



April 23, 2006

Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center
at the Center for Special Studies (C.S.S)

Suicide bombing attack at the old Central Bus Station in Tel Aviv¹



Poster appearing on the Hamas Internet site, www.palestine-info, commemorating the suicide bomber. The upper inscription is a verse from the Qur'an granting religious justification for the suicide bombing attack. Along the right side is a poem praising the suicide bomber and the attack (see translation below).

The victims

■ The suicide bombing attack carried out by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) at the old Central Bus Station in Tel Aviv **murdered nine people**: six **Israeli** civilians, a Jewish tourist from **France** and two workers from **Romania**. As of April 20, approximately 30 of the wounded were still hospitalized, two of them in critical

¹ April 23 update.

condition. Among the wounded are a **French** citizen, a **Slovakian** and two holders of both **American and Israeli** citizenship.

A. Israeli citizens²



Victor Erez, 60, from Givatayim. Survived by his wife and four children, mother, and four brothers and sisters.



Philip Balahsan, 45, from Ashdod. Survived by his wife and four children.



David Shaulov, 20, from Holon. Survived by his pregnant wife, two children, brother and sister.



Ariel Darhi, 31, from Bat Yam. Survived by his mother and two brothers.



Lily Yunes, 42, from Oranit. Survived by her husband and four children.



Binyamin Haputa, 47, from Lod. Survived by his brothers and sisters.

B. Foreign citizens



Marcel Cohen, 73, from France. Survived by son and three daughters.



Rosalia Beseneyi, 48, from Romania.



Piroshka Boda, 50, from Romania.

² <http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMO/Communication/IsraelUnderAttack/tel-aviv170406/>

Israel's responses

✚ Directly after the attack Shaul Mofaz, the Israeli Minister of Defense, called a meeting to discuss responses. According to the reports in Haaretz the following day (April 18), the following steps were decided on:

✓ **The region of Samaria would be isolated** by preventing the movement of Palestinians within it and from it to other areas of the West Bank (particularly from Jenin and Tulkarm to Nablus and Ramallah).

✓ **Targeted killings of senior PIJ members** would be carried out in the Gaza Strip, in addition to continued actions against terrorists launching Qassam rockets.

✓ **Searches and arrests would be intensified** in the West Bank, especially in the districts of **Jenin** and **Tulkarm**, two centers of PIJ terrorist infrastructures.

✓ **There would be a crackdown on Palestinians illegally in Israel** and on Israelis who help introduce illegal Palestinian workers into Israel (a conduit through which terrorist-operatives are infiltrated into Israeli territory).

✓ In view of additional warnings received of planned suicide bombing attacks against Israel, the **closure of Judea and Samaria would continue**.

✚ On April 18 acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert met with the Foreign Minister, the Defense Minister and the Interior Minister. After the meeting, **the government of Israel announced it was placing the responsibility for the suicide bombing attack on Hamas**, because as the elected government **not only did it do nothing to prevent terrorist attacks, its leaders made public statement justifying them**. The government announcement also stated that Israel would make no distinction between

terrorist organizations and that any organization involved in a terrorist attack would be punished immediately. In addition, the Prime Minister decided to hold deliberations next week about **increasing the pace of the construction of the security fence** around Jerusalem (Ynet, April 18).

☒ At the meeting it was also decided to **revoke the Israeli resident status** of Hamas members living in Israel (i.e., East Jerusalem). The decision related to one government member and three members of the Palestinian Legislative Council.³ In response, Farhat Ass'ad, Hamas spokesman for the West Bank, said that the entire Palestinian people opposed the decision. He said that the Israeli Interior Ministry could not revoke the citizenship of the residents of East Jerusalem (Ma'a News Agency, April 18). **Muhammad Abu Tir**, a resident of East Jerusalem and a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, described the decision as “arrogant hooliganism” and said that he and his colleagues were studying the legal aspects of the issue (Ali Waked, Ynet, April 18). The Palestinian justice minister said that the Hamas government would support its members' fight against the decision (AP, April 19).

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert: The order to carry out the suicide bombing attack came from Damascus

☒ On April 21, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told visiting members of the US Senate Budget Committee that the order to carry out the suicide bombing attack in Tel Aviv came from Damascus, and that after the attack a report was sent there (Haaretz and Ma'ariv, April 23).

PA responses

Hamas

☒ The Hamas leadership continues justifying the suicide bombing attack:

³ Two of them are apparently **Muhammad Mahmoud Abu Tir** and **Khaled Abu 'Arafa**, minister without portfolio responsible for matters pertaining to Jerusalem. Abu Tir was one of the senior Hamas members who blamed Israel and the “occupation” for the April 17 suicide bombing attack (Ali Waked, Ynet, April 18).

✓ **Prime minister Ismail Haniya**, who delayed his response to the attack to a cabinet meeting, repeated his claim that it was Israeli actions which caused it (Reuters, April 18). He also instructed Hamas ministers not to comment on it (in an attempt to minimize the damage to the government's image) (Al-Hayat, April 18). He also said that the attack was born of the accumulated anger of the Palestinian street (the Saudia Arabian newspaper Okaz, April 19).

✓ **Interior minister Sayid Siyam** said that Palestinians had the right to defend themselves against Israel in every way they thought possible (Reuters, April 18).

✓ Hamas spokesman **Sami Abu Zuhri**, in response to the demand made by the Secretary General of the UN that the Hamas government condemn the attack, blamed the UN for siding with Israel, for silence regarding Israel's actions and for encouraging Israel's "aggression" (Ramatan News Agency, April 18).

Hamas turns the suicide bomber into a hero and role model

✓ The chat room of the Hamas Internet site **issued an announcement glorifying the suicide bomber which included a poem praising the attack** (www.Palestine-info, April 18). The poem had five stanzas (see the poster on the first page), the first, third and fifth of which are:

"Your burning glances,
oh, self-sacrificer (*fadaa'i*)
oh, he who sacrifices himself for the sake of Allah (*istishhadi*),
without [these] actions my homeland will not be liberated."

"... Whoever condemned the act
is a trained dog,
a vile agent,
ignoble and a sycophant..."

"... And after the dunghill [you will know] hell,
no man will pity you⁴
and as for the one who gave his blood

⁴ According to the fourth stanza, the reference is to Mahmoud 'Abbas (Abu Mazen), Muhammad Dahlan and former Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom.

[he will go to] paradise, with the permission [of Allah] who guides the path.”

✚ According to additional information (from the Ramatan News Agency, April 18), the suicide bomber came from the village of ‘**Aaraqa**, west of Jenin, and not Burqin. Although an indiscriminate mass murderer of innocent civilians, he was touted by his family as a **hero and role model**: “He is a hero, I wish that all the young people were heroes like him... Allah will reward him in paradise,” said his mother, Samiah Hammad, to a Ramatan News Agency reporter.⁵

The PIJ

✚ **Omar Shalah**, who was described on the Internet as commander of the PIJ/Jerusalem Battalions, said that the attack in Tel Aviv was **the first in a series of suicide bombing attacks which would be carried out by his operatives**. His announcement was spread by the PIJ’s information [i.e., propaganda] bureau (PIJ Internet site, April 18).

✚ After the attack, PIJ operatives distributed baked goods in the streets of the Gaza Strip to celebrate the attack (AP, April 18).

✚ The PIJ operates under the aegis of Syria and Iran, is directed from Damascus and is headed by Ramadan ‘Abdallah Shelah. At a rally held in Al-Yarmukh refugee camp near Damascus, **he praised the suicide bombing attack in Tel Aviv and the suicide bomber**, threatened the attacks would continue (“Palestine is still full of jihad warriors and suicide bombers”) and strongly attacked Abu Mazen for having condemned the attack, calling it “a vile attack which harms the Palestinian people’s struggle” (Al-Jazeera TV, April 21).

⁵ Another example of a suicide bomber being turned into a hero and role model can be found in the fact that his biography was published in the official PA newspaper, Al-Hayat Al-Jadeeda (April 19). The appearance of such an article is exceptional and may indicate that the paper is approaching the official Hamas government line.

PA chairman Abu Mazen

✚ Abu Mazen’s statement deploring the attack was received with criticism:

✓ **Khaled Mashal**, head of the Hamas political bureau in Damascus, attacked Abu Mazen’s statement, saying: “Allah cannot bear having the suicide bombing attack [*istishhad*] called that [see above]... Should the one who blew himself up in Tel Aviv be ashamed? [At this point, the audience shouted “Allahu Akbar.”] Should our brothers who blow themselves up in Tel Aviv be ashamed, or should those who go to live in Tel Aviv [be ashamed] [i.e., collaborators]?” (From a speech at a rally in Al-Yarmukh refugee camp near Damascus, April 21, [Al-Jazeera TV, April 21].)⁶



**Khaled Mashal at a rally in Al-Yarmukh refugee camp
(Al-Jazeera TV , April 20)**

✓ **Mussa Abu Marzuq**, deputy secretary of Hamas’s political bureau, said that Abu Mazen should apologize to the Palestinian people and to the family of the suicide bomber for his statement (Al-Jazeera TV, April 18). In response to a question he said that “**the action did not embarrass Hamas... It was a natural reaction to all the activities recently carried out by Israel**” (*ibid.*)

✓ **Jibril Rajoub**, a senior Fatah member, said that Abu Mazen’s calling the action “despicable” was “a slip of the tongue” (Ma’a News Agency, April 18).

⁶ Fatah strongly condemned Kahled Mashal’s “hate speech” and called him a cat’s paw (of Syria and Iran?) and who works to destroy the Palestinian Authority (Palestinian News Agency, April 21).

He said that such a statement did not conform to Abu Mazen's understanding and perception of the events (Al-Jazeera TV, April 18).

✓ One of the **Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine** spokesmen demanded that Abu Mazen stop condemning the attacks in the name of "national unity."

✚ In response, Abu Mazen's information advisor issued a statement to clarify the issue. In it Abu Mazen once again condemned the attack because in his opinion, such an attack only hurt the Palestinian people's struggle and caused the international community to turn its back on the PA (www.pal-media.net, April 18).

Responses from the Arab/Muslim world

Egypt

✚ Egyptian foreign minister **Ahmed Aboul Gheit** condemned the attack. He said that "premeditated attacks on civilians contradict all tenets and laws" and that such attacks are "part of hated acts of terrorism, regardless of any justification" (Kuwait News Agency, April 18).

✚ It is worth noting the contradictory reactions of some of Egypt's newspapers:

✓ The government daily newspaper **Al-Ahram** called the attack "terrorism" worthy of condemnation because it harmed civilians, and called upon both sides to return to the peace process and to implement the road map (Al-Ahram, April 18).

✓ The official daily **Al-Gomhouria** justified the attack. An editorial called the attack self-sacrifice for the sake of Allah and a Palestinian response to "Israel's daily attacks" (Al-Gomhouria, April 18).

✓ The daily **Al-Ahram Al-Masaai** placed responsibility for the attack on “Israel’s inflexible way of thinking,” according to which only Israel has the right to peace and security (Al-Ahram Al-Masaai, April 18).

✚ On April 19, **Al-Ahram** reported that **Amre Mousa**, secretary of the **Arab League**, expressed opposition to attacks on civilians on both sides, Israeli and Palestinian. He said that harming civilians, no matter what their identity, was unacceptable.

Jordan

✚ A spokesman for the Jordanian government deplored the attack, saying that “the Jordanian government opposed harming civilians no matter where they were.”

✚ According to the Jordanian News Agency, on April 18 a government spokesman announced that **the visit out Palestinian foreign minister al-Zahar would be postponed until further notice “because of recent developments.”** Another reason for the postponement was **Hamas’s smuggling of weapons into the Kingdom of Jordan and gathering intelligence about Jordanian targets.** The spokesman said that it showed **Hamas’s “hypocrisy” towards the Jordanian kingdom.**

✓ Hamas spokesman **Sami Abu Zuhri** denounced the Jordanian accusations and said they were “baseless” (Ramatan News Agency, April 19). A high-ranking member of the Palestinian government said that canceling the visit because of the discovery of an arms cache was merely an excuse and that the real reason was the pressure exerted on Jordan by the United States and Israel (Sama News Agency, April 19).

Syria

✚ The Syrian newspaper Tishrin presented the attack as “the action of a lone man” and **expressed its understanding for the suicide bomber’s motives.** The paper denounced the American government and the European Union for condemning the

attack while they refrain from condemning Israel's actions against the Palestinians (Tishrin, April 19).

Lebanon

✚ Talal al-Salman, editor-in-chief of the Lebanese newspaper **Al-Safir**, wrote an editorial expressing his “understanding” of the suicide bomber’s motives. He said that in view of Israeli actions, the Palestinians had no choice but to carry out suicide bombing attacks (Al-Safir, April 18).

Turkey

✚ The Turkish government condemned the suicide bombing attack and called upon both sides to show restraint. **Abdullah Gul**, the Turkish foreign minister, criticized the Hamas government for its refusal to condemn the attack (AP, April 19).