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Man Armed with Knife Kills at Least 3 in France

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A man armed with a knife killed at least three people Thursday at a **church** in Nice, France. Police wounded the attacker, who was captured and later placed in a hospital.

The man repeatedly shouted "Allahu Akbar" -- the Arabic words for God is Greatest -- even after he was injured, said the city's **mayor**.

This was the third attack in two months. French officials have blamed the attacks on Muslim extremists. The latest incident comes at a time of growing Muslim anger over **cartoons** of the Prophet Muhammad. They were republished recently in the French magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. The pictures are protected under free speech laws in France. Muslims, however, consider their publication insulting to God.

Within hours of the Nice attack, French police shot and killed a man who threatened people with a handgun near the southern city of Avignon. Radio station Europe 1 reported that that gunman was also shouting "Allahu Akbar."

And in Saudi Arabia, state television reported that police arrested a Saudi man in connection with a knife attack at the French diplomatic office in Jeddah. That man is accused of injuring a guard. The French Embassy said the guard was taken to a hospital, and that his life was not in danger.

French officials are treating the knife attack in Nice as an act of terrorism. Prime Minister Jean Castex raised France's security **alert** to its highest level. He said the government's actions to answer the attack would be firm.

President Emmanuel Macron said he would immediately increase the number of soldiers deployed to protect schools and religious centers from around 3,000 to 7,000. The attack came days before the Roman Catholic All Saints' religious holiday.

The mayor of Nice, Christian Estrosi, said the knife attack happened at the Notre Dame Basilica. He likened it to the execution earlier this month near Paris of middle school teacher Samuel Paty. Paty had used cartoons of the Prophet Mohammad in a civics class.

In Paris Thursday, National Assembly lawmakers observed a minute of silence in a show of support for the victims. The city's mayor, Anne Hidalgo, said the people of Nice" can count on the support of the city of Paris and of Parisians."

The French Council of the Muslim Faith strongly condemned the attack. "As a sign of mourning and solidarity with the victims and their loved ones, I call on all Muslims in France to cancel all the celebrations of the holiday of Mawlid."

The attack took place on the anniversary of the birth of the Prophet Mohammad.

In Egypt, Al-Azhar University, the 1,000-year-old seat of Sunni Muslim learning, condemned the incident as a "hateful terrorist attack."

Protesters have denounced France at demonstrations in several Muslim-majority countries.

France has the largest Muslim community in Europe. The country has been targeted in a series of Islamist militant attacks in recent years, including the 2015 bombings and shootings in Paris. One hundred thirty people were killed. In 2016, a militant drove a truck through a seafront crowd in Nice, killing 86 people.

I'm Caty Weaver.

George Grow wrote this story for VOA Learning English. His report was based on stories from VOA reporter Lisa Bryant, The Associated Press and Reuters news agency. Mario Ritter, Jr. was the editor.

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Words in This Story

church – *n.* a religious center

mayor – *n.* the elected head of a city or town

cartoon – *n.* a simple picture showing its subjects in a humorous way

alert – *n.* the state of being watching; warning

solidarity – *n.* unity or agreement

reference – *n.* the action of suggesting or noting something

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