

It seems that migration policies of a leading country in Europe, France, are seriously changing. The country is no longer able to hold back the crowd of migrants, many of whom do not want to integrate into the social and economic life of their new home country. The upcoming radical changes for migrants were announced by French Interior Minister Manuel Valls.

After a meeting on the National Immigration and Integration, French Interior Minister Manuel Valls announced significant changes in the country's migration policy. The government will reduce financial assistance to immigrants, and this reduction will be substantial. Starting March 1 of next year, French immigrant benefits will be reduced by 83 percent. The amount of compensation to immigrants who voluntarily want to return home will be also reduced. If earlier the government paid 300 euros for every adult and 100 euros for every minor, in March of 2013 these amounts will be reduced to 50 and 30 euros, respectively. One of the main provisions of the new immigration rules in France is the reduction of unemployment benefits. New rules will directly affect many of the immigrants who do not want to be of real assistance to the country and whose main goal is the existence at the expense of French taxpayers. Now immigrants who are EU citizens receive an allowance of 2,000 euros per adult and 1,000 euros per child. Under the new policy, according to Valls, the payments will be reduced to 500 and 200 euros, respectively. Manuel Valls said that the previous immigration policy did not lead to the desired effect, and the existing outreach programs for immigrants do not work as they were expected to, therefore, the rules must be changed. If this is not done, the costs for the maintenance of migrants now paid by the French Treasury will continue to devastate the economy of France that is already suffering from the crisis caused by international factors.

Earlier this year, during the election campaign in France, Nicolas Sarkozy, the then President, strongly advocated for the changes in migration policies in France. He stated that the delays could adversely affect the entire domestic policy of France. Francois Hollande, the current President of France and at that time the main opponent of Sarkozy, spoke on the subject more softly, avoiding naming any specific measures. Does this mean that life itself supports the statements of the eccentric

ex-president of France?

According to the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies, in the second half of 2010, France was home to over five million migrant workers, or about 8 percent of the total population. The largest number of migrants arriving in France, according to the data for 2007, was from Algeria, Morocco and Portugal. In 2011, French citizenship was granted to 66,000 people. It is getting increasingly more difficult for the government to provide financial assistance to migrants, given that many of them do not work or study. In fact, this is not surprising given the amount of aid that the government was ready to provide to its new citizens.

With a growing number of migrants, mainly from Muslim countries, France is experiencing many internal problems. They include rising unemployment and crime, and increasingly greater sums of money from the state treasury spent on support of migrants and their families, which has a detrimental effect on the economy. Finally, France is simply awash with the migrant population with an alien ideology, reluctant to accept European values and often hostile.

Sooner or later, the government had to take measures. It seems that the time has come. On the wave of changes in French policy towards migrants, in 2007 Nicolas Sarkozy won presidential elections. Since his arrival to power, the government began to pursue a policy of the so-called selective migration, whose aim was to attract to France mainly skilled personnel. Under Sarkozy a quota system was introduced in the country that determined the number of required workers. In March of 2012, during the presidential campaign, Nicolas Sarkozy reiterated the importance of addressing domestic problems of migrants. Sarkozy, a son of an immigrant from Hungary, suggested cutting the amount of social assistance provided to migrants and reducing the number of issued residence permits by 50%. In addition, he threatened that France would leave the Schengen Treaty in order to prevent infiltration of unwanted migrants into the country.

Francois Hollande, the current president of France, was not that radical in his vision of the issues associated with migrants. He was not ready to control all categories of migrants, but in March of 2012 called for limiting migration for economic reasons. It looks like it is the economic conditions that are

forcing the French authorities to toughen the policy towards migrants. This is indicated, in particular, by the disappointing data in the Global Competitiveness Report on the state of competitiveness of France, which the government discussed in November. According to the report, the competitiveness of the French industry is falling. In 2000, the share of industry in the economy of the country accounted for 18 percent, and now - 12.5 percent as companies are going bankrupt. In part, it is due to the heavy burden of social security contributions that businesses are required to make. French business payroll taxes are among the highest in the world at approximately 50 percent. It could not have been different because the country had to feed a large number of migrants.

In March of 2012 Sarkozy suggested reducing the number of migrants from 180 thousand to 100 thousand. A significant decrease in the number of migrants could be expected in five years. It seems that the government of Hollande has adopted such measures and is moving towards action.

A significant decrease in the amounts allocated for subsidies for migrants might be somewhat effective. The treasury will have more resources that can be allocated to job creation and overall economic recovery. There is a likelihood that the reduction in benefits will be an incentive for some workers to step up their job search.

There is another side to the coin. Many migrants, especially those from Arab countries-former colonies of France, are used to living on government subsidies. They have been doing it for years, and have been teaching their children this model of social behavior. According to the National Institute of Statistical Studies, children from immigrant families tend to be weaker students than their peers who are not immigrants. This is especially true for migrants from Turkey. In the labor market, only 14 percent of children of immigrants attain high social positions.

Reduction of benefits would hurt many migrant families. Will this provoke antisocial behavior where migrants would outpour their anger in the streets of French cities, destroying everything around them? Will the migrant riots of 2007 be repeated? There is an obvious need in new approaches towards migration policy. However, in their implementation the government should take into account various possible consequences. Only a balanced approach will lead to positive results.

German Population Rises Thanks to Immigration

2012 saw a significant increase in Germany's population. It is not due to a sudden baby boom, but to the many immigrants flocking to the country. Experts point out chances and risks.

Germany is an attractive destination for hundreds-of-thousands of immigrants from all over the world, particularly from southern and eastern EU nations. In 2012, authorities recorded about 300.000 more immigrants than emigrants. Germany's Federal Statistical Office Destatis recorded a population of almost 82 million. Most of the immigrants settle in sprawling urban areas in and around Cologne, Frankfurt and Munich while rural areas record very little growth.

Many Greeks, Spaniards and Bulgarians see a move to Germany as their last chance to find a job. Their native countries are grappling with severe unemployment and no change for the better in sight. Inevitably, the migrants are disappointed when they realize Germans do not welcome them with open arms. Germany needs to develop a more welcoming culture, Steffen Kröhnert of the Berlin Institute for Population and Development said.

"In the past, Germany has often isolated itself," Kröhnert said and argued the country needs well-qualified migrants. "Their qualifications must be recognized, they must be able to live here with their families." Apart from legal issues, a welcoming culture would also not force immigrants to stand in line for hours in various offices for papers and documents, an often degrading process.

Good for Germany

Kröhnert: Germany needs a more welcoming approach to immigrants

The current wave of immigrants brings mainly well-qualified and trained people to Germany: engineers, academics and skilled workers. German businesses stand to profit, as does all of society. However, putting too much of an emphasis on qualification is nearsighted, Kröhnert warned. "Germany needs more than engineers," he said, and added workers for lesser positions, such as people who can work in the health care sector, are sought for as well.

Immigrants today learn German in the framework of integration courses. However, as many are looking to work as engineers, scientists, doctors or nurses, the new migrant generation needs specialized language classes,

Günter Heinecker of arealingua language institute told Deutsche Welle. "Of course, a doctor needs different language abilities than a scientist or someone who works in a restaurant."

While not all employers require foreign employees to take language courses, an upper-intermediate knowledge of the language is mandatory for employment in Germany in some sectors, including health care. That and the steep rise in immigration to Germany are the reasons why the number of participants in language classes has "skyrocketed", Heinecker said.

Integration vs. subculture

Another aspect in the immigration of foreign workers to Germany is evident only at second glance: migration benefits Germany, but is a loss for the countries of origin. While foreign workers pay into Germany's social security funds, their homelands suffer from brain drain. In the long run, that could become a problem for several countries in the south of Europe, where sinking birth rates translate into a shrinking young population. While these countries at present have fewer unemployed to look after, they are bound to lack workers at a later date to help them get back on their feet economically.

Steffen Kröhnert is convinced the current spate of immigration offers German society a chance; however, he appealed to politicians to better prepare the local population to ensure the newcomers a welcome without reservations.

The demographics expert also indicated the wisdom of pondering the effect of a possible new economic crisis. Let Spain serve as an example, Kröhnert warned. In 2005, migrants flocked to Spain, found work in the construction industry - and are now the first to lose their jobs. "Germany faces the same threat," Kröhnert said. "In a phase of decline, it will be the migrants who are confronted with massive social problems."

Breaching Fortress Europe: Despite the Downturn, Migrants Brave Fatal Crossing

There are many ways to die when trying to breach what Italian journalist Gabriele Le Grande calls “Fortress Europe.” Migrants are shot by border guards in Ceuta, die of thirst in the Sahara, freeze in the mountains of Gulpinar, drown in the Oder River, or perish in the Evros minefields. But the 90-mile wide Strait of Sicily between Tunisia and the Italian islands is the single deadliest obstacle. In 2011, over 50,000 migrants tried to cross the narrow strip of the Mediterranean; 2,200 of those died or went missing.

This year, however, an uneasy calm has settled over the strait. There have been less than 1,500 arrivals in Italy this year, as North Africa stabilized and the Eurozone crisis dimmed the lure of work. When a group of 400 migrants arrived at Lampedusa—the island south of Sicily that catches a majority of boat traffic—in mid-August, the most remarkable thing was, well, how remarkable it was. Arrivals of that size were a common occurrence last year. Now they are outliers.

In Sicily, the big question is whether this pax mediterranea is real, or whether the seas will fill again with migrants if the new governments of North Africa falter. “The situation is changing really, really fast,” says Le Grande. There are no guarantees, he says, that the worst days won’t come back.

(More from Roads & Kingdoms: Sicily, the Red Sauce Diaries)

A major factor, of course, is the Eurozone crisis. The jobs that used to lure migrants across the strait just aren’t there. In Italy, which was the final destination for about 25% of the migrants crossing the strait, the economy is in a tailspin. As factories in the north shut down, many earlier migrants are trickling back south to Sicily, where, as researcher Judith Gleitze of Borderline Europe points out, the large black market offers more piecemeal jobs and a chance to live without papers. But in Sicily, competition for those menial jobs is increasing, pitting the newest arrivals against those migrants who have been there longer. “It’s the poor against the even more poor,” says Gleitze. Many of those earlier arrivals will qualify for a limited amnesty being offered in September by the Italian government: if you can prove a lengthy residency in Italy, along with current employment, then you will get legal papers. As many as 100,000 people might apply, says Le Grande.

Paolo Cuttita, who teaches border studies at the University of Palermo, says that politics, more than economics, have long determined what happens in the Strait. The numbers often ebbed and flowed according to Gaddafi’s political needs in Libya. If he wanted concessions from Italy, he would simply allow a wave of migrants to leave Libya and swamp Italy’s shores (smuggling rings were often closely controlled by the Libyan government). One such wave in 2004 stopped only when Italy’s premiere Silvio Berlusconi signed a huge pipeline deal with Libya, one of the earliest breaks in the European efforts to embargo Gaddafi. “He used migrants to get what he wanted,” says Cuttita.

In 2009, Gaddafi signed another border cooperation deal that Italian politicians had hoped would allow them to automatically deport anyone caught in international waters. A European Court recently ruled that Italy’s insta-deportations were illegal, and that they had to determine the asylum status of anyone they pick up, even in international water. But that agreement caused many migrants to look for new routes into Europe overland through the Middle East.

(More from Roads & Kingdoms: Keith Dannemiller’s photoessay on Mexico City’s Saint of Lost Causes)

The new governments in Tunisia and Libya have both signed similar agreements with the Italians to help keep migrant traffic down. But North Africa’s biggest chance to help to staunch the boat crisis is to offer a future for their people at home. Le Grande says it’s happening already. “The southern shore of the Mediterranean is changing. Before everyone just wanted to leave the country, to go away,” he says. “[Now] many people believe in the future of these countries. They’re coming back.”

Samuel Cheung, a UNHCR Senior Protection Officer based in Libya, cautions that the new national pride of North Africans has not stopped other Africans from making the dangerous trip by boat. Libya in particular has what he calls a “push factor” for migrants from sub-Saharan Africa. “It’s very difficult to be a sub-Saharan African in Libya today,” he says. Migrants face everything from shootings to theft to unpaid wages. They are still suspected of having been part of the African mercenary corps used by Gaddafi. The majority of the estimated 600,000 people who fled Libya during the fighting were Sub-Saharan Africans, says Le Grande. Tunisians and Egyptians are now doing the jobs the Africans used to do. And then there’s the threat of arrest detention from the various qatibas—armed militias—

who maintain their own detention facilities throughout Libya. One of UNHCR's basic missions in Libya is to find out who is being held where, so they can provide services.

"Libyans don't want to be a waypoint for Africans to Europe," says Le Grande, "basically because they hate Africans. And human smuggling is seen as a part of the activity of the [Gaddafi] regime."

Little surprise, then, that for many Africans who find themselves in post-revolution Libya, the only option is to keep moving. Overall boat traffic is down, but those who do cross the Strait are, says Cheung, the most desperate.

"It's not uncommon to find 10 to 20 pregnant women on a boat with 60 people," says Cheung. "Not surprising to see boats that have old men, children, people with untreated gunshot wounds." Most of these migrants, says Cheung, are from the Horn of Africa—Somalis, Eritreans, Ethiopians.

When news recently broke that one of Somalia's best female athletes, runner Samia Yusuf Omar, had died in April trying to cross from Libya to Italy in order to start training in Europe before the Olympics, it was just the latest in a series of high-profile Somalis who took to the seas, says Le Grande "In Italy, we saw first division football players coming [across the Strait]," he says. "We saw journalists, professors, people you don't expect to take this dangerous routes. The visa policy gives

them no other choice."

And therein lies the best answer to whether or not the Straits will fill with migrants again: perhaps it doesn't matter. Earlier this month, Egyptian border guards shot three Eritreans trying to head into Israel from the Sinai. The new migration routes through the Middle East won't be less dangerous than the Strait of Sicily if governments decide to simply shoot migrants. Even in the economic crisis, Europe's toughest, lowest-paying jobs are still done by immigrants. But without a visa policy that acknowledges that fact, the would-be workers will continue to risk everything to cross Fortress Europe's high walls and deep moats.



Norway's Happy Lies on Muslim Immigration

Should one laugh or cry? That perennial question raised itself yet again on January 10 when Norway's purported newspaper of record, Aftenposten, ran what several readers, in the comments field, quite properly dismissed as a shameless piece of propaganda that, as one of them put it, "stinks" of the "red-green agenda." The headline: "People with immigrant backgrounds are becoming more like the rest [of us]." The article was based entirely on data from Statistics Norway, the government statistics bureau. Although that agency has a long record of massaging its numbers and serving up frankly absurd prognoses in order to make it look as if Islamic immigration into Norway is less of a fiasco than the average Norwegian man-in-the-street knows it is, Aftenposten's reporters, Kjersti Nipen, Øystein Aldridge, and Kjetil Østli, passed them on in the usual reverently unquestioning fashion.

"In some areas immigrants are becoming more like us," they quoted Statistics Norway researcher Lars Østby as saying, "but there are few areas in which the population without immigrant backgrounds are being influenced by immigrants." This was, first of all, a highly bemusing claim, given that a crucial element of the rhetoric churned out by the professional boosters of immigration -- Islamic immigration in particular -- has long been that the influx into Norway of persons with radically different cultural backgrounds enrich the country in extraordinary ways. Could it be that at least some of the longtime purveyors of that line decided that it wasn't working, and decided instead to try the more modest argument that immigration is a neutral phenomenon that doesn't really affect the native population one way or the other?

One imagines that Østby's assertion came as something of a surprise to more than a few ethnic Norwegians who in recent years, thanks to Muslim perpetrators, have ended up in Statistics Norway's database of rapes, gay-bashings, and other such offenses whose numbers in certain parts of the country have climbed steadily along with the Muslim populations of those areas. Ditto the many people who have felt compelled to move their families out of various Oslo neighborhoods in order to protect their kids from increasing gang violence and to be able to send them to schools that aren't hotbeds of bullying, harassment, and worse. (It is perhaps worth noting that in addition to Østby, Aften-

posten's reporters interviewed a staffer at Norwegian Social Research who managed to come up with exactly one specific way in which immigrants may be influencing Norwegians: in Oslo's immigrant neighborhoods, she said, young Norwegians, perhaps in imitation of their Koran-observant neighbors, are drinking less alcohol. In short: if there is any impact, it's utterly benign.)

Among those who should have raised their eyebrows at Østby's statement were the editors of Aftenposten itself, whose archives, after all, are packed with news stories that flatly contradict his pretty picture of today's multicultural Norway. Only three days earlier, for example, that newspaper ran an article about a new government report which, among much else, recommends that Islamic worship services be permitted in public schools and argues that schoolteachers shouldn't criticize Muslims' objections to sexual equality. (To push them on this matter, the head of the report committee insisted, would be to violate their religious freedom.)

Among the specific claims made in the January 10 article was that both "marriage immigration" and fertility rates are down among the Norwegian-born children of immigrants. Anyone familiar with Statistics Norway's usual sleight-of-hand would quickly have noticed that Østby and his scribes at Aftenposten didn't label the immigrants they are discussing with the word "Muslim" or even, more broadly, with the term "non-Western," which would include many Vietnamese, Chinese, and other non-Muslim Asians who, for the most part, have integrated splendidly into Norwegian society. No, they used the catchall word "immigrant," which of course covers everyone from Danes and Swedes to Americans and Brits. Most important statistically, perhaps, it also embraces Poles and other Eastern Europeans, who, in recent years, have poured into Norway to work in construction and similar trades, providing wily statisticians with figures that allow them to draw glowing conclusions about immigrant employment, crime, family size, and the like -- and thus whitewash Muslim immigration.

Østby further contended that the children of immigrants are now going to college in higher-than-average numbers -- which is good news for those benighted souls who still cling to the assumption that education and the acceptance of Western values go hand in glove. For a cogent wake-up call on this front, one needed only to turn from Aftenposten's January 10 article to

a piece by Hege Storhaug posted on the same day at Sappho, the website of the Danish Free Press Society. It began as follows: “Islamization [in Norway] is moving faster year by year...But academia and politicians can’t (or won’t?) puncture the aching abscess.” Without mentioning Østby or Statistics Norway by name, Storhaug tidily shot down the widespread illusion that education is a cure for Islam’s ills by pointing out that the pro-jihadist student group Islam Net, based at University College of Oslo, boasts 2000 paying members. Yes, more and more children of Muslim immigrants are getting higher educations -- and more and more of them are joining an organization that segregates men and women, calls non-believers kuffur, and looks forward to a future in which Norway will be part of a sharia-governed European caliphate.

Storhaug took her readers on a brief tour of organized Islam in Norway (a country, remember, with only five million inhabitants, including maybe 100,000 Muslims): the Islamic Cultural Centre, a branch of the Jamaat-i-Islami movement, which is considered extreme even in Pakistan, has 3500 members; the Tawfiq Islamic Center, which supports the terrorists of Al-Shabab, has 5400; Oslo’s Rabita mosque, run by a disciple of Holocaust fan Yusuf al-Qaradawi, has 2500; Minhaj ul-Quran, whose founder has said that any critic of Muhammed, whether “Muslim, Jew, Christian, infidel, man, or woman, will be executed like a dog,” has 3000.

For a clear picture of just how Islam has influenced Norway -- and is preparing to influence it in the future -- one had only to watch the NRK news-discussion program Dagsnytt 18, also (as it happens) on January 10. The topic was this: Islam Net (see above) had invited a famous Islamic scholar to Norway to give a talk under its auspices. Audun Lysbakken, head of the Socialist Left Party, was concerned that this scholar supports such “barbaric” practices as stoning adulteresses, and had asked Islam Net (pretty please) to disin-

vite him. On Dagsnytt 18 that evening, you could see Lysbakken meekly repeating his polite request, all the while assuring everyone that he fully respected Islam Net’s freedom of speech (a freedom that, he and other politicians stridently insisted after the Breivik atrocities, should be denied to the critics of Islam). Sitting beside Lysbakken in the NRK studio was Islam Net leader Fahad Qureishi, who, with not an ounce of meekness in his body, passionately dressed Lysbakken down, instructing him that what he called “barbaric” is, in fact, Islam itself, and in using the word barbaric Lysbakken was calling the Prophet himself (“peace be upon him”) barbaric -- an act that was plainly, in Qureishi’s view, the very gravest of offenses. Lysbakken, he warned portentously, should choose his words more carefully.

Rarely, if ever, have Norwegians been vouchsafed so concise and vivid a foretaste of what awaits them, or their posterity, if they continue to let their country be governed by the dangerous self-delusions of Lars Østby and his ilk. I’d encourage you to watch the Dagsnytt 18 segment yourself (which begins about 25 minutes into the show). It doesn’t really matter all that much if you don’t understand Norwegian: the steely look in Qureishi’s eyes, the authoritarian tone of his voice, and the feeble, pathetic, baffled reactions to his incendiary tirade by Lysbakken and the program host tell you all you need to know.

Officials deny Toulouse siege arrest of French shooting suspect Mohamed Merah

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French police continue to lay siege to an apartment block where a self-declared al-Qaeda militant suspected of committing a series of deadly attacks on troops and Jewish children is holed up.

Local media had earlier reported the hours long siege in southwestern France had ended in the arrest of the suspect, identified as Mohamed Merah. Those reports have now been denied by French Interior Minister Claude Gueant.

Gunfire erupted as members of the RAID police special forces team tried to storm Merah's apartment in a residential district of Toulouse in a pre-dawn raid, and two officers were wounded, Gueant said.

Officials said that Merah, a 23-year-old Frenchman of Algerian descent who has visited Afghanistan and Pakistan, bragged of being an al-Qaeda member and said he had killed to avenge the deaths of Palestinian children.

About 300 police, some in bullet-proof body armor, have cordoned off an area surrounding the four-storey house where the Merah has been holed up on the ground floor.

A police source had said earlier that authorities would not allow the siege to drag on indefinitely. Another source claimed Merah also planned to kill another soldier. He said the suspect "told investigators this morning that he had decided to kill a soldier in Toulouse on Wednesday morning and had already identified the victim."

Merah had been arrested for bomb making in the southern Afghan province of Kandahar in 2007 but escaped months later in a Taliban prison break, the director of prisons in Kandahar said.

Kandahar prison chief Ghulam Faruq said that security forces detained Merah on Dec. 19, 2007, and he was sentenced to three years in jail for planting

SHOOTING SIMILARITIES

A gunman has shot dead a teacher and three children in the French city of Toulouse. Three soldiers were killed in a similar style in two separate incidents last week.



bombs in Kandahar province, the Taliban's birthplace.

Merah escaped jail along with up to 1,000 prisoners, including 400 Taliban insurgents, during a Taliban attack on southern Afghanistan's main prison in June 2008.

Israel criticizes EU official for comparing France Jewish school shooting to Gaza children deaths. Interior Minister Claude Gueant said the gunman was

a French citizen of Algerian origin who had been to Pakistan and Afghanistan and had carried out his killings in revenge for French military involvement abroad.

President Nicolas Sarkozy, running for re-election in five weeks time, said France should not give way to discrimination or vengeance after the shootings of a rabbi and the three children, and three soldiers of North African origin.

Sarkozy claimed the three French paratroopers gunned down last week were victims of a “terrorist execution”.

His comments come after far-right leader Marine Le Pen, a rival presidential candidate, said France should wage war on Islamic fundamentalism.

About 300 police have earlier cordoned off an area surrounding a four-storey house in Toulouse where the 24-year-old is holed up on the ground floor.

“I have brought the Jewish and Muslim communities together to show that terrorism will not manage to break our nation’s feeling of community,” Sarkozy said after meeting community leaders. “We must stand together. We must not cede to discrimination or vengeance.”

Interior Minister Gueant said Merah, who had been under surveillance since the attack on the first of the soldiers last week, wanted revenge “for the Palestinian children and he also wanted to attack the French army because of its foreign intervention.”

He said Merah was a member of an ideological Islamic group in France but this organization was not involved in plotting any violence.

“We are certain that the man surrounded by police, and whose surrender is expected, is the one who committed this series of killings,” Gueant told BFM television.

He said Merah had thrown a Colt 45 pistol out of a window of the block of flats in exchange for a “communication device” or mobile phone, but was still armed. Police evacuated the other residents at 11 a.m (1000 GMT).

Police sources said they had conducted a controlled explosion of the suspect’s car at around 9:00 a.m. after discovering it was loaded with weapons.

Merah’s girlfriend and brother, who was also known to authorities as a radical Islamist, have also been arrested, officials said. French police said they



had found explosives in the car of Merah’s brother. A source close to the inquiry said the explosives consisted of black powder that could be lignite, a slow-burning fuel.

Gueant said Merah had contacted the first soldier he attacked under the pretext of wanting to buy his motorcycle.

Investigators identified the IP address he used — that of his mother — because he was already under surveillance for radical Islamist beliefs.

“We knew, and that is why he was under surveillance, that he had travelled to Afghanistan and Pakistan,” the minister said.

The telephone of the man and his family was tapped from Monday and with the help of other information the police decided to raid his house. Merah has a criminal record in France, Gueant said, but nothing indicating such an attack was possible.

Sarkozy had been informed of the standoff early in the morning, officials said.

The president’s handling of the crisis could be a decisive factor in determining how the French people vote in the two-round presidential elections in April and May.

In Jerusalem, the Jewish victims from the Ozar Hatorah school were buried. Parliament speaker Reuben Rivlin said in his eulogy at the hill-top cemetery that the attack was inspired by “wild animals with hatred in their hearts.”

Immigrants and Islam have been major themes of the campaign after



Paris Prosecutor Francois Molins said on Tuesday that the gunman had filmed the killings in the school. He first wounded Rabbi Jonathan Sandler as he entered the school and then cornered eight-year-old Myriam Monsonogo and shot her in the head, he said. He then returned outside and shot Sandler and his two children, who had rushed to his side, at point blank range.

Authorities believe that the gunman in the school shooting was the same person responsible for killing the seven people because the same Colt 45 handgun was used in all the attacks and in each case the gunman arrived on a Yamaha scooter with his face hidden by a motorcycle helmet.

Sarkozy tried to win over the voters of Le Pen, who quickly called for a war on fundamentalism.

“The risk of fundamentalism has been underestimated in our country. Certain political and religious groups are developing in the face of a certain laxness,” she told the i-Tele news channel, questioning the decision to deploy in Afghanistan.

“We must now wage this war against these fundamentalist political and religious group that are killing our children, that are killing our Christian children, our Christian young men, young Muslim men and Jewish children.”

But leaders of the Jewish and Muslim communities pointed out that the gunman was a lone extremist.

Dalil Boubakeur at the main mosque in Paris told Europe 1 radio that no one should link the Toulouse events and the Muslim religion, which is “99% peaceful, responsible, non-violent and well-integrated into the country.”

Family tragedy: Arie, Jonathan and Gabriel Sandler were all killed in the shooting outside a Jewish school in Toulouse, France.

France’s military presence in Afghanistan has divided the two main candidates in the election. Socialist frontrunner Francois Hollande has said he will pull them out by the end of this year while Sarkozy aims for the end of 2013.

Jean Marc, a 56-year-old restaurant owner in the city who declined to give his last name, said he believed the crisis would benefit the far right or Sarkozy in the election.

“The Socialists don’t talk about this stuff and it shows they don’t know what they are doing,” he said. “They [the police] need to get this guy.”

