Targeted French Theater Long On Jewish Ties

Jews or Jewish sites may not have been primary targets of the Islamic State-inspired assault on Paris that left France reeling from its deadliest siege since World War II, but they had to be on the terrorists’ radar.

The Nov. 13 multiple attacks left at least 130 dead and more than 350 injured. Investigators believe at least nine young men, thought to be largely French and Belgian nationals who became radicalized in Europe, were responsible.

It’s more than coincidence that one Paris target, Le Bataclan concert hall, had been owned by Jews, brothers Pascal and Joel Laloux, until September, when they made aliya. The hall had been Jewish owned for 40 years; anti-Zionist radicals long had marked it for protest and attack. Pro-Palestinian online networks considered it a cul-de-sac for Zionist support.

The 150-year-old theater took its name from an opéretta written and composed by two 19th-century Jews, according to Jewiverse, a 70 Faces Media property.

At least 89 people were killed in the attack on Le Bataclan during a performance by the American rock band Eagles of Death Metal, which was in the midst of a European tour. Terrorists randomly shot victims while shouting Allahu akbar! — Allah is great!

JEWISH TEXTURE

The hall, popular in the gay community, no doubt was targeted because the terrorists knew it would be full on a Friday night with more than 1,000 patrons — allowing mass confusion and casualties. While the top French Jewish organization, the CRIF, announced it didn’t believe anti-Semitism was necessarily a factor in any of the night’s coordinated attacks, Le Bataclan’s Jewish ties must have heightened its significance.

Over the years, the theater has hosted many pro-Zionist events, including an October conclave drawing 500 Christian Zionists in support of Israel.

From 2005 to 2009, Le Bataclan hosted the annual fundraiser for Migdal, a French Jewish nonprofit benefiting the Israeli border police. In 2008, according to the New York Times, 40 pro-Palestinian protesters wearing Arab kaffiyehs demonstrated outside the theater. A video captured one of the masked protesters saying, “You’ll pay the consequences of your acts,” adding, “In the neighborhoods, things are moving and heating up. The next time, we won’t come to talk.”

In 2010, Al Qaida’s branch in the Gaza Strip, Jisr Islami (“the army of Islam”), plotted to organize a Le Bataclan attack because “the owners are Jewish,” according to a statement to French police by a woman arrested in Cairo in connection with an assault on French students there. That assault was believed retaliatory for France’s role in Israel’s naval blockade of the Gaza Strip, the French daily Le Figaro reported.

California-based band Eagles of Death Metal was about to perform at Le Bataclan with its own Israel connection. On July 12, it performed in Tel Aviv, breaking from a music industry boycott of Israel precipitated by Roger Waters, former leader of Pink Floyd.

“I would never boycott a place like this,” Eagles of Death Metal lead singer Jesse Hughes told the Tel Aviv crowd, according to the Jerusalem Post.

Abaaoud told Boulahcen two days later “they would do worse in districts close to the Jews and would disrupt transport and schools.” Abaaoud also boasted of entering Europe amid Syrian refugees and spending two months in France undetected.

It’s not hard to trace Le Bataclan’s Jewish ties. Whether Islamic State specifically targeted the stately theater because of those ties remains speculation, even among French Jews. Some believe the hall was attacked as payback for hosting pro-Israel events. Others insist it was attacked because it’s a popular public venue, not because jihadists had it in their sight lines.

Anti-Defamation League CEO Jonathan Greenblatt threw the Le Bataclan massacre in sharp relief, urging French authorities to investigate “the possibility that virulent anti-Semitism was a motive in the attack.”

Sadly, the possibility seems all too real. *