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Russia Distances Itself From Fatal Stabbing of Teacher in France

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French police officers from the forensic service work in front of the Gambetta high school in Arras, northeastern France, after a man armed with a knife killed a teacher and wounded another teacher and a security guard. **Ludovic Marin, Pool via AP / TASS**

Russia's Embassy in Paris has denied links to the suspect of a deadly school stabbing that the French government described as an Islamist terrorist attack, state-run media reported Monday.

Police in France named Friday's suspected perpetrator as Mohammed Moguchkov, 20, who was born in the predominantly Muslim republic of Ingushetia in Russia's North Caucasus.

Moguchkov reportedly cried "Allahu akbar!" (God is greatest) during the stabbing attack that killed French literature teacher Dominique Bernard, 57, at the school in the northern city of Arras. Three others were wounded in the attack.

"We'd like to point out that [the suspect] arrived in France at the age of five and has been living in this country ever since," the Russian diplomatic mission told TASS.

“It’s quite clear that his radicalization did not take place in Russia,” the embassy told TASS.

Moguchkov was already listed on a French national register as a potential security threat and under electronic and physical surveillance by France's domestic intelligence agency, the DGSI. His father, who was also on the list, was deported in 2018.

Related article: Russia Dismisses Links to Chechen Accused of Beheading French Teacher

French Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin said the Arras attack bore a link to events in the Middle East, where civilians were fleeing northern Gaza ahead of an anticipated Israeli ground offensive in the besieged enclave following the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Israel.

In comments to TASS, the Russian Embassy in Paris accused the French government of curtailing cooperation with Russian law enforcement.

Paris says around 60 Russian citizens are on France’s national security watch list, 20 of whom are set to be deported.

Bernard, the teacher in Arras, was killed almost three years to the day after teacher Samuel Paty was beheaded outside his school in a Paris suburb, on Oct. 16, 2020.

The families of Paty's killer and Moguchkov share a background in Russia's North Caucasus region.

Paty was beheaded by 18-year-old Abdullah Anzorov, a radicalized refugee born in Moscow to ethnic Chechen parents. Anzorov, who moved to France at age six, was shot dead by police at the scene.

AFP contributed reporting.

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