

Hamas Praises Terrorist Attack in Tel Aviv

More than a dozen Israelis were wounded, with at least four suffering serious injuries, when a Palestinian terrorist went on a stabbing spree at a main road intersection in central Tel Aviv on Wednesday morning.

The attack took place around 7:15 AM, just as the morning rush hour was getting underway. A Palestinian male in his 20s from Tulkarem, who had entered Israel illegally, boarded Dan Bus No. 40, which was making its way from Bat Yam to northern Tel Aviv, at the Maariv junction. The terrorist pulled out a knife and stabbed the driver, who fought back and sprayed him with pepper spray, and a number of passengers before fleeing the bus. He then stabbed several nearby pedestrians.

The terrorist, who was later identified in media reports as Hamza Matrouk, was shot in the leg by Israel Prison Service personnel who happened to be passing by the scene at the time of the attack. The IPS personnel detained the terrorist, who was lightly wounded, until police arrived to arrest him. He was then transported to Wolfson Medical Center in Holon.

The Israelis wounded in the attack were transported to Sourasky Medical Center or Sheba Medical Center for treatment. Dr. Pini Halperin, head of the emergency room at Sourasky, said, "The terrorist tried to harm as many people as possible. He struck each wounded person at least once or twice. It appears he used a very sharp knife."

Following the attack, the Israel Police raised its alert level across the country.

Hamas official Izzat al-Rishq called the attack "brave and heroic," saying it was carried out by a "hero."

"This was a natural response of the Palestinian people to the crimes of the brutal Zionist occupier," he said.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Wednesday's terrorist attack in Tel Aviv was "the direct result of the poisonous incitement being disseminated by the Palestinian Authority against the Jews and their state. This same terrorism is trying to attack us in Paris, Brussels and everywhere.

"It is Hamas—the partners [of PA President Mahmoud Abbas] in a unity government—who hastened to commend this attack. This is the same Hamas that announced it will sue Israel at the International Criminal Court in The Hague. Abu Mazen [Abbas] is responsible for both the incitement and the dangerous move at the ICC in The Hague. We will continue to take strong action against the terrorism that has been trying to attack us since the founding of the state, and we will see to it that it does not achieve its goal."

Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman placed blame for the attack on Abbas, Hamas and a number of Israeli Arab leaders.

"The ones behind the attack this morning in Tel Aviv are also those behind the riots in Rahat and the wave of attacks in Jerusalem—Abu Mazen, Ismail Haniyeh, Raed Saleh, Hanin Zoabi, Ahmad Tibi, and their partners. They are all part of the same drive to undermine the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state, and it doesn't matter to them whether it's in Judea and Samaria, the Negev, the Galilee, Tel Aviv or Jerusalem. All of them are part of the same arm whose goal is to eliminate the Jewish state. Therefore, we must act decisively against all these people who are operating under different names and on different levels but with the same goal: To kill Jews and destroy Israel."

Economy and Trade Minister Naftali Bennett said, "The person responsible for the attack this morning in Tel Aviv was the same person seen marching with world leaders a week ago in

Paris. When Abu Mazen incites daily against Jews and names squares after murderers, he turns himself into a knife dealer. The Israeli government must completely halt the flow of money to Abu Mazen the terrorist as long as he continues to fund the families of terrorists. Words are not enough."

Labor leader Isaac Herzog said, "The IDF, Shin Bet and Israel Police have our full support in the uncompromising war against terrorism wherever there is a threat to Israelis, both inside the country and abroad. Today, the citizens of Israel do not have a feeling of security—not in Jerusalem, not in the Gaza border area and not in Tel Aviv. We will change this, with assertive and determined action [against] terrorist organizations and their leaders."

U.S. Ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro said, "We condemn strongly the deplorable terrorist attack that took place this morning on a bus and in the streets of Tel Aviv."

Before Wednesday, the most recent terrorist attack in Tel Aviv had taken place in November, when an IDF soldier was stabbed to death by a Palestinian terrorist outside the Haganah train station.

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