

**Bloodiest Synagogue Massacre Since Nazi Era:  
ABU NIDAL GANG TAGGED AS KILLERS  
OF 21 SABBATH WORSHIPPERS IN THE  
NEVE SHALOM SYNAGOGUE IN ISTANBUL**  
By Edwin Eytan (Paris) and Hugh Orgel (Tel Aviv)

Sept. 7 (JTA) -- The machine gun and grenade attack by two Arab terrorists on the Neve-Shalom Synagogue in Istanbul Saturday morning, which took the lives of at least 21 Sabbath worshippers and wounded four, bore the stamp of the Abu Nidal gang, a dissident faction of the PLO based in Syria, according to experts on international terrorism in Israel and other countries.

Premier Shimon Peres, expressing outrage and revulsion at what was probably the bloodiest synagogue massacre since the Nazi era, vowed on an Israel television interview Saturday night that "We will not rest until we cut off this murderous hand."

He added that "whoever hesitates about American responses or Israeli responses can now learn a lesson," a reference to the U.S. bombing of Libya last April in retaliation for terrorist acts against American nationals.

Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir declared that "Israel has to constantly conduct an aggressive war against all the terror organizations in every place and at every time to prevent them from carrying out beastly attacks like this one."

In Washington Saturday, State Department spokesman Bruce Ammerman declared, "We condemn this cowardly attack and deeply deplore the terrible loss of life which resulted from it."

Israeli sources saw a common anti-Israel thread linking the Istanbul outrage with the attempted hijacking of a Pan American 747 jet at Karachi airport Friday which resulted in the death of 16 passengers and more than 100 injured. The hijackers, they noted, demanded to be flown to Cyprus to effect the release of three Palestinian terrorists imprisoned there for the murder of three Israelis on a yacht in Larnaca a year ago.

**Eye-Witness Accounts**

The Neve Shalom Synagogue, an old Sephardic congregation in the city's Beyoglu quarter, had been closed for some time for repairs. The Saturday morning services marked its re-opening. The two assailants reportedly gained entrance by posing as television cameramen assigned to cover the event for Israel television. One of them spoke Hebrew to a guard.

According to eye-witness accounts, once inside they barred the heavy gates and opened fire on the congregants with machine guns and hurled grenades. Rafi Saul, 17, who had been worshipping with his father, told reporters later that after gunning down most of the 30 people in the synagogue, the attackers poured gasoline over the dead and dying and set them afire. The terrorists then blew themselves up with grenades.

Saul said he escaped by pretending to be dead. His father was killed by gunfire. Four women in the women's gallery were injured by flying splinters.

Radio Istanbul quoted eye-witnesses as saying dozens of people, haggard, in shock and

bleeding, ran into the street calling for help. Ambulances and police cars reached the area 10 minutes after the alarm was sounded.

Turkish officials contacted by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency from Paris said this was because the narrow lanes of the commercial quarter were crowded with pushcarts and shoppers at the time.

The death toll would have been much higher if a Bar Mitzvah planned for Saturday had not been postponed at the last minute.

The victims will be buried at a collective funeral, probably on Wednesday. Israel's Minister of Religious Affairs, Yosef Burg, will represent his country. The governor of Istanbul province, Nevat Ayaz, said after a meeting with Turkey's Chief Rabbi, David Asseo, that the services would be held in the Neve Shalom Synagogue.

**Two Groups Claim Responsibility**

According to Turkish officials, the killers shouted "Jihad" (holy war) as they opened fire on the worshippers. The officials suggested that the terror squad might have belonged to the Islamic Jihad, a gang controlled by the extremist Lebanese Shiites linked to the pro-Iranian Hezbollah (Party of God) which has been responsible for murderous attacks in Lebanon over the past two years.

A Shiite group in Beirut calling itself the "Islamic Revenge" claimed responsibility for the synagogue attack in revenge for Israeli attacks on Lebanese villages. Another unknown group calling itself the "Palestine Revenge Organization" also claimed responsibility.

But Israeli sources pointed to Abu Nidal who is backed by Syria and Libya. During the past six years his terror squads carried out fatal attacks on the Rue Copernic synagogue in Paris, the main synagogue in Rome and synagogues in Vienna and Antwerp. They also attacked a Jewish restaurant in Paris and a movie house there during a Jewish film festival.

Reports from Istanbul Saturday said seven rabbis were among the victims, also two cantors and three tourists from Iran. Another report named an Israeli rabbi, Raphael Nesin, as a victim.

But Henry Siegman, executive director of the American Jewish Congress who was recently in Turkey, said on a television interview Saturday that he had ascertained by telephone from Istanbul that no rabbi was killed.

**Turkish Officials Shocked**

The attack shocked Turkish officials. The first to reach the scene, the Deputy Governor of Istanbul, Hassan Ali Ozer, called the spectacle "awful." Case-hardened policemen were sickened by the sight of two dozen dead and wounded, many wrapped in prayer shawls, lying in inch-deep pools of blood.

Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Ozal, who called his Cabinet into special session, issued a statement in Ankara deploring "this heinous act in a place of worship." He said "All citizens of Turkey are under the protection of the State, irrespective of their religion, language or race."

He added, "We share as a nation the grief and pain of all the families of our fellow citizens who have died because of this odious assault and express our deepest sympathy to them."

Israel's Charge d'Affaires in Ankara, Yehuda Millo, said: "This outrageous and cowardly attack on Jewish worshippers ... only goes to show the nature of the barbaric perpetrators and the organizations the free world is facing. It also proves that the only way to combat international terrorism the way Turkey and Israel are doing is through resolve, firmness and determination."

#### Security Is Beefed Up

In the aftermath of the attack, police swarmed through the streets of Istanbul conducting identity checks. Key buildings, including the Israeli Consulate General, were placed under heavy security guard.

Extra police also patrolled Ankara which has one synagogue and a heavily fortified Israeli legation. Both were surrounded by guards. Two synagogues in Izmir were also under police protection.

#### The Turkish Jewish Community

There are 25,000 Jews in Turkey, some 20,000 in Istanbul and the rest in Izmir, Ankara, Edirne and Adana. Virtually all are Sephardic, descendants of Spanish Jews expelled from Spain in 1492.

The community consists mainly of businessmen, professionals, doctors, lawyers and scientists who have played an important role in Turkey's economic life. Since the military coup six years ago, many Jewish institutions were revitalized.

In May 1984, Zeki Dushi became the first Jew in over 20 years elected to the Istanbul district council. Jews are allowed to attend Jewish meetings abroad. A Jewish delegation from Turkey was present at the recent Geneva meeting of the World Jewish Congress European branch.

Apart from Egypt, Turkey is the only Moslem nation to have full diplomatic relations with Israel. El Al, Israel's national airline, has direct flights from Tel Aviv to Istanbul. There are also maritime and commercial links between the two countries and they cooperate in many sectors.

#### **ISRAELI LEADERS DENOUNCE BARBARISM IN ISTANBUL AS THE HEIGHT OF ANTI-SEMITIC TERRORISM** By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Sept. 7 (JTA) -- The country's top leaders denounced Sunday the atrocity in Istanbul as the height of anti-Semitic terrorism and warned that Israel will not rest until it crushes the evil of terrorism against the Jewish people everywhere.

Prime Minister Shimon Peres said: "No event has shown so starkly the bestial nature of this terrorism than what we saw this (Saturday) morning in a synagogue in Istanbul. Innocent people, old people were murdered in cold blood in the midst of their prayers -- they were shot, then set afire, without any respect for human life, for worship, for a synagogue."

"There is still a world that thinks that madmen can be allowed to operate, move about and commit murder in it. From our point of view, we shall first of all, of course, pray for the souls of the innocent worshippers: the entire Jewish people is today bound in one great prayer. We shall send condolences to the families.

"But we are also a State, and we not only pray. We will not rest until we lop off this murderous arm such as we have not known since the Nazis. We will pursue them everywhere, and we will get to them. At this stage, the government of Turkey has to work in order to determine whether any of the terrorists still remain, to bring them to trial, and to judge them with full gravity."

"This attack has no political significance. These are wild animals, and we need not look for meanings or diversities or political nuances--that is absurd. Today the nation is united against murder, against such a pogrom, and this is what is on our national agenda."

#### Need For An International Struggle

Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir said: "It seems to me that the heart of every Jew in Israel and in the world is today bleeding. What happened in the Neve Shalom Synagogue in Istanbul is the height of the bestial cruelty and the profound hate of the anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli terrorism."

"The Jewish blood that was spilled in the synagogue in the Istanbul diaspora obligates the Jewish State to step up and intensify its war of initiative against the terrorist organizations, in every place and at all times."

"It is essential to take all measures in order to prevent the men of blood from persisting in the perpetration of their crimes. And after what happened in Karachi as well, the need for an international struggle against international terrorism becomes more urgent with every passing day."

"Israel must demand that other countries enlist themselves, with all the strength required, in this struggle in order to extirpate the affliction that is endangering all of humanity."

#### United Front Against Terrorism Urged

President Chaim Herzog said: "The State of Israel and the entire Jewish people grieve and mourn for the victims of the murderous attack on worshippers in a synagogue in Istanbul. This is the height of the anti-Semitic terrorism -- the ally of international terrorism -- which balks at nothing and whose aim is nothing but the murder of Jews because they are Jews."

"This is yet another tragic demonstration of the base, inhuman image of the enemies of the Jewish people who are also the enemies of humanity. The State of Israel will not rest until it crushes the evil of anti-Semitism and of terrorism. It calls on all peoples and on all civilized persons throughout the world to stand with it in its struggle."

#### **REACTIONS OF U.S. JEWISH LEADERS** By Margie Olster

NEW YORK, Sept. 7 (JTA) -- American Jewish leaders reacted with shock and horror to the mass murder of 21 Jews worshipping in Istanbul's Neve Shalom Synagogue on Sabbath morning.

Morris Abram, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said Sunday, "We are as horrified by this appalling criminal and insane act as we were by the bloody hijacking of the Pan American plane in Karachi."

"If the world is to rid itself of the obscenity of terrorism, nations must demand that such governments as Saudi Arabia, Syria, South Yemen and the Soviet Union -- no less than Libya--

must stop supplying terrorist gangs with arms, training, money and safe haven.

"The slaughter of Jews in Istanbul by Arab terrorists reminds us again that it is not only Israel but the Jewish people itself that is the target of fanatical hatred."

Nathan Perlmutter, national director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, agreed that the source of terrorism needs to be dealt with. "The home bases of terrorists should be struck. Maybe that will provide their host countries with the motivation to police them," Perlmutter said.

#### Link To Other Anti-Semitic Massacres

The American Jewish Congress linked the massacre to other bloody acts of historical anti-Semitism. Theodore Mann, president of AJCongress said Sunday, "We do know that the Sabbath service was to have been a festive occasion in the Istanbul synagogue. It marked the first service since the reopening of the synagogue following its reconstruction and refurbishing. It now stands as the burnt and bloody scene of an insane, cowardly attack upon a congregation whose only fault was its Jewish identity."

Mann continued, "This conclusively belies any disclaimer by Moslem or Palestinian terrorist organizations that they are not motivated by conventional, historic, vicious anti-Semitism."

"Clearly it is not merely Israel who is the target of their attack. It is the Jews of the world against whom they aim their guns. They are motivated not simply by a resurgent nationalism but by degenerate bigotry and religious hatred."

Just six weeks ago, an AJCongress delegation of officers visited Turkey to establish closer relations with the Turkish Jewish community, 20,000 of whom live in Istanbul. Mann said Henry Siegman, executive director of AJCongress, will go to Istanbul to attend the funeral for the victims.

#### Cites Another Wave Of Fanaticism

American Jewish Committee president Theodore Ellenoff said the "criminal act" in Istanbul comes on the heels of the equally horrible killing of 18 innocent civilians and the wounding of scores of others in the hijacking.

"Clearly, we are facing another wave of Islamic fanaticism and violence ... the international community, especially those who uphold the sanctity of each human life and support law and civility, must strengthen their resolves and join forces to assure that this criminal element is brought to justice for this murderous deed."

In other reactions Sunday, Alleck Resnick, president of the Zionist Organization of America, called on the United Nations member-states to expel the PLO. "The ZOA demands that the PLO be finally and formally outlawed by all the world's nations who profess to oppose terrorism," Resnick said.

In a statement issued from Jerusalem, the Simon Wiesenthal Center equated Arab fanatical hatred of Jews with that of the Nazis.

"Today's attack on the synagogue in Turkey -- a cowardly and vicious act -- is reminiscent of similar outrages by history's worst Jew-haters, the Nazis. It is further proof that to many in the Arab world, Judaism is the enemy, and that claims by Arab states that they are only anti-Zionist are sheer fantasy," said the Center's dean, Rabbi Marvin Hier.

"It is about time leaders in the West faced this reality that it is the fanatic hatred of radi-

cal, fundamentalist Moslems and their hatred of Jews which constitutes the major obstacle to peace in the Middle East."

#### Urges Actions By The UN

Rabbi William Berkowitz, national president of the American Jewish Heritage Committee, sent a telegram to the United Nations Secretary General urging united world action against terrorism.

Berkowitz said in the letter, "The recurring problem of terrorism should be put on the forthcoming agenda of the General Assembly so that it be made clear that those nations which harbor terrorists within their borders and give aid and comfort to them, whether through funds or guns, will be censured and condemned. The civilized world cannot endure if it is to be at the mercy of international pirates and thugs who murder innocent civilians in the pursuit of their goals."

Ernest Zelig, president of B'nai Zion, also compared the massacre to acts reminiscent of the Nazis. "The cold-blooded massacre of Jews gathered in an Istanbul synagogue by Arab terrorists brings back the horror of Nazi atrocities. This is yet another instance of the terrorist war against the Jewish people."

#### A Common Denominator

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, international affairs director of the American Jewish Committee, speaking about both the synagogue attack and the Pan Am hijacking, said that "both these tragedies have one thing in common: these murderers have utter contempt for the value of human life."

Tanenbaum said that shortly after the synagogue massacre occurred, he received a telephone call from the Turkish Embassy in Washington, in which the political counselor, Candan Azer, expressed the condolences of the Turkish government and condemned forthrightly the terrorist attacks. Tanenbaum said that Azer told him, "These people are not true Moslems, they are plain killers and we are determined to bring them to justice."

Azer read statements of solidarity with the Turkish Jewish community from Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Ozal and the Turkish Ambassador to the United States, Dr. Sukru Ellekdog, and also emphasized Turkey's interest in upgrading its diplomatic relations with Israel. "We are next week, in fact, sending a senior diplomatic representative to Tel Aviv," Tanenbaum said Azer told him.

#### **JEWS WHOSE FAMILIES CAME FROM TURKEY ARE BITTER OVER THE MASSACRE**

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Sept. 7 (JTA) -- Jews in the metropolitan area, whose families had immigrated to the United States from Turkey, and religious leaders spoke with bitterness and sorrow over the terrorist rampage Saturday in Istanbul.

Rabbi Marc Angel, spiritual leader of the Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue in New York, Congregation Shearith Israel, recalled, in an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, that his mother's family came from a town outside Istanbul, Tekirdag, and his grandmother from the Island of Marmara, sites of 500-year-old Jewish communities that had come to Turkey from Spain and Portugal at the time of the Inquisitions.

"The Jews of Turkey are generally very mild-mannered, low-key and they don't like to draw attention to themselves," Angel said.

"They're very patriotic, very loyal to Turkey." The rabbi, who was in Istanbul two summers ago, has a cousin who currently serves in the Turkish army.

Reflecting on the massacre of the Sabbath worshippers, Angel said: "If there can be an attack on Jews and freedom-loving people, who is safe? If you give terrorists an opportunity to disrupt freedom, then this is a challenge to all of us.

"When things like this happen, it tends to strengthen the Jewish resolve and Israeli resolve. We've had our sufferings, and this is another chapter in the long litany of martyrs, and what this does is to strengthen the resolve of the Jewish people. The Jewish people will not bow to tyranny."

Leon Levy, president of the American Sephardi Federation, whose family's roots are also in the town of Tekirdag, said of the massacre: "This points out that Jews all over must band together and care for one another ... if even in a friendly country such as Turkey none of us is immune from terrorist attacks .... It parallels what happened in the Yom Kippur War, using a holy day to carry out an attack."

#### Workers Refurbished The Synagogue

Levy's daughter, Janet, a New York lawyer, visited Istanbul last week, her second visit to Turkey, where she sought her roots, and was in the Neve Shalom Synagogue on Wednesday, watching workers refurbishing the synagogue for the Sabbath service, the first which was to be held in the newly-renovated surroundings. Janet Levy remembered them polishing the benches and cleaning ceiling and pulpit. She told the JTA that she feels completely shocked by the attack. Even though the synagogue is situated in a vulnerable position, on a busy avenue, she said she felt absolutely no tension. She also related visiting shops in Istanbul where non-Jewish owners engaged her in constant conversations, interested in her origins and inquisitive about her Jewish background, but always with respect and no ulterior motives other than friendliness.

Rabbi Milton Poland, president of the Rabbinical Council of America, said, "We anxiously await the condemnation of this barbaric act by the leaders of other religious communities and the punishment by the government involved against those who plotted and carried out this dastardly act."

#### Pope Condemns The Terrorist Atrocities

Pope John Paul II condemned the terrorist attacks on both the Pan Am jumbo jet in Karachi and the attack on the Istanbul synagogue. Speaking from the summit of a mountaintop in north-west Italy, where he was on a mountain-climbing expedition, the Pope said, "Faced with events so horrendous and almost incredible, the yearning for peace is transformed into anguish." He added that the two terrorist attacks had wounded the conscience of humanity.

"Blood of brothers in travel, blood of brothers gathered in place of prayer" has been spilled, the Pontiff said. "It is necessary that without delay everything possible must be done to put an end to the unending spiral of hate and terrorism." A Vatican spokesperson said the Pope was "extremely saddened" because of the attack in a place of worship.

Meanwhile, the Synagogue Council of America (SCA), the umbrella organization of the congregational and rabbinic bodies of the Reform, Conservative and Orthodox movements in America, have called an emergency meeting for Monday afternoon to develop outreach programs to the Jewish community in Istanbul and to "offer any and all assistance possible."

Rabbi Herbert Baumgard, president of the SCA, said "These tragic criminal acts must once and for all come to an end." He called for a united front of governments of goodwill regardless of political persuasions to develop "strong action efforts" to counteract such terrorist offensives.

A memorial service for the victims of the synagogue attack is being coordinated by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York to be held Tuesday at noon at the Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue, Congregation Shearith Israel. Rabbinic and community leaders are expected, as well as representatives of the Turkish and Israeli governments.

According to Malcolm Hoenlein, executive director of the Presidents Conference, "It is our hope that this memorial service is an expression of both our outrage at this dastardly act as well as our solidarity with the Jewish community of Turkey. This was an attack on the entire Jewish people. It is regrettable that it takes such tragedies to galvanize us into action. We must see to it that action is taken to put an end to such terrorist attacks by consistent pressure, and not simply by responding each time there are more sacrifices."

#### **SHARON IMPLIES ISRAEL'S POLICY TRIGGERED ISTANBUL MASSACRE**

JERUSALEM, Sept. 7 (JTA) -- Premier Shimon Peres angrily broke up the weekly Cabinet meeting Sunday and declared he would convene no other until Commerce and Industry Minister Ariel Sharon publicly retracts and apologizes for remarks implying that Israel's pursuit of peace with the Arabs was a sign of weakness that triggered the Synagogue massacre by Arab terrorists in Istanbul Saturday.

Sharon, an outspoken Likud hardliner, said in a radio interview after the outrage in Istanbul, that "the unceasing pursuit of dubious and baseless peace plans at a time when our enemies are waging an unending war against us contributed to the weakening of the Israeli shield ... and has exposed Jews abroad even more to Palestinian terror."

"Yesterday's (Saturday) murder left a ghastly impression on all of us. At the same time a Cabinet member indirectly and directly laid responsibility for the act on the (Israeli) government," Peres said. A Cabinet statement released after the aborted session affirmed that the Premier insists on a retraction from Sharon.

Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir, who will take over as Prime Minister next month under the Labor-Likud rotation of power agreement, said he did not agree with or approve of Sharon's statement, but it was "inconceivable" that it should trigger a coalition crisis.

"I can see no justification in this ... this is not the time," Shamir said, adding, "One must see everything in the proper proportion. I call on the Prime Minister to concentrate on the really important issues that confront us."