

Two killed at Tel Aviv gay centre

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TEL AVIV - Two people were killed on Saturday night and several others were injured when a gunman burst into a gay community centre in the heart of Tel Aviv and opened fire with a machine gun.

The bodies of two casualties were found in the centre by paramedics. The injured were rushed to the Sourasky Medical Centre in Tel Aviv. Two victims were in critical condition, while three additional people in moderate condition, Magen David Adom paramedics said. Several more were lightly wounded in the attack.

Hundreds of local residents gathered around police lines, and tearful members of the local gay community wandered around the scene looking shocked.

Public Security Minister Yitzhak Aharonovitch said police have stepped up security around other gay centres and potential targets.



A wounded youth is carried away from the scene of an attack on a Tel Aviv gay community centre on Saturday.

Photo: Isranet

"This is a most severe incident. The police are investing major resources and means to capture this murderer and his accomplices," Police Commissioner Inspector General David Cohen said, speaking from the murder scene.

"These were teenagers," Yaniv

Weisman, chairman of the Israeli Gay Youth organisation, told *The Jerusalem Post*.

With tears in his eyes, Weisman added, "They came to this centre from across the country to talk to one another and receive help. This was supposed to be a safe place for them.

Someone knew what they were doing when they came here. This is not a pub or a club."

"Today, someone sent a message that gays in Tel Aviv and Israel are not safe," Weisman said.

Within a couple of hours of the attack, hundreds of members of Tel Aviv's gay and lesbian community gathered with placards and candles to protest the killings. "Love is allowed, killing is forbidden", one sign read.

Meretz MK Nitzan Horowitz, who is gay, arrived at the scene of the shooting. "There has been non-stop incitement," he told *The Post*. "I very much hope this is not the result of comments made by public figures and Knesset members. They need to understand that some people will take action," Horowitz added.

Lior Kay, a gay activist who took part in the demonstration, said, "I just want to say one thing. We will not be intimidated. We will not be frightened by this act of terrorism."