

## Moutaharrik and Khachia, their dream of going to Syria, and bomb poetry

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**Abderrahim Moutaharrik and Abderrahmane Khachia** met each other through **Khachia's brother, Oussama, who died in Syria**, in December 2015, after being expelled from Italy and from Switzerland. The investigation by the Italian Secret Service has reconstructed every step in their acquaintance and in their growing enthusiasm for jihadism, until it became necessary to intervene to prevent the escalation from ending in tragedy. Here is the reconstruction.

**Moutaharrik was employed as a manual worker** by a company that produces machinery for bakeries in Lecco Province. He had practised the martial art of kickboxing for many years, achieving a semi-professional level. Since 2013, he had frequently travelled to nearby Switzerland, to the **Fight Gym Club of Lugano**, in Canobbio, near Lugano, to train in kickboxing.

Over the years, he became a semi-professional kickboxer, and, until 22 September 2015, competed also in international competitions, in the Fight Gym Club of Lugano team. His matches were publicised on a dedicated Facebook page, where he can be seen fighting, wearing some symbols of radical Islam. In 2015, it was discovered that Moutaharrik had posted an image of himself, among others of a similar kind, showing him during a competition as **he entered the ring, wearing a shirt with the "Daesh" symbol**.

In addition to his great friendship with Mohamed Koraichi, who, it was later said, Moutaharrik turned

to, in order to obtain the authorisation/recommendation to join IS and to go to the territories controlled by the group, he was found to have an almost brotherly relationship also with an inhabitant of Varese, **Oussama Khachia**, a foreign fighter who left Switzerland for Syria, and died in Iraq, probably in the town of Ramadi, during an air raid carried out by the coalition against the militiamen of the so-called “Caliphate”.

**The friendship between Moutaharrik, Khachia and Mohamed Koraichi (who has been in Syria with his wife, Alice Brignoli, and their three children, since February 2015) that emerged from the wiretapping and room bugging was indisputable. Indeed, thanks to the investigations, the continual contacts between them, which increased quickly immediately after the news of Oussama’s death** were confirmed. During these contacts, they expressed their clear wish to join IS in order to commit terrorist attacks in the occupied territories, or in Italy, looking for contacts to obtain the necessary authorisations (Tazkia) for the journey to Daesh; they obtained the Tazkia thanks to Mohamed Koraichi.

In one of the dialogues between the two, **which was intercepted in a car**, Khachia said, “I swear my father told me this, you have to choose your way (of God), he had already chosen ... it’s a good thing we woke up; he said he came out of the dark and found the light; we were going the wrong way, we were busy, fortunately, God woke us up and put us in these times, times of fun killing.”

**Moutaharrik replied**, “There are lots and lots of stories, my friend; I got up once and started planning. I said I wanted to strike and blow up (the Embassy of) Israel in Rome.”

Khachia said, “What ... the cons ...?”

Moutaharrik Abderrahim replied, “Yes ... the Embassy ... and I went to an Albanian guy in Varese and I told him to get me a gun; I wanted to buy it from him, and maybe he became suspicious about me and turned his back on me; I called him lots of times, but he found me a gun, he found me a gun, but he...”

Khachia said, “A person has to present something for his religion, for his God, I also think this.”

Moutaharrik replied, “As I was saying, this was in 2009.”

**During the various meetings in Lecco and Varese**, Abderrahmane and Moutaharrik **did nothing except speak about how to obtain the Tazkia (the authorisation to go to Syria) and how to reach Daesh**, also in Libya. Abderrahmane mentioned a common acquaintance on Facebook, a man who lives in Turkey, who facilitates entry into the Caliphate’s territories. Moutaharrik followed his friend Koraichi, who was already in Syria with his family.

And it was from him that **they got the long-awaited Tazkia**, after Moutaharrik’s wife, Salma Bencharki, started working to obtain a loan from Deutsche Bank, making out the application in the name of the husband, who she informed of the positive outcome at the end of February.

At that point, Salma called Koraichi’s sister, Wafa, and asked her to make sure that her husband got the Tazkia through her brother in Syria.

Salma: “Yes, the next time you speak to your brother, give him my greetings, and to Alice, and tell him that Abderrahim sends him his greetings. Tell your brother these words, he’ll understand and know what they mean. Tell your brother that Abderrahim wants the Tazkia.”

Wafa: “What?”

Salma: Tell him that Abderrahim wants the Tazkia, and that’s all.”

Wafa: “OK, I’ll tell him.”

Salma: “OK? And he’ll understand what it means.”

Just when the preparations for the departure were being made, **the message from the Prince** (the Sheikh) arrived, again via WhatsApp. It was an audio message **that urged Abderrahim to strike where they were, in Italy, the country of the crusaders**. Here is a part of what it said.

“I remind you of the words of Sheikh al-Adnani Shami, may Allah protect him when he said ‘the operation of the wolf’ meant ‘the brothers united to fight the enemies of Allah in Christian countries.’ It is a single operation which satisfies us more than dozens of bombs and makes us see more blessings and more impact in creating suffering among the enemies of Allah. If you are suffering, they will suffer like you. We are hoping to get from Allah what they are not hoping for. Thanks to Allah, we have heard of the operations in France, of the invasions in France, in Paris (blessed by Allah), in Belgium, in America, from East to West, thanks to Allah. You will be those who wish to do this good, there in Christian countries, in Rome, in Italy, in Spain, in Christian France, in the Christian United Kingdom. May Allah curse them all together. Mohammed said, ‘Heaven awaits those who fight for Allah on a camel.’ The meaning of ‘on a camel’, is the amount of water that the camel drinks.”

Shortly after, they also received a so-called “**bomb poem**”, a kind of lullaby that urged the two to strike like lone wolves, in Europe and, in particular, in Italy. **The poem was part of the indoctrination that the two had been subjected to** by their friend Koraichi, **words that they listened to with great joy and enthusiasm**, so much so that the investigators were forced to end the investigation and make the arrests, before something terrible could happen.

“Listen to the Sheikh. Strike! Sparks will fly from your palms. Cut throats with you knife; and glory will await you. Make your belt explode in the middle of a crowd, saying ‘Allah Akbar’. Strike! Explode like a volcano! Upset the unfaithful. Face the enemy crowd, growl like thunder, say ‘Allah Akbar’, and blow yourself up! Oh, like a lion, that doesn’t bend, this is the glory brigade, who will win. May our Caliphate return to the top and give Islam back its glory, its battalions which have upset neighbourhoods and have gone to annihilate the unfaithful without surrendering. Cancel the borders that decimated us and reunite us in strength in every country after the bloodshed and driving out, and give unto the hawk the heroes of the enemies. Oh, Islamic State! Light the fire on the flocking crowd, may grenades fall down on the head of the crusader, have no mercy until he breaks, no life except that of a people that has fought for Allah (the Jihadists), in his true battle or as he ordered, will reach Heaven, like the first fighters. Oh Abderrahim, may you head for the glory that calls those who go towards her. Shout ‘Allah Akbar’.”

di Roberto Rotondo Translated by Laterza e Pellegrino (Reviewed by Prof. Rolf Cook)