

1. Mark the parts that confuse you. Make a marginal note to explain how it confuses you. (**Bold, underlined** words in bold must be annotated.)
2. Use what context clues you can to make a guess about what confuses you.
3. Comment on the text by connecting to personal experience or previous knowledge.
4. Answer the comprehension questions on a clean sheet of paper.

## Belgium: Europe's front line in the war on terror

CNN

Comprehension

Comments

Belgium (CNN)Brussels: It's a quaint but bustling city, famed for its picture postcard squares, its chocolate and its beer. But it is rapidly becoming infamous, too, as a fertile<sup>1</sup> recruiting ground for jihadi fighters.

According to police, the carnage of the Paris attacks was plotted here, and it was in these streets that fugitive Salah Abdeslam hid out in an apartment after abandoning his mission, dumping his suicide belt in a Parisian street and calling friends for help, after apparently driving his co-conspirators to their deaths.

That Abdeslam was caught at all appears to have been an enormous stroke of luck. Despite a massive security operation, the trail appeared to have gone cold, until police, initiating a search for evidence at Abdeslam's safe house on Tuesday, encountered a **barrage** of gunfire which tipped them off that something -- or someone -- important was inside.

Abdeslam and another man are believed to have escaped while a fellow suspect distracted police; he was eventually shot dead but by then Abdeslam had fled, across the rooftops.

Three days later, on Friday, officers finally cornered him in a daring daytime raid on another apartment, bringing to an end an international manhunt that had lasted more than four months.

But authorities here still don't know what -- if any -- terror plans are in the works, even with Abdeslam himself finally captured alive and charged, awaiting extradition to France.

### Hotbed of jihadist ideology

Belgium remains wary and on edge, its alert level stuck at "grave" -- the second highest stage -- with security forces warning of a very real threat of attack.

In the past several weeks, CNN went to Molenbeek, a working-class district that has found notoriety<sup>2</sup> as a hotbed of violent jihadist ideology, to find out what -- if anything -- had changed since the bloodshed in Paris four months ago.

It took months to coax people to meet with us. Many had received threats from self-proclaimed extremists directly to their mobile phones, warning them against speaking to the media.

### Inside a terror breeding ground

Belgian officials have been unable to **quell** the flow of fighters traveling to ISIS territory, and -- perhaps more worryingly, authorities are terrified the

1 Capable of producing results

2 The state of being famous or well known for some bad quality or deed.

fighters will bring another Paris-style attack -- back to Europe.

Brussels[, the capital of Belgium,] is just a short drive away from a host of major cities: Paris, of course, but also Amsterdam, Cologne, Strasbourg, Frankfurt, Berlin; hop into a car or onto a train and almost anyone can travel between any number of European cities within a few hours. Only recently, especially after the Paris attacks, did some European nations begin implementing immigration checks.

Per capita<sup>3</sup>, Belgium has the highest number of foreign fighters in Syria of any Western European nation. Experts say nearly 500 men and women have left Belgium for Syria and Iraq since 2012. At the same time, they say more than 100 Belgians have returned home from ISIS territory-- many facing immediate arrest. But everyone CNN spoke to admits these numbers err on the conservative side; no one knows for certain exactly how many have gone and how many have returned.

## ISIS recruiting new members

Belgium's Interior Minister Jan Jambon told us the security forces' work to counter terrorist threats is having an impact, but admits ISIS recruiters are still able to **ply** their extremist trade in Belgium.

"Recruitment continues -- at a much lower level than we were used to, for example two years ago -- but yes, it continues," he says. "It is difficult to find the people that are [responsible] -- you can do it in a small room in every house."

Family and community members brave enough to try and stop the radicalization open themselves up to threats -- and the possibility of worse. "We live in an era where everybody that tries to speak out and stand up for the truth will find people trying to stop him from doing so," says Belgian Imam<sup>4</sup> Sheikh Sulayman Van Ael.

For Van Ael, a convert who is **outspoken** on the issue of jihadism, the dangers are very real; we meet in secret, his bodyguard hovering nearby throughout our conversation. But he insists: "I am not afraid ... I am taking precautions, but I don't hide -- I get out, I walk around. Whatever has to happen will happen. It's not a nice feeling knowing that people are like that. But it doesn't frighten me."

Imams, he says, must be willing to contest the Islamic justifications being used by ISIS and their **ilk**.

## Questions

1. Who is Salah Abdeslam?
2. Where is Molenbeek? Why is it significant?
3. Why would Brussels be a good base of operations for terrorists?
- 4.

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3 In relation to the total population.

4 An imam is an Islamic religious leader, something like a pastor in Islam.