

Paris attacks: police identify third Bataclan assailant

Foued Mohamed Aggad, 23, went to Syria at the end of 2013, police sources say

Kim Willsher in Paris

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A 23-year-old man from Strasbourg, eastern France, has been identified as the third attacker involved in the terrorist assault at the Bataclan music hall in Paris, police sources have said.

Foued Mohamed Aggad went to Syria with his brother and a group of friends at the end of 2013, according to a source close to the investigation. Most of the others were arrested in spring last year after returning to France but Aggad stayed on in Syria, the source said.

The news was further confirmation that the deadly Paris attacks were carried out largely, if not entirely, by Europeans trained by Isis in Syria.

Ninety people died in the Bataclan attacks on 13 November, the single highest death toll in attacks in the city that night that killed 130. The two other Bataclan attackers have been identified as Omar Ismaïl Mostefai, 29, and Samy Amimour, 28.

Aggad was identified at the end of last week after his DNA was matched with those of his family members, the police source said.

The French prime minister, Manuel Valls, confirmed on BFMTV that the man had finally been identified. “What is important is that the investigation is progressing, that the accomplices are found out, that arrests happen,” he said.

“This will all take time and in the face of the terrorist threat that is unfortunately here, we need to carry on with this work of tracking down terrorists because we are at war with radical Islam, with Daesh,” he said, using an Arabic acronym for Isis, which claimed responsibility for the attacks.

Aggad’s father. Saïd Mohamed Aggad, told Le Parisien: “He lied to us. He said he was going on holiday two years ago and he went to Syria. I thought he would die in Syria or Iraq, not come back here and do that,” Aggad added.

“The last time I heard from him was four or five months ago via Skype. As usual, he didn’t say where he was or what he was doing. He spoke a lot about jihad. What can I say? It was like talking to someone different, someone who had been brainwashed. There wasn’t

anything more to say to him.

“Each time there was a call, I was expecting to hear he had died in a bombing or something else. It would have been better that he died in Syria.”

Aggad’s identity came to light after his mother received a text message in English 10 days ago announcing her son’s death “as a martyr” on 13 November, a typical way Isis notifies families of casualties. Then she gave French police a DNA sample which showed that one of her sons was killed inside the Bataclan, his brother’s lawyer said.

“Without the mother, there would have been nothing,” the lawyer, Francoise Cotta, told BFM television. Cotta said Aggad had told his family months ago that he was going to be a suicide bomber in Iraq and had no intention of returning to France.

Two members of the group that went to Syria with Aggad were killed. All the others, except Aggad, returned to France in February 2014 after a few weeks in Syria. They were arrested three months later, a judicial source and other sources close to the situation told Reuters. His older brother, Karim, who also visited Syria, is in jail in France, the judicial source said.

The Frenchman believed to have recruited them, Mourad Fares, is also under arrest. All are charged with terror-related offences and face trial.

The latest information means that all of the assailants identified so far were French or Belgian, all native French speakers, and the attacks increasingly appear to have been part of a homegrown terror plot.

All three Bataclan attackers were killed, two by detonating suicide vests and one who was shot by police.

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