



Resolution 2031 (2015)¹

Final version

Terrorist attacks in Paris: together for a democratic response

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly is outraged by the barbarous terrorist attacks in Paris on 7, 8 and 9 January 2015, which led to the deaths of 17 people. Among them were journalists, cartoonists and staff killed in cold blood at the offices of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, policemen and people of the Jewish faith. The Assembly conveys its sympathy to the families of the victims and expresses its solidarity with the French people and authorities.
2. More than an assault on freedom of expression or another act of anti-Semitic violence – which they also were – these were attacks against the very values of democracy and freedom in general, against the type of society that our pan-European Organisation has aimed at building since the end of the Second World War.
3. These were terrorist attacks based on hatred, which no arguments can justify and any attempt to find excuses for the actions of the murderers must be firmly rejected. There must be no “but”. As the Assembly put it in its [Resolution 1258 \(2001\)](#) on democracies facing terrorism, “[t]here can be no justification for terrorism”.
4. In addition, the Assembly wishes to emphasise that these terrorist attacks were obviously not the result of an alleged plot to stigmatise Islam or Muslims but a co-ordinated act designed to silence, through crime, journalists and a newspaper that symbolise freedom of expression, and to kill people for the sole reason that they are Jewish or members of the police force because they embody the defence of institutions and the rule of law.
5. The Assembly recalls that, in line with well-established case law of the European Court of Human Rights, the use of satire, including irreverent satire, and information or ideas that “offend, shock or disturb”, including criticism of religion, are protected as part of freedom of expression under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5, “the Convention”). Such are the demands of that pluralism, tolerance and broad-mindedness, without which there is no democratic society.
6. Freedom comes with responsibility and it is for the democratic institutions, especially the courts, to strike a fair balance between freedom of expression and its authorised limitations, such as hate speech or incitement to violence – which should be laid down in the legislation of all European States – under the ultimate control of the European Court of Human Rights. In this context, the Assembly recalls its [Resolution 1510 \(2006\)](#) on freedom of expression and respect for religious beliefs, which stated that “freedom of expression as protected under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights should not be further restricted to meet increasing sensitivities of certain religious groups”.
7. The Assembly notes that the fact that the terrorists claimed to be acting “in the name of Islam”, thus insulting the very religion they claimed to defend, has prompted many Muslim religious leaders, representatives of Islamic associations and also a very large number of Muslim citizens to condemn the attacks and warn against the risk of stigmatisation. The Assembly strongly condemns all malicious acts, the number of which is currently on the rise, against citizens of the Muslim faith and their places of worship.

1. *Assembly debate* on 28 January 2015 (5th Sitting) (see [Doc. 13684](#), report of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, rapporteur: Mr Jacques Legendre). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 28 January 2015 (5th Sitting).
See also [Recommendation 2061 \(2015\)](#).



8. At the same time, the fact that the three jihadists were French, born and brought up in a disadvantaged neighbourhood, as well as the fact that many people claiming to be Muslims, especially among the young, took the side of the terrorists on social media networks, has prompted a twofold debate: on the one hand, on the urgent need for a common, international but also specifically European response to the jihadist threat; on the other, on the need to combat social exclusion, discrimination, violence and segregation, as the breeding ground for terrorism and religious fanaticism.

9. Recalling the recent outrages directed against Jews in Toulouse and Brussels, the Assembly reiterates its condemnation of any acts of anti-Semitism. It wholly rejects any suggestion that the Arab-Israeli conflict, or other events in the Middle East or elsewhere, could possibly justify such acts within our European democratic societies.

10. The whole of Europe joined in condemning the attacks and in mourning the innocent victims of 7, 8 and 9 January 2015, and the whole of Europe marched alongside France on Sunday, 11 January 2015 to express its rejection of terrorism and its stand for the values of democracy and freedom. The whole of Europe must now find, together, a democratic response to the rise of terrorism and radical Islamism. The values on which Europe is founded are not outmoded. Democracy, freedom and human rights are worth fighting for.

11. Europe must continue to show that it is not afraid and must keep using humour and satire. Not to do so in the name of political correctness would mean that terrorists had won. Secularism, that is, the principle of the separation of State and religion, must also be protected.

12. Freedom of expression, in particular that of journalists, writers and other artists, must be protected and governments of member States should not interfere with the exercise of that freedom, be it in printed or electronic media, including social media. In this respect, the Assembly condemns declarations against media freedom made by certain authorities in the aftermath of the attacks on *Charlie Hebdo*.

13. The Assembly firmly believes that democracies have the right, and the obligation, to defend themselves when attacked. It thus finds that the fight against terrorism and jihadism must be reinforced while ensuring respect for human rights, the rule of law and the common values upheld by the Council of Europe.

14. In this respect, the Assembly recalls its [Resolution 1840 \(2011\)](#) on human rights and the fight against terrorism, in which it stated that the concept of “war on terror” was misleading and unhelpful and was a threat to the entire framework of international human rights. Terrorists are criminals not soldiers, and terrorist crimes are not akin to acts of war. It calls in particular on member States to:

14.1. ensure that a fair balance be struck between defending freedom and security while avoiding the violation of those very rights;

14.2. refrain from indiscriminate mass surveillance which has proven to be ineffective for the prevention of terrorism and therefore is not only dangerous for the respect of human rights but also a waste of resources;

14.3. grant appropriate means to law-enforcement bodies and security and intelligence services and provide training to their members to cope with the rising threat of terrorism, including the jihadist threat;

14.4. ensure that intelligence services from different European countries increase their collaboration. Co-operation with other democracies as well as with countries in the Middle East and the Arab world is also important;

14.5. share national records of persons convicted of terrorist offences as well as information on airline passengers posing security threats, subject to appropriate data protection guarantees;

14.6. pay serious attention to the ways in which money and weapons end up in the hands of potential terrorists, in order to dismantle such networks and punish the culprits.

15. With a view to strengthening the legal action against terrorism, the Assembly also:

15.1. calls on Council of Europe member States, and neighbouring countries, which have not yet done so, to sign and ratify, as a matter of priority, the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism (CETS No. 196);

15.2. welcomes and fully supports the preparation of an additional protocol on “foreign terrorist fighters” to the Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism, an issue which the Assembly itself follows closely;

15.3. supports the demands by several member States of the European Union asking the European Parliament to reconsider its position on the Passenger Name Record (PNR) system, which it has been blocking for almost two years, subject to appropriate data protection guarantees.

16. The Assembly invites newspapers and television channels to consider a code of conduct regarding coverage of terrorist events, striking a balance between the need for freedom of information and the needs of police action.

17. The Assembly underlines that security responses must be accompanied by preventive measures aimed at eradicating the root causes of radicalisation and the rise of religious fanaticism, especially among young people. In this respect, the Assembly asks member States in particular to:

17.1. study carefully the situation in prisons and the ways in which prisoners are indoctrinated into terrorism, and in particular jihadism, and take measures to counter this phenomenon;

17.2. closely monitor the Internet and social media with a view, in particular, to fighting hate speech, radicalisation and cyber-jihadism;

17.3. grant appropriate means and resources to schools and teachers to promote education for democratic citizenship and human rights, with special emphasis given to education in marginalised and disadvantaged contexts;

17.4. promote intercultural dialogue and the “living together” model, including in schools;

17.5. take measures to combat marginalisation, social exclusion, discrimination and segregation, especially among young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods;

17.6. support families in their role of educating their children to respect the values of democracy and tolerance;

17.7. protect journalists, writers and other artists from extremist threats and refrain from any interference with the exercise of their freedom of expression, in full compliance with the law, be it in printed or electronic media, including social media;

17.8. support action by the Council of Europe in the above-mentioned areas and allocate appropriate means and resources, in line with the proposals made by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

18. For its part, the Assembly resolves to continue to follow closely and try to tackle, through the work of its committees and the newly launched No Hate Parliamentary Alliance, the main challenges arising from the recent terrorist attacks in Paris, namely: the need to live together; the upsurge of the jihadist threat and the issue of jihadists arriving from Europe to fight in Iraq and Syria; the protection of human rights in the fight against terrorism; the need to combat the root causes of radicalisation and religious fanaticism, such as social exclusion, discrimination or even segregation; the process of radicalisation in prisons; the continuing fight against hate speech, racism and intolerance, including anti-Semitism and Islamophobia; and the role of education for democratic citizenship, human rights and intercultural dialogue.