

Terror trial opens in Paris over beheading of Samuel Paty, teacher who showed prophet cartoons

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Eight people went on trial in Paris on terrorism charges Monday over the beheading of teacher Samuel Paty, who was killed by an Islamic extremist after showing caricatures of Islam's prophet to his middle school students for a lesson on freedom of expression.



Islamist activist Abdelhakim Sefrioui, here in 2012 in Paris. | AFP

Paty's shocking death left an imprint on France, and several schools are now named after

him. Paty was killed outside his school near Paris on Oct. 16, 2020, by an 18-year-old Russian of Chechen origin, who was shot to death by police.

Those on trial include friends of assailant Abdoullakh Anzorov who allegedly helped purchase weapons for the attack, as well as people who are accused of spreading false information

online about the teacher and his class.

Much attention at the trial will focus on Brahim Chnina, the Muslim father of a 13-year-old girl who claimed that she had been excluded from Paty's class when he showed the caricatures on Oct. 5, 2020.

Chnina sent a series of messages to his contacts denouncing Paty, saying that "this sick man" needed to be fired, along with the address of the school in the Paris suburb of Conflans Saint-Honorine.

In reality, Chnina's daughter had lied to him and had never attended the lesson in question.

Paty was giving a Moral and Civic Education lesson mandated by the National Education Ministry on freedom of expression. He discussed the caricatures in this context, saying students who did not wish to see them could temporarily leave the classroom.

An online campaign against Paty snowballed, and 11 days after the lesson, Anzorov attacked the teacher with a knife as he walked home, and displayed the teacher's head on social media. Police later shot Anzorov as he advanced towards them armed.

Chnina will be tried for alleged association with a terrorist enterprise for targeting the 47-year-old teacher through false information.

His daughter was tried last year in a juvenile court and given an 18-month suspended sentence. Four other students at Paty's school were found guilty of involvement and given suspended sentences; a fifth, who pointed out Paty to Anzorov in exchange for money, was given a 6-month term with an electronic bracelet.

Abdelhakim Sefrioui is another key figure in the trial opening Monday for the adult suspects. He presented himself as a

spokesperson for Imams of France, although he had been dismissed from that role. . .

Sefrioui founded the pro-Hamas Cheikh Yassine Collective in 2004, which was dissolved a few days after Paty's killing. Sefrioui had long criticized and threatened Muslims who advocate friendship with Jews, including the rector of the Grand Mosque of Paris.

Sefrioui and Chnina face 30 years in prison if convicted.

Two of Anzorov's friends face life imprisonment if convicted on charges of complicity in murder in connection with a terrorist enterprise. Naim Boudaoud and Azim Epsirkhanov are accused of helping Anzorov buy a knife and a pellet gun. Boudaoud also drove Anzorov to Paty's school. They turned themselves in at the police station, and deny being aware of the attacker's intentions.

The other four individuals are charged with criminal terrorist conspiracy for communicating with the killer on pro-jihad Snapchat groups. They all deny being aware of the intent to kill Samuel Paty. One of them sent smiling emojis after the decapitated teacher's head was shared.

They are:- Priscilla Mangel a convert and the only woman. She is alleged to have sent 'encouraging messages'

Yusuf Cinar a 22-year-old Turkish national who shared messages with on Abdullakh Anzorov Snapchat group called "Zbrr" dedicated to jihadist propaganda

Ismail Gamaev a 22-year-old Russian of Chechen origin who also shared messages with Anzorov on a jihadist snapchat group.

Louqmane Ingar, administrator of the snapchat group.