

Mumbai attacks: Jews tortured before being executed during hostage crisis

Israeli hostages killed by Islamic terrorists during the attacks on Mumbai (formerly Bombay) were tortured by their captors before they were bound together and killed, according to officials in both countries.

By Damien McElroy in Bombay

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Jewish victims made up a disproportionate number of the foreigners killed after 10 Muslim fanatics stormed a series of sites in the Indian financial capital.

Members of the beleaguered Jewish community in Mumbai gathered at a crumbling synagogue for a memorial for Rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg and his wife Rivka, who ran the cultural centre targeted by the Deccan Mujahideen.

The couple's son, Moshe survived after his nanny, Sandra Samuel escaped with him in her arms 10 hours after the hostage incident started. The child cried "Ima" and "Dada," or mummy and daddy, as the service began.

Moshe's grandparents have arrived from Israel to take the orphaned boy home and there is intense pressure to grant Miss Samuel a visa by declaring her righteous among the gentiles.

Two countries have posted officials at the JJ Hospital morgue but there are at least twice as many Israeli disaster specialists as British consuls representing the former colonial power.

Israeli officials confirmed six Jews were dead but the figure is likely to rise to eight. The total number of foreigners killed in the attacks stands at 22.

A forensic team arrived on a specially chartered flight on Sunday night. "There are still a few yet to be identified – not a lot, under five – and this is why we need the forensic team," an Israeli diplomat said. "And there are two or three Israelis unaccounted for and we have a couple of bodies that could be them."

Doctors expressed horror at the condition of the bodies recovered from the Nariman Building, which housed the Orthodox Chabad-Lubavitch retreat.

"I have seen so many dead bodies in my life, and was traumatised," a mortician said. "It was apparent that most of the dead were tortured. What shocked me were the telltale signs showing clearly how the hostages were executed in cold blood."

The group that stormed Bombay's most famous institutions displayed unrestrained brutality throughout the mission. The captain of a fishing trawler hijacked by the group in Arabian Sea was found with his throat cut.

Police said 17 victims were pushed against a wall in the corridor of the Oberoi hotel and executed in a line.

One man who served a glass of water to a terrorist at Bombay's main railway station was shot in the forehead.

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