

PARIS CARNAGE: MUSLIM LEADERS' REACTIONS



SHEIKH HASINA
BANGLADESH PRIME MINISTER

"Terrorists are terrorists irrespective of their colour, creed or religion and must have no place in any civilised society. We are together in our fight against terrorism and violent extremism."



BASHAR AL-ASSAD
SYRIAN PRESIDENT

"The terrorist attacks that targeted the French capital Paris cannot be separated from what happened in the Lebanese capital Beirut lately and from what has been happening in Syria for the past five years and in other areas."



RECEP ERDOGAN
TURKISH PRESIDENT

"As a country that knows very well the manner and consequences of terrorism, we understand perfectly the suffering that France is experiencing now."



HASSAN ROUHANI
IRANIAN PRESIDENT

"I strongly condemn these crimes against humanity."



AHMED AL-TAYEB
HEAD OF CAIRO'S AL-AZHAR UNIVERSITY

"We denounce this hateful incident. The time has come for the world to unite to confront this monster. Such acts are contrary to all religious, humanitarian and civilised principles"



ADEL AL-JUBEIR
SAUDI ARABIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

"The heinous terrorist attacks that took place yesterday ... are in violation and contravention of all ethics, morals and religions."



ASHRAF GHANI
AFGHAN PRESIDENT

"The merciless killings of Paris citizens indicate that terrorists do not know borders. They're enemies of all humanity."



NAWAZ SHARIF
PAKISTANI PRIME MINISTER

"I condemn this act of terror ... this brutal carnage."



NAJIB RAZAK
MALAYSIAN PRIME MINISTER

"We must remain united in the war against terrorism."



JOKO WIDODO
INDONESIAN PRESIDENT

"I urge all parties to strengthen the international cooperation in handling terrorism issues."

'Never felt so scared'

Two write-ups of renowned Bangladeshi painter Shahabuddin Ahmed and acclaimed Bangladeshi mime artist Partha Pratim Majumder, both currently living in France, were published in Anandabazar Patrika after the carnage in Paris. The Daily Star is publishing a translated and abridged version of their accounts.

SHAHABUDDIN AHMED

It was a horrific night! Horrific! I am still having goose bumps. It's still all blurry for me.

It was at 8:30pm and I was preparing for dinner. My daughter Chitro was not home yet. She went towards Bastille with her friends, like every other weekend. Bastille is very popular amongst youngsters, and on weekends, it's more crowded. I myself went to Bastille in the evening to see an exhibition of young artists, but I came home early. I knew Chitro would have dinner with her friends and come home late. So, my wife and I were preparing for dinner.

Chitro called, she was speaking in a terrified voice. She spoke of danger. Said she was hiding in the basement of a café in Bastille with many others. All the lights had been turned out. There were sounds of heavy gunshots and she said "it felt like a state of war".

I couldn't believe my ears. I asked my wife to turn on the television. I was stunned seeing the news. The place I just visited a while ago had become a war zone. Army was there and so were gunshots. I came to know it was a terrorist attack.

I became tense. All I could think of was when I would get to see my daughter. Would I even see her again? We were feeling helpless. But Chitro kept calling and updating us every time she had the chance. They could not hide in the café for long. But the war was turning so violent that they got scared.

This café and Bataclan Hall is on the same lane. The explosions, attacks, screams, and deaths -- everything was going on around them all at once. They feared the café would come under bomb attack too. They sneaked out the back door, and somehow managed to get to a garden. There were lines of houses beside the garden, but everything was dark, the lights were out. Only the street lights were on.

(The writer is a famous painter. Born in Dhaka in 1950, Shahabuddin actively fought on the battlefield during the country's Liberation War. He has been living in Paris for almost four decades. He is one of the 50 contemporary master painters. In 2014, the French government conferred on him "The Order of Arts and Letters." He also received Swadhinata Padak and Bangla Academy Purashkar.)

PARTHA PRATIM MAJUMDER

I have never been this scared in all my life. The death toll kept rising and I kept thinking that it could have been

me, my son or daughter or it could have been one of my kin, my friends! Every time the thought crept into my mind I continued to get startled.

I stay a little away from the main city, in Mesi Palazzo. From the scene of the carnage, it takes about 20 minutes or so by metro rail. I could hear the sound of explosions from that far away.

Friday nights in Paris means fun and festivities. People in this city toil away during the weekdays and during the weekends they let loose and enjoy. Hence, I presumed the sound of explosions around 8:30pm as part of the weekend celebrations. I did not even think I needed to pay attention.

But a few minutes later, my son told me that the entire city was under the siege of terrorist attacks. I got news of only 18



Shahabuddin



Partha Pratim

dead then. We could not even imagine that the number could reach 100.

The clock had struck 10:30pm then. My son and daughter returned home an hour back. One of my son's female friends also came to our house. They were preparing to watch a horror movie in the next room after finishing dinner. My daughter saw the news on her tab and showed it to me. Upon turning on a 24 hour news channel, I saw the death toll was rising. French president Francois Hollande was seen making a statement on TV around midnight. He assured the people of safety. However, seeing the scenes of the city I found it hard to rely on that assurance. But, as he is the president of such a developed nation, I eventually tried to have faith in it.

I have been somewhat captive in the house all night. Well-wishers have called me from all around the world, asking how I am. I could not sleep the entire night; my wife is also in the same state. I never thought I would feel so insecure in such a developed nation. Anything can happen any time!

(The writer is famous mime artist. He was born in Pabna, Bangladesh, in 1954. He has been living in Paris for 35 years. In 2011, he received "Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters," the highest honour of the French government in the cultural arena. He also won Ekushey Padak.)

FROM PAGE 1

Hollande and the German foreign minister were watching a friendly football international.

All eight attackers died during the assaults that also left at least 350 wounded, 100 of them seriously.

Denouncing the attacks in a strongly worded statement, the French president said the multiple attacks across Paris were "an act of war... committed by a terrorist army, Daesh [another term for Islamic State], against France".

The attacks were "organised and planned from outside" but with help from inside, said Hollande.

"We will be merciless toward the barbarians of Islamic State group. Faced with war, the country must take appropriate action," he said after the attacks, the bloodiest in Europe since the Madrid train bombings in 2004.

These were attacks "against France, against the values that we defend everywhere in the world, against what we are: a free country that means something to the whole planet," Hollande said, calling for unity and courage and saying he would address an extraordinary meeting of parliament tomorrow.

Hollande himself had to be hastily evacuated from the Stade de France stadium when suicide bombers struck outside during the friendly football international between France and Germany.

The French president declared a state of emergency and three days of national mourning.

"All measures to protect our compatriots and our territory are being taken within the framework of the state of emergency," he added.

Claiming responsibility for the deadly attacks, Islamic State said, "Eight brothers wearing explosive belts and carrying assault rifles" conducted a "blessed attack on... Crusader France."

"France and those who follow her voice must know that they remain the main target of Islamic State and that they will continue to smell the odour of death for having led the crusade, for having dared to insult our prophet, for having boasted of fighting Islam in France and striking Muslims in the caliphate with their planes," it said in a statement online.

France, a founder member of the US-led coalition waging air strikes against IS in Syria and Iraq, was on high alert since January when jihadist gunmen killed 17 people in Paris in attacks targeting satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo and a Jewish supermarket.

Briefing reporters in Paris last night, Paris Prosecutor Francois Molins said three teams of attackers were involved in the assault on Paris.

"We can say at this stage of the investigation that there were probably three co-ordinated teams of terrorists

An act of war



Rescue services personnel working near the covered bodies outside a restaurant following a gun attack in Paris late Friday local time. PHOTO: REUTERS

behind this barbaric act."

He confirmed that one of the dead attackers was identified as a 30-year-old Frenchman with a criminal record. The man was identified by security services as having been radicalised.

Police were focusing on two vehicles. One was a black Seat used by gunmen in two of the attacks and still untraced.

The other is a black Volkswagen Polo with Belgian registration plates found at the concert venue, said Molins.

The car had been rented to a Frenchman living in Belgium who was identified in a spot check by police on Friday morning as he drove across the Belgian border with two others.

The BBC reports that investigators are working on the theory that there could be another team of attackers who managed to flee the scene.

A Syrian passport was found near the body of one of the eight attackers, the first suicide bombers to strike in France, according to Reuters.

"The holder of the passport passed through the island of Leros on October 3, 2015, where he was identified according to EU rules," Nikos Toscas, Greece's deputy minister in charge of policing, said in a statement.

A Greek police source told Reuters that the passport's owner was a young man who had arrived in Leros with a group of 69 refugees and had his fingerprints taken by authorities there. Police declined to give his name.

According to French media reports, three of the attackers were believed to have come from the Brussels neighbourhood in Belgium where police were carrying out raids.

Belgian police arrested three per-

sons for their alleged links to the terrorist attacks, reports the BBC.

One of the detainees had been in Paris on Friday evening, said Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel.

Meanwhile, an extra 1,500 soldiers were mobilised to reinforce police in Paris, Hollande's office said.

ANIGHT OF HORROR

The worst of the killing occurred at the Bataclan music venue in the trendy 11th arrondissement where more than 1,000 rock fans were at the sell-out show.

A Paris city hall official said four gunmen systematically massacred at least 87 young people at the Bataclan concert hall before anti-terrorist commandos launched an assault on the building.

"They didn't stop firing. There was blood everywhere, corpses everywhere. Everyone was trying to flee," said Pierre Janaszak, a radio presenter who was at the concert by US rock band Eagles of Death Metal.

Hinting at their motives, the gunmen were overheard raging at French President Francois Hollande and his military interventions in the Syrian civil war against the Islamic State group.

As screams rang out and survivors ran over the injured or dead to make their ways to the exits or places to hide, the militants took hostages and began executing them.

"We heard people screaming -- the hostages particularly -- and the threats from the kidnappers," said another survivor, 34-year-old Charles.

Along with around 20 others, he fled to a toilet where he pushed through the ceiling and hid in the cavity.

A police officer who took part in the

storming of the building told AFP: "It was horrible inside, a bloodbath, people shot in the head, people who were shot as they were lying on the ground."

Several restaurants near the concert hall were also targeted, including a popular Cambodian eatery in the trendy Canal St Martin area, where bars and restaurants were thronged with young revellers.

Three of the militants blew up their explosive belts at the Bataclan venue as heavily armed anti-terror police raided the venues around 12:30am (2330 GMT), while a fourth was shot dead.

Another attacker blew himself up in nearby Boulevard Voltaire, as the streets were filled with the sound of police sirens and convoys of ambulances shipping hundreds of injured to hospital.

The other three militants blew themselves up at eating places near the Stade de France national stadium.

CONDEMNATION

US President Barack Obama led a chorus of global condemnation of the deadly attacks, as nations pledged solidarity with France.

Countries such as the US, the UK, Spain and India, which have experienced their own mass-casualty attacks, were among the first to voice condemnation.

Saudi Arabia led Gulf Arab states also denounced the brutal attacks.

"I wanted to express our condolences to the government and people of France for the heinous terrorist attacks that took place yesterday, which are in violation and contravention of all ethics, morals and religions," Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir said.

He made the remarks in Vienna where he is attending international talks aimed at finding a solution to end the war in Syria, where IS holds swathes of territory.

The president of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al-Nahyan, also condemned the attacks as "heinous crimes" and said the UAE would "spare no effort... to fight terrorism in all its forms," state news agency WAM reported.

The top Sunni Muslim religious authority in the oil-rich kingdom, the council of senior ulemas, said the attacks were "contrary to Islam and its principles".

The Qatari foreign ministry condemned the "armed attacks and bombings" in a statement cited by official agency QNA, saying they "contradict all moral and humanitarian principles and values".

There were also condemnations from Bahrain and Kuwait, and from Abdellatif Zayani, head of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council which includes Oman.

REMEMBRANCE



With great love and respect, we remember today our beloved mother, Syeda Razia Faiz. She left us all and reached the Shore from which no traveller returns, on the 15th November 2013 for her eternal abode.

May Allah Grant her blessings and eternal peace, and ease our hearts from the pain of her absence. The Quran Khani, feeding of orphans and a Milad Mehfil will be held on this day of 15th November 2015 at different locations of the country. We humbly request all family members, friends, colleagues and well wishers to keep HER in their prayers.

Munia, Osman and Aman
on behalf of the entire Faiz family

Dhaka reaches out to Paris

FROM PAGE 1

"We are together in our fight against terrorism and violent extremism."

In a message to French President Francois Hollande yesterday, she also said, "I along with the people of Bangladesh strongly condemn these acts of terror and stand in solidarity with the people and the government of France."

Expressing deepest condolences to Hollande and the people of France, Hasina added, "Our thoughts and prayers are with the grieving families. May the departed souls rest in eternal peace."

President Abdul Hamid has also strongly condemned the attacks.

In a message to the French president, he expressed his deep condolence to the victim families, saying he was praying for the departed souls.

Top leaders of different political and socio-cultural and religious organisations, including BNP chief Khaleda Zia, Opposition Leader Raushan Ershad, Islami Oikya Jote, Jamaat-e-Islami and head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community Mirza Masroor Ahmad, have denounced the attacks.

"I am surprised and shocked over the Paris terror attack," said Khaleda in a statement signed by Asaduzzaman Ripon, spokesperson for the BNP.

She said she was also concerned and saddened over the killings. "I do hope the perpetrators will be brought to book."

Raushan Ershad echoed Khaleda in another statement.

Ambassador of France to Bangladesh Sophie Aubert yesterday said France will not succumb to any terror spread by "obscurantist and barbaric enemies of civilisation".

"France has been struck in its heart, but France is strong, and will not succumb to terror," she said in a brief statement.

The ambassador added: "We all are in mourning after the carnage that occurred in Paris on the evening of November 13. In these days of sorrow, I thank Bangladesh and all friends of France for their expressions of solidarity."

'BANGLADESHIS SAFE'
Bangladesh nationals, living in the areas of Paris where the series of terrorist attacks were carried out yesterday, are reportedly safe and unhurt.

Foreign ministry officials in Dhaka, who are in constant contact with the Bangladesh embassy in Paris, said they had not received any report of casualty of any Bangladeshi.

Contacted, Wahid Var Taher, a Bangladeshi social organiser, told our diplomatic correspondent over the phone: "Usually, Bangladeshis don't not live in the areas

where the multiple terror attacks have taken place."

He said during a phone conversation yesterday morning, Bangladesh Ambassador in Paris M Shahidul Islam requested him to keep in touch with the embassy as well as the Bangladeshis living in France.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh embassy has opened a hotline (+33146519033) to receive calls regarding the Paris incident, said a foreign ministry press release.

Two numbers -- +33 6 51 36 02 22 (TM Reza) and +33614497095 (Wahid Var Taher) -- could also be contacted for more information, it said.

PM'S FRANCE VISIT

Despite the attacks, the schedule of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's upcoming visit to Paris for joining "Leaders' Forum", to be hosted by the Unesco, on November 16-17 is likely to remain unchanged.

Contacted, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam told The Daily Star, "Prime minister's visit is on and she will join the programme if it not cancelled by the Unesco."

On Monday, the Unesco will celebrate the 70th anniversary of the adoption of its constitution. Hasina is scheduled to leave Dhaka that morning.