

France reels as terrorist mows down 84 in Nice on Bastille Day

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Nice (France): A large truck plowed through revelers gathered for Bastille Day fireworks in Nice, killing at least 84 people and sending others fleeing into the sea as it bore down for more than a mile along the Riviera city's famed waterfront promenade.

The driver shot into the crowd and then drove for 2 km along the pavement of the Boulevard des Anglais, the main street in Nice, mowing down people who had gathered to watch fireworks.

Police shot and killed the driver, Interior Ministry said, adding that police found firearms, explosives and grenades in the truck. The driver is suspected to be 31-year-old man of Tunisian origin. The identity papers of a French-Tunisian was found in Nice truck.

According to reports, gunmen exchanged shots with police before ploughing into the crowd of revellers. Footage captured by terrified bystanders fleeing from the scene has captured the sound of several gunshots being fired. Over 150 people were also injured in the mayhem.

Condemning the attack, French President Francois Hollande today said it was of a 'terrorist character' as he announced that the State of Emergency will be extended in the country for three months beyond July 26.

"An attack on the terrorist nature can not be denied. We must do everything so that we can fight against the scourge of terrorism. This is France, which is under the threat of Islamist terrorism," he said.

The President had earlier on Thursday indicated that the State of Emergency declared immediately after the terrorist attacks in Paris on November 13 last year, would be lifted on July 26.

A spokesperson for the Elysee Palace, the official residence of the President, said Hollande and Prime Minister Manuel Valls went to the crisis cell in the Ministry of Interior where Valls was to receive further information from Nice.

The President earlier cancelled his trip to Avignon in the south of the country to return hastily to Paris.

Obama condemns Nice attack, offers help

Meanwhile, US president Barack Obama said in a statement that "we have offered any assistance that they may need to investigate this attack and bring those responsible to justice".

"We stand in solidarity and partnership with France, our oldest ally, as they respond to and recover from this attack," Obama added.

The US President also showed his admiration for "the extraordinary resilience and democratic values that have made France an inspiration to the entire world" and he is convinced that this character will "endure long after this devastating and tragic loss of life."

President Mukherjee, PM Modi condemn France attack

President Pranab Mukherjee and Prime Minister Narendra Modi today strongly condemned the deadly truck attack in France terming it as a "mindless act of violence".

The President said that India shares the pain and stands firmly with France in this hour of "immense sadness".

"I am shocked to hear about the terrorist attack on an innocent crowd of people gathered to celebrate the Bastille Day in Nice, France. I strongly condemn the perpetrators of the terrorist attack in France," Mukherjee said.

"India stands shoulder to shoulder with the people and Government of France as it responds to this attack. We will strengthen our cooperation with France and other countries in the fight against terrorism. Heartfelt condolences to families of bereaved; prayers for speedy recovery of injured in attack," Mukherjee added.

The Prime Minister said: "Appalled by the horrific attack in Nice. I strongly condemn such mindless acts of violence. My thoughts are with the families of deceased. I hope the injured recover soon. India shares the pain & stands firmly with our French sisters & brothers in this hour of immense sadness."

Congress president Sonia Gandhi also condemned the "terror" attack in Nice in France and called for strict action and harsh punishment against those behind it.

Expressing grief she said, "This deadly attack reflects deep resentment to peace and democratic values."

She also expressed deepest condolences to the families of those killed and called for a "strict action and harsh punishment against those who are behind the attack".

"The Congress party stands firmly with the people of France in these difficult times," the Congress chief said.

No reports of Indians affected: MEA

Ministry of External Affairs informed that there were no reports of any Indian being affected in the terror attack in Nice city of France.

"We condemn the attack. We are monitoring the situation. There are no reports of Indian affected so far," MEA spokesperson Vikas Swarup said, adding that the Indian Embassy in Paris opened a helpline number: +33-1-40507070.

The Mediterranean city of Nice, with its pebble beaches and clear blue water, has been a magnet for sun-seekers and the jetset since the 19th century.

The bloodshed comes eight months after Islamic State jihadist attacks on Paris nightspots left 130 people dead, dealing a hard blow to tourism in one of the world's top destinations.

Islamic State has repeatedly singled out France as a prime target, and the country has been under a state of emergency ever since the November 13 Paris attacks.

UN condemns 'barbaric and cowardly' Nice attack

The UN Security Council today strongly condemned the "barbaric and cowardly terrorist attack" that took place during Bastille Day celebrations in the French city of Nice.

The council unanimously adopted a French-drafted statement that "condemned in the strongest terms" the attack and expressed condolences to the families of the victims.

The council reaffirmed that terrorism constitutes one of the most serious threats to world peace and security.

"Any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable," said the statement from the 15 council members.

The attack was the third major strike against France in less than 18 months.

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