

The Museum and Memorial of Terrorism

a place of recognition and understanding



On June 15, 2020, French president Emmanuel Macron appointed Henry Rousso, a French historian known for his work on collective memory, to oversee the preliminary project for the Museum and Memorial of Terrorism.

Public Interest Group

A public interest group was created on February 1, 2021, to bring this task to completion. The group consists of:



01

a governance board of founding members chaired by Henry Rousso, bringing together seven French ministries — Justice; Europe and Foreign Affairs; Interior; Culture; National Education, Youth and Sport; Higher Education, Research and Innovation; Remembrance and Veterans, attached to the Ministry for the Armed Forces — as well as the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), the National Audiovisual Institute (INA), and the French Foundation to Support Victims of Terrorism (FAVT);

03

a scientific and cultural board chaired by the sociologist Michel Wieviorka, comprising two dozen researchers and experts in relevant fields from France and abroad, named for two-year appointments;

02

an advisory committee chaired by François Molins, Public Prosecutor at the French Court of Cassation, bringing together victims' associations, the president of the association of French mayors representing towns affected by terrorism, directors of foreign museums and memorials dedicated to terrorism, and experts from a broad swath of arenas;

04

an operational team led by the magistrate Élisabeth Pelsez, made up of permanent and associate members.



A Museum of History and Society

The first of its kind, this institution will be a place of remembrance, a museum of history and society, a platform for documentation and research, and a center for educational programming, lectures and debates. It will complete a commemorative mission that already includes the French National Medal of Recognition for Victims of Terrorism, the French National Day for Victims of Terrorism, and the creation of the French National Resource and Resilience Center.

Victims, survivors, those wounded both physically and psychologically, as well as first responders and relief workers (fire fighters, rescue workers, police officers and gendarmes, doctors, community members) are at the heart of the mission at the Museum and Memorial of Terrorism.

The Museum and Memorial of Terrorism covers all the acts of terrorism that have struck France and the French people over the past fifty years.

It is intended to be a place that fosters understanding and recognition: honoring victims is also understanding why they were the target of terrorism acts and giving meaning to their experience. It is intended to be a place of empathy, learning, and communication. The Museum and Memorial of Terrorism addresses the issue of terrorism head on, but with the distance needed to gain a better understanding of its underpinnings.

Located near Paris, the Museum and Memorial of Terrorism is national in scope and broadly accessible to French and foreign visitors.

Compared to the handful of similar sites around the world (Oklahoma City, New York, Oslo, Vitoria-Gasteiz), the French initiative goes beyond a single attack or single type of terrorism to consider all the victims and terrorist acts that have impacted France and the French people over the past fifty years.

The permanent exhibition will be threefold:

01

The history of terrorism

since the 1970s and the emergence of a new type of international terrorism, with a retrospective going back to the nineteenth century

02

Victims' voices

and their place in public policies, legal procedures, and mobilizations

03

Societies facing terrorism

and their responses in the realms of policy, law, culture, art, urbanism, public health, and community

The collections at the Museum and Memorial of Terrorism include personal objects, archival documentation, evidence from closed cases, images, testimonies, works of art, and so forth. The Museum and Memorial of Terrorism has developed strong partnerships with many heritage institutions (archives, libraries, French and foreign museums). It works in cooperation with the French National Center of Scientific Research (CNRS), the French National Audiovisual Institute (INA), the National Museums of France-Grand Palais (RMN-GP), the École du Louvre, and the French National Institute of Cultural Heritage (INP).

The Museum and Memorial of Terrorism seeks to provide a narrative that facilitates a historical understanding of terrorism. Through a study of causes and consequences, its aim is to go beyond feelings of shock created by an attack. In its appeal to culture and reason, the Museum and Memorial of Terrorism is embedded in a tradition of resistance.





Reaching Out to All Visitors

The Museum and Memorial of Terrorism has opted for an open and inclusive approach to visitors. It is a space for victims to reflect, be heard, and interact. It welcomes all visitors and makes accommodations for special needs. It will feature frequently rotating temporary exhibitions, visitor experiences, and cultural programming with a strong emphasis on lectures and conferences, live performances, and film documentaries.

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Special activities are planned: workshops for families, classes for professionals directly impacted by terrorism (police officers, judicial officials, care workers), and a studio lab for students and academics.

A pilot exhibition in collaboration with middle and high school students lays the foundation for the Museum and Memorial of Terrorism's commitment to involving schools.

The Museum and Memorial of Terrorism's online presence will help build a direct relationship with our visitors, make our collections and databases accessible, and launch crowdsourced collection drives.



A Place of Resilience and Resistance

Terrorism is a structural phenomenon whose contours can change in unpredictable ways. The Museum and Memorial of Terrorism has set out to investigate the cultural, scientific, and societal reverberation that this violence and its threat pose for the present and the future.

On May 11, 2021, a decisive stage was reached with the choice to inaugurate the Museum and Memorial of Terrorism on Mont-Valérien in Suresnes, a western suburb of Paris, near the *Mémorial de la France combattante*, a memorial to French fighters of the Second World War. The Museum and Memorial of Terrorism will be located in what was formerly the *École de Plein Air*, an open air school built in 1934 by Eugène Beaudouin and Marcel Lods, commissioned by the town's then socialist mayor Henri Sellier.

Resilience is rooted in the heritage of this modernist site, which was built to provide ailing children with an education tailored to their physical conditions.

The building was registered as a historic monument in 2002, and its grounds provide an exceptionally calm and peaceful park. The site will be renovated in keeping with the original spirit of the space. Preliminary studies were launched in late 2021. The scientific and cultural program was submitted to the French president in March 2022. The museum inauguration is planned for 2027.



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