

# Terror in Tel Aviv: Israeli Families Mourn Victims

Two days after Friday's deadly terrorist attack on Tel Aviv's bustling Dizengoff Street, the father of 26-year-old Israeli Jewish victim Alon Bakal wants the world to know about his late son.

"There was a reason that I spoke to the journalists right away," said David Bakal at Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center. "I wanted everyone to know who Alon was. I wanted to tell everyone how generous he was. When he came with me to synagogue, he used to make donations in his brother's and sister's names, not for himself. ... He had a heart of gold and the bullet pierced his heart of gold."

Alon was a manager at the Simta bar, where suspected Arab Israeli terrorist Nashat Milhem first opened fire with a submachine gun in a gruesome attack that also killed 30-year-old Shimon Ruimi and wounded seven others, two seriously.

"My eldest son, Avi, had moved to Tel Aviv on Friday, and we had just helped him move. Then Alon's girlfriend called to say there had been a terrorist attack at the pub Alon worked at," David Bakal said.

Avi then ran to the pub and saw his brother lying on the ground.

David Bakal went straight to the hospital, hoping to meet his son there. "When I saw them bring him in on a stretcher, I fainted. I knew in my heart that he was dead. After they treated me and gave medication, they told me the news," he said.

Alon grew up in the northern Israeli city of Carmiel. He moved to Tel Aviv only three months ago. When he wasn't at work at

the pub, he volunteered with the Israeli charity Latet, which assists the needy. He was also a dedicated fan of the Hapoel Jerusalem Basketball Club.

Yarden Goldfinger, who volunteered with Alon at Latet, said, "He had a big, amazing heart, and he loved to help and to give to anyone who needed it. He always arrived at our volunteer activities with a big smile on his face and plenty of motivation."

Alon served as a combat soldier in the Golani Brigade of the Israel Defense Forces, and recently finished studying law and business management. He was set to begin his law apprenticeship at the law firm of attorney Dov Weissglass.

A few months ago, on Israel's Memorial Day for Fallen Soldiers and Victims of Terrorism, Alon wrote on Facebook, "We have one country, for good and for bad, a country with every type, religion and country in which people help the country in which people work day and night to make our lives better. ... In the name of all these heroes, we will show up every time we are called for reserve duty, even if it isn't the most convenient for us, so that we will be prepared and trained."

Carmiel Mayor Adi Eldar visited the Bakal family home on Saturday and said, "Carmiel is shocked and weeping over the murder of Alon Bakal. All of the city's residents are embracing his family."

Tel Aviv attack victim Shimon Ruimi's family, from the southern town of Ofakim, was similarly heartbroken. "I lost the most precious thing in the world. This is a very sad day for us," said Iris Ruimi, Shimon's mother.

"I can't understand this disaster; it's impossible to grasp," she said.

Iris said she met with the owner of the Simta pub on Saturday, and he apologized for her son's death. "I told him he has

nothing to apologize for," she went on to say. "He isn't to blame for what happened. The truth is, I feel we are all guilty, just because we are Jews."

Ruimi last spoke with her son on Thursday. "He told me that he missed me and that he would try to come visit on Friday," she said. "Look what happened, why he didn't come."

She went on to address the suspected Arab terrorist's family, saying, "Any mother who gives birth to a terrorist like that should have her family home destroyed. The terrorist must be punished—an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. And his father should not feel that his conscience is clear just because he turned in his son."

Shimon's friends and neighbors visited his family home on Saturday. One neighbor, Edna Fahima, said, "I've known him for many years. He was a sweet boy, and he stayed that way as long as I've known him. I only have good things to say about him. It's a great shame that his life ended this way."

Shimon was the third of four siblings—two brothers and two sisters. He worked in Beersheba as a manager at HOT, a telecommunications company.

Ofakim Mayor Itzik Danino said, "The entire Ofakim family is hurting and mourning this great loss."

Meanwhile, among the seven who were wounded in the attack but survived, four remained in the hospital as of Sunday. Ido Lazan and one other injured victim are in serious but stable condition at Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center, where they remain in medically induced comas and on respirators in the intensive care unit.

Israel Avitan is in stable condition with light wounds and hospitalized at Sheba Medical Center in Ramat Gan. Hadar Klein is also in stable condition with light wounds, at Rabin Medical Center in Petah Tikva.

Avitan, who came with Shimon to the Simta pub to celebrate a friend's birthday, said, "We were among the first to arrive at the pub; not everyone was there yet. I sat inside, and then two of our friends went to the bathroom, and Shimi (Shimon Ruimi) went outside for a cigarette. I didn't want to sit inside by myself, so I stepped outside to sit with him. Within seconds, I heard gunshots, and I felt something burning in my back."

According to Avitan, the terrorist sprayed bullets in every direction. "It took maybe 20 seconds," he said. "When I fell down, I looked to see if he would continue shooting at us, and he turned around and shot all over in the other direction. ... I saw the flashes from the gunfire, he fired everywhere, indiscriminately. I didn't see his face, he shot me in the back. I think he may have even shot in the air, he shot in every direction."

Only after seeing security footage of the attack did Avitan realize exactly what had happened. "In the video, I saw how close he was to me. The bullet sliced through my back. It went in and out. It's crazy. We made it through Lebanon, through Gaza, and then of all places in Tel Aviv," he said.

Ariel Nusbacher, the friend whose birthday was being celebrated at the bar, told Israel's *Channel 2*, "Shimi and I went outside to smoke a cigarette. We had barely managed to light our cigarettes when the gunfire few minutes earlier, a friend has called me aside and pointed out the man who, we would later find out, was the terrorist, saying he looked like someone we know. We were joking around, we had no idea what would happen."

Klein, 25, who was lightly injured, was attending another birthday celebration. She recalled the moment of the attack, saying, "I arrived with other friends to celebrate our friend's birthday and to have a couple of beers in the afternoon. I was talking to a friend when all of a sudden I

heard explosions, and my friend pushed me inside the first, I was sure the noises were coming from a party, from another birthday celebration. It was only after I heard people screaming and crying and saw people lying flat on the floor that I realized what happened.”

She continued, “I felt pain in my thigh—two rounds hit me in one side and came out the other. Luckily, one of them missed my main artery by a centimeter. Everyone tried to help was so much screaming and crying all around.”

*With reporting by Daniel Siryoti, Dan Lavie, Gadi Golan, and Maytal Yasur Beit-Or. For the original article, visit [. Used with permission.](#)*