

French Teacher Beheaded: Islamic Terror Returns to France

Interview with Nidra Poller

by [Jerry Gordon](#) (November 2020)



Rally protesting beheading of French schoolteacher at *Place de la République*, Paris, October 18, 2020

On Sunday, October 18, 2020, tens of thousands of Parisians including French President Macron filled *Place de la République*, protesting the grisly beheading of French schoolteacher, Samuel Paty, by an 18-year-old Chechen refugee at the junior high school in a suburb. Thousands rallied in other major French cities. The Macron Government is taking

this latest jihadist attack with seriousness and dispatch going after those Islamists who fomented a fatwa against the hapless late Professor Paty who displayed the Charlie Hebdo cartoons in his civic class as an example of freedom of speech. Those Charlie Hebdo Cartoons inflamed jihadists on January 7, 2015 to attack the former editorial offices killing 11; while another jihadist took hostages at a Kosher supermarket, killing four Jews. The Macron government and most French revere secular education and teachers as are held in high esteem in the society. However, this time it appears that the French Interior Ministry and the counterterrorism prosecutors are going after those who are considered 'accomplices after the fact" in the commission of this crime shutting down alleged French Muslim anti-Islamophobia civil rights groups and Mosques supporting Islamic separatism in France.

Interior Minister Gérard Darmanin declared: "They launched a fatwa against him."

The father of a schoolgirl and his accomplice—a notorious anti-Zionist agitator, head of the Cheikh Yassin association—fomented revolt against the teacher, Samuel Paty, who showed Mohamed cartoons in a lesson on freedom of speech. Investigators have discovered that they communicated by phone with the 18-year-old Chechen refugee who beheaded the teacher in *Conflans Ste. Honorine* and was shot and killed by French police.

I reached out to Nidra Poller, American ex-pat in Paris, writer, translator, author, and journalist. She has written extensively on Islamic anti-Semitism, murders of French Jews over the past two decades. She was an early investigator in the Mohamed Al Dura "blood libel" propounded by Palestinian activities and leftist journalists against Israel that occurred in Gaza on September 30, 2000 at the start of the Second Intifada ,the subject of French trials she covered involving the France 2 TV news. See her book, [*Al Dura: Long*](#)

[Range Ballistic Myth \(2014\)](#). Poller has been the subject of *Israel News Talk Radio—Beyond the Matrix* interviews by Gordon and host Rod Reuven Dovid Bryant, republished in *The New English Review*.

What follows is the interview with Nidra Poller by Jerry Gordon.

Jerry Gordon: We are speaking with American ex-pat journalist, author of note, intrepid journalist, Nidra Poller in her lair, in a section of Paris, which we will leave unidentified. I am, Jerry Gordon, Producer and co-host of Israel News Talk Radio: Beyond the Matrix, and a Senior Editor at the *New English Review*. We are dedicating this program to our sidekick Rod Bryant who is unfortunately down with COVID-19. Nidra, a lot of things are going on in Paris these days. Islamic terrorism has once again been triggered by the Charlie Hebdo cartoons, used in a class by a French high school teacher, Samuel Paty. That resulted in his grizzly beheading by a Chechen asylee in a Paris suburb. What are the facts about the crime, and what do we know about the 18-year-old perpetrator, shot dead by police?

Nidra Poller: Yes. First, it is not high school, it is middle school or junior high school, called collège in France. In a beautiful, leafy suburb. *Conflans-Sainte-Honorine*, a quiet residential place. What happened is that all teachers in France are required to give courses in civics, and that includes classes on freedom of expression. In that context, Samuel Paty, like many other professors, raised the question of the Muhammad cartoons, called “caricature” in French. This happened a little more than a week ago, and the father of a 13-year-old, who was supposedly in the class, complained that this was terrible, it was an insult to Muslims. He claimed that the teacher asked the Muslim students to raise their hands, identify themselves, and leave the classroom so as not to be shocked. He said his daughter refused to leave. And she was shocked. It turns out that his daughter had been expelled.

She was not in the class; she was expelled for bad behavior and absenteeism.

This father who's already being recognized as a full-time agitator, started a whole campaign against the professor, with the help of an even bigger agitator, Abdelhakim Sefrioui of Moroccan origin, who created the Cheikh Yassine association in France, and was a known, antisemitic, antizionist agitator. He was also fighting against, for example, any kind of rapprochement between Muslims and the greater French society. He mounted an operation against Imam Chalghoumi, who is internationally known for his friendship with the Jewish community, has often traveled to Israel and is present at many important Jewish events. So, it was not like there was some immediate reaction because the professor showed the cartoons. This was prepared and fomented and there were endless videos, complaints, visits to the school, accusations and finally, the professor made a complaint to the police against this father for defamation. There were meetings in the school, apparently, the principal was helpful to the professor. Not working against him.

Not much is known yet about the Chechen who beheaded the teacher. He has a 10-year residence permit. He is here with his family. They were granted asylum on appeal after it was refused the first time. And of course, the police are looking to find out if there is a direct connection between those that made the whole operation against the professor and the one who carried out the beheading. There are, I think, 16 people held for questioning at this time. One little detail: This Chechen went to the school, was hanging around near the end of the day, asking pupils to identify the professor. And apparently, he gave money to one or more of the pupils to help him identify the professor. Some of these pupils are also being questioned right now. So, it is important to know that this was not a spontaneous reaction, the Chechen was not a student at that school, never had been, did not live in that

neighborhood. This operation was carried out deliberately by known agitators. The agitator I spoke of, the friend of the father, he was one of the big organizers of the 2014 riots, one of the worst demonstrations, against Jews. They tried to make a pogrom, they attacked synagogues. They were defending Hamas against Israel. And of course, the question is raised now: how is he allowed to do this? He has been doing it for 15, 20 years.

Jerry Gordon: Why did Paty's murder trigger such an overwhelming reaction throughout France, evident in the huge rallies in Paris and major cities this past Sunday?

Nidra Poller: Yes, even though people are in general respectful of the rules of distance, and of course they were all wearing masks. Yes, the reaction was so intense. *Place de la République* was totally filled. All over the country, people came out as they did in 2015, though in much smaller numbers. One thing, Jerry, there is a series of such reactions—2013, 2015—people are exasperated and they want to show their will to defend their country. They do not want to put up with this anymore. There is no resignation at all, no acceptance, and no resignation. The other reason is because school is almost sacred in France. The French system of education is what makes people from all origins into French citizens, and there is a long-standing respect for teachers. The irony is that if you look back 20 years, many French teachers were anti-Zionist pro-Palestinians voting for the left and far-left parties. Now you see, there is a construction of the defense against Islamization; it goes in steps and stages. When it was only the Jews, there was not such a massive reaction, but that is “normal.” That is how it is and how it works. Today, we can catch up with the beginnings of this Islamization and this jihad against France.

Jerry Gordon: What precipitated Monday's actions by the Ministry of the Interior to arrest and close French Muslim anti-Islamophobia organizations?

Nidra Poller: Well, being against Islamophobia, as we well know, is being against the criticism of Islam and against the defense of society against jihad. That has been clear to many of us for a long time. However, this time, the government took some bold steps. They are closing the anti-Islamophobia association. They are going to close other associations and other mosques. They immediately closed a mosque that had retransmitted the video against this schoolteacher. You know we have a new Minister of the Interior, Gérald Darmanin. He is the grandson of immigrants. His maternal grandfather, Moussa Ouakid, was a French Muslim patriot born in Algeria, who fought with the French Résistance in 1944 and sided with France during the Algerian liberation war. He was a Harki. His father, Gérard Darminin, is Maltese.

Jerry Gordon: You mentioned earlier, the perpetrator of the fatwa against Paty. He has some connections, I gather with a pro-Hamas group—

Nidra Poller: —Yes, he's the leader of it. He created it.

Jerry Gordon: He's the head of it?

Nidra Poller: The Cheikh Yassine Association. Sefrioui. He is a dual national and people are saying, "Why isn't he being deported?" Let me tell you that the debate is so lively on French TV that you can hardly follow it. People are talking over each other, not in a hostile way. They are so filled with exasperation and the feeling that it is time now to do what is clear and obvious to anyone in his right mind. Governments cannot do what we say should be done in one fell swoop. A government cannot do that because they must modulate and be prepared for the counterpunch that would come. They do it by stages, but this is a definitive moment in the defense against Islam and jihad in France. There is no talk of "mentally unstable" or "nothing to do with Islam." No, I have not heard it from anyone.

Jerry Gordon: You would characterize this as a sea change in attitudes in France or this has been percolating for a while?

Nidra Poller: It percolates and then, by stages, it reaches a new plateau. And then, it percolates and reaches a new plateau. This is one important plateau. It is 20 years of exasperation. People are not used to violence in France. France is not a very violent society. There is a great love of freedom and a great love of being out in your cities. This is not a country where people want to close themselves inside. There is a tremendous opposition to this force that is trying to prevent us from living the French way.

Jerry Gordon: Interesting. Someone who has been controversial in France and across Europe is Marine Le Pen of the National Front. How has she positioned herself in this development, particularly because you have got a presidential election coming up in two years?

Nidra Poller: Hardly anybody wants it to be a contest between Macron and Le Pen. She is practically useless. Her position is always predictable and it is always very shrill and harsh, and there is her impractical side to it and the role that she carved out for herself is being chipped away. Because mainstream is against the jihad, against Islamization. So, her position does not have the force that it had when she first started it. She cannot govern and people know that, and so her voice is not important.

Jerry Gordon: How have President Macron and his ministers handled this latest atrocity?

Nidra Poller: Like fighter jets that scramble when there is a plane coming in to bomb the Tour Eiffel. They are just busy everywhere. They had already been preparing some new laws. Albeit avoiding the question by calling it a program against separatism, but the crackdown on Islamization has been building, and now this incident is making it even stronger.

They are doing house searches. To give you an example, authors of the 80 messages in support of the Chechen that beheaded the teacher, have been detected. They are finding out who posted those messages, and they are going to be called in for questioning and they are going to be investigated. I think this is an especially important step because those people thought they were safe and out of danger in expressing this. They took great pleasure in siding with the killer. They are going to be surprised now. There will be house searches and people called in for questioning.

There is the issue of people who are slated for deportation and not accepted by their country of origin. This question has been boiling over the years. The Minister of the Interior was in Morocco, the day that the professor was beheaded, trying to get the government to accept some 22 people that were being deported. Again, there is a call within the country for some kind of hard-headed, muscular policy with regard to these countries that send us little punk jihadis and high-level jihadis and intermediate jihadis, that will force them to take them back when they're deported. There is a lot of pressure in that direction, and there are perhaps thousands of people that should be deported.

Jerry Gordon: The irony is, this heinous crime occurred during the Charlie Hebdo trial that involves the murders of 12 editorial staff, and four hostages at the kosher supermarket back in January of 2015, over five years ago. What was revealed in the testimony, particularly of the Jewish hostages at the trial?

Nidra Poller: I am so sorry to tell you that I cannot answer that. I was not able to follow it, not even in the media. I was working on other things and when I work on something, I am so concentrated on it. I simply could not follow the trial. I know, from the little that I read, that it is bloodcurdling to hear from these people. The trials are filmed, and so we will eventually be able to see them. However, I could not follow

the reporting.

Jerry Gordon: The machete attack by an 18-year-old Pakistani immigrant triggered by the Hebdo cartoons. In fact, I think it took place not too far from their editorial headquarters, the new ones. What prompted a visit by the French Interior Minister and other Macron government officials to a Jewish synagogue that weekend?

Nidra Poller: First . . . it was the former headquarters of Charlie Hebdo. They have moved to a secret location.

Jerry Gordon: Correct.

Nidra Poller: And the people that were attacked—they were downstairs smoking a cigarette. They work for a production company that was in those offices when the Charlie Hebdo staff was massacred. Again, I am sorry I was following things more on your side of the Atlantic at that time, and I do not know about the visit to the synagogue. Do you know anything more than that?

Jerry Gordon: Apparently it was done close to Yom Kippur. And it basically involved the interior minister and several others on Macron's staff, I think, to tell the French Jewish community, whether it was a consistory, the so-called CRIF in France, and others.

Nidra Poller: No, the *Consistoire* and the CRIF are two different things. The *Consistoire* is religious, the CRIF is like the Conference of Presidents of the Major Jewish organizations in the US.

Jerry Gordon: That's correct. To communicate a message to them that they were vitally concerned about the rise of anti-Semitism.

Nidra Poller: Yes, so then it must be that in that context, if one guy attacks where he thought Charlie Hebdo was located.

You know he did not. He was not that bright, right? He did not know that they had moved. He thought that he was in front of their offices. Since the Charlie Hebdo massacre was followed by the Hyper Cacher hostage-taking and massacre, I suppose that was the intention. The interesting thing is, this man, the Pakistani that attacked those two people with a meat cleaver, was in fact 25 when he came to France and was accepted as an unaccompanied minor. The department that takes care of these unaccompanied minors did not think he was under 18. He went before a judge and the judge said, "No, no, it's okay." This is another issue that the whole society is up in arms about, allowing these so-called minors to roam free and take advantage of the asylum policy.

Jerry Gordon: This summer, there were also some trials, involving the murders of Jews in France. I speak of not only a retired teacher, Mireille Knoll, but also Sarah Halimi. There was the start of a bow wave of Jewish Aliyah to Israel that occurred after the Toulouse attacks in 2012.

Nidra Poller: Mireille Knoll was in her 80s. She had escaped the *Rafle du Vel d'hiv* because her mother had a Brazilian passport, so they did not get caught in, that big round-up in July of 1942. And Sarah Halimi was a pediatrician. She was not a teacher. She was a pediatrician. She set up Jewish nursery schools that were connected to synagogue. In this case, it is not a trial. There is a whole series of hearings because the lawyers defending the Halimi family want her killer to be tried in criminal court. The investigating judge has stubbornly insisted that he is mentally unfit to be judged. There were three separate expertises on his psychological condition. The first one concluded that he was fit to stand trial and that his judgment was altered, but he was not completely out of his mind. He knew what he was doing when he did it. Nobody, in fact, claims he is not fit to stand trial. This is a ridiculous perverse process. He's mentally healthy before the murder, then he goes berserk because he smokes a

whole lot of marijuana, and then he's mentally normal after.

He was arrested 20 or 30 times. No one, ever presented any defense based on a psychological problem. The Halimi family's lawyers keep going to court, trying to get the investigating judge to back off and let the murderer be tried in criminal court. The Mireille Knoll case is much less complicated. The two perpetrators are accused of anti-Semitism, the judges have all the evidence, it is clearer cut. Now, there is a moment of exceptional awareness over the beheading of this teacher. There was a moment of blindness, exceptional blindness after the killing of Sarah Halimi, and this will come up, and these arguments will be made, and they will reach further into the mainstream, beyond the limits of the Jewish community. We know that this goes back 20 years to the Al-Dura blood libel that led to this absolute explosion of anti-Semitism, especially in France, but everywhere in the world. And it continues to this day. In Black Lives Matter demonstrations, some were chanting, "Israel, we know you kill children, too." Then there is, you know about the connection between Black Lives Matter and anti-Zionism.

At the beginning, of course, the Jews felt alone and tried to explain that this would not stop with us. It is such a cliché that you do not even feel like saying it anymore. Now it is playing out. And I think I told you the other day when we were talking privately, if societies were geniuses, then every time something goes wrong, they would understand, take measures, and go back to normal harmonious life. They are not, they are like bumbling idiots. We are not geniuses, and we make endless mistakes. And so, it goes that way, hobbling along. I feel that it is very important, when it starts to go in the right direction, to encourage that, to recognize it, to bring in our old stories or our evidence that was ignored. But to do it, I think, almost (in a) tender way, so that it can be accepted instead of creating another kind of refusal to see it. That is one of the things I am working on.

Jerry Gordon: Nidra, thank you for this timely and important discussion on this latest Jihadist atrocity in France.

Nidra Poller: It was a pleasure.

[Watch](#) this Vimeo video of the interview of Nidra Poller by Jerry Gordon.

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