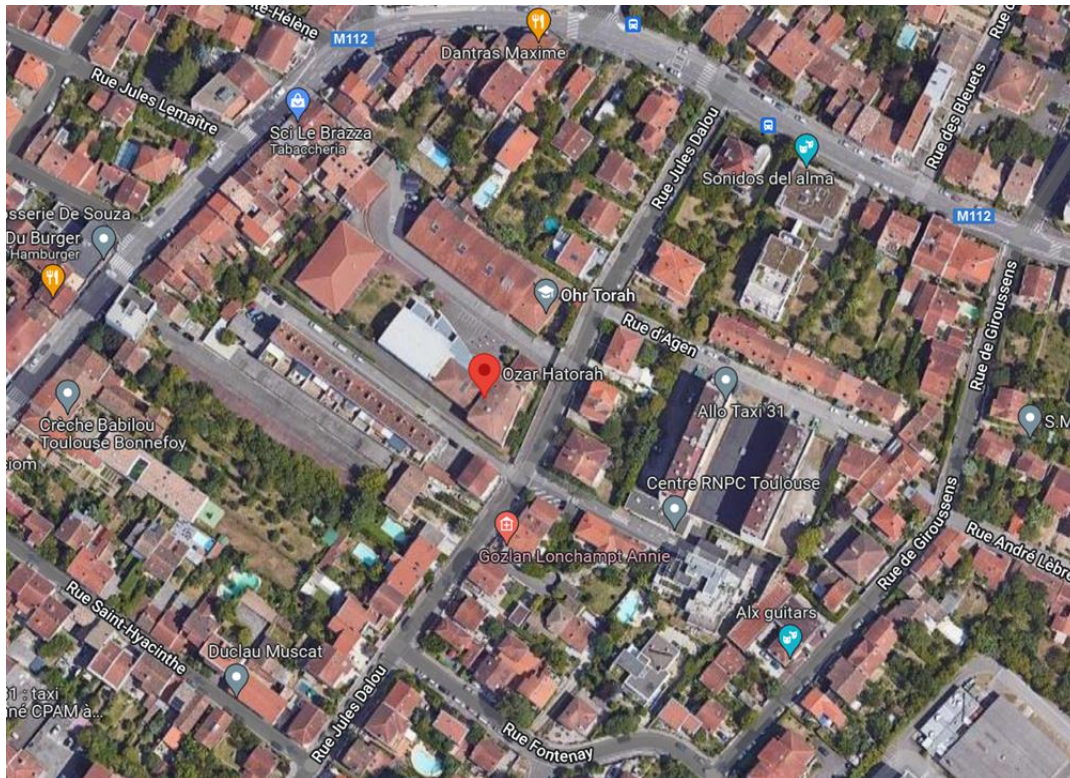


Figure 27 – Location of Otzar Hatorah school

His face was covered by a helmet, and he was carrying a video camera on his chest (covered by a bulletproof vest). Armed with a pistol, he immediately opened fire in the direction of the school. Four people lost their lives, just before entering the classroom: a teacher of 30 years old and three children of three, six and eight years old. The man was a Jerusalem-based rabbi, Yonatan Sandler, who was killed along with his two sons, Arie and Gabriel. The killer, then, entered the courtyard where everyone tried to escape and pursued Myriam Monsonégo, eight years old, daughter of the school principal, Yaakov Monsonégo. He reached for her, shot her in the shoulder, grabbed her by her hair and pointed the gun at her temple, but it jammed. The killer then changed weapons, took out another gun and shot the girl in the head at close range. She was the fourth victim. All four victims had dual citizenship, French and Israeli. Several people were injured, including two in serious condition.

The three children killed were not pupils of the Otzar Hatorah Institute. That morning they were in front of the building because it is from there that in the morning the pupils are grouped to be taken to the Jewish elementary school in Gan-Rachi, a few meters away. "*The children were screaming and running away* - said a father, after the shooting - *Many were waiting for the shuttle that was supposed to go to the elementary school*". After the massacre, the street where the school is located, rue Dalou, was closed. The students were brought to safety inside the building.

4.2.4. Investigations

The police reported that the killer had two weapons and one of the two is the one used by the person responsible for the mysterious ambushes of recent days against the paratroopers stationed in the city and in Montauban, which resulted in three deaths, all of foreign origin, and one wounded. It is an 11-43 caliber. The scooter with which the murderer escaped is also the same one used in the attack on the military. The vehicle, a very powerful Yamaha T-Max 500 cm³, was stolen in Toulouse before a paratrooper was killed on 11th March.

According to the first indications, the killer would be a large man, tattooed and dressed in black.

In the evening, President Nicolas Sarkozy explicitly said that the killing is the same as the attacks on the military on 11th and 15th March. "*The anti-Semitic motivation seems clear,*" added the head of state. At first, the authorities and the press spoke of an attack by a "lone wolf", but then it turned out that Mohammed Merah was known to the police for various acts of delinquency that had led him to prison and had been reported to the intelligence services afterwards. His travels, particularly to Afghanistan and Pakistan, during which he would acquire training in weapons handling, and his passport attested to numerous travels to Arab and Muslim countries (Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iran, etc.). The Toulouse and Montauban killings are claimed by the Jund al-Kilafah (Soldiers of the Caliphate) organization, affiliated with Al-Qaeda. The statement calls the killer Youssef-al-Firansi (Youssef the French), a nickname that, it will turn out, was the one he used during his "period of education" in Islamic countries. All things the security services knew: Merah was classified as a dangerous extremist, but he had not been monitored for a long time nor had preventive measures been applied to him. The explanation given by the authorities is that there are too many like him to be able to follow them.

4.2.5. Vulnerabilities exploited by the attacker(s) and weaknesses in security measures

The main vulnerability exploited by the perpetrator was the fact that the school is located close to a bus stop and the place nearby is used as a drop-off for people exchanging transportations to other destinations. So, a high volume of people moving was expected there, particularly in the early hours of the morning such as near the timing of the attack (8am). Then, regardless of the security measures specifically present at the school, the neighbourhood was an easy sweet spot. The perpetrator asserted that the school was not originally meant to be a target of his, but he realized it could be one after missing one of the objectives in a previous raid to the military. He reportedly had transited near the location some time before the attacks and was presumably able to identify it as an easy target. He could reach the area on his scooter and leave it very quickly.

4.2.6. Communities' reactions

Following the attack, the French Ministry of the Interior ordered the "strengthening of surveillance" in front of the country's Jewish schools. In many institutions, particularly in Paris, students do not go out into the courtyards, not even during recess.

The Vigipirate plan, the French counter-terrorism plan, was raised to the level of maximum alert in the Midi-Pyrenees region and in the surrounding departments. The red alert status had remained in effect from the London bombings of 2005 to 19th March 2012, on the occasion of the Toulouse shooting, where it was turned to scarlet.

4.2.7. Conclusion

A few days later, on 22nd March, the terrorist was killed: Mohammed Merah, 23, a Franco-Algerian of Muslim faith. He had taken refuge in an apartment in the Côte Pavée neighborhood. He had with him an arsenal consisting of an AK 47, an Uzi, a Sten shotgun, a Winchester shotgun, three Colt M1911s, a Glock 9mm, a Colt Python and a .357 Magnum. Other weapons will later be found in a white Renault Megane parked nearby.

After a long negotiation, at 10.30 am on 22nd March, fifteen policemen broke into the apartment and engaged in a firefight. To neutralize the terrorist was a sniper, with a shot in the head. Mohammed Merah had been arrested several times as a boy, spending two months in prison in 2005, another 18 between 2007 and 2008 and finally in 2009. A French intelligence document indicated him as a member of the Islamic extremist movement Forsane Alliza, an organization based in Toulouse suspected of inciting violence and terrorism. In January 2008 he tried to join the French army but was rejected due to a criminal record.

4.3. Attack n°7: Copenhagen Synagogue shooting, Denmark (2015)

4.3.1. Summary of the attack

On 14th and 15th February 2015, three separate shootings occurred in Copenhagen, Denmark. In total, two victims and the perpetrator were killed, while five police officers were wounded.

The first shooting took place on 14th February at a small public afternoon event called "Art, Blasphemy and Freedom of Expression" at the Krudttønden cultural centre, where an armed gunman killed one civilian who tried to stop him and wounded three police officers. 30 to 40 people attended the event, amongst whom were the Swedish artist Lars Vilks, who was among the key speakers, and François Zimeray, Ambassador of France in Denmark, who opened the seminar with his speech just before the attack took place. Vilks is often described as the main target because of his drawings of Muhammad. The second shooting took place later that night (after midnight and, therefore, on the 15th), outside the city's Great Synagogue in Krystalgade. A gunman killed a young Jewish man on security duty during a bat mitzvah celebration, where more than 80 people attended and wounded two police officers. Later that morning, near Nørrebro station, police tracking the suspect shot and killed a man after he opened fire on them while attempting to enter a residential building under police surveillance. The man was identified as Omar Abdel Hamid El-Hussein, who police said was responsible for both attacks.

4.3.2. Introduction

From the analysis of this attack, it emerges that security works only as a system and not only as a summation of process, technology and people.

On 14th February 2015, there was a high alert in Copenhagen due to a Lone Gunman that opened fire on the Krudttønden cultural centre in Copenhagen. When the attack took place (15.30 hrs), the Cultural Centre was hosting a public seminar on 'Art, Blasphemy and Freedom of Expression'. Lars Vilks, a Swedish artist deemed controversial for previous drawings of Mohammed was attending the seminar.

The local synagogue hosted a Bat Mitzvah with 88 guests, one of the most emblematic events in Jewish families. The synagogue was protected well, had a well-functioning security technique, detailed and checked processes furthermore talented manpower (three security guards and two police officers).



Figure 28 – The Security-as-a-System scheme¹³⁴

4.3.3. Framework

¹³⁴ <https://www.cgsinc.com/blog/cybersecurity-should-be-top-every-ceos-priority-list>

A bit more than one month passed since Charlie Hebdo shooting, which was a series of terrorist attacks that shook France in January 2015, claiming the lives of 17 people, including 11 journalists and security personnel at the Paris offices of Charlie Hebdo, a satiric magazine. Swedish cartoonist Lars Vilks had been the subject of death threats from Islamic extremists in the wake of the controversy over his drawings of Muhammad. On 14th February 2015 at 15:00 CET, an event titled "Art, Blasphemy and Freedom of Expression" took place at Krudttønden cultural centre at Østerfælled Torv in the Østerbro district of Copenhagen. The debate, organised by the Lars Vilks Committee, was scheduled to include discussions on the attack in January against the French satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo.¹³⁵

The perpetrator, Omar El-Hussein attempted to make his way into the cultural centre while avoiding the main entrance. After failing to do so, at 15:33 he encountered 55-year-old film director Finn Nørgaard, who tried to stop him; the film director, however, was shot and killed with a single round from a stolen M/95 rifle. Nørgaard was attending the event but ran out of the building and tried to overpower the gunman. Finn Nørgaard stopped the attack, but lost his life. The attacker fired 27 rounds from the same weapon through the window of the cultural centre, wounding three police officers. Officers of the Danish Security and Intelligence Service and two Swedish officers (who were there as personal protection of Vilks) attempted to return the fire; nevertheless, the attacker managed to flee.¹³⁶

Omar Abdel Hamid El-Hussein (Arabic: عمر عبد الحميد الحسين, romanized: 'Umar 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Ḥusayn; born 11th September 199) was a 22-year-old man, who was identified as the suspected shooter. He was born in Vordingborg, Denmark, as a son of Jordanian-Palestinian parents, and grew up in Copenhagen and Jordan. Danish police stated that the subject was well known to the Danish intelligence services.¹³⁷

El-Hussein spent most of his childhood in Mjølnerparken in Nørrebro. When he was in primary school, his parents divorced and he lived with his mother. When he was twelve years old, his mother sent him to Jordan where he spent three years. Upon returning to Denmark, he had problems in school. He became a member of the Brothas gang in Mjølnerparken, and was sentenced twice for violence, possession of an illegal weapon, and hashish possession before 2013.¹³⁸

In November 2013, the police wanted El-Hussein for an indiscriminate knife attack on a man riding a suburban train in Copenhagen. He was arrested in January 2014, and remanded in custody. The prison had concerns about his bizarre and fanatical behaviour in prison and filed a report to the Danish Intelligence Service in September 2014, as they found that he had changed behaviour and become "extremely religious". In December 2014, he was sentenced to two years in prison; however, he was released on 30th January 2015, after having been imprisoned only for two weeks.¹³⁹ CNN reported that he had sword fidelity to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in a post made on his Facebook page just before the weekend shooting spree. The post pledges "*allegiance to Abu Bakr in full obedience in the good and bad things. And I won't argue with him unless it is an outrageous disbelief.*"

¹³⁵ "Debatmøde om Charlie Hebdo". Østerbro Avis. Archived from the original on 23 April 2015. Retrieved 12 April 2015.

¹³⁶ Braagaard, Natali (19 February 2015). "Øjenvidne: Finn Nørgaard forsøgte at overmande attentatmand" [Eye witness: Finn Nørgaard tried to defeat the attacker]. TV2.dk (in Danish). Archived from the original on 5 April 2015. Retrieved 12 April 2015.

¹³⁷ "Police say Copenhagen attacks suspect killed". aljazeera.com. Archived from the original on 27 March 2015. Retrieved 12 April 2015.

¹³⁸ Mette Richardt and Michael Lund (17 February 2015) Skoleleder: Vi forsøgte at tale Omar og hans mor til fornuft Archived 17 February 2015 at the Wayback Machine (in Danish) Danmarks Radio

¹³⁹ Cathrine Bloch (17 February 2015) PET: Ingen grund til at tro, at 22-årig planlagde terrorangreb Archived 24 September 2015 at the Wayback Machine (in Danish) Berlingske Tidende

4.3.4. Great Synagogue shooting

At 00:50 on 15th February 2015, a shooting took place at the Great Synagogue on Krystalgade in central Copenhagen. A bat mitzvah ceremony attended by 88 people was taking place there. The gunman, who pretended to be a drunk, approached his target without causing initial suspicion, fired two 7.65 mm rounds and seven 9 mm rounds, hitting Dan Uzan, a 37-year-old Jewish community member on security duty, who later died from the gunshot wound to his head. The gunman also shot and wounded two officers of the Danish Security and Intelligence Service in the arms and legs. The gunman escaped without managing to enter the synagogue and was not injured by shots fired by the officers.¹⁴⁰

The Great Synagogue is the main synagogue of the Jewish community in Copenhagen, Denmark. The synagogue is defined by its unique architecture around the Ark. The synagogue can welcome 900 worshippers. The community centre is located next to the synagogue. The synagogue was not opened on that night, the event took place in the community centre behind that. The venue is elegant, close to the University of Copenhagen, and numerous churches are in the neighbourhood.

The building is solid, and is well equipped with physical security instruments (motoric double door system, CCTV with night vision, panic room, panic alert systems). These security investments are hardly unrelated to the fact that the synagogue has been already attacked before. On 22nd July 1985, the synagogue was struck by a bomb placed by Palestinian terrorists. While no people were injured in the attack on the synagogue, a second bomb placed by the same group destroyed the Copenhagen offices of the American Northwest Orient Airlines, killing one person and injuring 26. Four individuals with links to Palestinian nationalist organizations, including Mohammed Abu Talb, were later convicted for these and several other terrorist attacks.¹⁴¹



Figure 29 – Location of the Great Synagogue of Copenhagen

¹⁴⁰ Copenhagen hit by second deadly shooting". BBC News. 15 February 2015. Archived from the original on 15 February 2015. Retrieved 15 February 2015.

¹⁴¹ "27 Injured in 3 Terrorist Explosions in Copenhagen". Los Angeles Times. Associated Press. 22 July 1985. Retrieved 15 February 2015.

4.3.5. Modality of action: progression of the attack

This paragraph briefly presents the evolution of the attack. Due to privacy issues, the name of the security personnel will not be mentioned, apart from Dan Uzan, who was the victim of this attack.

- 18.00 hrs: Preparation started, security personnel arrived and checked the area. Three well-trained security officers were guarding the event.
- 18.45 hrs: Bat Mitzvah event started, guests were arriving. Estimated number of guests was around 90 people. Though the security alert was significant due to the terror attack happened the day earlier, the organizers did not decide to postpone the event.
- 19.30 hrs: the police arrived at the scene as an additional security presence. The police forces were worried about the event and thus ordered well-equipped police officers with assault rifles.
- 00.39 hrs: The attack took place when two members of the security staff were on change-over shift at the gate, and the third was in the local control room. Before the shift, they briefed each other, and Dan (the murdered security officer), who took the new shift had been warned about a suspicious person, who was walking strange and vomited just before. In this neighbourhood, an outgoing person is not out of the ordinary at Saturday late night. Just as Dan took the position, the suspicious person approached him and shot with a pistol. Dan was deadly shot, and the police officers were slightly injured by shots so, they tried to answer the fire but had issues with arms. The security officer inside followed the protocol, thus, he pushed the panic button (alerts the police forces immediately), evacuated the guest to the safe room, and monitored the situation and reported from a secured place.
- 00.55 hrs: Danish SWAT team arrived at the scene and started to sweep the area (looking for the attacker, or second wave of an attack). The SWAT teams did not have direct contact with the security officer inside, therefore they were handling the situation longer.
- 01.40 hrs: The guest managed to leave after one and a half hour, but unharmed. Until the SWAT team and reinforcement arrived the security guard inside took care of the guest. He informed them, gave water and even a radio have direct contact among them from the safe room.



Figure 30 – Military police guarding the Great Synagogue of Copenhagen¹⁴²

¹⁴² <https://www.wsj.com/articles/for-europes-jews-worship-comes-with-a-heavy-dose-of-security-1540846059>

By comparing the protection of the Great Synagogue of Copenhagen with other religious facilities, it can be noted that it had developed security techniques, manpower and protocols:

- Techniques:
 - Direct panic alert to police
 - CCTV all around with PTZ dome and night vision
 - Motorised double door access control
 - Safe room with emergency exit
 - Control room
- Manpower:
 - Trained security personnel
 - Responsible security manager
 - LEA assistance
- Protocols:
 - Control room
 - Emergency plan

4.3.6. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of safety and security experts, it is possible to state that the security system worked well, and it managed to prevent a fatal terror attack against the Jewish community of Copenhagen. However, the price of the protection in this case was unacceptably high since a Jewish volunteer died on duty.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that serious consequences followed the attack. The professional investigation figured out that the theory of prevention has not been taken into consideration. Possible measures that could prevent such an attack include:

- In high alert, the postponement of events should be adequately considered. When a possible armed attacker is on his way, and can be connected to the ideology of enemies of our community, it makes a hint. Better to have more influence on the intelligence to consider the real threat.
- It is not necessary to put anyone into danger without reason. When nobody is on the street, the perimeter protection is working and there is the possibility to cover the area by using cameras; it should not be a convention to position guards on doors or gates.
- If there is a suspicious person, it must be under control until he/she is checked. If there is LEA assistance in the field, the cooperation has to be constant and direct.
- There must be a facility file prepared or shared in advance with SWAT, which the special teams can use to have the basic knowledge about the venue in order to shorten and ease the penetration.

4.4. Attack n°8: the Halle Synagogue shooting, Germany (2019)

4.4.1. Introduction

On 9th October 2019, the serenity of Halle, a German town in Saxony-Anhalt, was unexpectedly disturbed by the attack of a 27-year-old German guy at Halle Synagogue. The attack took place during the day while the Jewish community was celebrating Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar.

The perpetrator attempted to force the main door and a side gate of the synagogue using firearms and explosives but failed to enter the building. No people inside the synagogue were injured; however, the lone gunman killed a 40-year-old woman walking by. Failing to achieve his main target, the guy walked

away and ended up in a nearby kebab shop, where he shot and killed a 20-year-old student having lunch there.¹⁴³

The perpetrator, Stephan Balliet, was a German Neo-nazi, grown up in Saxony-Anhalt and living in an apartment in Benndorf (near Eisleben). He served in the German armed forces, attending his six-month military services in a Panzergrenadier battalion. He also studied “molecular and structural product design” for one year and attended chemistry at Halle University for one year. According to the witnesses and the investigation, Balliet acted alone, using homemade firearms and explosives. The guy was arrested 90 minutes after the attack, about 40 kilometres outside the town¹⁴⁴. On 10th November 2019, Balliet confessed and almost one year later was condemned to life imprisonment with preventive detention.¹⁴⁵

This attack offers food for thought from several perspectives: this analysis investigates, thus, the symbolic relevance of the planned timing for the attack, the dynamic and means adopted, the collateral effects it causes and the reaction of the broader Jewish and non-Jewish community.

4.4.2. Spatial framework

Germany counts approximately 118,000 Jewish out of 83,300,000 of the national population. This amount represents around 0.8% of the Jewish population worldwide.¹⁴⁶ Saxony-Anhalt is known for being one of the less religious länder; however, there are several small Jewish communities, including the one in Halle. On the day of the attack, the synagogue was hosting 51 believers.

The attack, indeed, took place during the religious celebration of the Yom Kippur, thus assuming an important twofold meaning. On the one hand, it showed the link between perpetuated violence and religious motivation. It symbolises the hate towards a religious community and the hostility toward its beliefs in the day when Jewish celebrate atonement and repentance. Jewish people traditionally observe this holy day with a day-long fast, confession, and intensive prayer, gathering in synagogues, reason why the Halle synagogue was full of people. On the other hand, it confirms the intention to cause harm, as it was well-known that the number of people in the synagogue would have been higher than usual due to the Yom Kippur celebration and thus the presence of the local community and occasional visitors.

It is worth mentioning that after the Munich Massacre in 1972 - a terrorist attack against the Israeli Olympic team members conducted by affiliates of the Palestinian militant group Black September¹⁴⁷ - Germany started to pay more attention and adopt precautions to guarantee the security and safety of the Jewish communities across the country. A couple of months before the attack in Halle, reports from the German authorities had stated that the threat of far-right attacks had increased in the two years prior to April 2019 due to the number of extremists and fringe groups increasing by 50 percent.¹⁴⁸

The warning was raised at the national level; however, each Bundesland was actually in charge of adopting the security measures to be implemented by state police forces. Some smaller communities, however, did not introduce further measures due to a lack of resources. Even the state police of Saxony-Anhalt carried out no extra security precautions at the Halle synagogue in occasion of the Yom

¹⁴³ <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-synagogue-attacker-sentenced-to-life-in-prison/a-56004932>

¹⁴⁴ <https://www.spiegel.de/panorama/justiz/halle-saale-stephan-balliet-bereitete-tat-seit-monaten-vor-a-1291500.html>

¹⁴⁵ <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-synagogue-attacker-sentenced-to-life-in-prison/a-56004932>

¹⁴⁶ <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jewish-population-of-the-world>;
<https://www.jewishagency.org/jewish-population-5782>

¹⁴⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/event/Munich-Massacre>

¹⁴⁸ <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/halle-synagoge-schuesse-1.4633708>

Kippur celebration in 2019. It is interesting the interview given by Christina Feist, a 30-year-old Viennese visitor to the Halle Synagogue the day of the attack. In her declaration, she affirmed that she was pretty surprised by the lack of security at the site compared to other Jewish institutions in Europe.

"I was pleasantly surprised in my naive conception that hey, maybe Halle is the place where you do not need police to be in front of shul because there is no anti-Semitism." However, the reality was slightly different: she was told that the synagogue had made the request to increase security but without receiving acknowledgement or support. The different statement provided by the synagogue and the police, indeed, led to an investigation of the police's conduct.¹⁴⁹

Halle is, hence, one of the example of those smaller communities that are aware of the risk and their exposure to the threat but often do not manage to put in place adequate measures to prevent the occurrence of terrorist events. Nevertheless, as it will be explained in the next sections, the limited security measures presented at the Synagogue allowed to protect people inside the synagogue, at the expense of two random people that happened to be in the wrong place in the wrong moment.

4.4.3. Modality of action: progression of the attack

The terrorist attack at the Halle Synagogue was carried out on the morning of 9th October, 2019. Before approaching the building, the attacker Stephan Balliet started a livestream on the platform Twitch, using a smartphone attached to the helmet he was wearing. The livestream started at 11:54 am and three minutes later, Balliet posted also the link to the livestream on the social media Meguca, an independent website affiliated with 4chan's anime board. Here, Balliet also published his Manifesto, declaiming his extremist views and antisemitic values. It seems that only five users saw the video realtime; but it took half an hour for the administrator to remove it and by that time it was already been watched by more than 2.200 people.¹⁵⁰



Figure 31 – Damages inflicted on the security door by the attacker's gunfire

At 12:01 pm Balliet reached the synagogue. Celebration had already started with 51 people inside the synagogue. Balliet was carrying homemade firearms and explosives and attempted to force the entry door and a side entrance. The image on the right shows the bullet holes on the door. However, he

¹⁴⁹ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/a-year-after-halle-terror-attack-jews-who-were-there-still-looking-for-answers/>

¹⁵⁰ <https://ctc.usma.edu/halle-germany-synagogue-attack-evolution-far-right-terror-threat/>

failed to breach the entrance. Thanks to the CCTV camera installed near the synagogue's door, the cantor was able to notice the man approaching the building, thus having the time to lock people inside and adopt preliminary security measures.

Failing to enter the building, Balliet opened fire on a woman passing by and killed her. Another man who stopped to help the woman was almost shot but, fortunately, Balliet's weapon misfired. At 12:03 pm Halle fire-emergency HQ received a distress call, thus being informed of the attack; subsequently, the police of the town was informed. However, it took two hours and a half before the federal police quick responders managed to reach the town (2:40 pm).¹⁵¹

Meanwhile, Balliet abandoned his initial target and drove away randomly until he stopped at a kebab shop almost 600 m from the synagogue. It was 12:10 pm and he shot at the window, killing a young student having lunch inside the restaurant. Another customer was injured, thus raising the casualties of the attack to two deaths and two injuries. In the meantime, local authorities activated the Public Alert System Katwarn – an alert and information system that informs the affected citizen in disasters and dangerous situations (e.g. large fires, power outages, bomb finds) - warning the local community to stay at home while closing the city's train station.¹⁵²

The police arrived at 12:16 pm and a firefight started: despite having been slightly injured, Balliet managed to escape. In Wiedersdorf, a village about 15 km from Halle, he changed his car. First, he tried to steal a car from two people that however refused to give it up: Balliet shot them, severely injuring both. Afterward, he stole a cab and took the highway with direction Munich. However, he got in an accident with a truck, sealing the end of his flee. The police arrested him at 1:38 pm, about 40 km from the synagogue.¹⁵³¹⁵⁴

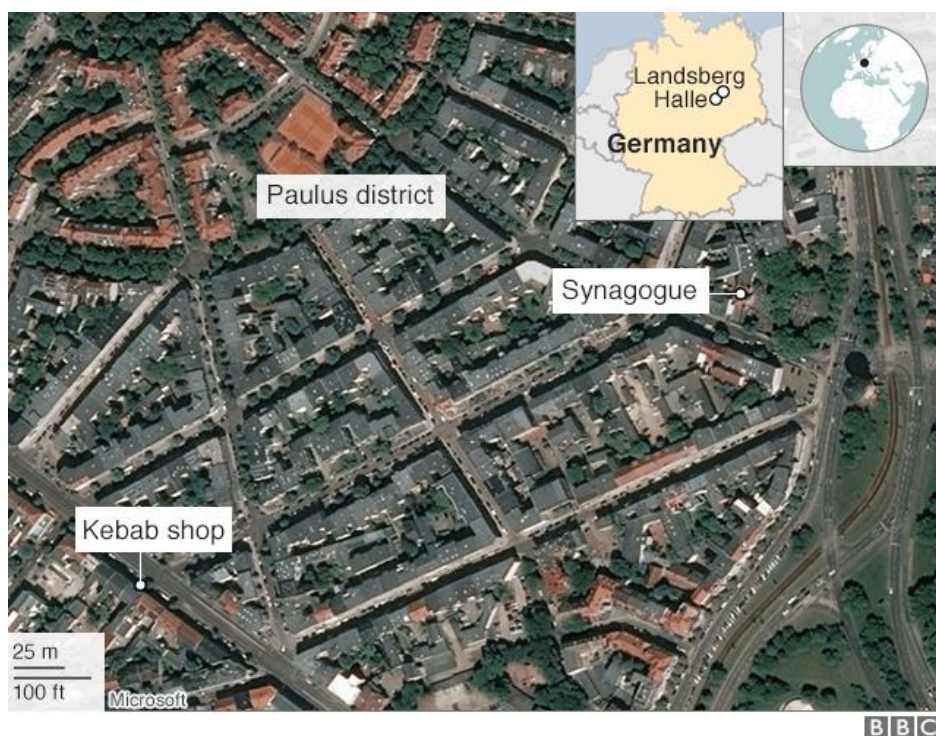


Figure 32 – Map of the involved areas during the Halle Synagogue Attack¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/a-music-lover-a-painter-victims-of-halle-shooting-identified/>

¹⁵² <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/germany-synagogue-shooting-halle-grenade-reportedly-thrown-jewish-cemetery-today-2019-10-09/>

¹⁵³ <https://ctc.usma.edu/halle-germany-synagogue-attack-evolution-far-right-terror-threat/>

¹⁵⁴ <https://www.newyorker.com/news/letter-from-europe/a-terrorist-attack-on-yom-kippur-in-halle-germany>

¹⁵⁵ Image source <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-50003759>

4.4.4. Building structure and surroundings

The Halle Synagogue is located in Humboldtstraße 52, in Halle, near the Paulus District. As the image shows, the synagogue is accessible from two entrances: a main central door and a smaller one on the left (looking at the synagogue).



Figure 33 – Halle Synagogue entrance

In 2015, the Halle synagogue was equipped with security measures as part of the security assistance fund, a project promoted by the Jewish Agency for Israel that devoted about 11 million USD to Jewish communities worldwide in order to strengthen their security equipment. The fund was established after the shooting in a Jewish school in Toulouse (France) in 2012.¹⁵⁶

In particular, the synagogue was equipped with a strong locked door (that can only be opened by someone inside with an electric door pane) and a CCTV system (as shown in Figure 34) According to the testimony, the CCTV camera allowed the cantor to spot the gunman approaching the building. In this way, he managed to warn the visitors and lock them inside the building.¹⁵⁷ Although the security measures permitted to protect the people inside, thus jeopardising the attacker's original plan, it was not enough to prevent the collateral effect, such as the killing of the woman outside and the shooting at the kebab shop.

¹⁵⁶ <https://www.jewishagency.org/saf/>

¹⁵⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/11/halle-synagogue-fortified-ahead-antise-mitic-attack-germany>



Figure 34 – Halle Synagogue’s side entrance

The kebab shop is located in Ludwig-Wucherer-Straße 12, almost 600m from the synagogue. As most of the kebab shop, or *imbisstube*, the building had some tables inside and outside. Two windows delineate the shop size. No particular security measure was in place in the shop. The attacker opened fire from outside, killing a student sitting inside the place. The kebab place was not originally a target of the terrorist action but became a scapegoat for the attacker’s frustration.



Figure 35 – Kebab shop near the synagogue¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-55395682>

4.4.5. Vulnerabilities exploited by the attacker(s) and weaknesses in security measures

The attack at the Halle synagogue provides some insights from multiple perspectives. In terms of *weaknesses in the security measures*, it proves that the presence of some security measures in places of worship is indeed helpful and permits avoiding major injuries. It should also be noted that, in this specific case, the scale of the attack was quite limited. Balliet acted alone and used homemade explosives and firearms: it cannot be *a priori* excluded that, should have the attack been conducted by a group of people and using more sophisticated and destructive weapons, the outcome could have been different.

On the other hand, this event also proves the importance of *prevention*. The security measures in place managed to protect people inside the synagogue (which is what they are meant to): however, they did not manage to discourage the attacker from perpetuating violence. Eventually, Balliet was driven by rage and frustration and injured and killed people that were not his original target. People inside the synagogue were Jewish people celebrating their faith and beliefs: the attack had a clear symbolic value. As it was lately investigated during the trial, Balliet's attack was fueled by right-wing extremist ideology and antisemitic motive. In the Manifesto he published on Meguca, he declared that there is a "Jewish world conspiracy" and after the attack, he stated that "*if he could kill only one Jew, that was worth the attack*".¹⁵⁹ The synagogue was, indeed, selected as target as it was the closest place where he could find Jewish people.

However, failing to reach his goal, Balliet poured out his anger and frustration on random people who were not part of the Jewish community and thus did not represent the target of his mission (during the trial he declared he was sorry for these casualties as they were German people not target of his action). This collateral effect highlights the utmost importance of also intervening in prevention and not just protection. Anti-semitism is still a plague in German society (as in other societies worldwide) and needs adequate instruments (e.g. information, awareness, community building, etc.) to be tackled.

4.4.6. Communities' reactions

Reactions and consequences to the attack can be grouped into different categories.

First of all, *criticism towards the action of the local police* before, during and after the attack. As mentioned, a request for additional security measures was made by the synagogue in view of the celebration of the holiest day in the Jewish calendar. However, such a request was never followed up. In an interview to the TV station Das Erste, the president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Josef Schuster, declared that the day of the attack there was no police patrolling the Halle synagogue's area. Most likely, if some police forces would have been there, at least the subsequent shooting at the kebab shop could have been avoided.¹⁶⁰

During the attack, the response was quite slow and police were ill-equipped to handle the attack in a sensitive manner. Felix Klein, the German government's Commissioner for Jewish Life in Germany and the Fight against Anti-Semitism, lately reported to the BBC that he was not surprise by hearing of the police response. Although the federal government has acknowledged the need to improve police training against anti-semitic crime and allocated specific financial resources to this aim, a significant improvement still has to be seen.¹⁶¹ Even after the attack and the controversies arisen, in June a policeman was reported and disciplined after he denied the finding of a paper swastika outside Halle

¹⁵⁹ <https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2019-10/anschlag-halle-helmkamera-stream-einzeltaeter/seite-2>

¹⁶⁰ https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/the-government-has-made-it-illegal-to-share-or-download-the-video-of-the-german-terror-attack/YI7FR3FSQEPJE372GUIRFA4GJI/?c_id=1&objectid=12275357

¹⁶¹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54433397>

Jewish community office. The officer stated that he did not find the paper: however, the CCTV recorded the policeman removing it after accidentally passing by.¹⁶²

Second, *trust*. The Halle police did not come out gloriously from this event. Besides the inadequate reaction, Rabbi Jeremy Borovitz, head of Jewish learning for the Base Berlin cultural centre, also reported that a clear lack of cultural knowledge was perceived: the police, apparently, treated the Jewish community members as a “burden” without understanding the real value of such an act and also lacking empathy towards the congregation.¹⁶³ Declaration from the political class did not come to rescue: in the aftermath of the attack, Interior Minister Holger Stahlknecht declared that the new obligation to increase the protection of Jewish buildings could have posed delays in the ability of police officers to respond to other (even no emergency) calls, thus indirectly conferring a lower priority to the Jewish community needs.¹⁶⁴

Third, the attack had a *wide appeal* also at the national level. The problem of increasing far-right and antisemitic extremism was already known, but the event in Halle confirmed the urgency of arranging adequate measures to tackle it. The Jewish Agency chairman Isaac Herzog wrote a letter to chancellor Angela Merkel mentioning that the attack at the Halle synagogue “*should sound the alarm loud and clear throughout Europe*”.¹⁶⁵ He also reiterated the urgency to reinforce security measures nearby synagogues and other types of Jewish facilities, especially in periods of religious celebrations (e.g. Yom Kippur, Sukkot, etc.). He also called for actions at the legislative level, as well as education.¹⁶⁶

Fourth, *solidarity*. The condemnation of the terrorist attack at the Halle Synagogue and the acknowledgement of the gravity of such an action also translated into a solid support for the synagogue survivors from both Jewish and non-Jewish groups in Halle. In a similar fashion, people have been standing alongside the owners of the kebab shop, Ismet and Rifat Tekin. The two brothers, indeed, encountered difficulties in getting clients back into the shop, thus financially struggling. The German Jewish student union launched a fundraising campaign managing to raise 40 million USD to support the owners.

In addition, according to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, “*More than 10,000 people marched in Berlin against anti-Semitism and in a show of support for the victims of anti-Semitic violence in the city of Halle*” a few days after the attack.¹⁶⁷

Lastly, *consequential effects*. Following the event in Halle, security measures to protect Jewish communities and facilities were introduced. Now, Halle’s Jewish community is constantly in close contact with the police about security issues. At the national level, the government announced the allocation of 22 million euros to improve security of synagogues and other Jewish sites, confirming the commitment of Germany to ensure the Jewish community the necessary protection. As the head of Germany's Central Council of Jews, Josef Schuster, stressed, the new funds would help Jewish communities that are struggling with the lack of resources to improve their security measures.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶² <https://www.dw.com/en/halle-synagogue-attack-1-year-on-do-german-jews-feel-safer/a-55192188>

¹⁶³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54433397>

¹⁶⁴ <https://www.dw.com/en/halle-synagogue-attack-1-year-on-do-german-jews-feel-safer/a-55192188>

¹⁶⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/11/halle-synagogue-fortified-ahead-antisemitic-attack-germany>

¹⁶⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/11/halle-synagogue-fortified-ahead-antisemitic-attack-germany>

¹⁶⁷ <https://jewishjournal.com/online/305703/thousands-march-in-berlin-against-anti-semitism/>

¹⁶⁸ <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/germany-improve-safety-jewish-sites-halle-attack-73075606>

4.4.7. Conclusion

The analysis of the terrorist attack at the Halle synagogue allows drawing relevant conclusions.

First of all, the attack presents a specific type of terrorism that plunges its roots in the antisemitic far-right extremist ideology. The attacker was not affiliated with any terrorist group or organisation and acted alone. The so-called *lone wolf*, indeed, is a terrorist that plans and commits an attack on his own, thus not claiming it to any specific group's affiliation. Despite acting alone, these attackers can provoke mass destruction, acting unexpectedly and often driven by feelings of anger and revenge that end up in violence and intention to cause harm. As Balliet's Manifesto confirms, the attacker believed in a "Jewish world conspiracy" and acted to kill Jewish people. This event, thus, shows how racism and antisemitism are still deeply anchored in the German society and need to be tackled from multiple perspectives.

Secondly, the analysis of the attack confirms the relevance of security measures. Security measures are, indeed, perceived as necessary by the Jewish community (the synagogue even asked for additional ones prior to Yom Kippur day), and have proved to be essential to protect the believers inside the building. However, they did not manage to avoid the killing of the woman on the street and the student in the kebab shop. Moreover, as abovementioned, if the attack would have been perpetuated with more destructive weapons and perhaps additional people, the security measures might have not been sufficient, and the event could have ended up in a massacre.

Thirdly, security measures alone cannot tackle the phenomenon. It is necessary to improve prevention by working on education, cultural awareness and legislation. The Jewish community was, indeed, aware of the risk but still it was not enough, as their requests were not followed up and the attack, although failing, eventually took place. Anti-Semitism, as well as other forms of violent extremism, needs to be addressed simultaneously from different angles: awareness of the risk is clearly crucial, as it is the availability of security measures. However, it is also essential, and perhaps this is one of the main missing factors in Halle, the collaboration between religious and political authorities as well as police forces. Stronger coordination and most of all a true understanding of each other needs and challenges would create a more solid structure to tackle this type of threat and ensure the security of both Jewish and non-Jewish people.

5. Attacks to Muslim religious buildings

5.1. Attack n°9: the flare bomb attack on the main mosque of Granada, Spain (2017)

5.1.1. Introduction

On 19th August 2017, a group of 12 young radicals was concentrated outside the main mosque of Granada (Mezquita Mayor de Granada) in the district of Albayzín, holding banners with Islamophobic messages, shouting xenophobic slogans and finally launching flare bombs outside the mosque, causing upheaval among the people present at such a touristic place. The perpetrators were holding a banner signed by the ultra-right movement "*Hogar Social*" and their Islamophobic attack was clearly a self-perceived response to the terrorist attacks of Barcelona and Cambrils, which had occurred two days ago. Namely, the message "whoever funded this mosque, funds terrorism. Why the authorities are silenced?" was written on the banner that they were holding. Among others, messages such as "terrorists", "DAESH funds you", "get out of Europe", were some of the ones shouted towards the Muslim population who was inside the mosque. Once the Granada Local Police arrived at the place, the perpetrators were lost in the alleys of Albayzín and could not be identified, according to police reports. There were no casualties, injuries or physical damage to the mosque by the attack.¹⁶⁹

5.1.2. Spatial framework

The city of Granada is the capital city of the homonymous province, belonging to the autonomous community of Andalusia, in the south of Spain. Granada has a population of 231.775 people as of 2021, and a territorial extension of 88,06 km² as of 2019. The main mosque of Granada is located in Albayzín, one of the six main districts of Granada. Albayzín is probably the most touristic district of Granada and it is usually crowded by both the local population and visitors.¹⁷⁰

Concerning religious distribution, Granada has historically been a space of religious coexistence. In the latest years, in particular in the district of Albayzín, the attitude of the local population towards their Muslim neighbors has shifted from an initial resistance to inevitable coexistence.¹⁷¹ Although exact data on religious distribution in Granada is not available, it is important to consider that 18,455 foreigners live in Granada (as of 2021), with the majority of them (26,5%) coming from Morocco, where more than 99% of the population is Muslim.¹⁷² According to the statements of Umar Del Pozo Cadenas, director of Granada Main Mosque, 36,000 Muslims live in Granada as of February 2022, with 3,000 Spanish converts among them.¹⁷³

Regardless of the historical and present plurality of cultural and religious backgrounds in Granada, the mosque attack under question proved that a place of worship can constitute a potential target of aggression or even terrorist attack, under certain circumstances.

The decision to analyse the 2017 Granada Mosque attack is based on three core factors:

¹⁶⁹"Denuncian el asalto de ultras de Hogar Social a la Mezquita de Granada", *El Plural*, 09/08/2003, https://www.elplural.com/autonomias/andalucia/denuncian-el-asalto-de-ultras-de-hogar-social-a-la-mezquita-de-granada_108175102

¹⁷⁰ "Andalucía Pueblo a Pueblo - Fichas Municipales", Instituto de Estadística y Cartografía de Andalucía, <https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/institutoestadisticaycartografia/sima/ficha.htm?mun=18087>

¹⁷¹"Una mezquita para Granada", *El País*, 09/07/2003, https://elpais.com/diario/2003/07/09/ultima/1057701601_850215.html

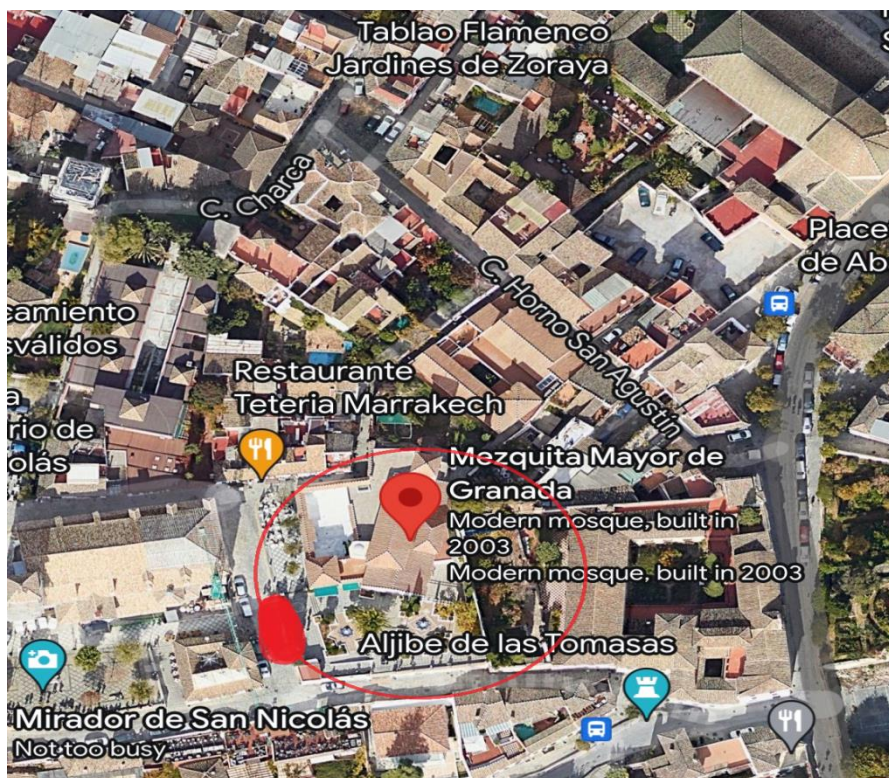
¹⁷² "Andalucía Pueblo a Pueblo - Fichas Municipales", Instituto de Estadística y Cartografía de Andalucía, <https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/institutoestadisticaycartografia/sima/ficha.htm?mun=18087> and USDOS, "2018 Report on International Religious Freedom: Morocco", 2018, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-report-on-international-religious-freedom/morocco/>

¹⁷³ "Unos 36.000 musulmanes viven en Granada, incluyendo 3.000 conversos", *Mundoislam*, 28/02/2022, <https://mundoislam.com/actualidad/espana/2022/02/28/unos-36-000-musulmanes-viven-granada-incluyendo-3-000-conversos/>

1. the *timing of the attack*, two days right after the 2017 Barcelona and Cambrils terrorist attacks, thus considering whether this timing affects the vulnerability of the mosque or not;
2. the *geographic particularities* of the wider district and how they affect the attack and the vulnerability of the space of worship as a potential target;
3. the *author(s)* of the attack, the planning and *modus operandi*, as well as other possible outcomes of the attack.

5.1.3. Building structure and surroundings

The main mosque of Granada (Mezquita Mayor de Granada) is composed of three distinct elements. The garden, the prayer hall, which is the Mosque itself, and the Centre for Islamic Studies. The mosque occupies almost an entire block and is located in the area of Albayzín, one of the most touristic areas of the city. Indicatively, "Mirador de San Nicolás", one of the most famous and crowded places in Granada, is located at less than 100 meters from the mosque. It is important to take into consideration that the whole area of Albayzín is full of squares, narrow pedestrian alleys and streets through which vehicles can barely cross. The latter factor will be relevant, while reviewing the vulnerabilities of the mosque as exploited by the attackers.¹⁷⁴



Principal entrance of the mosque, while the circle delineates the wider area where the mosque is extended

Figure 36 – Location of the Mosque of Grenada

5.1.4. Modality of action: progression of the attack

Although there were no identified perpetrators nor detentions/arrests for the attack, the timeline and the progression of the attack have been clearly recorded, since the authors were openly claiming the attack by their name and also the place was very crowded at the moment, thus with plenty of witnesses.

¹⁷⁴ More information on the official website of the Mosque of Granada: <https://mezquitadegrana.com/the-mosque/?lang=en>

What is evident regarding this attack is that it was initiated as a protest by some youth radicals belonging to a far-right political group. Nevertheless, the protest does not seem to have been a spontaneous gathering of the group members, but a planned action. The perpetrators had already printed banners with messages against the mosque and they had already obtained and were carrying the flare bombs and smoke canisters that they launched. It was, therefore, a targeted and planned attack.

A group of 12 Hogar Social's young radicals gathered on 19th August 2017, around 20.30 outside the entrance of the mosque of Albayzín. The authors were holding banners with Islamophobic messages and shouting chants of the same nature against the people inside the mosque. Then, they started to launch smoke canisters and flare bombs towards the mosque. Their intention seemed to be forcing people inside the mosque to get out. Once the Local Police arrived around 21.00, the group disbanded and the perpetrators were lost in the alleys of Albayzín, making it impossible for the authorities to identify or detain them. There were no casualties, people injured by the attack, nor physical damage to the mosque, but undoubtedly there was upheaval and disorder caused in the wider area by the aggressive chants and the flare bombs.¹⁷⁵



Figure 37 – Protestors at the entrance of the Mosque of Granada¹⁷⁶

The perpetrators of the attack in the entrance of the mosque, shouting hateful messages, launching the flare bombs and holding the banner with the message "whoever funded this mosque, funds terrorism. Why the authorities are silenced?".

As mentioned above, there are some remarkable elements that should be taken into consideration regarding the Granada Main Mosque attack. First, the *temporal context* of the attack, which occurred two days after the terrorist attack in Catalonia in August 2017. The banner that the perpetrators were holding was clearly accusing the mosque of having (financial) ties with terrorism activities. In addition, Hogar Social published a post on their Facebook page demanding "*the precautionary closure of the mosque in Granada, and its connections with radical Islamism to be investigated, as we refuse to mourn the death of dozens of our compatriots in another Islamist massacre*". It is worth mentioning that the imam of the mosque condemned the Catalonia terrorist attacks. The attack to the Albayzín mosque as a "response" to the Barcelona and Cambrils points out some interesting elements concerning the

¹⁷⁵"La Mezquita Mayor de Granada presenta denuncia tras el ataque sufrido por un grupo de jóvenes radicales"[The Great Mosque of Granada files a complaint after the attack suffered by a group of radical youths], *Europa Press*, 20/08/2017, <https://www.europapress.es/andalucia/noticia-mezquita-mayor-granada-presenta-denuncia-ataque-sufrido-grupo-jovenes-radicales-20170820174402.html>

¹⁷⁶ Source: *Cadena SER*

vulnerabilities exploited by the attackers and how they are related with the *momentum* when the attack occurs. Those elements will be analyzed in the subsequent sections.¹⁷⁷

The second interesting element to take into account regarding the Granada mosque attack is the *geographich particuarities* of Albayzín, the area where the mosque is related in. The perimetric area circulating the mosque is composed of narrow alleys, not very accessible by vehicles. Thus, in the case of a potential attack, a rapid reaction and intervention of the law enforcement authorities a less possible scenario. The probabilities of identifying and arresting possible perpetrator(s) are also decreased for the same reason. Therefore, any potential perpetrator planning to attack the Granada mosque, would be most probably aware of said geographic particularities and the possibility of avoiding the authorities by "getting lost" in the alleys of Albayzín.

A third particular characteristic of the 2017 Granada mosque attack was the *modus operandi* of the authors, as it generates unanswered questions regarding their initial plan and intentions, as well as the other potential outcomes of the attack in case the events had been developed in a different way. According to police reports to the press, the attackers launched flare bombs in order to force the people who were inside the mosque to go out. However, it did not happen and finally the attackers fled in order not to be caught by the Local Police. It would be interesting to consider what would have happened if people inside the mosque had gone out. Probably the attack would have gone beyond the banners and the verbal violence if the perpetrators had direct visual and/or physical contact with their targets.¹⁷⁸

The motive of the attack under review could be the imputed attribution of the Catalonia terrorist attacks to the Muslim community in general, targeting the one of Granada in particular. Another motive could also be the gaining of visibility by a political far-right group through populist activities such as the Islamophobic protest, the banners and the chants before the attack. The group Hogar Social openly claimed responsibility and also publicly posted against the Granada mosque, making its intentions public.

5.1.5. Vulnerability exploited by the attacker(s) and weaknesses in security measures

In the dynamics of this attack, the attackers exploited a number of vulnerabilities of both the mosques as potential targets of terrorist attacks in general and the one of Granada in particular.

The first vulnerability is linked to the timing of the attack and more specifically the mosque attack perceived as a response to the Barcelona and Cambrils terrorist attacks which had occurred a couple of days ago. At that time, the DAESH claimed responsibility for the attacks and a wave of islamophobia was triggered in Spain, provoking hate speech and hatred-motivated acts all over the country.¹⁷⁹ For more radical individuals or groups such as the authors of the Granada mosque attack, the transition from hate speech to verbally and physically attacking the Muslim population, has proved to be a realistic possibility. The fact of attributing a terrorist attack to a religious community, with social media and mass media nurturing this discourse, undoubtedly accelerated the targeting of said communities. Therefore, it can be assumed that after the occurrence of terrorist attacks, claimed by or attributed to certain religious communitites, the spaces of worship belonging to the respective denomination are more vulnerable and exposed to potential attacks.

¹⁷⁷"La comunidad islámica de Granada denuncia el asalto a la Mezquita por un grupo de neonazis", *El Diario*, 19/08/2017, https://www.eldiario.es/andalucia/granada/hogar-social-granada-islamistas-europa_1_3229717.html

¹⁷⁸"La Mezquita Mayor de Granada presenta denuncia tras el ataque sufrido por un grupo de jóvenes radicales", *Europa Press*, 20/08/2017, <https://www.europapress.es/andalucia/noticia-mezquita-mayor-granada-presenta-denuncia-ataque-sufrido-grupo-jovenes-radicales-20170820174402.html>

¹⁷⁹"La islamofobia se desata en las redes y llega a la calle tras los atentados", *El País*, 23/08/2017, https://elpais.com/politica/2017/08/22/actualidad/1503428186_516127.html

Thus, religious spaces might become more vulnerable after shocking events such as the Catalonia attacks: relevant stakeholders must, hence, take these factors into consideration and implement preventive measures in order to avert attacks of "revenge". Considering the weaknesses in security measures, probably an enhancement of monitoring and prevention measures could have avoided such types of attacks and/or increased the possibilities of identifying the perpetrators. For instance, a mechanism of monitoring hate speech on social media might have detected the intentions of Hogar Social that had already posted hate messages towards the mosque before the attack. Likewise, police vigils could have also been increased in the district where significant and symbolic places of worship - such as the Granada main mosque - are located in order to act preventively and to be able to identify the attackers.

The second vulnerability is related to the spatial framework of the district surrounding the Granada mosque. The geographic particularities of Albayzín delayed the arrival of the Local Police and allowed the perpetrators to flee and avoid being identified or arrested. The perpetrators of the attack probably were fully aware of the fact that escaping within the alleys of Albayzín would be relatively easy and that the police would not be able to reach them easily. Given the difficulty of changing the street planning of the district, preventive measures could be applied to mitigate the consequences and the vulnerabilities regarding security. For example, surveillance cameras around the mosque, as well as in the wider area, would have provided the authorities with useful material to identify the perpetrators. Another solution could be to provide the Local Police with means that would allow them to move rapidly in the district and access any place, without causing unrest, such as bicycles. A specific, trained and specialized unit of the police could be deployed to the Albayzín district in order to be able to adequately react in such cases.

The third vulnerability exploited by the attackers of the Granada mosque is merely security-related. As mentioned above, the attackers launched flare bombs with the intention of making people inside the mosque to come out and most probably point their attack directly towards them. Eventually, the people inside the mosque stayed there and the situation did not escalate. However, given the delay of the Local Police in arriving at the place, if people had gone out, the attackers could have been even more aggressive and directly toward the targeted population. Thus, the delayed response of the police might probably have caused an escalation of the attack and, in the case of the Granada mosque, it seems that the non-escalation of the situation was purely circumstantial and thanks to the fact that people did not come out. Last but not least, taking into consideration all the aforementioned vulnerabilities combined, religious leaders in times of excess hate speech and shocking events such as terrorist attacks, might take into consideration maintaining more constant communication with law enforcement authorities and address any kind of potential threats to the place of worship, as well as enhance the security measures that depend on them, such as CCTV installations.

In case surveillance cameras had been placed around the mosque, the identification of the perpetrators would have been more likely. The perpetrators might have even thought twice about launching the attack, if they had known that they would have been captured by cameras. Likewise, the existence of a prepared, fast-response unit of the Local Police trained to react in such situations and in accordance with the geographic particularities of Albayzín district, would increase the possibility of detaining the attackers instead of letting them escape. The constant and direct communication between the imam and the authorities and/or other relevant stakeholders, especially in times of increased possibilities of an attack, could have also contributed to mitigating the threats before and during the events.

5.1.6. Communities' reactions

The interesting element of the Granada main mosque attack was that a radical political group, Hogar Social, openly claimed responsibility for the attack, by signing the banners that the attackers were holding, shouting the group's name and posting in their social media as well. The group was most probably aiming to gain visibility and supporters through these actions, as such kind of populist tactics

are characteristic of extremist political groups. However, it is important to mention that even if the group itself did not hesitate to claim responsibility for the attack and the attackers were eventually members of Hogar Social, the police was unable to identify any of the perpetrators.

Apart from the attackers' reaction, the positioning of the victims was also direct and clear. Shaykh Ahmed Bermejo, the imam of the mosque, had already positioned himself against the Catalonia attacks before the attack on the Granada mosque. One day after the attack, the victims sued the attackers for hate crimes. Concerning the reaction of the wider Spanish Muslim Community, its President - Malik Ruiz - stated that even if the attackers did not gain access to the mosque premises, their action did cause confusion and tension among those inside the mosque. He added that the Community would sue the attackers.¹⁸⁰

Concerning the law enforcement authorities, police sources stated that it was impossible to identify any of the perpetrators and, consequently, detain them. In a more general notice following the Islamophobic wave, the autonomous police force of Catalonia (Mossos d'Esquadra) stated that "*mosques should not be criminalized, they are places where people go to pray*".¹⁸¹

5.1.7. Conclusion

The novelty and genuineness of the analysis of the present attack lies in the three dimensions mentioned above. Namely, the timing of the attack as a "response" to another terrorist attack, the geographic particularities of the district where the mosque is located and the low-level of security measures and the delayed intervention of the Local Police. All three factors contributed significantly to making the mosque of Granada a potential target of attacks and, especially when they intertwine, they have proved to increase the vulnerability of the mosque and its exposure to attacks.

Another interesting element to deduce from the attack under analysis is how the attack falls under the three main features/common characteristics of all definitions of terrorism under SHIELD's scope. The attack against the main mosque of Granada entailed violent acts and the use of force; they had the purpose and managed to install fear and intimidate both direct (Muslim community, people inside the mosque) and indirect (crowd, local population, tourists) targets, as well as to influence governmental actions and decision-making processes. Concerning the latter, at first glance, the attack against the mosque might not seem to directly have a political connotation. However, the authors were members of a political group which most probably aimed to gain visibility, supporters and legitimacy, in its own way, by adopting such populist hate narratives and committing such acts against other people. The selection of the place, an always crowded district, also seemed part of their tactics to gain more visibility, together with generating more fear, depending on the target population and how each one perceived the attack.

Finally, merely security-wise, this attack proved that additional dimensions (e.g. timing of powerful events or geographic particularities) should be seriously taken into consideration as far as the prevention of security incidents and attacks is concerned. The religious communities and the responsible persons should always be alerted of potential security threats, especially in times of generalized unrest and hate speech, in a preventive way. For instance, the religious communities might initiate tighter cooperation with law enforcement agencies in order for the latter to provide them with equipment, expertise and training in order to prevent or be better prepared to react to such events. Likewise, police forces must be more aware of the geographic particularities and requirements of each district where the spaces are located in, and increase their preparedness to react when there is a

¹⁸⁰"Primeros ataques islamófobos contra mezquitas en España", *El Mundo*, 20/08/2017, <https://www.elmundo.es/andalucia/2017/08/20/59994ab0ca4741dd488b4635.html>

¹⁸¹"La Mezquita Mayor de Granada presenta denuncia tras el ataque sufrido por un grupo de jóvenes radicales", *Europa Press*, 20/08/2017, <https://www.europapress.es/andalucia/noticia-mezquita-mayor-granada-presenta-denuncia-ataque-sufrido-grupo-jovenes-radicales-20170820174402.html>

generalized hate rhetoric and targeting of religious or other groups/minorities. Undoubtedly, the consequences of this attack could have been worse if the attackers managed to make the Muslims get out of the mosque, and the inability of the police to identify and/or detain the perpetrators gives space to further debate on the ability of the law enforcement agencies to adequately protect religious spaces, regardless of their particularities.

5.2. Attack n°10: Molotov cocktails thrown by assailant at a mosque in Ulm, Germany (2018)

5.2.1. Introduction

On the 19th of March 2018, at 3.00 a.m., assailants attacked a Mosque in Ulm, Baden-Württemberg, in Germany. They threw Molotov cocktails and set fire to a part of the Osman Gazi Mosque. The mosque belongs to the Turkish community in the country and is owned by the Islamic Community National View (IGMG- *Islamische Gemeinschaft Millî Görüş*), one of the largest Muslim- Turkish associations in Germany.

The attack with Molotov bombs caused some slight damage to the mosque but no injuries to community members who were praying at the mosque. The first suspicions of the attack were immediately on sympathizers with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Turkey, who threatened to spread more "violence", along with supporters of the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) – the PKK's Syrian branch.¹⁸² Despite a ban on activities of PKK in Germany, supporters of the terrorist group and its Syrian branch PYD (Democratic Union Party) have carried out dozens of rallies and violent acts since January, after Turkey launched a counter-terrorism operation in northwestern Syria.

The PYD/PKK group and far-left organizations claimed responsibility for more than two dozen attacks since January. Twenty attacks targeted Turkish mosques, associations, and shops in various cities, including Berlin, Frankfurt, Hamburg, and Aachen.

The attack under analysis came in less than two weeks after a similar incident in Germany's capital, Berlin, but also in Schleswig-Holstein and Baden-Württemberg.

The PKK, listed as an international terrorist organization by US and EU, has undergone a significant process of organizational structuring by establishing a franchise system in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran and branches in Europe. It has been banned in Germany since 1993, but it remains active.

The choice to analyze the attack on Ulm Mosque came from the following core factors:

1. this type of attack was perpetrated in various locations and had causes that did not concern right-wing extremism;
2. the method used was always the same in the multiplicity of cases, even if with different effects;
3. the perpetrators were identified and arrested.

5.2.2. Spatial framework

Ulm is a city in Baden-Württemberg Land (state), southwestern Germany. It lies on the left bank of the Danube River at its junction with the Iller and the Blau, opposite the Bavarian town of Neu Ulm. With a population of 126,790 inhabitants (2019), Ulm forms an urban district and administrative centre of the region.

Due to its long industrial tradition, in the city of Ulm there is a large portion of the migrant population, in particular the Turkish community, which is well integrated despite the room for improvement. In the city, there are three Islamic places of worship that are not only expressions of the different ethnic components of migrants but also of their different Islamic orientations. The Islamic Community National View (IGMG) is the owner of the Islamic centre in Schillerstraße n. 27 that does not properly

¹⁸² "Mosque in Germany attacked with Molotov bombs", Al Jazeera, 20 march, 2018, [https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/3/20/mosque-in-germany-attacked-with-molotov-bombs].

configure itself as a mosque from an architectural point of view but represents a place that in addition to having a religious value, plays a social and educational role for the community.

The fact that it was not properly a mosque, but a building adapted as a place of worship, may be useful in configuring the risk assessments of the majority of Islamic places of worship in Europe that are particularly exposed and have no sufficient security measures for the believers inside and the neighbours.

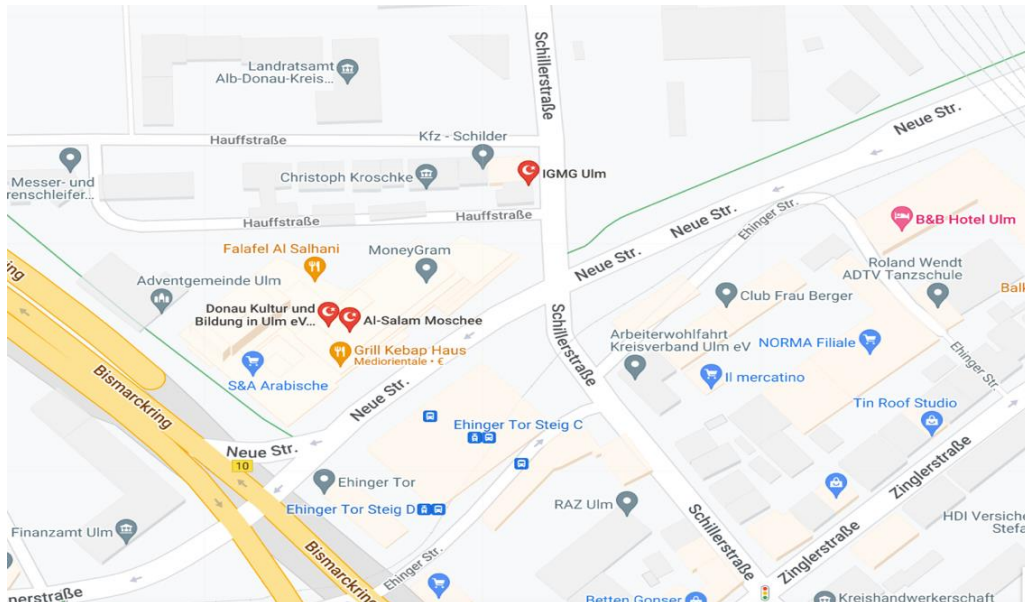


Figure 38 – Location of Ulm Mosque

5.2.3. Modality of action: progression of the attack

From a reconstruction of the dynamics of the attack, it emerges that at 3.00 a.m. flammable liquid was thrown at a window on the ground floor of the prayer room. The window of the prayer room was broken, and the blaze caused by the explosion of the device caused the fire to burn the internal curtains and the nearby walls. The door was partially burned down. The glass, while deflagrating, prevented the penetration of the bottle, which fell to the ground and exploded, generating a flame. Other unexploded devices were found near the prayer room. The assailants left a Quran in Arabic outside the place of worship, whose pages had been desecrated with organic liquid and urine.

Explosive devices are one of the most common weapons of terrorists. The exploding devices are easy to find and build by hand, and instructions for their construction are publicly available. Explosives are easily transportable, using vehicles and humans as a means of transportation. The night before the attack, four Syrians of Kurdish origin, passing through Schillerstraße, noticed the Turkish flag of the mosque sign affixed to the facade of the building and decided to carry out the attack. "We wanted to burn something Turkish," a young defendant said in court.

The gang leader of the whole action and two other activists then sentenced respectively to five years and six months, three years and nine months in prison, had prepared homemade Molotov cocktails, with bottles of beer full of petrol. Eight people, including the mosque's imam, were awakened between 2:30 and 3:00 am.

The exploded bottle caused a fire outside the front door, which went out shortly after. Police officers used fire extinguishers from their patrol cars to smother the flames that licked the face of the building. The desecration of the Koran immediately led to the hypothesis that it was yet another hate crime against Muslims perpetrated by far-right extremists. The police had recorded in the first months of 2018 a growth in hate crimes against Muslims.

Perpetrators

From the investigations subsequently carried out, six responsible of the attack to the Ulm Mosque were identified and arrested. The perpetrators of the attack were Kurdish Syrian citizens residing in the neighbouring city of New Ulm, who carried out the attack to avenge the military action of Turkey against the Kurds in Afrin, Syria. Two of the detainees were 18 years old, and the other two between 24 and 27 years old.¹⁸³ The defendants were convicted of attempted murder with arson, while two others were convicted of aiding and abetting. The authors were originally from the area around the city of Afrin.



Figure 39 – View of some of the damages to the mosque

5.2.4. Building structure and surroundings

The Osman Gazi Mosque is in a building at the corner of a widening, between Schillerstraße and Hauffstraße, in a densely populated popular district. The Mosque was realized in the basement of a building where many citizens live, in a very crowded street. Adjacent to the entrance to the place of worship there is a fruit shop, with stalls generally also placed outside

If the explosion had occurred during a religious service on Friday, when there is usually the highest presence of believers, it could have had serious consequences both inside and outside the mosque. Moreover, on the upper floors, there are civilian homes and, during peak hours, there is a greater crowding even along the sidewalks where the explosion occurred.

¹⁸³ "Ulm: four Syrians imprisoned after arson in the Turkish mosque, New Beezer, 30 March, 2018 [https://newsbeezer.com/germanyeng/ulm-four-syrians-imprisoned-after-arson-in-the-turkish-mosque-neu-ulm-news];



Figure 40 – The Osman Gazi mosque

5.2.5. Vulnerabilities exploited by the attacker(s) and weaknesses in security measures

The dynamics of the attack revealed a series of vulnerabilities that can be extended to a large slice of Islamic places of worship in Europe, due to the lack of adequate prevention measures. Although after a series of attacks recorded in the years 2017-18, the building (and not the mosque) was equipped with a simple camera system (CCTV), at the time of the terrorist attack, they were not functioning.

The location of the mosque and of the prayer room in a basement inside a building presents several critical issues:

1. The lack of emergency escape routes for believers inside the prayer hall with fire resistance and panic doors (which pose questions on the consequences had the attack occurred during a ritual prayer);
2. Easy access to the prayer room from the street and the exposure of the basement window to the sidewalk. The window is simply protected with railings;
3. Access to the mosque is adjacent to a very busy commercial establishment that allows suspicious people to make inspections without arousing suspicion. These conditions predispose the place to a particular vulnerability to become targets of terrorists;
4. The lack of a risk prediction and prevention program, including emergency situations deriving from terrorist acts, that provides for:
 - Evacuation plan;
 - Aid and relief to victims;
 - Help to make damaged buildings safe;
 - Extinguishing fires.

5.2.6. Communities' reactions

The mayor of Ulm and the religious authorities publicly condemned Islamophobia in the aftermath of the attack and called on citizens to mobilize for democratic and anti-racism values. Even the director of the mosque, in his interview released a few hours after the events, condemned all types of racist attacks and requested the intervention of the German central authorities to protect the Muslim community. Once the investigators had discovered the perpetrators of the attack, the Turkish embassy asked the government for effective measures against the Kurdish terrorists of the PKK.

5.2.7. Conclusion

From the analysis of the facts, there can be no doubts about the objective of the terrorist attack. The young terrorists intended to burn the mosque of the Turkish community. The fortuitous event of the non-deflagration of the glass of the window that opens in the prayer room prevented greater damage. In the upper part of the place where the bomb exploded, there are roller blinds of a shop that could have caught fire and raised the flames to the houses above.

Fortunately, the damage was limited due to the fact that in the building where the mosque is located resides the imam and other people who, awakened by the explosion, immediately requested the intervention of the police.



Figure 41 – Place of the explosion



Figure 42 – Area affected by the attack delimited by the police

5.3. Attack n°11: Fire on civilians and incendiary devices targeting a mosque in Bayonne, France (2019)

5.3.1. Introduction

On the 28th of October 2019, an assailant opened fire on civilians and threw an incendiary device targeting the mosque of Bayonne, Nouvelle-Aquitaine. Two people (74 and 78 years old) standing outside the mosque were injured in the attack. A conspiracy theory extremist Claude Sinke, 84 years old, claimed responsibility for the incident and stated that the attack was carried out in retaliation for a conspiracy theory that blamed for the fire at the Notre Dame Cathedral in April 2019. Sinke was a former candidate of France's far-right National Rally party.

5.3.2. Spatial framework

Bayonne city is one of the two subdivisions of the department of Pyrénées-Atlantiques, in the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region of southwestern France. Despite its mixed-race influences, it is now recognized as the main city of the French Basque country. The city's population is made up of about 51,894 people and 4,432 foreigners (8.6% of the population, below the national average of 9,7%). The territory has experienced sharp population growth due to two different phenomena: on the one hand, a negative natural balance and, on the other hand, an extremely important migratory balance. Between 2010 and 2015, the increase of 0.9% per year on average in the population is due to net migration, since there is a surplus of 3,100 arrivals (compared to departures) each year. These migratory flows significantly brought modifications to the municipality.

The city of Bayonne is a predominantly Catholic centre that in history has distinguished itself for having rejected various attempts of conquest over the centuries. Bayonne has a motto *numquam pulluta*, in Latin "never muddy".

Despite the Catholic majority, marked by the historic Gothic-style cathedral of Santa Maria from the sixteenth century, there is also a consolidated presence of Protestants, with a temple founded in the nineteenth century, and of a historic Jewish community, with a synagogue built in the eighteenth century by groups of different fugitives from Portugal.

The mosque is the most recent building, whose construction was driven by the increase of predominantly Maghreb Muslims immigration (especially from Morocco, Algeria, and Senegal). Its construction was launched in 2008 by the Cultural Association of Muslims on the Basque Coast (ACMCB), which estimated 300 Muslim families in the Basque Country. It opened officially in April 2013. The believers previously prayed in a room (*muşallā* - مصلى) on rue Daniel Argote. It was built on a plot of 2,000 m² and can accommodate 300 people in two prayer rooms. It has more than two classrooms, a library, and a conference room. A symbolic minaret surmounts the mosque. The building was officially inaugurated in March 2014. In January 2015 and August 2017, the building was a target of attempted fires caused by incendiary devices thrown in front of it.

5.3.3. Modality of action: progression of the attack

The assailant, Claude Sinké, was born in 1935 in Morocco, where he spent his youth. He then lived in Saint-Martin-de-Seignanx. In the years 1965 to 1980, he was a train driver at the SNCF, from which he retired, and would have undergone military training.

Aged 84 at the time of the attack, he was a candidate for the 2015 departmental elections in the canton of Seignanx under the label of the National Front. The National Rally said he was no longer a member of this movement. He is "unfavorably known" by the inhabitants of his village for his extremist remarks. Some of them say: « *We even had to snatch the microphone from him during a ceremony to pay tribute to the victims of the Bataclan, to prevent him from talking and dwelling on his extremist ideas* ». He is described as a "violent and angry" man. He had already made people talk about him by making homophobic, xenophobic and Islamophobic remarks.

While in police custody on the very day of the attack, he confessed to being the perpetrator. During his interrogation, Claude Sinké explained that he wanted « *to avenge the destruction of Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris* » by claiming that the fire in this building was started by members of the Muslim community.

Claude Sinké made at least five suspected visits to the Bayonne Mosque, in Joseph- Latxague road, between 7th October and 21th October 2019 according to the tracking of his mobile phone.



Figure 43 – Overview of the Bayonne Mosque

On 28th October 2019, at around 3:20 p.m., the mosque was attacked: Claude Sinke forced a possible witness to flee by threatening him with a pistol and then tried to set fire to the mosque's door (photo 4) by pouring gasoline onto it. Two people were inside the place of worship to clean and prepare the hall for the afternoon prayer at 16.30.

He then left the scene by car, before returning on foot and shooting the first victim, a 74-year-old man, wounding him in the chest. He then targeted a second 78-year-old victim, who was trying to flee at the wheel of his car and hit him in the neck. He tried to set fire to the victim's vehicle, while the latter was still inside. Afterwards, he fled to his home, located in the village of Saint-Martin-de-Seignanx (Landes), about eight kilometres from the mosque, where he was arrested twenty minutes later. The police seized a gas cylinder and an automatic pistol magazine from his car and, from his home, weapons for which he had a license.

The attack left two people injured: Maati Baggar was hit by three bullets in the side and right arm, and Amar Kariouch, was injured in the neck. After intensive care, they were hospitalized for six months and had to continue with hours of rehabilitation.

The question that immediately arose was whether the attack was due to madness or a deliberate and planned act. Investigations by the Bayonne Public Prosecutor's Office ruled out that the subject was

mentally incapacitated. The psychiatric report recognized, indeed, a case of partial alteration of the aggressor without excluding his full conscience in committing the attack by armed hand and in destroying the mosque, starting the fire. The investigations eventually proved that the subject had studied the criteria of action before committing the attack.

5.3.4. Building structure and surroundings

The Bayonne Mosque is located in a peripheral area and, as can be seen from the map (Figure 43), has a large unattended car park facing Joseph-laxague street. The structure consists of two adjoining buildings communicating with each other, through an external covered corridor. The first building (Figure 44), with three wooden portals, allows access to the prayer room, while in the adjacent building, there are offices and classrooms where Arabic language lessons are held for young people. Beyond the wounding of two elderly men in the mosque, the main purpose of the attacker was to set fire to the wooden portals at the entrance to the building, causing them to burn.



Figure 44 – View of the Bayonne mosque from the entrance

5.3.5. Vulnerabilities exploited by the attacker(s) and weaknesses in security measures

The assailant exploited a series of serious vulnerabilities present in Islamic places of worship on the outskirts, in which there is a total absence of minimum-security measures.

The total absence of cameras placed in strategic positions (e.g. CCTV on the threshold of the entrance (photo 3), the parking lot in front of the mosque, the entrance portals and along the perimeter areas) would have most likely discouraged the attack. Despite the repeated arson attacks that occurred on two occasions before 2019, no preventive measures had been adopted except for an external gate, often always left open except during the night.

The underestimation of the risk has not prompted the Islamic community to adopt greater security measures also on the location of the parking lots that are close to the hall of worship and the entrance of the believer. Free access to the parking area, therefore, constitutes another danger and threat to the believers who go to the mosque for ritual prayer.

Securing the area with a special video surveillance system at strategic points and the creation of flower beds that prevent the parking of cars not far from the entrance to the mosque could represent valid logistical solutions to avoid easy attacks.

A successful protection strategy must establish a strong risk management framework that defines the process for combining threat, consequences, and vulnerability information to produce comprehensive, systematic, and rational assessment of risks.

5.3.6. Communities' reactions

The immediate identification of the perpetrator of the attack by the police triggered a polarization of information about the interpretation of the attack itself. While some believed that it was a reaction of a madman, also to belittle the past militancy within the right-wing formations, others adopted categories of classification of the attack as an actual attack.

The Bayonne community and its mayor expressed their solidarity with Muslims and total condemnation of the "attack". The President of the Republic Emmanuel Macron also publicly condemned the heinous attack perpetrated in front of the mosque. The rector of the mosque had turned to the president to invoke the protection of Muslims in France.

The debate caused such a spread of disinformation as to acquire substantial relevance in the impact on public opinion, not only at the local level. The dissemination of segmented and personalized information content, devoid of verifiable and verified notions, has produced polarization, i.e. the tendency of civil society to align with messages that are close to the emotional state and the prevailing opinion. These episodes have direct political repercussions and have strong consequences on the stability of social equilibrium, as demonstrated by the massive demonstration in Paris on 10th November 2019 against Islamophobia that has divided political forces.

5.3.7. Conclusion

The attack on the Bayonne Mosque, as it became clear during the investigation phase, was incited by a feeling of hatred of a former militant of the far-right groups who believed Muslims responsible of the fire at Notre Dame Cathedral.

The place of worship was totally devoid of the slightest measure of safety, although it was in an area (region) that had experienced remarkable growth of immigrants in proportion to a low birth rate, with the increase in cases of intolerance. In addition, it had already suffered arson attacks in 2015 and 2017.

The attacker, who had carefully studied how to set the mosque on fire, chose a time in the afternoon (3.20 pm) when he surely knew that he would not have met any believer who could hinder or even prevent him from carrying out his plan. In the first phase, the attacker did not intend to kill but only to set the mosque on fire. The intervention of the two believers, a risk not calculated by the attacker, prevented him from carrying out his plan and, for this reason, he first drove off by car and then returned armed to kill.



Figure 45 – Bayonne mosque entrance

5.4. Attack n°12: the shooting attack of the Muley el-Mehdi mosque in Ceuta, Spain (2019)

5.4.1. Introduction

On 24th June 2019 and around 5.00am, two people wearing hoods and riding a motorbike opened fire toward Muley el Mehdi mosque, one of the principal mosques of Ceuta, an autonomous Spanish city located in the North of Africa, bordering Morocco. The perpetrators started to shoot at the mosque entrance while riding a bike and then fled. Reports state that there were around six persons praying inside the mosque; however, no casualties or injuries were caused. The reported three or four gunshots caused physical damage to the entrance of the mosque, as well as panic and tension both inside the mosque and the wider area. The authors of the attack managed to flee the scene, and the police authorities could not identify them. Police investigations following the event linked the case to common delinquency and ruled out the possibility of a hate crime with religious or other motives. Similar incidents were also reported in the past in the city of Ceuta, also attributed to common criminal activities.¹⁸⁴

5.4.2. Spatial framework

Ceuta is a Spanish autonomous city, located in the North of Africa and specifically adjacent to Moroccan territory. It has a population of 83,517 people as of 2021, and a territorial extension of 20 km¹⁸⁵. As of 2018, 87.1% of Ceuta's habitants are Spanish nationals, and of the rest of them having foreign nationalities, 11.2% are Moroccan nationals.¹⁸⁶ Concerning religious distribution, as of 2019, the majority of Ceutans (60%) is self-identified as Roman Catholics, while a considerable percentage of the rest of Ceutans (36.7%) is Muslims.¹⁸⁷ It is worth mentioning that in the city of Ceuta, there are currently 33 mosques.¹⁸⁸ Additionally, there are two smaller Hebrew and Hindu communities.

Another remarkable fact considering the attack under review is the precedents of similar attacks in Ceuta carried out through the same *modus operandi*: one against the Sidi Embarek in 2015 and another one with gunshots in the area of Príncipe in 2019, a couple of weeks before the attack in the Muley el Mehdi mosque.¹⁸⁹

The decision to analyse the 2019 Muley el Mehdi mosque attack in Ceuta is based on three core factors:

1. its apparent linkage with delinquency and the vulnerabilities it pointed out merely security-wise;
2. police investigation ruling out the possibility of hate crime or religious motives behind the attack;
3. the possible link between the religious reasons and the threat for the mosque, given the interconnection between terrorism-common criminal activities.

¹⁸⁴ "Disparan varias veces contra una de las principales mezquitas de Ceuta sin causar heridos", *ABC España*, 24/06/2019,

¹⁸⁵ Source: Spanish National Statistics Institute; <https://www.ine.es/jaxiT3/Datos.htm?t=2908>

¹⁸⁶ "El 67,8% de los habitantes actuales en Ceuta han nacido en la ciudad según los datos del INE", *Ceuta Ahora*, 20/12/2018, <https://ceutaahora.com//art/574/el-678-de-los-habitantes-actuales-de-ceuta-han-nacido-en-la-ciudad-segun-los-datos-del-ine>

¹⁸⁷ Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (Centre for Sociological Research), 2019, "Macrobarómetro de octubre 2019, Banco de datos - Document 'Población con derecho a voto en elecciones generales y residente en España, Ciudad Autónoma de Ceuta", p.20

¹⁸⁸ "Una Las 33 mezquitas de Ceuta permanecerán cerradas al menos dos semanas para prevenir el contagio de Covid-19", *Europa Press*, 15/03/2020, https://elpais.com/diario/2003/07/09/ultima/1057701601_850215.html

¹⁸⁹ "Unos encapuchados disparan contra una mezquita de Ceuta", *El Periódico*, 24/06/2019, <https://www.elperiodico.com/es/politica/20190624/ataque-mezquita-ceuta-disparos-7519351> and "La policía investiga un ataque con disparos a una mezquita de Ceuta", *El País*, 24/06/2019, https://elpais.com/politica/2019/06/24/actualidad/1561361254_763048.html

5.4.3. Building structure and surroundings

The Muley el Mehdi mosque was inaugurated in 1940 right after the Spanish Civil War, and was renovated in 2017.¹⁹⁰ The mosque is located on the avenue "Avenida de África", a relatively central location in the city of Ceuta. The entrance of the mosque is through the "Avenida de África", a two directions avenue of approximately 1km, leading to other avenues and roundabouts of Ceuta. Considering the aforementioned, along with the early hours - and the scarce traffic - when the attack occurred, it would not be difficult for the perpetrators to develop high speed and flee after the gunshots.¹⁹¹



 = Principal entrance of the mosque

The red arrow delineates the entrance of the mosque and the red circle the wider area where the mosque is extended.

Figure 46 – Location of the Muley el-Mehdi mosque

5.4.4. Modality of action: progression of the attack

The attack with gunshots against the Muley el Mehdi Mosque in Ceuta, took place on 24th June 2019, around 5 am. The attackers were two masked persons on a motorbike who opened fire aiming at the mosque's facade and fled after firing three or four shots. Since the authors of the attack acted rapidly and fled, they only caused physical damage to the mosque, as there were no people outside. No injuries or casualties were caused among the approximately six persons inside the temple. It is also worth mentioning that the attack took place at a time (5 am) when the mosque was not usually crowded, both inside and outside.

¹⁹⁰ "La mezquita de Muley el Mehdi, una construcción franquista en agradecimiento a las tropas musulmanas", *ABC España*, 24/06/2019, https://www.abc.es/espana/abci-mezquita-muley-mehdi-construccion-franquista-agradecimiento-tropas-musulmanas-201906241017_noticia.html

¹⁹¹ Muley el Mehdi Mosque, Ceuta, *Google Maps*, <https://bit.ly/3LLyFwI>

The attackers managed to flee after the shootings. Police investigations did not succeed in catching the perpetrators nor in identifying them *a posteriori* in order to detain them. Consequently, the motive behind the attack remains unclear, and the police authorities attributed it to common criminal activities, thus perceiving it as a warning attack between gang members.¹⁹²



Figure 47 – The damage caused in the entrance of the Muley el Mehdi Mosque in Ceuta by the shootings¹⁹³

As mentioned above, there are some interesting elements that should be taken into consideration regarding the Muley el Mehdi mosque attack in Ceuta. First, its apparent *linkage with delinquency*, as police investigations concluded, and the *modus operandi* of the attack. If the investigation results are precise, it means that people linked to the mosque in whichever way were involved in criminal activities. Even if this conclusion of the authorities is certain, it proved that security-wise, the mosque is a vulnerable target to attacks both considering their prevention, in dealing with them in real-time, as well as after the attack. The aforementioned elements will be analyzed in detail, at the vulnerabilities section of the present document.

A remarkable element to take into account regarding the Ceuta mosque attack is the fact that the police investigation ruled out the possibility of hate crime or religious motives behind the shooting. Some interesting questions arise from the conclusions of the police investigation: how exhaustive the investigation has been, given that the perpetrators have not been identified in order to confess (or deny) their motives behind the attack? Again, if the attackers simply wanted to "warn" a rival band member, why they chose to target the mosque over another public space such as a mall or a café? This topic will be also analyzed below as a potential vulnerability of the place of worship.

Another question that the 2019 Muley el Mehdi mosque attack raises is whether potential targeting for religious reasons could pose a real threat to the mosque or not, considering the interconnection between terrorism and common delinquency. Historically, it has been proved that illegal activities that contribute to nurturing terrorist activities and their perpetrators can vary. They might include extortion, kidnapping and ransom, robbery, document forgery, piracy, smuggling and, mostly, illicit

¹⁹² "Policía relaciona los disparos en la mezquita de Ceuta con delincuencia común", *La Vanguardia*, 24/06/2019, <https://www.lavanguardia.com/vida/20190624/463083558945/policia-relaciona-los-disparos-en-la-mezquita-de-ceuta-con-delincuencia-comun.html>

¹⁹³ Sources: El País, Hoy.

trafficking in drugs, arms and other goods, as happened in the case under review according to the police.¹⁹⁴ Thus, the attribution of the attack to bands of common delinquency by the law enforcement agents, along with a place of religious worship being its target, generates unanswered questions regarding the potential shifting of the attacks from mere "settlement of scores" to acts of terrorism. In any case, the potential shift in the targeting of the mosque towards religious motives, under the interconnection between delinquency and terrorism, will be examined below as another vulnerability.

Other potential outcomes of the attack, such as what would have happened if the people inside the mosque would have come out, will not be analyzed given that the attackers themselves proved that their intention was to "warn" their target and they acted rapidly, without clear intentions to cause injuries or casualties.

5.4.5. Vulnerabilities exploited by the attacker(s) and weaknesses in security measures

In the dynamics of this attack, the perpetrators exploited multiple vulnerabilities of Muley el Mehdi mosque as a potential target of terrorist attacks, which would be applicable to any place of worship through a macro-approach.

The first vulnerability is security-related: it is linked to the *modus operandi* of the attackers and the possible relation of some people inside the mosque to common crimes that have grown into violent act against the place of worship. Apparently, people attending the mosque - unknown if during the precise moment of the attack or in general - had some links with delinquency and some "pending debts" with rival gangs or individuals, for whom the most was targeted. At a level of prevention, the religious leaders, given their "sacred" role and tight relationship with the worshippers, could have been aware of such activities that the worshipers were involved in. That way, the imam(s) in our case, might have talked to the police regarding potential consequences for the mosque or simply for discussing preventive security measures. It was proven that criminal activities of members of the religious community, if they are kept in dark, might also endanger the rest of the worshipers and make the mosque a potential target. The constant and direct communication between the imam and the authorities and/or other relevant stakeholders could have also contributed to mitigate the threats before and during the events.

Regardless of the motives of the attackers, their *modus operandi* highlighted the vulnerabilities of the mosque. Two similar cases with shootings occurred in 2015 and in 2019, as mentioned above. A previous awareness of the religious leaders on the criminal activities, might have led to the installation of CCTV security systems, or the increase of police vigils around the mosque. In that case, the plates of the motorcycle or some physical characteristics of the perpetrators might have been identified. If motives were purely delinquent, it is also interesting to question why the mosque was preferred by the perpetrators as a target over other public spaces such as a mall, a market or a cafe, as mentioned above. One of the reasons might have been the awareness of a lack of security measures at the mosque.

The second observation is linked to the conclusion of the police investigation, which attributed the attack to rival delinquent bands, excluding the possibility of religious motives. It should be noted that even though the authorities ruled out the existence of hate-driven motives, this conclusion still does not override the fact that the violent act was committed against a space of religious worship. A more exhaustive investigation might have examined more profoundly whether the motives were hate-driven or not. If they were hate-driven, it would have clearly been a terrorist act against a particular religious community. In case they were not, the investigations might have addressed the security-related vulnerabilities of the mosque. Nevertheless, even if the attackers chose the mosque because of its low-level security, it should still be kept in mind that it was a place of worship being attacked. Thus, the

¹⁹⁴ Mikel BUESA, Aurelia VALIÑO, Thomas BAUMERT, Joost HEIJST, «ECONOMÍA DEL TERRORISMO: TEORÍA Y APLICACIONES», *Documento de Trabajo*, nº 4 – Julio, 2008, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Universidad Católica de Valencia, p. 59

potential consequences of existing criminal activities within the mosque worshippers should be reviewed, mainly concerning their potential nexus with terrorist activities.

The third observation on the Muley el Mehdi mosque attack, which might turn into a vulnerability of the space as a target, derives from the linkage between terrorism and criminal activities. It also entails the two aforementioned vulnerabilities as it could become reality under certain circumstances such as the lack of security measures and the absence of an exhaustive investigation by the authorities. Even if the attack under review has been attributed to common criminal activities, the interconnection between terrorist activities and delinquency is an undeniable fact.

Said interconnection might have a double reading: existing terrorist groups might fund their activities through illicit activities such as the ones mentioned above and/or recruit persons involved in delinquency in order to participate in violent acts, either offering attractive financial means or through radicalization processes and mechanisms. In addition, Ceuta is a city where four different religious communities (Christian, Muslim, Hebrew and Hindu) are represented and each one has its own place(s) of worship.¹⁹⁵ Thus, the potential crossing over from common delinquent activities to the participation in hate-driven violent acts is not an impossible scenario. In any case, all the above should be taken into consideration as potential vulnerabilities and crucial factors such as the role and awareness of religious leaders considering criminal activities related to the spaces of worship, their relations with the authorities, as well as the increase of preventive security measures, are fundamental for the protection of all religious spaces.

5.4.6. Communities' reactions

Mohamed Chaib, president of the Islamic community of the mosque declared that he trusted that the police would do its job, deal with the guilty ones. He also condemned the events, not only against this mosque but against all temples where such events could have taken place.¹⁹⁶

Concerning the law enforcement authorities, police sources stated that it was impossible to identify any of the perpetrators and, consequently, detain them. In a more general notice following the islamophobic wave, the autonomous police force of Catalonia (Mossos d'Esquadra) stated that "*mosques should not be criminalized, they are places where people go to pray*".¹⁹⁷

Hamido Mohamed, the delegate of Spanish Islamic Commission (CIE) in Ceuta, condemned the shooting and stated that "*Illegal activities that contribute to the maintenance of terrorism and its perpetrators can be varied. We strongly reject this violent act, whatever its motivation, as any other against any religious institution or not*", adding that violence "*is against human principles, whether it is directed against a mosque, a church or any other religious denomination*".¹⁹⁸

Concerning the law enforcement authorities, police arrived at the scene and collected proof from the facade of the mosque, where the shooting took place. The authorities opened an investigation but

¹⁹⁵ "Las cuatro comunidades religiosas de Ceuta ya cuentan con su propio templo tras la inauguración oficial del hindú", *Europa Press*, 23/10/2007, <https://www.europapress.es/ceuta-y-melilla/noticia-cuatro-comunidades-religiosas-ceuta-ya-cuentan-propio-templo-inauguracion-oficial-hindu-20071023174911.html>

¹⁹⁶ "La policía investiga un ataque con disparos a una mezquita de Ceuta", *El País*, 24/06/2019, https://elpais.com/politica/2019/06/24/actualidad/1561361254_763048.html

¹⁹⁷ "La Mezquita Mayor de Granada presenta denuncia tras el ataque sufrido por un grupo de jóvenes radicales", *Europa Press*, 20/08/2017, <https://www.europapress.es/andalucia/noticia-mezquita-mayor-granada-presenta-denuncia-ataque-sufrido-grupo-jovenes-radicales-20170820174402.html>

¹⁹⁸ "Unos encapuchados disparan contra una mezquita de Ceuta", *El Periódico*, 24/06/2019, <https://www.elperiodico.com/es/politica/20190624/ataque-mezquita-ceuta-disparos-7519351>

quickly excluded the possibility of hate crimes and attributed the attack to differences between gang members.¹⁹⁹

5.4.7. Conclusion

The genuineness of approaching the Muley el Mehdi mosque attack in Ceuta lies in the three dimensions mentioned above. First, the security-related vulnerabilities of the mosque, the involvement of worshippers in criminal activities and the unawareness of the religious leaders. Second, the depth and efficiency of the police investigations and how they can both address security vulnerabilities and/or detect potential hate-driven motives. Third, how the nexus between terrorist acts and delinquency might potentially affect the vulnerability of the mosque. All the three factors might have contributed, or potentially contributed to making the mosque of Ceuta a potential target of attacks and, especially when they intertwine, they might increase even more the vulnerability of the mosque and its exposure to attacks.

At first glance, the mosque attack under review seems not to be hate-motivated and not directly related to terrorism. However, this does not change the fact that it constitutes a violent act against a place of religious worship and it pointed out diverse vulnerabilities. Merely security-wise, this attack proved that additional dimensions such as the linkage of members of the community with common delinquency should be seriously taken into consideration, as far as the prevention of security incidents and attacks is concerned.

The core role of the religious leaders and their interaction with the authorities also proved to be important in a case such situations exist, and said responsible persons should always be alerted on potential security threats and act in a preventive way. For instance, the religious communities might initiate tighter cooperation with law enforcement agencies in order for the latter to provide them with equipment, expertise and training so that they are able to prevent or be better prepared to react to such events. Likewise, police forces must be more aware of such activities and their linkage with religious communities, and increase their preparedness to prevent and/or react.

Finally, the inability of the police to identify and/or detain the perpetrators gives space to further debate on the ability of the law enforcement agencies to adequately address cases of attacks against places of religious worship for two main reasons. First, without the attackers in custody, the motives behind the attack can hardly be clear and the possibility of hate-driven motives can barely be excluded with certainty. Second, in a more practical sense, law enforcement agencies cannot get to the authors of the attacks, dismantle the networks behind them - if any - and protect religious spaces and worshippers from future attacks, applying adequate measures and mechanisms.

¹⁹⁹ "Policía relaciona los disparos en la mezquita de Ceuta con delincuencia común", *La Vanguardia*, 24/06/2019, <https://www.lavanguardia.com/vida/20190624/463083558945/policia-relaciona-los-disparos-en-la-mezquita-de-ceuta-con-delincuencia-comun.html>

6. Comparison between attacks

The table below provides summary information on the attacks previously analysed. The attacks in France and Germany are slightly over-represented, as they also reflect the reality of the situation: most of the attacks against places of worship took place in France and Germany, followed by other countries.

Table 3 - Comparison between the aforementioned attacks

Comparison between the aforementioned attacks							
Religion	Country where the attack occurred	Year	Summary and type of attack	Use of violence against people	Use of violence against buildings	Responsibility of the attack	Vulnerabilities exploited
Christianity	Italy	2003	1) bomb attack on two churches in Padova	no	yes (serious damages)	unknown suspected: anarchists, right-wing, Islamic terrorism	absence of any security measure, a normal vulnerability existing in small rural areas
Christianity	France	2015	2) attempted firearms attack on a church in Villejuif	yes (1 death)	no	Islamic terrorist (1)	the attack occurred in the streets; impossible to prevent with standard security measures
Christianity	France	2016	3) arson in the church of Fontainebleau	no	yes (serious damages)	mentally ill individual (1)	the church did not have a fire alarm, anti-theft alarm, no cameras, no physical surveillance during the night
Christianity	France	2020	4) attack on the Nice cathedral	yes (3 deaths)	no	Islamic terrorist (1)	the attacker has previously studied the building; the church was open as it was during the day in the weekend and the alarm has been given only because one of the victims managed to escape outside
Judaism	Poland	1997	5) arson on a synagogue in Warsaw	no	yes	unknown	the attacker(s) broke the only non-armoured window and thrown a molotov cocktail
Judaism	France	2012	6) Toulouse Jewish school shooting	yes (4 deaths, 7 injured)	no	Islamic terrorist (1)	the attacker previously studied the area, passing-by with his scooter several times and waited to the school to open the doors in order to attack

Judaism	Denmark	2015	7) Copenhagen synagogue shooting	yes (2 deaths)	no	Islamic terrorist (1)	thanks to the well-established security measures and the training of security guards, the attacker did not reach the interior of the building but unfortunately killed the security guards
Judaism	Germany	2019	8) Halle synagogue shooting	yes (2 deaths)	yes (important damages)	neo-Nazism (1)	thanks to the armoured doors the attacker could not enter the synagogue but killed two people randomly near the synagogue
Islam	Spain	2017	9) flare bomb attack on the main mosque of Grenada	no	yes	right-wing extremism (12)	the attackers tried to enter the mosque to force people that were inside to come out, unsuccessfully; so they threw flare bombs in order to get this result, again unsuccessfully
Islam	Germany	2018	10) Molotov cocktail to the mosque of Ulm	no	yes (important damages)	unknown suspected: Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)	as the windows where not shatterproof the molotov cocktail has been thrown inside the mosque
Islam	France	2019	11) fire on civilians and incendiary devices targeting a mosque in Bayonne	yes (2 injured)	yes	mentally ill individual; right-wing extremism (1)	the attacker previously visited the mosque in order to organise the attack; tried to force the entrance and burned the door, then came back in order to shoot at people coming for the prayers at the mosque, where there was no even minimum security measures
Islam	Spain	2019	12) shooting attack of Muey el-Mehdi mosque in Ceuta	no	yes	unknown (2) suspected: common delinquency; hate crime	riding a motorbike, the individuals shouted in the direction of the door of the mosque, without injuring those that were inside

The examples analysed have served to bring to light some fundamental aspects regarding attacks that can occur in places of worship:

- Attacks involving civilian victims are often carried out by people who are identified either on the spot or afterwards, or who do not even flee the place where they have proceeded with the attack since their will is to strike a precise target, aware of the possible consequences. These are not acts of criminality in which the perpetrator seeks to evade the law. In this sense, the place itself is not affected, but people are. The place is a symbol, but the target is human lives. Very often, the attacker has come in the days or hours before to visit the place where he will carry out the attack.
- When the attack is directed towards people, the security measures taken (if any) are often sufficient to protect the people inside. Obviously, this does not apply to the outside and the immediate vicinity. Some of the victims, when there were any, were killed at the entrance or the attacker waited until the premises were open (before mass; before school opened). If security measures are not sufficient, both places and people are much more vulnerable.
- Often, attacks involving buildings have no victims, and the perpetrators are also difficult to identify, as they strike and leave immediately. This also makes it difficult to identify the real reason for the attack, as well as making it largely unpredictable. Understanding whether an act is criminal but only vandalism or it is the preamble to something more serious is extremely difficult.
- Failure to take basic security measures implies extreme vulnerability of both places and people. The adoption of adequate security measures, such as security guards, exposes the security guards and security personnel to high risks for the protection of places of worship and the people inside. Very well protected places of worship (think of the security door of the synagogue in Halle, which withstood an armed attack) also have consequences, since the attacker cannot achieve his goal, then he may create another one and thus change his target. As the attempted attack on the synagogue in Halle showed, the bomber, unable to enter the synagogue, started shooting at passers-by. These individuals are, in a way, the 'collateral victims' resulting from the fact that the primary target was well protected.

7. Surveys

This chapter provides an analysis of the perception of security of each religious group based on interviews conducted by the SHIELD consortium with various religious leaders. The interviews were carried out in an attempt to make them as representative as possible, thus following three criteria:

- i) equal representation of the different religious groups;
- ii) geographical coverage, thus interviewing religious leaders in different European countries;
- iii) inclusion of different contexts or environments, thus taking into consideration places of worship in both large urban agglomerations and small rural areas.

Members of law enforcement agencies were also interviewed; nevertheless, the information provided seems to be much more in line with the requirements of WP3 and some parts of WP2 (in particular T2.2; T2.3 and T2.4). The choice was, therefore made, to include the information received from the LEAs in the related deliverables of WP3 and T2.2 – T2.4.

For reasons of confidentiality and given the sensitivity of some information, it was decided not to report the interviews in full, but only to extrapolate the essential information. In any case, the full interviews are collected and managed by each interviewing partner and will be handled based on the in Deliverable 1.3 “Ethics and Data Protection - Guidelines” outlined procedures. Consequently, for all issues regarding informed consent and privacy, reference was made to the mentioned Deliverable 1.3.

7.1. Interviews with religious representatives of Christianity

Interview N°	Figure	City and Country
1	Chief of security service	City of more than 250,000 inhabitants in Italy
2	Priest of the local Catholic community	City of more than 150,000 inhabitants in Italy
3	Priest of the several Catholic communities	City of 100,000 inhabitants in Italy
4	Chief of security service and responsible for museum	City of 100,000 inhabitants in Italy
5	Priest of the local Catholic community	Small village in Italy
6	Priest of the local Catholic community	Small village in Poland
7	Priest of the local Orthodox community	City of more than 250,000 inhabitants in Romania

With regard to Christian places of worship, both Catholic and Orthodox, the perception of security is high and, consequently, the security measures taken are often very low.

Some initial considerations are crucial before proceeding with the analysis: unlike mosques and synagogues, as we shall see, there are tens of thousands of Christian places of worship throughout Europe. Securing all places of worship related to Christianity would be hardly possible and unlikely to be budgeted for by either church security officers or clergy in general. Moreover, churches are, traditionally, ‘places open to all’ and, therefore, by definition, several sites do not have entry controls and are not designed as places where the physical safety of people could be questioned. This element can be easily inferred from the interviews, as all the interviewees think that they are in a completely safe place (despite the absence of security measures) and think that the people inside the places of worship are also safe. The only concerns about safety come from purely structural considerations:

some churches are very old and in need of renovation, so some religious representatives fear that there might be collapses or that natural disasters might seriously damage some structures. These worries are clearly unrelated to the danger of terrorist attacks or violent attacks.

None of the respondents considered the possibility of an attack. On the contrary, in some cases, the question was a source of concern for the respondents. Some of them stated that they had never remotely imagined that there would be a danger of an attack and that they would have had no idea what to do in case of such an event other than trying to hide, securing people inside and calling the police. Only one respondent has specified procedures to follow in case of an attack. However, it must be mentioned that, in this case, the church in question is not only a place of worship but also a museum that can be visited every day (except Sunday) in a big city. This peculiar characteristic explains the availability of security measures in place: such as metal detectors and checking pockets and backpacks/bags before entering, as well as cameras inside the building. However, the interviewee points out that the cameras inside were placed more to discourage degradation and theft, as there are a lot of valuables inside the church.

Respondents were also asked whether they remember any violent incidents in the buildings for which they are responsible or not: the testimonies are practically nil. The few cases concern attempted thefts (both at night and during services), mentally disturbed people interrupting services, people in financial difficulty trying to steal from the offering box usually present inside the churches, or episodes of degradation or vandalism. These premises are important to understand which security measures have been adopted and why: if for other communities, as it will be explained later, the security measures put in place are designed to protect places and people, as far as Christian places of worship are concerned, the security measures are bland and designed to discourage theft and break-ins, since the safety of people attending the celebrations has never been questioned. Consequently, measures in place include surveillance cameras, armoured or very thick doors, locked doors when they allow access to other areas of the building not open to the public, valuables protected by cases or grills, and volumetric alarms when churches are closed.

Only in a few cases were volunteer service to manage the flow of people organised. Nevertheless, this precaution is more a result of the Covid-19 pandemic than a concern about the possibility of an attack. However, some of these people have received basic training in case someone becomes ill and to manage the flow of people, as well as to check that the emergency exits, when present, are properly working.

Another critical point highlighted in European churches, especially very old ones, is that they have not been built according to current regulations. Some churches do not have emergency exits, which represents a further criticality in the definition of adequate safety measures.

Respondents highlighted dates of particular vulnerability, such as Easter (and Eastern night for Orthodox Christians), Christmas and generally every Sunday morning. During these particular holidays (Christmas and Easter), the influx of believers is much higher than normal, and there might also be processions taking place outside the churches. On these dates, the crowds are often tough to manage: the lack of incidents is mainly the result of people being polite and waiting their turn to enter, avoiding standing in front of the doors. Other potentially risky occasions are weddings: several people stand both inside and outside the building. Fortunately, these dates are changeable, thus making it difficult for potential attackers to anticipate and plan an action ahead. Therefore, they do not have the same level of risk as Christmas and Easter, whose dates are fixed and well-known. In addition, Christmas and Easter have a strong symbolic relevance, which magnifies the attack's impact. During ordinary days, when there are no services, the churches are generally open to the public without any access control, and only sometimes the churches are guarded, either by the religious representative or by volunteers.

The interview analysis points out that in Christian places of worship, the religious representatives have no adequate security measures in case of a violent attack, primarily due to the lack of awareness about the possibility of being the victim of an attack.

7.2. Interviews with religious representatives of Judaism

Interview N°	Figure	City and Country
8	Rabbi of a Jewish community in Paris	Paris, France
9	Individual in charge of the security of the local Jewish community	City of 2 more than Millions of inhabitants in Italy
10	Representative of the local Jewish community	City of 2 more than Millions of inhabitants in Italy
11	Representative of the local Jewish community	City of more the 350,000 inhabitants in Italy
12	Representative of the local Jewish community	City of more than 250,000 inhabitants in Romania
13	Representative of the national Jewish community	Budapest, Hungary

Considering the interviews with the Jewish communities, it appears that their level of security awareness and preparedness is much higher than that of the other communities. This is due to two main reasons: firstly, attacks and violent attacks of various origins, and more generally acts of anti-Semitism, have a very long history in Europe. Secondly, the Jewish communities in various countries of Europe are quite small and circumscribed: there are not that many synagogues, which makes them a more identifiable and, thus, "easier" target. Over time, therefore, a more mature awareness of the security of places of worship has developed within Jewish communities. In addition, the representatives of other religious communities themselves are usually responsible for organising the security of places of worship and people. In the case of the Jewish communities, instead, this task is often carried out by actual security officers, who are not necessarily also the community representatives.

All respondents asserted that they feel safe in the building, as did the people who attend the community. Nevertheless, given the global level of insecurity and the ever-changing types of terrorist attacks, all expressed the idea that the general level of security could be increased. In this sense, unlike representatives of other communities, those responsible for the security of Jewish places of worship seriously considered the possibility of a terrorist attack. This type of attack does not refer to mere vandalism or the remote possibility of a possible violent attack; instead, it concerns the possibility of armed attacks, attacks with gas, chemical weapons, kamikazes or bombs placed in the vicinity of synagogues. The representatives of the Jewish communities also have internal procedures to follow in the event of an attack, tailored according to a specific scenario. The exceptionally high level of security awareness stems from the fact that practically all communities surveyed have suffered at least one attack since the end of World War II, sometimes with deadly outcomes. When attacks have been less violent, there have still been molotov attacks and general vandalism.

It also emerges that the riskiest dates are Shabbat (Friday sunset to Saturday sunset) and more generally all Jewish holidays: Rosh Ha-Shanah (New Year's Eve), Pesakh, Kippur (fasting of atonement), and Sukkot. Another particularly risky day is Yom Ha Atzmaut, the day of independence of the State of Israel. It should be noted that this is not a Jewish religious holiday; however, the vulnerability of the

community on that day is greater as there have been attacks on Jews on this particular day in the past because they were directly or indirectly associated with Israel. Furthermore, big events like marriages and Mitzvahs are susceptible to pose security problems.

As for security, it is managed in a fairly organised way: communities rely both on an internal trained staff, but also on external private companies (especially at night). Some sites are also constantly monitored by cameras directly connected to and monitored by the police and in some cases by the military. Within the communities, there are specific figures in charge of organising the daily security of places of worship and adjacent sensitive sites. The security measures in place also apply to adjacent museums, kindergartens or yeshiva (Jewish schools). Often, the local communities have elaborated a common strategy at the national level with other Jewish communities in order to organise the security of places of worship and ensure the safety of people.

Security measures include video surveillance systems, metal detectors, security doors, volumetric and intruder alarm systems, shatter-proof glass, and alternate door opening. On the outside, there are both security perimeters equipped with doors, video cameras and sensors, and walls/enclosures protecting places of worship, sometimes even armoured bollards. In case of multiple entrances, these are all monitored and when someone wants to enter, he/she is asked the reason for the visit, while a physical check is carried out. If the reason is a cultural visit, people are accompanied by a guide throughout the tour. It should be highlighted that all these security measures protect people inside the synagogue, but problems and vulnerabilities arise when people are outside waiting to enter, such as during holidays or on Shabbat.

As noted in the interviews, the level of awareness and preparedness regarding security issues and the perception of the risk of attacks is very high among the Jewish community. This is due to the reasons already listed above, namely the long history of anti-Semitism and violent attacks suffered over time, and also the limited presence of places of worship. It is also worth mentioning that in several cases, part of the security budget is provided by the State of Israel or Israeli associations, in addition to voluntary contributions from community members. Some respondents even suggest that with a higher budget, they would like to implement an intelligent video surveillance system (video mining) or the construction of protective barriers (e.g. made of plexiglass) in order to secure the outer perimeter of the various places of worship and the nearest sensitive sites as yeshivas.

7.3. Interviews with the religious representatives of Islam

Interview N°	Figure	City and Country
14	Chairman of the local Islamic community	City of more than 2 Millions of inhabitants in Italy
15	President of the local Islamic community	City of 2 more than Millions of inhabitants in Italy
16	President of the local Islamic community	City of 250,000 inhabitants in Italy
17	Imam of the local Islamic community	City of 2 more than Millions of inhabitants in Italy
18	Religious leader (Imam) of two Islamic communities in two different mosques	City of 200,000 inhabitants in Spain
19	Imam of the local Islamic community	City of more than 250,000 inhabitants in Romania

The interviews conducted show that there is a generalised sense of security within the Muslim communities. Only in one interview, a sense of fear linked to insecurity emerged: this specific case concerns an Italian region, in the past affected by both acts of vandalism (against the place of worship and cars parked in front of the mosque) and a demonstration against the presence of the mosque (and in general against Muslims). These acts have sometimes been supported by extreme right-wing political parties. Also, in the case of the Spanish mosque, although the sense of physical safety was not questioned, there were altercations with some people about the presence of the mosque. The Spanish imam pointed at other priority issues, such as racism, xenophobia or islamophobia, all on a discursive-conceptual level. These issues, if declined to a level beyond the purely discursive, could lead to even violent degeneration.

Almost all the interviewees deny having thought about the possibility of a violent event occurring and have never even thought about what they would do, should such an event take place. One respondent admitted having considered the possibility of a sort of violent attack to occur (vandalism or violent manifestation) but decided not to spread fear among the community by introducing specific security measures, through which even more attention on the local Muslim community could have been irritated. Only one respondent has taken the occurrence of a violent attack as a real potential threat into consideration. This is due to the mosque being one of the largest in the country, where both national leaders and foreign political and religious leaders are received. Consequently, he developed a plan to be executed in case of an attack; however, this plan has not been updated for years, and he admits that it does not meet contemporary security challenges anymore.

A further interviewee explained that one of the reasons for not proceeding with the implementation of particular security measures is to avoid the spread of panic or fear among the community, or giving signals of mistrust toward non-Muslims, thus suggesting that they were protecting themselves from those who might want to attack them. Consequently, the perceptual and psychological dimensions of the implementation or non-implementation of security measures are an element that needs to be taken into account. Sometimes, therefore, the non-implementation of security measures does not result from a misperception of risk but a conscious choice.

Regarding the most vulnerable structures and/or parts of places of worship, most respondents considered that there are no works of great material or spiritual value inside that could be targeted. Inside mosques, there are usually no representations of human figures, let alone the prophet. Usually, there are simple phrases taken from the Koran and painted in a more or less elaborate way. The greatest vulnerability is represented by people who are most exposed, especially near the entrance doors (where clusters form) and in the outdoor spaces adjacent to the mosque, which cannot always be adequately protected or guarded.

Regarding the dates when people are most vulnerable, all interviewees expressed concern in particular about the period of Ramadan, Taraweeh, Idil Fitri, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha. The period of Ramadan is of utmost importance for the Muslim community: it is also a time when large crowds form both inside and outside mosques, making mosques and people much more susceptible. In the case of one interviewee, practically every Friday evening is mentioned as a critical date, as it is the day of the week when prayers are held and the mosque is particularly busy. It must, therefore, be considered that large mosques in large cities, or in general all mosques that are very frequented, in addition to those occasions already mentioned, consider a sensitive date also every Friday, as people crowd in and out of places of worship.

As for the security measures put in place, they differ according to the type of structure considered. A few elements must be taken into account: several mosques have been obtained from spaces that were previously not designed to be places of worship and, therefore, suffer from some structural issues. Some spaces are even used for other activities during the various days of the week, and are then “transformed” into places of worship on certain days (Fridays, the Ramadan period, etc.): in these

cases, security is even more challenging to organise and guarantee. Finally, other mosques, either built more recently or in larger cities, offer higher security standards. For example, stemming from the information obtained in one interview, it turns out that the mosque offers quite high security standards, such as the presence of surveillance cameras, physical barriers delimiting a security perimeter, speed bumps and concrete blocks forcing cars to a slight zig-zag that reduces their speed, a metal detector at the entrance, registration of people entering the place of worship and, above all, the presence of an armed security company during visits to the mosque by important personalities and during the main festivities. This level of attention to security, however, is unique. The other interviews show that security measures are often substantially inadequate: this is not due to a lack of will of religious leaders, but to a matter of perception, as several of them do not believe that they should implement particular measures, and when they do, they are aware that they are limited. For example, four respondents have organised a security service with volunteers, part of the community. These volunteers are predominantly present during celebrations, and their main task is to monitor and, if something happens, alert the police. In most cases, they do not have any specific training, except for some basic notions such as handling a fire extinguisher and ensuring the emergency exits are working properly, among related tasks.

One respondent, although denying that security is one of the main priorities of the related community, admits that there is an access control system managed by volunteers and there are surveillance cameras.

Most communities possess only the common security standards prescribed by law, such as fire extinguishers or emergency exits.; however, these measures are not specifically provisioned to manage the potential consequences of a violent attack. In some cases, there are both surveillance cameras and armoured doors, designed mainly to protect against vandalism at night. In other cases, there are only surveillance cameras, the main purpose of which is both to deter and to track down the perpetrators in case of vandalism. The only exception are the more complex and elaborate security systems mentioned by one interviewee, as described previously. The level of awareness of the danger posed by violent attacks and the vulnerability of people is higher than standard, and so are the security measures in place.

Overall, it is possible to conclude that most interviewees think that the possibility of a violent attack is unlikely, if not almost impossible. Consequently, they have adopted relatively basic levels of security measures, such as the installation of video surveillance cameras and the establishment of volunteers during the mentioned holidays.

8. Conclusion

This concluding section of D2.1 will briefly recapitulate the topics covered within this deliverable. The aim of the WP2 is to undertake a risk assessment on terrorist attacks to places of worship and religious buildings, respectively from Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Recent terrorist attack has been reviewed to gather lessons and common trends have been also identified. Vulnerable spots in buildings and rituals or holidays that could pose a major risk for people have been also identified. These activities have led the foundations for the definition of prevention and mitigation strategies, to be identified in WP3. In particular, the objective of D2.1 was to carrying out a review of past terrorist attack to Christian, Jewish, Islamic places of worship happened in Europe in the XXI century.

The introduction sought to account for the multiple definitions of terrorism and the problematic nature they represented in the case of our deliverable. We therefore proposed the definition of terrorism according to some international organisations as well as some national states. By choosing a precise definition of 'terrorism', we would not have been able to include in the report all those 'violent attacks' that represent an important contextual element. Subsequently, we also looked at terms sometimes used ambiguously and equivalently, such as fundamentalism, extremism, violent extremism, religious extremism, religious intolerance and radicalisation.

Based on this, we have proposed an overview of all the 'violent attacks' that have occurred in Europe against places of worship from the beginning of the 21st century until today. The reason why we have previously dwelt on those definitions and chosen the more generic 'violent attacks' is because it was neither the task of the consortium to give a definition of terrorism nor to wrongly qualify as terrorism those violent acts that might not be.

After the general overview of attacks in Europe, we wanted to proceed with a more in-depth analysis of a few events in particular, choosing several criteria: difference between events, geographical and religious representativeness, violence of events, type of attack, chronological distribution. The aim was to gather information on the different attack methods, the structure of the buildings and their surroundings, the vulnerabilities exploited by the attackers and/or the weakness of certain security measures, as well as to understand the perception of these attacks within the various communities.

The following attacks were analysed and subsequently compared:

1. Bomb attack on two churches near Padua, Italy (2003)
2. Attempted firearms attack on the Saint-Cyr-Sainte-Juliette church in Villejuif, France (2015)
3. Arson in Saint-Louis church in Fontainebleau, France (2016)
4. The attack to the Nice cathedral, France (2020)
5. Arson on a synagogue in Warsaw, Poland (1997)
6. The Toulouse Jewish school shooting, France (2012)
7. The Copenhagen synagogue shooting, Denmark (2015)
8. The Halle synagogue shooting, Germany (2019)
9. The flare bomb attack on the mosque of Granada, Spain (2017)
10. The molotov cocktails thrown by assailants at a mosque in Ulm, Germany (2018)
11. The fire on civilian and incendiary devices targeting a mosque in Bayonne, France (2019)
12. The shooting attack of the Muley el-Mehdi mosque in Ceuta, Spain (2019)

Afterwards, in order to add value to the state of the art, interviews were conducted with representatives of the various religious communities in order to identify other interesting elements that could have provided important information on both security awareness and the security measures actually implemented.

At the end of this work, the inputs found in D2.1 will be used for the remaining part of WP2 in order to proceed with the risk and vulnerability assessment. The results found in 2.1 will be a solid basis for the continuation of the project.

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11. List of abbreviations

- ATLD: Anti-terrorism Law Draft (China)
- BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation
- CCTV: Closed Circuit Television
- CIE: Spanish Islamic Commission
- DAESH: al-Dawla al-Islāmiyya fī l-'Irāq wa l-Shām
- DHS: Department Homeland Security (USA)
- EU: European Union
- EUROPOL: European Police Office
- FBI: Federal Bureau Investigation (USA)
- GSPC: Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat
- IDC: Interdisciplinary Center (Israel)
- IDF: Israeli Defence Forces
- IGMG: Islamic Community National View (Germany)
- INTERPOL: The International Criminal Police Organization
- ISIS: Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
- LEA: Law Enforcement Agency
- LGBT: Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Trans
- NATO: North-Atlantic Treaty Organization
- PKK: Kurdistan Workers' Party
- PYD: Kuridish Democratic Union Party
- RAN: Radicalisation Awareness Network
- SWAT: Special Weapons Assault Team
- UDHR: Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- UK: United Kingdom
- UN: United Nations
- UNGA: United Nations General Assembly
- US: United States (USA)
- USA: United States of America
- USD: US dollar
- WMD: Weapons of mass destruction
- WP: work package

12. Annex A: SHIELD project guidelines for the interviews

12.1. Introduction

The guidelines provided in this document are resuming the methodology to be used in the SHIELD project in order to have a structured survey which will lead to a coherent analysis. The questionnaire should be submitted to LEAs, security practitioners and representatives of religious communities. Each partner should submit the survey to at least one/two individuals, with regard to their field of competence/expertise/contacts. Each additional interview is welcomed.

2 types of questionnaires will be created:

1. questionnaire addressed to the representatives of religious communities
2. questionnaire addressed to LEAs and security practitioners (to be performed and to be presented in D2.2; D2.3 and D2.4)

12.2. What does the Grant Agreement says?

T2.1: Along with the literature review, T2.1 will perform a survey to representatives of LEAs, security practitioners and religious communities. Respondents will be given a score between 1 and 10, according to their knowledge of the above topics.

T2.2: will perform an assessment of vulnerabilities as regards Christian places of worship and buildings (e.g. monasteries, catechism schools). Such analysis - to be carried out by experts in risk detection, LEAs, security practitioners and religious organisations - will consist in the identification of sensitive or relatively unprotected points (e.g. holy water font, tabernacle, entrance, etc.) as well as moments of the liturgy (e.g. the holy communion) or ritual holidays (Easter, Christmas, but even the Sunday mass) which could be potentially more likely of the typologies of attack defined in T2.1.

T2.3: an assessment of vulnerabilities as regards Jewish places of worship and buildings (e.g. the headquarters of the community or Torah schools) will be undertaken. This study - to be carried out by experts in risk detection, LEAs, security practitioners and religious organizations - will regard physical weak points of synagogues, as the matroneum or the entrance, particular moments of the liturgy or ritual holidays (e.g. Shabbat, Pesach, etc.) which are more at risk to be exploited by terrorists.

T2.4: will detect main criticalities related to Muslim places of worship and buildings (e.g. the headquarters of the community or Islamic centres). This investigation - to be carried out by experts in risk detection, LEAs, security practitioners and religious organizations - will consist in pinpointing the most vulnerable, easily accessible or relatively unprotected points in mosques (e.g. muşallā or the entrance), along with the moments of liturgy or ritual holidays (e.g. the Jumu'a, Eid al-Fitr (عيد الفطر), Eid Al Adha (عيد الأضحى), Laylat al-Miraj, Tarāwīḥ (تراويح) etc.) which appear to be more at risk of the terrorist attacks examined in T2.1.

12.3. Proposed methodology

Each partner can proceed with the interviews and it is encouraged to do so. As a preliminary privacy policy agreed within the consortium, a full-list of the interviewed people with complete information will not be public. Each partner conducting an interview will reveal only the position/role of the individual interviewed.

When enacting the interview, the following must be recorded:

- interviewer: person conducting the interview (persons, organisation)

- for persons: name (public), position (public), organisation (public), email (confidential), phone (confidential)
- per organisations: full name, address, short profile
- date and time: date and time when the interview was accomplished. If multiple sessions, please list all of them
- place: place where the interview was accomplished (organisation, city, country), if in-person meeting. Other types such as phones, video conferencing, email or other.
- recording (optional, only if available): if the Responder(s) agree, fill out reference to a meeting recording(s), such as MS Teams call recording, phone call recording or video recording from an in-person meeting. If possible, annotate the recordings with time.

Language: the interview can be conducted in the respective language of the country of the interviewed/interviewers. The interviews must be translated into English and the full transcription of the interview must be kept in the original language for documentation.

Selection of interviewees - social and gender-sensitive perspective

When selecting interviewees one has to take into account not only their knowledge of the issue but also social characteristics which partially determine their experience of the issue. As Peter Mandaville and Melissa Nozell (2017) stress in the article on engaging religion and religious actors in countering violent extremism - following understanding of lived religion - to “get beyond official religious authorities and formal institutions [...] men” (p. 11). They advise reaching out, for instance, to younger or more junior leaders and women. “Recalibrating understanding of the religious sector to get beyond official religious authorities and formal institutions makes it possible to discern a far more complex religious landscape populated by a far more complex array of actors and voices. For example, although many religious traditions limit formal religious authority to older males, in practice women play a major role in shaping understandings and interpretations of religion—both within families and as public religious leaders. Focusing only on men can serve to reproduce male domination of religious space and miss opportunities for more effective and impactful engagement” (p. 11).

12.3.1. How to conduct a semi-structured interview? Helpful tips and basic rules.

Preparation phase:

- pick up an adequate interviewee;
- introduce him/her briefly into the subject of the interview, describe why it takes place, what we will do with data, how it will be stored and when it will be deleted, and say a few words about the importance of the SHIELD project and your organisation. Openly say that you will happily address all questions. It all will build trust and result in high-quality data;
- highlight that the interview is anonymous and what does it mean, how you will protect sensitive data;
- provide a form for informed consent;
- an interview should take place in a quiet and private space - the both of you should feel safe and secure there.

Conducting your interview: the interview should be recorded, so you need to agree upon this. Before turning on your voice recorder, ask for permission and repeat the anonymity guarantees. After turning on the voice recording, put it aside but be sure that it works.

The semi-structured interview is all about following the interview scenario and adapting questions to the context. It means that you can rephrase, repeat and add questions. The very goal here is to get the most out of this - to cover all questions. If you feel that an interviewee does not understand or is not sure about a question, simply and politely rephrase it. On the other hand, if you do not understand an answer, ask for more details or examples. It is very helpful to ask for details and examples, real life situations, previous activities instead of general opinions or rules. You can also reach out to the context, such as artefacts from the place that you visited, to develop a topic or ask for examples. Once

you complete all questions, ask if an interviewee has something more to add. Wait a few seconds, if not, turn off the voice recorder. If an interviewee added sth once the voice recorded is off, do not turn it on. Simply seek to memorise it and take notes asap after the meeting.

Table of questions to be addressed to the representatives of religious communities (please note that you can adapt the questions depending on the interviewee)

Question n°	Type of question	Question
1	General question	Do you feel safe here? Why? Do you think the building should be enhanced in terms of security? Why?
2	General question	Do you think the people feel safe in this place?
3	General question	Did you take into account the possibility of an attack? If yes, of what kind? How do you think the key people in your community would react to the proposal of elaborating a security plan?
4	General question	Do you have any instructions to follow in the event of an attack? Please describe them. If not, imagine that you have to act, what would you do?
5	General question	Do you have in mind any past attack on this building? Or people visiting the building?
6	General question	Other than people, of course, what are the most vulnerable structures/objects in the building?
7	General question	What are the dates most at risk? Are there any particular holidays which are particularly crowded?
8	General question	How are entrances handled during celebrations? What about during normal days when there is no crowd?
9	General question	In order to ensure your security, do you rely on a private security company?
10	General question	Which are the security measures actually in place?
11	General question	Is the site protected in any specific way?
12	General question	Who is aware of sensible information on security issues?
13	General question	Is your place of worship collaborating with other places of worship (of the same or other religion) or other organisations to come up with common solutions for safety?
14	General question	Has the building or its surroundings been vandalised? If yes, when? By whom? How?
15	Exterior	Does the site have a perimeter fence or other type of physical barrier? What are barriers able to stop?
16	Exterior	How are the places adjacent to this location used for? Do you identify any potential critical issues?
17	Exterior	Is there an access control system?
18	Exterior	How many access points are there for entering the building? Are they protected?
19	Exterior	Are there any obstructions or barriers that force approaching vehicles to slow down?
20	Exterior	If densely populated urban areas: is uncontrolled parking allowed in public places too close to the building?
21	Exterior	Are there any items (trash cans, mailboxes) that might be used as bomb-hiding places?
23	Exterior	What is the estimated level of protection of the building against explosion events or extreme violent events?
24	Exterior	Is there good visibility from inside to the exterior?

25	Exterior	Is the lighting outside the building adequate?
26	Interior	What are the most at-risk spots in this building?
27	Interior	Are critical or most valuable items located in the innermost possible areas and separated from the publicly accessible areas of the building?
28	Interior	Are visitors kept away from the most critical or vulnerable spots?
29	Interior	Is there an evacuation plan? Is your staff trained to handle an emergency? Do you carry out evacuation or emergency management exercises?
30	Interior	Are there physical separations within the building that differentiate zones at different security levels?
31	Interior	Is there a fire suppression system?
32	Interior	Is there a particular ventilation system?
33	Interior	Are there cameras or CCTV? Please deepen
34	Interior	Are there security doors?

Table of questions to be addressed to LEAs and security practitioners:

Question n°	Type of question	Question
1	General question	How do you assess the level of prevention of the buildings of the XXX community in this country? Is there a systematic approach to this topic? Please provide details.
2	General question	What should be improved and how? Who should do it? Selected communities? LEA organisations?
3	General question	What are the weak points and strong points of the building security approach in this country?
4	General question	What are the weak points and strong points of the buildings you have experience of (in general) of XXX community?
5	General question	What are the security standards of the building of XXX community in this country? Who defined them? How do you assess them? What should be improved in this respect? Who should do it?
6	General question	What are the typical security solutions to the buildings? Please give details?
7	General question	How do you assess the level of awareness of the needs of the buildings' security?
8	General question	Do you recall any attacks on the buildings? What can you say about them?
9	General question	Which attacks on the building of the XXX community are the most possible in this country? How to prevent them?
10	General question	Do you think that LEAs in this country are well-prepared against attacks on the building of the XXX community?
11	General question	Are LEAs in this country taking intercultural training to know how to present security measures in a culturally-sensitive way to religious communities? (and to know what measures might be resisted or rejected and how to find acceptable solutions?)
12	General question	Do you think XXX community is well-prepared to protect their buildings?
13	General question	Do you think there is a need to develop a systematic approach and standards for the security of the religious buildings of different communities in this country?

14	General question	How and to what extent religious communities are open for collaboration in the domain of safety?
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