

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières > English > Europe, Great Britain > France > Human Rights  
Freedoms (France) > Terrorism (Human Rights, France) > **November 13: The Paris attackers hit the city's young, progressive core**

# November 13: The Paris attackers hit the city's young, progressive core

Tuesday 17 November 2015, by [SAADIA Manu](#) (Date first published: 14 November 2015).

Tonight, the golden triangle of Parisian youth culture is covered in blood.

We do not yet know the full extent of the terrorist attacks in Paris that started Friday night, or even how many attacks there were. But we do know that the coordination and the scale of the attacks is unprecedented, at least for Paris. The latest victim count is north of 120 dead, according to Paris's prosecutor, and dozens more wounded.

The attacks were concentrated in the center of Paris, on the Right Bank. These are places and streets that burst with life on a Friday evening. It is where young and hip Parisians gather to drink and socialize. Le Carillon, La Belle Equipe, Le Petit Cambodge: these are ordinary neighborhood joints where you meet your buddies for a quick "demi" of watery French beer or a snack before going out somewhere else.

I know these places well. This is where I meet up with my old friends whenever I go to Paris. In the early 90s, I saw Prince playing an aftershow at the Bataclan—now a venue which will forever be associated with tragedy and death. This is not the side of Paris seen by tourists or business travelers; rather, it's an area where actual Parisians and people from the banlieues hang out and mix together. They might have gentrified, yet these neighborhoods have retained their proletarian and ethnically-mixed flavor. That whiff of authenticity is part of the neighborhood's attraction for Parisian Bobos, as they call themselves. The banlieues are the cities and housing projects surrounding Paris, where most of the French youth of immigrant descent live (contrary to popular imagination, the banlieues are far from desolate ghettos, "no-go zones" or breeding grounds for jihadists: they are difficult yet vibrant and dynamic places).

This is the land of hipster socialists. These neighborhoods recently elected a female socialist mayor, as well as a slew of Green Party candidates, even as the rest of the country voted for the more conservative and anti-immigration parties on the Right.

The attackers, whomever they may be and whatever their motives, went after the heart of progressive Paris. They did not attack the more touristy Champs-Élysées or Notre Dame, or the more bourgeois and conservative left bank, where most of the government ministries are located.

That message is reinforced by the site of the other attack, the Stade de France. That particular stadium is one of the few places where the promise of a more integrated France is realized, if only intermittently. The French soccer team, known as "Les Bleus," is the paragon of the '*black-blanc-beur*' ideal (black, white, arab). The national team is republican meritocracy in action, and it works. The Stade de France is where a French team led by the Algerian-Frenchman Zinedine Zidane won the greatest trophy in sports, the FIFA World Cup, in 1998.

Tonight's attacks show the same uncanny sense of symbolism as the January massacres. They targeted neighborhoods where people are more inclined to be tolerant, liberal and progressive. And

they targeted the greatest monument to France's multi-ethnic, pluralistic success: the hallowed ground of the Stade de France.

These attacks will almost certainly strengthen the hand of hard-line conservatives, from anti-Islam popular intellectuals like Eric Zemmour and Michel Houellebecq to right wing extremists like Marine Le Pen. There are important regional elections coming up next month, and these attacks could seal the National Front's victory in several regional governments.

Anne Hidalgo, the mayor of Paris and the granddaughter of Spanish Republican immigrants, called for unity in a tweet.

I doubt that she will be heard.

**Manu Saadia**

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**P.S.**

\* "The Paris attackers hit the city's young, progressive core". Fusion. November 14, 2015 3:11 a.m:  
<http://fusion.net/story/233036/paris-attack-young-progressive-core/>