

World reacts in shock, solidarity after Paris attacks

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Alastair Macdonald, Reuters

World leaders responded with shock and pledges of solidarity for France following the killing of scores of people in attacks in Paris on Friday night, though there was little action any could immediately take.

The United Nations Security Council issued a statement condemning "barbaric and cowardly terrorist attacks" involving assailants using guns and bombs on several venues, including the national sports stadium and a major music venue.

Divided on many issues, including on the war in Syria that has fuelled Islamist violence, the United States and Russia both voiced their support in messages to French President Francois Hollande.

"Once again we've seen an outrageous attempt to terrorise innocent civilians," said US President Barack Obama. "We stand prepared and ready to provide whatever assistance that the government and the people of France need."

"Those who think that they can terrorise the people of France or the values that they stand for are wrong," Obama said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin sent his deep condolences to Hollande and all the people of France following the "horrible terrorist attacks in Paris", the Kremlin said in a statement.

"Russia strongly condemns this inhumane killing and is ready to provide any and all assistance to investigate these terrorist crimes."

In January, an attack on the offices of French satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* left 12 people dead. A second siege ended with the deaths of four hostages.

The Western defence alliance Nato said it stood with France, a founder member.

Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said, "I am deeply shocked by the horrific terrorist attacks across Paris tonight. My thoughts are with the families of the victims, with all those affected, and with the people of France.

"We stand strong and united in the fight against terrorism. Terrorism will never defeat democracy."

In Europe, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, whose foreign minister was attending a France-Germany soccer match with Hollande when the stadium was attacked, said, "I am deeply shaken by the news and pictures that are reaching us from Paris.

"The German government is in contact with the French government and has passed on a message of sympathy and solidarity from the German people."

British Prime Minister David Cameron said, "I am shocked by events in Paris tonight. Our thoughts and prayers are with the French people. We will do whatever we can to help."

In Brussels, the leaders of European Union institutions, which have been trying to coordinate security responses since the Islamist attacks in Paris in January, joined the chorus.

"I am confident the authorities and the French people will overcome this new trial," European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker said.

European Council president Donald Tusk said he was following events "with horror".

- Reuters