

20 Are Convicted in Paris Rampage, Including Only Surviving Attacker

By CONSTANT MÉHEUT
and AURELIEN BREEDEN

PARIS — Twenty men were convicted on Wednesday for their roles in the worst Islamist terrorist attack in French history, a coordinated spree of shootings and bombings in November 2015 that killed 130 people in and near Paris and injured more than 500, leaving lasting scars on the nation's psyche.

Capping a record 10-month trial, Salah Abdeslam, the only surviving member of the team of Islamic State extremists who carried out the attacks, was found guilty by a panel of judges of all the charges against him and sentenced to life in prison, eligible for parole only after 30 years and under extremely stringent conditions — a rare sentence in France that makes future release unlikely.

Other defendants, who stood accused of intending to take part in the attacks or of providing various degrees of logistical help to the attackers, were found guilty of almost all charges against them, with sentences ranging from two years to life in prison, and, in some cases, some of that time suspended.

"I think it's a fair verdict," said Arthur Dénouveaux, who survived a shooting at the Bataclan concert hall and is now president of Life for Paris, a victim support group. He called it a "sign that we managed to understand what happened and to try it dispassionately."

The trial shed light on the bloodiest in a string of terrorist attacks in Europe over a span of a few years — in Brussels, Nice, Berlin, Barcelona and in Paris more than once. Since then, a series of smaller-scale stabbings and shootings in France have kept the terrorist

threat in focus, prompting authorities to broadly expand counterterrorism and anti-extremism legislation.

The events of that period deeply traumatized France and continue to shape national debates over French identity, the place of Muslims in a country that identifies itself as secular, and the balance between individual liberty and collective security.

Week after week, hundreds of people testified under tight security in a giant Paris courtroom built specifically to accommodate over 500 — lawyers, survivors, families of victims, defendants, experts, and even the president of France at the time of the attacks, François Hollande, a first for a former French leader.

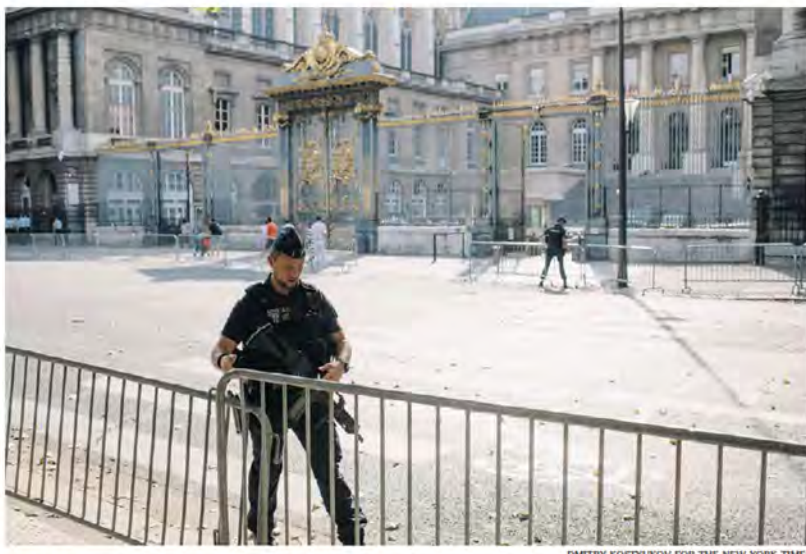
In a statement after the verdict, Mr. Hollande said: "France showed that our democracy can be firm without undermining its rules and principles."

The court found 19 of the defendants guilty of all the charges against them, which included being accomplices to murder and hostage-taking, as well as taking part in a terrorist conspiracy. One defendant was convicted on the lesser charge of taking part in a criminal conspiracy.

The sentences announced Wednesday can be appealed, and the court did not get all the answers that it wanted from the defendants, several of whom remained mostly silent.

Prosecutors were unable to determine where most of the weapons used in the attack had been acquired, or whether the Islamic State had planned other simultaneous attacks in Paris or at the Amsterdam airport, as suggested by documents later found by investigators.

Cédric Maurin, 33, a history teacher who escaped the Bataclan, where the attackers killed 90 concertgoers and held hostages for several hours, said he was frustrated that more information had not emerged, but added, "I



The Palais de Justice. The 2015 attack in Paris left 130 people dead, and more than 500 injured.

have made peace with not having truth."

The trial served as a catharsis for some survivors and families of victims, many of whom testified during five emotion-filled weeks about the devastating physical and psychological aftermath of the attacks and the difficult road to recovery. Two survivors killed themselves in the years that followed.

The verdict "will not heal the wounds, visible or invisible, it will not bring the dead back to life, but at least it will be able to guarantee them that justice and law have the last word here," Camille Hénriet, one of the prosecutors, said this month.

In the assaults on the evening of Nov. 13, 2015, 10 Islamic State extremists carried out nearly simultaneous shootings and suicide bombings at the Bataclan, an area outside France's national soccer

stadium, and the terraces of cafes and restaurants in central Paris.

The assailants were mostly French citizens who, in a carefully orchestrated plot, had traveled to Islamic State-controlled territory in Syria for military training, before returning to Europe to plan the attacks, mainly in Belgium.

Only 14 of the 20 defendants appeared in court, with the other six missing or presumed dead. As the sole surviving attacker in the dock, Mr. Abdeslam, 32, was the central figure — and perhaps also the most elusive.

Little was initially expected of Mr. Abdeslam, a French citizen of Moroccan ancestry who lived in Belgium and who was arrested after months on the run in Molenbeek, a Brussels neighborhood. He refused to cooperate with investigators before the trial, defiantly telling the court on the first day of proceedings that he was "a

fighter for the Islamic State."

Mr. Abdeslam eventually opened up about his involvement and asked the victims for forgiveness, but he never renounced the Islamic State's ideology and insisted, contrary to the evidence, that the attacks were in response to French airstrikes in Syria.

He admitted dropping off suicide bombers outside the soccer stadium north of Paris. But he said he had been brought into the plot only two days beforehand and that he changed his mind when he arrived at the bar where he was supposed to blow himself up.

"I made mistakes," Mr. Abdeslam told the court this week. "But I'm not a murderer, I'm not a killer."

But prosecutors argued that the evidence against Mr. Abdeslam, who drove some of the attackers and their accomplices across Europe, showed he was integral to

the plot. He had failed to carry out the attack because his suicide belt had malfunctioned, not because of a change of heart, they said, and pointed to letters written while he was on the run suggesting he wished he had carried out the attack.

Only Mr. Abdeslam stood directly accused of murder, attempted murder and hostage-taking. Other defendants were charged with planning to take part in the assaults, or helping the attackers by renting hide-outs to stash weapons and explosives, driving them across borders or securing them cash and fake documents.

Some defendants were accused of being hardened Islamist extremists who knew the attack was coming. Others, like some of Mr. Abdeslam's childhood friends, were suspected of having helped the plotters without fully knowing what was planned.

Many of those convicted have already spent years in pretrial detention, and the handful of defendants whose sentences are short enough will not return to prison.

Defense lawyers, most of whom belong to a young generation scarred by terror attacks in France, were careful not to defend their clients' cause. Instead, they urged the court to avoid using a broad brush in judging defendants with very different degrees of involvement, and to uphold legal principles they described as endangered by ever-expanding counterterrorism laws.

"There is something more important than the client in a criminal trial," Margaux Durand-Poincloux, one of the lawyers, said. "It's democracy."

Mr. Maurin, who attended the trial almost every week, said he was struck by its emotional and rhetorical depth.

"It was the best and the worst of humanity, all mixed together," he said. "One can only come out of it changed — and I think enriched."

Strict Lockdown Is Over, But Raw Feelings Linger

Shanghai Strains to Resume Normal Life

By VIVIAN WANG

BEIJING — June, for Shanghai, was supposed to be a time of triumph. After two months of strict lockdown, the authorities had declared the city's recent coronavirus outbreak under control. Businesses and restaurants were finally reopening. State media trumpeted a return to normalcy, and on the first night of release, people milled in the streets, shouting, "Freedom!"

Julie Geng, a 25-year-old investment analyst in the city, could not bring herself to join. "I don't think there's anything worth celebrating," she said. She had spent part of April confined in a centralized quarantine facility after testing positive and the feeling of powerlessness was still fresh.

"I feel there is no basic guarantee in life, and so much could change overnight," she said. "It makes me feel very fragile."

The lockdown had plunged

that has been broken, and rebuild it in a way that will allow you to feel stable and safe again?"

Health officials worldwide have warned of the pandemic's toll on mental well-being. Anxiety and depression increased 25 percent globally in the first year of the outbreak, according to the World Health Organization.

But China's epidemic controls are singularly restrictive, with locked down residents sometimes physically sealed in their homes, unable to receive emergency medical care. Prescriptions, including for mental health conditions, went unfilled. People infected with the virus were sent to hastily constructed makeshift hospitals, some of which lacked showers or were brightly lit at all hours.

The apparent arbitrariness of admission or discharge policies fed feelings of helplessness; some people were sent to the facilities in the middle of the night, or unable to leave despite testing negative. Others said that officials entered their homes with disinfectant while they were away and damaged their property.

Ms. Geng, the investment analyst, was ordered to a makeshift hospital after testing positive. She refused, citing her diagnosis of a mood disorder, she said; eventually, officials sent her to a quarantine hotel instead. Still, she was shaken by her lack of control.

"People who test positive are dehumanized, treated as animals," she said.

During the lockdown, calls to mental health hotlines in Shanghai surged. Queries from the city for psychological counseling, on the search engine Baidu, more than tripled from a year ago. One survey of city residents found 40 percent at risk of depression. When restrictions in some neighborhoods loosened slightly in late April, more than 1,000 people lined up outside the Shanghai Mental Health Center one morning.

At a government news conference in May, Chen Jun, the chief physician at the Shanghai Mental Health Center, said anxiety, fear and depression were inevitable under an extended lockdown. For most people the feelings would be temporary, he said.

But other experts have warned that the effects will be long-lasting. An editorial this month in the medical journal *The Lancet* said the "shadow of mental ill-health" would linger over China's culture and economy "for years to come." It continued: "The Chinese government must act immediately if it is to heal the wound its extreme policies have inflicted."

The long-term fallout of the containment policies was already becoming clear in the inquiries that Xu Xinyue, a psychologist, re-



ALY SONG/REUTERS

A residential section of Shanghai, above, and Covid screeners on the street. The city was under lockdown for two months. "We are seeing a lot of symptoms of post-traumatic stress," one psychologist said.

their ability to cope with stress. "There is also a tense feeling on the newly reopened streets and in people's behavior, that at any moment you could be watched, interfered with, interrupted or driven away," he wrote in an essay widely shared on WeChat.

There are few avenues for release of that tension. In addition to limited resources for mental health — national medical insurance does not cover counseling — censors have erased many critical social media posts from the lockdown. State media has glossed over residents' residual anger and fear, encouraging "positive energy" and holding Shanghai up as yet another example of the success of the zero Covid strategy.

The absence of any collective reckoning or grieving has stung even those who have felt largely able to return to their pre-lockdown lives.

Anna Qin, an education consultant in her 20s, has started going to the office and the gym again. She walks and bicycles around the city, delighting in feeling her feet on the pavement.

But the fact that such mundane things now feel so special is just a reminder of how much the city was forced to sacrifice.

"We're glad it's opening up again, but also there's no acknowledgment of what we went through," she said.

"Now it's closed, now it's open, and we have no control. And now we're supposed to be happy."

Experts warn of the mental health impact from confinement.

Shanghai into chaos and suffering. Sealed in their homes, residents were unable to buy food, denied medical care or separated from their children. Social media overflowed with their fury and desperation. Now the worst is ostensibly over. But in this city of 25 million, many are just beginning to take stock of what they endured, what they lost and what they expect from the future.

Some residents are confronting the precarity of rights they once took for granted: to buy food and to expect privacy in their own homes. Some are grieving relationships that fractured under the stresses of lockdown. Many people remain anxious about the weeks they went without pay or whether their businesses will survive.

Hanging over it all is a broader inability to put the ordeal fully behind them, as China still holds its goal of eliminating the virus. The authorities announced recently that every district in the city would briefly lock down each weekend until the end of July for mass testing.

"We are seeing a lot of symptoms of post-traumatic stress, though many people may not recognize them," said Chen Jiejun, a Shanghai psychologist. Some people felt chest pain, or could not focus at work, she said.

"How do you go from this trust

Li You and Liu Yi contributed research.



HECTOR RETAMAL/AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

ceived in recent weeks.

When the pandemic began two years ago, said Ms. Xu, who volunteers for a national counseling hotline, many callers were scared of the virus itself. But recent callers from Shanghai had been more concerned with the secondary effects of China's controls — parents anxious about the consequences of prolonged online schooling, or young professionals worried about paying their mortgages, after the lockdown pummeled Shanghai's job market.

Others were questioning why they had worked so hard in the first place, having seen how money could not ensure their comfort or safety during lockdown. They were now saving less and spending more on food and other tangible objects that could

bring a sense of security, Ms. Xu said.

"Money has lost its original value," she said. "This has upended the way they always thought, leaving them a bit lost."

The lockdown also transformed interpersonal relationships. Under Shanghai's policies, just one confirmed case could lead to tighter controls on an entire building or neighborhood. Some residents who fell ill said they were shamed in their housing complexes' group chats.

Before the lockdown, Sandy Bai, a 48-year-old resident, considered her next-door neighbor a friend. They swapped eggs when the other was short and asked after each other's parents. But one day after the city shut down, Ms. Bai returned from walking her

dog — technically not allowed, but she had slipped out because her dog was sick — to find that her neighbor had reported her to the police, she said.

"She really destroyed the trust I had in her," Ms. Bai said. "There's nothing you can do, you'll never convince the other person, and you just learn to take some distance."

Interactions between strangers also seem to point to a frayed social fabric. After officials at one testing site told residents they could not be tested — and therefore could not move freely about the city — a resident smashed a table and injured a worker.

Li Houchen, a blogger and podcaster, compared Shanghai residents to easily startled birds, on edge because they had exhausted