

Paris attack marks new global war: Iraq's foreign minister

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Paris: The wave of suicide bombers and gunmen who terrorized Paris marked a new stage in the war against extremism that will leave no country in the world untouched, Iraq's foreign minister said Sunday.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari said Iraq has long known that Islamic State extremists posed a fundamental danger and the Nov. 13 attacks on innocent people enjoying a night out were a demonstration to the West of the Islamic State group's determination to sow fear by killing as many people as possible. A total of 130 people died and hundreds were injured in the attacks on the Bataclan concert venue, bars and restaurants, and the national stadiums.

"The world took too long to react against Daesh and al-Qaida. In 2004, 11 years ago, I said terrorism had no religion, had no country, had no particular beliefs. And in 2012, I said that we were in a third world war. Now, you will see that no country can live in peace, quietly," al-Jaafari said, using the Arabic acronym for the group, which he said has nothing to do with Islam.

Al-Jaafari spoke on the sidelines of international climate negotiations, which is bringing together more than 140 world leaders. He said the decision to attend the global conference was a sign of solidarity and trust in France's ability to protect people at the highest level.

Now, he said, countries must take initiative against the group.

He confirmed that Iraq had warned France and other nations the evening of Nov. 12 of an impending attack, even if few details were available, and said Iraq's intelligence services are redoubling their efforts.

"In Iraq, we are not only defending ourselves. We are defending your countries. We are defending everyone. Because those who are currently in Iraq can go home, can go back into their countries to commit terrorist acts," he said.

All the attackers who have been firmly identified were French or Belgium, and many had joined Islamic State extremists in Syria or Iraq. This comes as little surprise to al-Jaafari, who said the group has become an international breeding ground for extremism.

"It's the expression of a culture, these actions. This culture is not linked to a territory. The terrorists who belong to Daesh come from 100 countries. They are from the world's greatest democracies," he said. "What unites them is this hatred they share. They are ready to die. They are ready to kill themselves to take out the largest number of victims. They detest the entire world and, it must be said, most of the victims are Muslim."

Al-Jaafari arrived in Paris after the winter sundown, and said he reveled in seeing the city lit at night.

"We cannot cover our heads when faced with this terror and let our communities, our cities, be terrorized, to be afraid. That is their goal, their objective. Yesterday, when I arrived at the airport to go to the hotel, I saw Paris with all its lights, joyful. And it was a pleasure to see Paris like that."

- AP