

"WE ARE ALL FRANCE"

... but we are not all Lebanon

Five Messages From the Paris Attacks



RYAN MAURO, National Security Analyst in the US, made the following statement in an article in **The Daily Express** of 1 July 2015: *"ISIS (IS) is only a fraction of what it could potentially become. If we don't act quickly, this is still going to grow – and what we're looking at today is going to look like the good old days compared to the future."*

This warning became a stark reality on Friday evening in a terror attack in Paris that President Barack Obama called "an attack on all humanity". At least 128 people were reported dead and more than 300 injured after a shooting rampage and explosions in the capital of France.

But the attacks in Paris were more than just an attack on a 'political enemy'. It was a message delivered to a global audience and packaged in the wrapping of terror. The message was clearly spelt out, not only by the attackers, but also by the victims:

1. IS is expanding their vision beyond their borders

The main message that the Islamic State (IS) conveyed with the acts of terror is that they are now pursuing the vision of expanding their borders beyond the edges of Iraq and Syria. The past three weeks have seen a dramatic expansion of IS attacks that have been, up to now, fairly limited to Iraq, Syria and Libya. On 31 October a Russian Metrojet Flight 9268 was downed when, allegedly, a bomb planted by IS exploded in mid-air over the Sinai desert in Egypt. Less than two weeks later on 12 November, two Sunni suicide bombers killed over forty people in a Shiite residential neighbourhood in Beirut, Lebanon. The Paris attack was a clear indication that IS is now at the point where they are expanding their terror into foreign borders.

2. The world was not Lebanon

It was an outcry of solidarity that was unmatched in quantity this year. Mourners across the globe, from the Queen to the Pope, reacted to the attacks in Paris with horror, tears and with anger. Spanish Premier Mariano Rajoy declared **"WE ARE ALL FRANCE"** and leaders worldwide echoed his sentiment.

However, on the same day a suicide bomber attacked funeral goers in Iraq, killing more than twenty-one mourners and injuring dozens. It didn't reach the news. One day earlier forty three people were killed in Beirut, Lebanon with more than 240 injured by the same group, and the world was silent. When IS downed the Metrojet Flight 9268 on 31 October, killing 224 people flying from the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh to the Russian city of St Petersburg, global leaders did not express "We are Russia".

In a world where only pain that affects me directly counts, it becomes more and more critical that Christians will show solidarity with anybody who suffers, regardless of nation, race or religion.

AFP interviewed a young Syrian refugee who came to the French embassy in Berlin to pay tribute to victims of the Paris attacks. His words were a chilling reminder that empathy is very often selective. "We are with them right now, just to help them with this crisis. What's happening to them is happening every day in Syria, 100 times per day for five years, so we know what that means," he told AFP.

3. A tipping point in negotiations

Every attack by IS militants seems to confirm that the only solution to stopping the Islamic State is military intervention. The declaration by French President François Hollande that *"this is war"* was not metaphorical nor was it symbolical. It came as a declaration that enough is enough and on Sunday night France launched "massive" air strikes on the Islamic State group's de-facto capital in Syria, destroying a jihadi training camp and a munitions dump in the city of Raqqa.

This comes as a stark contrast to the past as President Hollande has been very selective in his approach to Muslims in an effort not to offend the French Muslim community. After the Charlie Hebdo attacks in January, for the first time Mr. Hollande referred to the incident as *"an act of exceptional barbarity"*. His response, both then and after the attacks on Friday, is an indication that any future incidents may erode the belief that 'Islam is a religion of peace'.

The attack in Paris will also emphasize the religious dimension of the Islamic State's objectives and will force global leaders into a new approach. In a recent article in Morningstar News ([Morning Star News](#)), the problem of Islam and the Islamic State was addressed by Canon Andrew White, who has lost 1,200 parishioners to jihadist violence, "including four boys beheaded and one boy sawed in half in front of his own father". He commented as follows: *"The only answer is to radically destroy them. I don't think we can do it [only] by dropping bombs. We have got to bring about real change. It is a terrible thing to say as a priest ... I will do anything to save a life and bring about tranquillity, and here I am forced by death and destruction to say there should be war."*

"It's time for a sea of change in the Christian response to persecution. Prayers and charity are not enough," he writes. *"It's time for American Christians to lead, to demand a response and –crucially – to participate in the conflict ... Destroy ISIS. Not just for America, but also for the church."*

The president of the Iraqi Christian Relief Council, Juliana Taimoorazy, confirmed these words earlier this year to Morning Star News: *"if we're going to end the Islamic State, a concerted effort by many countries is required to combat both Islamist ideology and jihadist militaries"*.

The retaliation by France on Sunday evening shows a new determination by Western allies to act against terror. The sad reality is that up to know the countless bodies from within Iraq and Syria was not enough motivation to step up efforts to combat the terror of IS

4. Refugees will ultimately pay the price for the attacks

With the continent facing its biggest migration crisis since World War II, EU states have bickered for months on how to stem the flow and share out the new arrivals. The discovery of a Syrian passport near one of the assailant's bodies will no doubt strengthen the fears of many anti-migrants movements, like PEGIDA in Germany, and use this as new propaganda to strengthen their cause.

Immediately after the attack Poland already announced that they will not partake in receiving any further refugees and more borders will likely close to refugees in the near future. Austria has also closed its borders during the past week. It seems like many of the refugees will once again be the victims of another terror attack

Followers of Christ cannot allow that their obedience to be dictated by fear or suspicion. Daniel Shayesteh refers to the "conscience of the heart" as one of the key components needed if we seek to educate ourselves concerning what is 'right' and 'wrong' in situations like these ([When Conscience is Suppressed](#))

Daniel notes that *"A lack of understanding or insight is the major obstacle to conscience's voice, but other hindrances include fear, false pleasure, anger and hatred. Not many are able to realize that awareness is the key to freedom. Without awareness of truth, people violate their consciences and deprive themselves, their families and societies of the fruits of the truth, real peace and comfort. We will experience relief from anything that aims to keep us captive if we educate ourselves concerning what is 'right' and 'wrong' and if we listen to the voices of our consciences."*

Conscience, which the Bible describes as God's law written in the hearts of all individuals (Romans: 2:14-15), is an amazing agent. It stands up for truth in our inner beings, but only if it is given a chance.

We need to discover every possible and ethical channel for proclaiming the solutions of Christ to our perplexed societies. It is not helpful to speak about problems without having clear solutions and without laying the foundation for people to hear and understand constructive remedies for their problems

The prayer of every follower of Christ in these troubled times should therefore be that our hearts are not hardened by hatred and that the conscience of hearts are not softened by suspicion.

5. The solution

Morningstar news quotes Somali atheist **Ayaan Hirsi Ali** in **Foreign Policy** who advocates that Christians should redouble efforts to convert Muslims in order to reduce Islamist excesses. Changing the ideology at the heart of Islam is critical. Hirsi Ali intones that war alone will not do away with Islamist violence.

"We will not win by stamping out the Islamic State or Al Qaeda or Boko Haram or Al-Shabaab; a new radical group will just pop up somewhere else," she said. "We will win only if we engage with the ideology of Islamist extremism, and counter the message of death, intolerance and the pursuit of the afterlife with our own far preferable message of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

This is an amazing confession by an Atheist and should confirm what every Christian believes:

1 Timothy 2:3-6 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time.



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