French ramming suspect says he attacked cops for Palestinian cause

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A driver who rammed two policemen in France Monday afternoon said that he carried out the attack because of “the situation” in Palestine.

The suspect, identified by French newspaper Le Parisien (French) as pro-Palestinian activist Youssef T., drove his black BMW into two motorcycle cops as they conducted roadside inspections in Colombes, near Paris.

According to French news reports, during his arrest he mentioned Palestine, Gaza and the Islamic State terrorist organization and said that he wanted to die while killing policemen.

Pictures of the incident shared on the Twitter account of the country’s police union showed a motorcycle crushed between a police car and the assailant’s vehicle.

One of the policemen was seriously injured in the head, the other in the legs and pelvis. Both have been hospitalized but their lives are not in danger.

In the suspect’s car, investigators found a knife and a “letter explaining his action,” and he “said during his arrest that he had watched videos on Palestine before acting,” prosecutors in Nanterre said.

Youssef T., 29, was unknown to French intelligence services prior to the attack but had previously been sentenced to community service for an unspecified violent incident in 2008, Le Parisien reported.

The national counterterrorism prosecutor’s office is looking into the possibility of getting involved in the case and Le Parisien reported that France’s General Directorate for Internal Security (DGSI) intelligence agency is currently on alert.

“My thoughts are with our two injured police officers,” French Interior Minister Christophe Castaner tweeted after the attack, adding that the investigation into the attack would “shed light on [the suspect’s] motivations.”

France has been living under the constant threat of jihadist attacks since 2015, which have left 258 dead in total.

These include the 2012 Toulouse and Montauban shootings in which three soldiers as well as a rabbi and three Jewish schoolchildren were shot to death; the January 2015 attacks in which 17 people were killed, including 12 at the offices of the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo and four at Paris’s Hyper Cacher kosher supermarket; a series of attacks in November 2015 that killed 130 people in Paris; and the 2018 Strasbourg shooting in which Cherif Chekatt killed four people at a Christmas market.

Earlier this month, French counter-terrorism prosecutors opened a judicial investigation after a knife attack south of Lyon left two people dead.

This January, France reported a 27 percent increase in anti-Semitic incidents in 2019.