

Female ISIS cell are jailed for up to 30 years for failed plot to carry out a car bomb massacre outside Notre Dame cathedral

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PARIS – A French court on Monday handed down sentences of at least 25 years in jail to two women with ties to Islamist militants. The women had made a failed attempt to set off a crude car bomb outside of Paris's Notre-Dame cathedral three years ago, the *Le Figaro* newspaper reported.

Fingerprints left behind at the scene led to two people: Ines Madani and Ornella Gilligmann. According to prosecutors, they had parked the car after sending a video claiming responsibility for the planned attack to Rachid Kassim, a French member of the Islamic State group.

One of the women (Ines Madani) enticed her fellow defendant to join the plot by posing online as a male Islamist militant who had returned from Syria and was seeking a bride, French media reported.

The five, aged between 22 and 42, were arrested after a car packed with gas cylinders was found parked near the bustling esplanade in front of the cathedral in the heart of the capital on November 4, 2016.

The two main defendants, Ines Madani and Ornella Gilligmann, had doused the car with diesel in the middle of the night and tried but failed to set it alight with a cigarette. They were sentenced to 30 years and 25 years in prison respectively.



Left to right: Ines Madani, Ornella Gilligmann and Sarah Hervouet

The women are believed to have been acting on the orders of Rachid Kassim, a French Islamic State propagandist, also suspected of ordering the grisly murder of a French police couple at their home in June 2016.

Kassim was the public face of ISIS' claim on the July 2016 Nice truck attack that left 86 people dead, appearing in a video in which he threatened France and beheaded a captive in Iraq. His digital fingerprints were also smeared across the harrowing throat slitting of an elderly priest in the Normandy town of Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray, also in July 2016.

Madani, 22, was arrested a few days after the failed attack in a Paris suburb along with two other defendants, Sarah Hervouet and Amel Sakaou, who were each sentenced to 20 years. The three burst out of the apartment to which they had been tracked down by police, brandishing knives. Hervouet stabbed an officer in the shoulder, while Madani was shot in the leg.

Gilligmann was arrested in southern France. A fifth woman, Samia Chalel, was also tried for allegedly helping hide Madani. She was sentenced to five years in prison.