
AT LEAST 84 DEAD AS TRUCK CRASHES INTO CROWD IN FRANCE

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At least 84 people, including children, were killed and more than 150 others wounded when a truck ran through crowds in the southern French city of Nice during Bastille Day celebrations, French authorities said Friday.

In a statement, the Interior Ministry said 18 of the injured were in a critical condition.

France has been struck on the day of her national holiday... the symbol of liberty, President Francois Hollande said in a nationally televised address.

A state of emergency imposed following Novembers attacks in Paris that killed 130 had been scheduled to be lifted at the end of the month but was now being extended for three more months, he added.

A white truck drove through crowds of revelers on the Promenade des Anglais for around 2 kilometers (1 mile) following celebratory fireworks.

France as a whole is under the threat of Islamic terrorism, the president said. We have to demonstrate absolute vigilance and show determination that is unfailing.

France would strengthen our efforts in Syria and Iraq against those who are attacking us on our very soil.

Hollande, who is due to visit the Mediterranean city later Friday following a security meeting at 9 a.m. local time (0700GMT), said the government had called up operational reserves to support gendarme and police forces and assist in controlling borders.

Witnesses said the driver, who was killed in the attack, began shooting randomly after getting out of the truck. One told broadcaster BFMTV that he saw other men with guns in the truck. French authorities are working to determine if the attacker had any accomplices.

It is the worst tragedy in the history of Nice, Mayor Christian Estrosi said.

Weapons in truck

Flags would be lowered across the city Friday, he added. A jazz festival due to begin Saturday and a concert by pop star Rihanna planned for Friday have been cancelled.

Counter-terrorism investigators from Paris have taken charge of the investigation.

Le Figaro newspaper quoted security sources as saying that several weapons, guns and grenades were found inside the truck.

Local newspaper Nice-Matin and French broadcaster BFMTV reported the attacker was a 31-year-old local resident with dual French-Tunisian nationality, while citing security sources who said an ID card had been found inside the truck.

Iranian journalist Maryam Violet, who was visiting Nice for holiday, told the U.K.s Guardian newspaper that she witnessed the attack and many Muslims are among the dead.

There were so many Muslim people who were victims because I could see they had scarves over their head and some were speaking Arabic. One family lost a mother and in Arabic they were saying shes a martyr, she said.

People were celebrating and it was so peaceful, it was a festivity vibe, it was right after the fireworks that the truck came and ran over people.

The French Muslim Council condemned the attack with the greatest vigor.

France has been hit yet another time by a terrorist attack of the utmost severity, the council said in a statement, adding that the odious terrorist act took aim at our country on the very day of its national holiday, a day which celebrates liberty, equality and fraternity.

'Barbaric attack'

The council called for French Muslims to pray Friday for the memory of the victims of this barbarian attack.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu denounced the barbaric terrorist attack in Nice in a Twitter post and said the world should combat terrorism resolutely wherever it happens, regardless of who commits it.

He added that Turkey would continue to fully cooperate with France and all other partners in the fight against terrorism.

EU Minister Omer Celik also condemned the horrible events in Nice in the strongest possible terms.

Terror is always brutal wherever or in whatever form or with whatever motives it attacks humanity, he tweeted. We should all unite against it.

EU President Donald Tusk also tweeted: Tragic paradox that the subject of Nice attack was the people celebrating liberty, equality and fraternity.

Shortly after news of the tragedy broke, U.S. President Barack Obama condemned the attack in the strongest terms. He said Washington stood in solidarity and partnership with its oldest ally.

On this Bastille Day, we are reminded of the extraordinary resilience and democratic values that

have made France an inspiration to the entire world and we know that the character of the French Republic will endure long after this devastating and tragic loss of life, he said in a statement.

Following the attack, Italy tightened security along its land border with France, Interior Minister Angelino Alfano said. The center of Nice is 22 kilometers (14 miles) from the Italian border.

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