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EU lawmakers dodge bullets in Mumbai hotel attacks

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European parliament lawmakers told Thursday how they watched in horror as suspected Islamic militant opened fire with machine guns in the **Mumbai attacks**.

A European parliament delegation was in the Taj Mahal Palace hotel in the Indian city along with top industry executives and well-heeled tourists when the stunning raids were launched on Wednesday night.

The head of Madrid's regional government, who was on an official trip to India, said she walked barefoot through pools of blood to get away from the carnage.

Sajjad Karim, a Conservative member of the European parliament from northwest England, told BBC radio how he was walking out of the front doors of the Taj Mahal Palace when the gunmen burst in.

"All of a sudden there was gunshots that we could hear from outside the main grounds of the hotel. We were directed back into the hotel."

He went on: "As we got to the rear exit another gunman came in who was carrying an automatic machine gun type of weapon and he just started firing that, quite indiscriminately really."

The MEPs hid in a kitchen area, while the gunmen went on their rampage reportedly demanding whether guests had British or US passports.

They "made their way along the corridors, and they were entering rooms and firing and security guards were exchanging fire with them."

The European Union expressed "horror and indignation" over the attacks.

European parliament spokesman Jaume Duch said the EU delegation included two Germans, two Britons, a Pole, a Hungarian and a Spaniard, all from the same parliamentary committee. They were with six officials and three interpreters.

"In principle, everyone is doing fine at last word. We are quite relieved," said the spokesman, adding that most found refuge in the French consulate in the city.

Duch said one Hungarian official went to a Mumbai hospital after being caught up "in the middle of the shooting" but left again with no injury.

Spanish deputy Ignasi Guardans was interviewed on Spanish national radio as he hid in a restaurant with other EU lawmakers.

"This is happening right now. There has been an attack on several areas of Mumbai at the same time," Gardans said.

"The worst is that it seems that the terrorists are driving around Mumbai shooting in the air and hurling grenades from cars," he said.

Esperanza Aguirre, president of the Madrid regional government, was at Mumbai's Oberoi Hotel, local government officials said.

Aguirre, 56, escaped unhurt and arrived back in Madrid on Thursday. She said: "When we saw the panic in the eyes of the staff, we understood the enormous scale of what was happening."

"We arrived at the hotel around 9:45pm, when I went into the hall I spotted a childhood friend ... who was in Mumbai to bring back the body of his brother who died the previous day," she said.

When the shooting began, "I first thought it was windows shattering, but the noise turned into machine-gun fire.

"We were among the last to be evacuated from the lobby. We first went behind the reception desk, then the hotel staff made us go downstairs, first into the kitchen, then into the laundry, into the offices and finally in a sort of reception room where there were around 200 people. They told us not to leave."

Moments later, Aguirre and her delegation learnt that the lobby was in flames and decided to leave through a hidden door.

"I saw pools of blood, which I walked through with bare feet, but I didn't see any of the wounded or terrorists," she said.

The outgoing chief executive of the Anglo-Dutch conglomerate Unilever, Patrick Cescau, a Frenchman, and his successor, Dutchman Paul Polman, were also at the Taj Mahal meeting Indian business associates, but a group spokesman said both were safe.

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