

'The Lions of Islam Have Avenged Our Prophet,' ISIS Fighter Declares

A fighter of the Islamic State militant group praised Wednesday's attack on a French satirical magazine that killed at least 12 people, telling *Reuters* the raid was revenge for insults against Islam.

Hooded gunmen stormed the Paris offices of *Charlie Hebdo* in the worst militant assault on French soil in recent decades. The dead included top editors at *Charlie Hebdo*, a publication renowned for lampooning Islam, as well as two police officers.

"The lions of Islam have avenged our Prophet," said Abu Mussab, a Syrian who fights with the Islamic State, which has captured broad swathes of Iraqi and Syrian territory.

"These are our lions. It's the first drops—more will follow," he said, speaking via an internet connection from Syria. He added that he and his fellow fighters were happy about the incident.

"Let these crusaders be scared because they should be."

No group has so far claimed responsibility for the attack.

Growing Network

Abu Mussab said he did not know the gunmen who carried out the attack, but added "they are on the path of the emir ... and our Sheikh Osama (bin Laden)."

His reference to the emir is to Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, whose group is a powerful anti-government paramilitary force in both Iraq and Syria and has a growing

network of followers elsewhere in the Middle East and Asia.

Al Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden was killed by U.S. special forces in Pakistan in 2011.

In 2013 the Yemen wing of al Qaeda published a notice called "Wanted Dead or Alive for Crimes Against Islam" featuring several outspoken critics of Islam, including Stephane Charbonnier, the editor of Charlie Hebdo, who was killed on Wednesday.

On the Twitter social media site, militant sympathizers expressed profound satisfaction.

One wrote: "Oh dog of the Romans in France, by God, by God, by God, we will not stop at targetting *Charlie Hebdo* magazine. What is coming is worse."

The Arabic phrases #parisburns and #revengeforthe prophet were among the hashtags used by many admirers of the shooting.

One supporter tweeted, "The word of Allahu Akbar (God is Greatest) shakes Paris". Another wrote: "Bravo lone wolves:".

"Nothing Sacred"

A Twitter account called al-Marsad, which says it tracks news in the Islamic world, praised the attack: "Your planes strike Muslim children with impunity ... And our lions roam your streets.

A more nuanced message came from prominent Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi. He wrote: "Charlie Hebdo is a satirical journal, nothing is sacred to it. It was abusive to Jesus Christ and the symbols of all religions and we as Muslims reject that—but to them this is freedom of expression."

Early reaction from governments in Muslim countries was unreservedly critical.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu strongly condemned the shooting and said to associate Islam with terrorism would be a mistake. He called for a fight against both extremism and Islamophobia.

“Our religion is a religion of peace ... We are against all forms of terrorism,” he told reporters in Ankara.

Condemnation also came from Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Islam, the Egyptian government and Egypt’s leading Islamic authority, Al-Azhar.

© 2015 Thomson Reuters. All rights reserved.