

A murder that France dares not name

by Nidra Poller



Sarah Halimi (Courtesy of the Confédération des Juifs de France et des amis d'Israël)

Dismay, frustration, exasperation. Three months after Sarah Halimi was savagely murdered by Kobili Traoré, the suspect is still out of reach in a psychiatric hospital, leaving the criminal investigation at a standstill. An update and action plan were presented at a July 4th press conference organized by the Comité de soutien / Vérité et Justice pour Sarah

Halimi, under the auspices of the CJFAI (Confédération des Juifs de France et des Amis d'Israël) at a restaurant in the heart of the Invalides station. Mr. Gilles William Goldnadel, counsel for the victim's brother William Attal, Samy Ghozlan former police commissioner and president of the BNVCA (Bureau National de vigilance contre l'antisémitisme), and MP Meyer Habib presented the facts as known to date.

Despite the horrors of the case, the presentation, moderated by Richard Abitbol and André Added, was respectful, dignified, and determined. No whining, no wild accusations. The support committee counts 7,000 members, including distinguished thinkers Georges Bensoussan, Pascal Bruckner, Luc Ferry, Alain Finkielkraut, Eric Marty and more.

I was in Israel on the 22nd of May when lawyers representing Sarah Halimi's adult children – attorneys Jean-Alexandre Buchinger and David-Olivier Kaminski – presented their position at a press conference. Without stoking controversy, let it be understood that they favor a prudent “loyalist” approach, whereas Maître Goldnadel, a mince-no-words editorialist and former president of the France-Israel Association, is more forthrightly combative. At issue: the failure of law enforcement to intervene while Traoré was beating and torturing Sarah Halimi. The autopsy concludes that the victim was still alive when she was pushed off her 3rd floor balcony. At least six policemen were in the building, waiting for reinforcements before attempting to apprehend the assailant. Too late.

A brief review of the facts as corroborated by the police report

Twenty-seven-year-old Kobili Traoré, of Malian origin, a repeat offender with at least twenty convictions for theft, violence, and drugs, has no psychiatric history. As far as can be known at this stage of the investigation, no defense of mental instability has ever been presented in the various

criminal proceedings and/or prison sentences. On the 3rd of April, after allegedly spending the afternoon smoking marijuana with friends, he came home in an agitated state and made so much trouble that his mother threw him out in the middle of the night. Apparently she did not seek medical help or police protection. No interviews with or statement by the family have been made public to date. Traoré sought refuge with Malian neighbors, the Diara family, that took him in unsuspectingly. But he was so aggressive that they barricaded themselves in a room and called the police. Three agents arrived within minutes and stood outside the door of the Diara apartment. Traoré was pacing around, loudly reciting koranic verses. Three more policemen arrived but did not enter the apartment because, according to the police report, they suspected they were dealing with a terrorist (the koranic verses).

While they waited for reinforcements, Traoré climbed from the Diara balcony to the next balcony, smashed the window, and fell upon his orthodox Jewish neighbor Sarah Halimi, a 65 year-old retired M.D. Shouting allahu akhbar, shietan (devil), he battered and tortured her, interjecting koranic verses with unspeakable barbaric acts. A neighbor across the courtyard called the police and recorded several minutes of the incident. But the police were already there and still did not intervene.

No matter how many times this fact is stated, repeated, corroborated, I cannot report it without a feeling of utter dismay. By the time the elite forces arrived, 50 minutes after the first response to the Diara's call, Sarah Halimi lay dead in the courtyard and Kobili Traoré was back in the Diara apartment, calmly reciting koranic verses and boasting "I killed the neighborhood shietan." He was arrested and placed in psychiatric confinement. To date, the court-appointed psychiatrist has not turned over his report to police or judicial authorities, and Traoré has not been questioned by

police investigators. The anti-Semitic motive has not been included as an aggravating circumstance of the charges he faces.

Two elements of incomprehension

Goldnadel, expressing his extreme reluctance to take action against the police, themselves targets of the Islamic violence that massacred Sarah Halimi, nevertheless respected his client's instructions to file a complaint for dereliction of duty. Why didn't the police come to the rescue of a woman whose screams resounded in the courtyard, whose interminable agony stretched out for an eternity, who could have been saved in a matter of minutes? An internal police report concluded that law enforcement had followed accepted procedures and there is no need for further investigation.

MP Meyer Habib, who represents French citizens in Israel, Greece, Cyprus, and Italy, pointed out that it takes little more than a minute and a half to terminate a terrorist attack in Israel; the Bataclan massacre that left 90 dead lasted three hours before the appropriate forces received the appropriate orders and neutralized the killers. Why did the police stand down during the interminable ordeal of Sarah Halimi? Were they obeying orders? From what level of the hierarchy? Why would they wait for orders when in fact failure to rescue is a criminal offense? One question leads to another and we cannot even be sure that the investigation will provide clear answers. Why does the judge stand down instead of qualifying the crime as anti-Semitic? Why did the media remain silent when this atrocious crime was committed between the first and second round of the presidential elections? As if safety from jihad massacre were not a legitimate campaign issue!

If the respective counsels differ on strategy and tactics, they are united in the determination to establish the anti-Semitic nature of the murder and to bring the killer from his

refuge in a mental asylum to face his responsibilities in criminal court and, finally, to bring to light the obvious failure of the police to intervene on the spot and protect the victim's life. Will their strategy change with the addition, announced Tuesday – of attorney Francis Szpiner to the legal team? Szpiner represented Ilan Halimi's family in the case against the Gang of Barbarians. He also acted as counsel to France 2 in its lawsuit against Philippe Karsenty (the al Dura affair).

Is there a media blackout on the Sarah Halimi case?

Yes there is. In the immediate aftermath, the brutal assassination of a Jewish woman by her Muslim neighbor in Paris was [turned himself in to police](#) last week after brutally murdering an elderly couple and setting fire to their home. He slit the throat of the 85 year-old woman, stabbed and battered her 87-year-old husband to death. He knew the couple because he regularly delivered groceries they bought at his wife's store. Though the murderer is a Daesh sympathizer, the police are not classifying the crime as terrorist because there is no evidence that he was acting on orders from Daesh.

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