

Brussels schools reopen, manhunt ongoing for Paris suspects

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Brussels: As police armed with automatic weapons stood guard, schools and some subway stations in the Belgian capital reopened today for the first time since emergency measures were imposed four days ago in the wake of the Paris attacks.

Belgian and French authorities continued a manhunt for at least two suspects believed directly linked to the killings in Paris.

About half of all subway stations in Brussels were operating for the first time since the weekend.

Despite the easing of restrictions, Brussels home to the European Union and NATO headquarters remained under the highest alert level due to what authorities have described as a serious and imminent threat of attack.

Emergency measures had shut down shops, schools and subways in the city since Saturday.

The threat alert level is expected to remain at that level until at least Monday, barring a major development such as the arrest of suspects in the Paris attacks.

The Belgian government has also ordered health and emergency services to take precautionary measures to ensure their services aren't infiltrated by extremists.

"We have to be sure that we can see everybody has an identification badge," Health Minister Maggie De Block told VRT network. "When ambulances arrive, we have to see from where they come, who is in it. Really as a precaution."

Belgian Interior Minister Jan Jambon said raids carried out Sunday night had been designed to foil an imminent attack in Brussels.

Authorities had detained 16 people, but released all but one of them the following day. No explosives or firearms were seized.

"There were indications that there would be attacks on Sunday evening and they did not materialize," Jambon said, adding that otherwise "you don't impose terror level 4," the highest possible.

The minister refused to elaborate what kind of attacks the government believed had been planned.

The reopening of schools and some subway stations restored a sense of normality to Brussels, parts of which have been deserted for days.

At Brussels' College Saint-Jean-Berchmans, some parents gave their children a quick kiss before dropping them off, while several police officers guarded the entrance, including one with a machine gun.

Among the students at the school is Belgium's Princess Eleonore.

Some children looked visibly worried as they arrived, but most gave a friendly handshake to a burly school official guarding the entrance alongside the police officers.

- AP