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Beheadings in France



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History is a merciless teacher.

In October 2020, beheadings in France outraged the people and President Emmanuel Macron, who explained that “Islam in crisis” attacks France’s “core values.” First, a Chechen-born teenager, who entered France as a refugee, beheaded a history teacher sharing the Charlie Hebdo cartoons of the Prophet of Islam with his students. Soon after that, a Tunisia-born tourist “virtually beheaded” a woman and a man inside a church in Nice.

Both perpetrators used sharp blades.

Like all others, Muslims committing murders in any country, including France, must be punished under the territory's laws where they commit crimes.

For nearly 200 years (1789-1981), the law of capital punishment in France was beheading through a world-famous instrument, called the guillotine. Before the 1789 French revolution of enlightenment, expressed through the slogans of liberty, equality, and fraternity, France carried out capital punishment through the torture wheel, tearing up the defendant's bones and flesh until he or she died.

Amid the enlightenment, Dr. Joseph-Ignace Guillotin, a physician and a member of the Parliament, came hard on the historical execution methods. They are barbaric, he claimed. In 1789, he proposed to humanize capital punishment in harmony with the French revolution's core values. Incorporating compassion into the killing, France invented the machine and named it the guillotine.

The guillotine was a tall frame equipped with a sharp, angled blade mounted at the top. At the bottom of the frame, a shackle trapped the defendant's neck and precisely positioned it right below the blade's edge. When released, the hard and incisive blade fell ferociously on the neck, severing the head from the rest of the body. The machine's mercy lay in its efficiency as compared to the torture wheel.

In 1793, King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette were guillotined among thousands of others, upholding the revolutionary principle of equality. For the most part, the guillotine executions were crowd-pleasers. In Paris, women sat by the scaffolds, chatted, waited, and knitted while the heads chopped away from the bodies.

For decades, the guillotine fascinated French intellectuals. Poems, plays, and short stories celebrated the awe and beauty of the machine. Guy Maupassant (1850-1893), an iconic French storyteller, wrote: "March 20th. It is done. He was guillotined this morning. He made a good end, very good. It gave me infinite pleasure. How sweet it is to see a man's head cut off! The blood spurted out like a wave, like a wave. Oh, if I could, I would have liked to have bathed in it! What intoxicating ecstasy to crouch below it, to receive it in my hair and on my face, and rise up all crimson, all crimson! Ah, if people knew!" Hopefully, Maupassant was writing a satire.

The guillotine turned into a noble French invention. In the revolutionary spirit of fraternity, France exported the guillotine to brotherly and non-brotherly nations, such as Spain, Germany, Sweden, and Italy. In the 20th century, the Nazis adored the machine, despite reservations about France. Throughout colonization, the French practiced no discrimination in delivering the guillotine to Algeria, Tunisia, and other Middle Eastern colonies.

Fernand Meysonnier (1931-2008), a Frenchman, operated the guillotine in Algeria for fifteen years until Algerian independence in 1962. He was proud of the machine and the justice it furnished to the Algerian legal system. "But of course! Yes, yes. Five, seven liters empties out. It's not the electric chair, eh jets of blood spray out three meters," said Meysonnier in an

[interview](#) with Sarah Richards of Walrus. Unlike Maupassant, Meysonnier believed in the guillotine.

In 1977, Hamida Djandoubi, a Tunisian immigrant, who had lost his leg in a work-related accident in Marseilles, became the guillotine's last casualty for choking a woman with a scarf around her neck. Neck for neck said some.

In October 1981, the French National Assembly abolished the death penalty; and in 2007, the French constitution was amended to prohibit capital punishment. This constitutional ban abandoned a core enlightenment value exemplified in the mercy machine.

Under French laws, Muslim terrorists beheading the people in France will face no guillotine or capital punishment by any other method, nor can they be deported to a country that enforces the death penalty.

However, it appears that the French police have borrowed the concept of police encounters, prevailing in some countries, under which the police officers shoot and kill a defendant on the spot. Though unlawful, this prompt justice makes it efficient for the system to process terrorists without going through due process and appeals. The Chechen teenager met his end in the police encounter the day he beheaded the history teacher.

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