

San Bernardino Mourns Its Dead, Calls For Unity, Not Rancor

BY TAMI ABDOLLAH AND BRIAN SKOLOFF
Associated Press

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. — At a church, a mosque, a makeshift street-corner memorial and other sites, they gathered Sunday to mourn the 14 victims of the San Bernardino massacre and lament that the community has now been added to the tragic list of U.S. cities scarred by terrible violence. Residents struggled to come to terms with the violence and hoped the community would unite in mourning and not be divided by the disclosure that the killers were a religious Muslim couple.

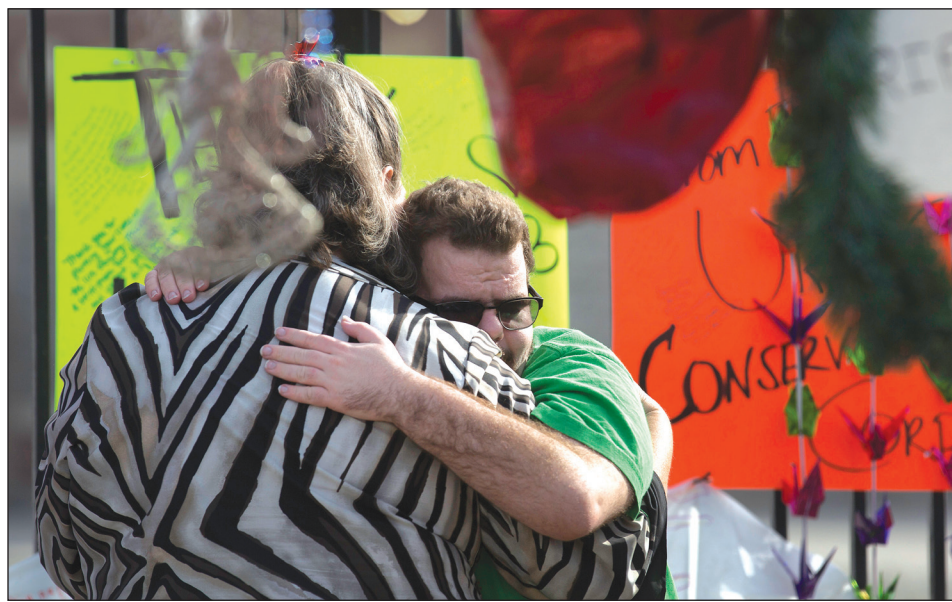
"It's unfortunate that we're on this list now, a list like Newtown, Aurora and others where such tragic events occurred," Rep. Pete Aguilar, D-Calif., told a crowd at a mosque. "It's not how I want San Bernardino remembered."

In the wake of the attack, President Barack Obama prepared to deliver a prime-time address to the nation Sunday night on security and terrorism.

Meanwhile, investigators were looking into what led Tashfeen Malik and Syed Farook to attack the gathering of Farook's co-workers on Wednesday. Authorities were trying to determine if Malik, who was born in Pakistan and spent considerable time in Saudi Arabia, radicalized her American-born husband, Farook, and was the driving force behind the rampage, two officials said Sunday.

That possibility emerged late last week when it was disclosed that Malik had pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group in a Facebook post about the time of the bloodbath at a holiday luncheon. Malik, 29, and Farook, 28, were killed in a furious shootout with police hours after the attack.

On Sunday, scores of mourners visited a growing memorial on a corner near the social service center where the shooting took



BRIAN VAN DER BRUG/LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS
Inland Regional Center client Johnathan Rose, 20, right, hugs his mother Marianne Rose while visiting a makeshift memorial to the shooting victims on Waterman Avenue at Orange Show Road in San Bernardino, Calif., on Sunday.

place. There were American flags, poster that read "Pray for the world," balloons, candles and cards. Many said they hoped the community would pull together.

"I'm trying to use it as a teaching thing for myself and for my children that horrible things happen, but it doesn't mean that everybody is a horrible person," said Eric Abrams, of San Bernardino. At the St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church, where shooting victim Yvette Velasco worshipped, the service focused on the need to get beyond the anger. Many parishioners said they would reach deep into their faith to find some way to forgive.

More than 100 people gathered for an interfaith memorial service at a mosque where Farook had occasionally prayed. Silver-framed photos of the victims were placed on a table at the Islamic Community Center of Redlands, with a candle lit for each.

Muslim community members said they are feeling both grief over the loss and fear of a backlash against their community. They encouraged community members to come together

and not live in fear.

"It is really sad that we meet because of this. It is sad that only in death are we able to celebrate humanity," 30-year-old mosque member Ajarat Bada said, fighting back tears.

Many in the crowd wrote personal notes to the victims' families that the mosque will deliver.

Federal investigators continued trying to establish what pushed the couple to carry out what appears to be the deadliest attack on American soil by Islamic extremists since 9/11.

"I think I can't say definitively right now what led either of these two to pick up guns and become murderers. I consider that is the focus of our investigation," Attorney General Loretta Lynch said on NBC's "Meet the Press."

"We're looking at everything we can find out about these two killers' lives — how they grew up, where they grew up, how they met. All of those things will provide us guidance."

One U.S. official said there appears to be nothing in Farook's history that would implicate him as the driver of the attack.

Separately, a law enforcement official said investigators are looking into whether Malik was radicalized in the Middle East, where she spent considerable time, and used her 2014 marriage to Farook to penetrate the U.S. and commit jihad. But the official said it is only one among a number of theories that are being pursued.

The two officials were not authorized to discuss the investigation publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

While radical Islamic groups at times have mobilized women as suicide bombers, and extremist women may exhort their men to attacks, it is extremely rare in conservative Muslim societies for female jihadists to take part in actual combat, as Malik did.

Former college classmates of Malik's and others who knew her in Pakistan said that in recent years, she began dressing more conservatively — including wearing a black head-to-toe garment or a scarf that covered nearly her entire face — and became more fervent in her faith.

Kerry's Comments Cause Consternation

JERUSALEM (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry set off an uproar in Israel on Sunday after warning that the country, through its continued West Bank occupation, will become a "binational state."

Kerry's words describe a scenario that would mark a failure of U.S. policy and end to Israel's existence as a country that is both Jewish and democratic. The U.S., the international community and many Israelis have endorsed the "two-state solution" — establishing a Palestinian state and ending Israel's control over millions of Palestinians in territories occupied in the 1967 war.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared Sunday that "Israel will not be a binational state" and blamed the Palestinians for the failure of peace efforts. But despite Netanyahu's pledges, Jewish settlement of the West Bank continues apace, while confusion over his true intentions grows by the day.

Meanwhile, Israel seems unable to stem a wave of stabbings and other attacks by Palestinian individuals, now in its third month, that has killed 19 Israelis and left over 100 Palestinians, most said by Israel to be attackers, dead.

This situation has sharpened the country's half-century-old debate over the Palestinians. Opposition politicians, intellectuals and retired military commanders are issuing increasingly strident warnings that never-ending violence awaits if Israel continues to occupy millions of angry Palestinians who cannot vote in its national elections.

Scientists Enlist Faith Climate Action

PARIS (AP) — The cold hard numbers of science haven't spurred the world to curb runaway global warming. So as climate negotiators struggle in Paris, some scientists who appealed to the rational brain are enlisting what many would consider a higher power: the majesty of faith.

It's not God versus science, but followers of God and science together trying to save humanity and the planet, they say.

Physicist John Schellnhuber, founder of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany, said he has been coming to these international talks for 11 years and essentially seen negotiators throw up their hands and say "sorry guys we tried our best." And no one protested. But this time, with the power of Pope Francis' encyclical earlier this year calling global warming a moral issue and an even more energized interfaith community, Schellnhuber feels the world's faithful are watching and will hold world leaders accountable.

"They know they will be measured against the encyclical," Schellnhuber, a member of the Vatican's Pontifical Academy of Sciences, said Saturday at a Catholic Church event. Ever the scientist, Schellnhuber said on Saturday he hadn't seen any evidence yet during the first week of negotiations that this will happen, but he has faith it will.

In the first five days of climate negotiations, interfaith activists came, fasted, talked to media, buttonholed leaders and prayed. On Saturday night in a downtown Paris chapel, hundreds of people, many of them prostrated on the ground, sang and prayed for the climate negotiators and mostly for the world.

Texas Birth Certificate Rules Unenforced

BROWNSVILLE, Texas (AP) — Texas has for seven years said it won't accept Mexican identification cards when issuing birth certificates for children of people in the United States illegally. But it doesn't appear to have stepped up enforcement until recently, amid mounting political pressure to get tougher on immigration, records obtained by The Associated Press show.

That could validate complaints from immigrant parents suing in federal court, claiming the state is denying "birth-right" U.S. citizenship for their Texas-born children guaranteed under the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

The AP used open records requests to get annual "self-assessment" surveys completed by local registrars. They show that officials in at least five cities and counties along the U.S.-Mexico border told the Texas Department of State Health Services during the past three years that they were allowing parents to get copies of birth certificates using a Mexican identification known as the matricula consular.

"Most of applicants are here illegally as they claim, and are therefore unable to obtain a valid form of identification from the United States," Janie Madero, then-registrar in McAllen, wrote in a 2013 survey response. "Therefore our office accepts the matricula consular so they can obtain the birth certificate for their children who were born here."

Elsewhere along the border, Arizona generally doesn't accept the matricula consular while New Mexico does. California lets notaries decide whether the Mexican ID is acceptable.

Challenge For Socialists In Venezuela

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — The socialist system built by Hugo Chavez faced its gravest electoral test Sunday as Venezuelans cast ballots in what seems to have become a tightening race for control of the national legislature.

Voters woke to state-sponsored fireworks and music in working-class parts of Caracas. Wealthier neighborhoods, which tend to favor the opposition, were spared the early morning cacophony, but many headed to the polls at the crack of dawn anyway, anxious to cast their ballots early in case violence should break out later in the day.

"I'm voting for the opposition and then I'm going home to read newspapers all day," said Nora Beatriz, 78. "You can't believe the level of hate there is here now. You say you don't like the socialists and you get screamed at, yelled at, and who knows what else."

As voting wound down, several ruling party governors were caught on film braving boos and insults as they entered their polling places, including Chavez's brother Adan. Electoral authorities also suspended the credentials for yes, former Bolivian President Jorge Quiroga, one of six conservative leaders invited by the opposition to monitor the election, for controversial comments seen as interfering in the voting process.

More than 163,000 police and troops were deployed around the country ahead of Sunday's vote, but many Venezuelans still fear postelection violence. Maduro had repeatedly vowed in recent weeks to take to the streets if his party lost. Opposition leaders said that if their coalition failed to win, it would mean the state cheated.

French Regional Vote: National Front Dominates First Round

BY ANGELA CHARLTON AND CHRIS DEN HOND
Associated Press

PARIS — France's far right National Front won more support than any other party in the first round of regional elections Sunday, according to polling agency projections, in a new boost for Marine Le Pen's anti-immigration strategy and a new blow to President Francois Hollande's Socialists.

The projections put National Front candidates on top so far in six of France's 13 newly drawn regions. But Sunday's voting was only a first round, and some mainstream voters may steer away from far right candidates in the decisive Dec. 13 runoff.

The elections took place in an unusually tense security climate just over three weeks after deadly attacks on Paris — a climate expected to favor conservative and far right candidates. It is the last election before France votes for president in 2017, and a gauge of the country's political direction.

Voters are choosing leadership councils for the regions, and had the choice of several parties in the first round. Polling agencies Ifop, OpinionWay and Ipsos projected that the National Front won between 27 and 30 percent support nationwide.

The polling projections estimated the percentage of votes for different parties, not the number of seats they are expected to win on France's regional councils. The number of seats will be determined in next Sunday's runoff, which pits the leading parties in each region

against each other.

Nicolas Sarkozy's conservative Republicans party and its allies were projected to come in second place in the national vote at around 27 percent. The Socialists, who currently run nearly all of the country's regions, were projected to come in a weak third place, with between 22 and 24 percent, followed by a smattering of mainly leftist groupings.

The big question for the runoff is whether supporters of Republican, Socialist, and smaller candidates will rally together to keep the National Front from winning control of any of the regions. The party, long considered a pariah, has never had such significant political power.

The National Front is hoping the regional elections will consolidate political gains Le Pen has made in recent years, and strengthen its legitimacy as she prepares to seek the presidency in 2017.

The National Front "is the only (party) that defends an authentic French republic, a republic with only one vocation: the national interest, the development of French employment, the conservation of our way of life, the development of our tradition and the defense of all the French," Le Pen said Sunday night in Lille.

The Islamic State-inspired Paris attacks on Nov. 13 that killed 130 people and a Europe-wide migrant crisis this year have shaken up France's political landscape.

The arrival of hundreds of thousands of migrants in Europe and the exploits of IS have bolstered the discourse of the National Front, which denounces Europe's open borders, what it calls the "migratory submersion" and what it claims is the

corrupting influence of Islam on French civilization.

Le Pen is campaigning to run the northern Nord-Pas-de-Calais-Picardie, which includes the port city of Calais, a flashpoint in Europe's migrant drama. Her young niece, Marion Marechal-Le Pen, is running to lead the southern Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur region.

Projections showed the National Front lists with around 40 percent first-round support in both regions, a good 15 percent ahead of second-place Republicans. Socialist leader Jean-Christophe Cambadellis called for his party to withdraw from the runoff in both races in hopes of keeping the National Front from winning.

Voters left and right joined together to keep Marine's father Jean-Marie Le Pen from winning a presidential runoff in 2002. However, Marine Le Pen has worked to undo its image as an anti-Semitic party and has lured in new followers from the left, the traditional right and among young people.

"The verdict of the French people tonight is clear," Sarkozy said Sunday night. "We must hear and understand the deep exasperation."

Sarkozy said his party should refuse to ally with any National Front candidates or to pull out of any races in the second round. He said a victory for National Front ideas "would dramatically aggravate France's situation and create conditions of dangerous disorder."

Socialist Prime Minister Manuel Valls and the conservative-leaning national business lobby issued a public appeal this week to stop the National Front's march toward victory.

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