



## Recent Terrorist Plots Against Jews and Israelis Abroad – Updated

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### **ABSTRACT**

On 19 July 2012, Shasta Khan was found guilty of conspiring to bomb Jewish targets in Manchester. Her husband Mohammed Khan had pleaded guilty and therefore did not stand trial. The following day, both were sent to prison.

On 18 July 2012, a bus carrying Israeli tourists outside Burgas airport in Bulgaria was blown up, killing five Israelis and the Bulgarian bus driver. The official report of the Bulgarian authorities concluded that Hizbollah was behind the attack. The report stated that a Canadian and an Australian, who had been living in Lebanon and were members of Hizbollah, were responsible for the attack. According to the Bulgarian Interior Minister, "We have established that the two were members of the militant wing of Hizbollah." The attack took place on the 18th anniversary of the bomb attack on the AMIA Jewish community centre.

On 28 March 2013, a Cypriot court sentenced Hossam Taleb Yaacoub to four years imprisonment for planning to attack Israeli citizens and for his membership of a criminal organization, namely Hizbollah. Yaacoub had been gathering intelligence on Israeli tourists, noting arrival times of flights arriving from Israel and the details of buses taking visitors to hotels.

These three incidents encapsulate the nature of the ongoing threat to Jewish communities and Israeli institutions abroad: both are targets, and the threat comes from different sources, with Iran and its surrogates, as well as al-Qaeda and its affiliates and sympathisers in the global jihad movement, presenting the major concerns.

\* The views expressed in this publication are solely those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT).

## **Terrorist Plots Against Jews and Israelis Abroad – Update**

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### **Introduction**

On 19 July 2012, Shasta Khan was found guilty of conspiring to bomb Jewish targets in Manchester. Her husband Mohammed Khan had pleaded guilty and therefore did not stand trial. The following day, both were sent to prison.

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On 28 March 2013, a Cypriot court sentenced Hossam Taleb Yaacoub to four years imprisonment for planning to attack Israeli citizens and for his membership of a criminal organization, namely Hizbollah. Yaacoub had been gathering intelligence on Israeli tourists, noting arrival times of flights arriving from Israel and the details of buses taking visitors to hotels.

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CST's report on terrorism against Jews and Israeli institutions around the world, published at the end of 2010, noted that during the previous 40 years there had been some 427 recorded plots and attacks. This paper brings the tally up to date, and, as with the previous report, it focuses attention on the direction from which these attacks come.<sup>1</sup>

The 2010 report (which was itself an update of a report published by ICT in 2003) noted that the terror threat to Jews comes primarily from three sources: (1) al-Qaeda, its affiliates in the global jihad movement and self-radicalised Islamists sympathetic to this cause; (2) Iran and its surrogates, of which the most active is Hezbollah; and (3) far-right terrorists. During the late 1970s and until the mid 1980s, anarchist and extreme left terror groups also attacked Jews, synagogues and Jewish schools. However, sustained counterterrorist strategies and changing economic circumstances led to a drastic decline in threats and attacks from this quarter. Palestinian secular terrorist groups reduced their attacks beyond the Middle East after the Madrid and Oslo peace accords, when most forswore terrorism beyond the immediate theatre of conflict, and after the deaths of many of the leaders (Abu Nidal, Naif Hawatmeh, Yasser Arafat, etc).

The report noted that antisemitism remains central to the ideologies of all three groups, and that they make little or no distinction between Jews and Israelis. Also, the ideologies of extremist groups provide a milieu within which activists are further radicalised, so that perpetrating acts of terrorism against Jews and Israelis becomes a fulfilment of their ideological aims.

It provided evidence that, while the different sectors usually operate in isolation, there have been cases where they have cooperated across their ideological boundaries. Iran in particular has used surrogates, such as Hizbollah, converts to radical Islam or mercenaries, who may appear as unknown 'clean skins' to security services. There is also evidence that terrorist groups are increasingly cooperating with criminal syndicates. Iran and Hezbollah have sub-contracted terrorist attacks to criminals (as in Azerbaijan), and raised funds through black market criminal schemes (as in the USA and Latin America).

Since 2010, the number has increased of self-radicalised Islamists who follow the guidance of global jihad ideologue Abu Mus'ab al Suri, as well as Anwar Awlaki, the now deceased ideologue behind Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), to attack domestic targets with devices manufactured from easily obtainable constituents. This has required security services to enhance their capabilities to search out those accessing the proliferating open and closed Internet and interactive social networks, which are designed to seduce and radicalise their viewers. Al-Qaeda's core infrastructure may have been terminally degraded, but its affiliates have been reinvigorated by new conflicts, such as Syria and Somalia, to which European and American Muslims have travelled in order to join the conflict, or to seek training, which they may use against domestic targets on their return home.

The Salafi 'gateway' organisations, such as Hizb ut Tahrir and the Al Muhajiroun successor groups, remain active in Europe and the USA. They radicalise members, some of whom follow the conveyor belt processes to recruitment into jihadi groups abroad. These groups promote a violent antisemitic ideology, although their public pronouncements and literature are constrained by laws against incitement. The consequences of this incitement are plainly seen in the prosecutions and convictions of their followers in those countries that use their domestic legislation to set legal parameters for what is, and what is not, acceptable speech in modern society.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the incidents listed below, there have been other plots which were foiled in their early stages, and where few details have been made public. These include a perceived threat earlier in 2012 to Israelis in Bulgaria, following which the Israeli press reported that its transport ministry had warned the Bulgarian authorities of a potential threat.<sup>3</sup> Later, in May 2012, Israeli media reported that the Turkish authorities had thwarted a potential plot to Israelis travelling to Turkey, and, at about the same time, a plot had been thwarted in South Africa, again based on Israeli information provided to the local security services.<sup>4</sup>

A final introductory remark: in many cases, Jews were not the primary targets, but secondary or tertiary ones. Primary targets for global jihad movement terrorists are more usually Western facilities (government as well as civilian), targets associated with states with armed peace keeping forces in Muslim lands, such as Iraq or Afghanistan. Nevertheless, the fact that operational intelligence has also been gathered on Jewish targets underscores the antisemitic nature of those engaged in contemporary terror. The targets for Iran and its surrogates are primarily Israel and Jews, however.

It is worth noting that the general media tends to ignore the specific terror threat to Jews around the world. This may be because governments themselves play down the threat for fear of not being able to manage the public relations consequences. Or it may be because the political orientation of some media outlets leads them to ignore the anti-Jewish specificities of jihadi and Iranian directed terror.

Reversing the order used in the two reports previously published, this report lists the incidents chronologically, starting with the most recent.

## **Chronology of plots and attacks**

### **Kano, Nigeria, 16-28 May 2013**

Security forces uncovered a Hizbollah terror cell said to be threatening western and Israeli targets in Nigeria.

Mustapha Fawaz was the first to be arrested, followed by Abdullah Tahini and then Talal Roda, at whose house was discovered an underground bunker containing a large quantity of weapons. All three are Lebanese nationals.

The men remain in custody pending trial.

A few days previously, on 13 May, Azim Aghajani, an Iranian national, and Usman Abbas Jega, a Nigerian, were jailed for five years in connection with smuggling 13 shipping containers of weapons into Nigeria in October 2010. The weapons were due to be shipped on to Gambia, West Africa.<sup>5</sup>

### **Kathmandu, Tibet, 13 April 2013**

An Iranian national, Mohsin Khosravian, was detained outside the Israeli Embassy in Nepal, after he was observed behaving suspiciously. He was later handed over to the Nepalese police, who subsequently determined that he had entered the country ten days earlier, on a false Israeli passport while concealing his genuine Iranian documents in his luggage.

He also had a tourist map of the neighbourhood around the Israeli Embassy and had been spotted making frequent and suspicious visits to the area. He admitted travelling from Iran to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where he had been given the forged Israeli passport, and thence to Sri Lanka and finally to Nepal.

He remains in custody pending trial.<sup>6</sup>

### **Istanbul, Turkey, March 2013**

Turkish police arrested 12 persons: two Chechens, two Azeris, and eight Turks said to be connected to al-Qaeda, who were plotting to bomb the US Embassy in Ankara, a museum and a synagogue in the Balat district of Istanbul.

Simultaneous raids in Istanbul and Tekirdag uncovered 22 kilos of explosives and a selection of firearms. They also retrieved laptop computers, photographs and floor plans of the synagogue, as well as other incriminating material.

Six members of the group remain in custody pending the outcome of investigations.<sup>7</sup>

### **London / Birmingham, UK 21 February 2013**

Ashik Ali, Irfan Khalid and Irfan Naseer from the Sparkhill area of Birmingham were convicted at Woolwich Crown Court, London, on 12 counts of committing acts in preparation for a terrorist attack.

Inspired by al-Qaeda, Naseer and Khalid had travelled to Pakistan for training and preparation, and on returning recruited six others with the intention of carrying out shootings and suicide bombings with rucksack-borne bombs in what they intended would be the UK's most damaging terrorist attack.

Although they had not identified their targets before being arrested, the group had talked about storming a synagogue.

The other members of the group had earlier pleaded guilty and had already been sentenced.<sup>8</sup>

### **Lagos, Nigeria, 20 February 2013**

Abdullahi Mustapha Berende, Sulaiman Saka and Saheed Adewumi were arrested on suspicion of being members of an Iranian-tasked and trained terrorist cell that planned to attack US, Israeli and Jewish targets in Lagos.

A fourth member of the group, Bunyamin Yusuf, escaped.

The group leader, Berende, admitted that he'd made several training visits to Iran, and that he'd received payment for his work.

According to the Nigerian Department of State Services, the group planned attacks on the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the Israeli-owned ZIM shipping line and the Chabad-Lubavitch Jewish cultural centre.<sup>9</sup>

### **Detroit, Chicago, 21 December 2012**

The name of the CEO of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit, and that of the president of the local National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP), were found on a hit list, which included other local Jewish leaders, at the home of neo-Nazi Richard Schmidt. His house in Toledo, Ohio, was raided by members of a FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force unit, and they discovered he was tracking Jewish and African American leaders.

A cache of 18 weapons, including assault rifles and more than 40,000 rounds of ammunition, was found at his home.

Schmidt pleaded guilty to possession of firearms by a convicted felon at his trial on 9 July 2013, and is due to be sentenced in October.<sup>10</sup>

### **Malmo, Sweden, 27 September 2012**

A small explosive device detonated outside the Jewish community centre, damaging the front door.

The explosion took place after two local Muslim residents failed to gain access to the building and drove off at high speed in a car, which was identified by a passersby. The two men were later apprehended and remain in custody.<sup>11</sup>

### **Sarcelles, France 19 September 2012**

Two explosive devices were thrown into a kosher supermarket in the northern Paris suburb of Sarcelles, injuring a customer.

The subsequent police investigation resulted in a nationwide anti-terrorist operation against radical Islamist groups, which uncovered a hit list of Jewish organisations.<sup>12</sup>

### **Manchester, UK, 20 July 2012**

Mohammed Sadiq Khan and his wife Shasta Khan were convicted of planning to bomb Jewish targets in north Manchester on 19 July at Manchester Crown Court, following a three week trial.

On 20 July, Mohammed Khan was given an indeterminate sentence of which he must serve a minimum of seven years and six months; Shasta Khan was sentenced to eight years and must serve a minimum of four years.

The plot came to light when the police were called to a domestic incident at the home of Shasta Khan's parents which had resulted in Mohammed Khan hitting Shasta's father and then driving off in a car. During the course of their investigation the police were told of Mohammed Khan's plan to attack the Jewish community. The subsequent investigation found that he had been radicalised by watching Islamist material on the Internet, including terrorist videos, and that together they had amassed a substantial quantity of chemicals that could be used to construct powerful bombs. They had also carried out surveillance by car between March 2011 and the time of their arrests in July 2011 Jewish areas in Salford and the offices of the United Jewish and Israel Appeal (UJIA) in Prestwich. They had also sought to purchase firearms.

In addition to the above, Mohammed Khan had also amassed a collection of antisemitic publications, which had propelled him towards a violent anti-Jewish ideology.<sup>13</sup>

### **Burgas, Bulgaria 18 July 2012**

Five Israeli tourists were killed on a bus which they boarded at Burgas airport, a Bulgarian Black Sea resort, after a bomb in the rucksack was detonated. The bomber was killed, as was the bus driver.

CCTV footage from within the airport terminal showed the bomber to be a casually dressed European male with long blond hair, but subsequent investigation suggested that he had been accompanied at some point by two others, and that the bomb he was carrying may have been detonated remotely. The bomber was carrying a fake Michigan driving licence which had been printed in Beirut. Investigation by the Bulgarian authorities and others, subsequently indicated that the bomber went under the alias of Jacque Felipe Martin, and that the two others, who are believed to have fled to Lebanon, went under the names of Meliad Farah (aka Hussein Hussein) an Australian national and Hassan El Haj Hassan, a Canadian national, and that Hezbollah had wired 100,000 dollars to their bank accounts.

The attack followed warnings by Israel that Bulgaria was a likely terror target by Iran and Hezbollah.

On 22 July 2013, the Foreign Affairs Council of the European Union agreed to place the military wing of Hezbollah on its list of terrorist organisations, in part because of its complicity in the Burgas and Cyprus plots.<sup>14</sup> (see below)

### **Limassol, Cyprus, 7 July 2012**

On 18 July 2013, Hossam Taleb Yaacoub, a Swedish citizen of Lebanese origin, was sentenced to four years imprisonment by a Limassol court for plotting to kill Israeli tourists visiting Cyprus. He had been arrested on 7 July 2012, in connection with information he was gathering on Israeli flights to Cyprus, and bus tours catering to Israeli tourists. He was found guilty of five of the eight charges with which he was charged, including preparation of a criminal act and participation in a criminal organisation. The court found that Hizbollah “acts as a criminal organisation.”

Yaacoub reportedly told police: “I was just collecting information about the Jews. This is what my organization is doing, everywhere in the world... I was supposed to spot Israeli restaurants where Jews eat kosher.”

In his written testimony, Yaacoub stated that he had been sent around Europe on missions as a courier and scout for Hizbollah, of which he had been a member of since 2007. He had delivered packages for Hizbollah in Attalya (Turkey), Lyon and Amsterdam, and collected other items for delivery to Lebanon.<sup>15</sup>

### **Nairobi, Kenya, 2 July 2012**

Two Iranian nationals, Ahmed Abdolfathi Mohammed and Sayed Mansour Mousavir, were convicted of possessing RDX explosives, which they had buried at a golf course, and of plotting to bomb western targets. Both were sentenced to life imprisonment.

According to the Kenyan police, they had admitted membership of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps Quds Force, and had planned to attack American British, Saudi or Israeli targets. Reports following their arrest in June 2012 noted that they had surveilled the Nairobi synagogue and the Israeli Embassy, and that approximately 85 kilograms of their shipment was still missing.

The court stated that both were linked to a larger network believed to be planning bombings in Nairobi and the coastal city of Mombasa.<sup>16</sup>

### **Pune, India, April 2012**

In April 2012, Indian authorities deported Hamid Kashkhouli, an Iranian PhD student at Pune University, after he had been arrested for spying on the local Chabad-Lubavitch House and the Rasta Peth Synagogue.

According to a police spokesman, “He came to India under the pretext of being a student but was keeping a close eye on the Jewish centres in Pune. He had collected information about visitor’s movements at the Chabad House and the synagogue which he forwarded to intelligence officials in Iran.”

Intelligence officials zeroed in on Kashkhoul's movements when they discovered that he had no visa to study or research, and that in four years he had submitted no progress reports on his research.<sup>17</sup>

### **Toulouse, France, 19 March 2012**

Mohammed Merah, a French citizen of Algerian origin, killed a teacher and three children at the Ozar HaTorah School in Toulouse.

Merah had also murdered three unarmed French Muslim soldiers in Montauban and Toulouse during the course of the preceding week, prior to visiting the school. On arrival at the school, he shot and killed a teacher and his two children before pursuing another child into the school where he shot her at short range. A fourth child was also injured. After the attack, Merah escaped on his Yamaha T-MAX motor scooter, and was only traced to his apartment some days later. There he was killed by police after a twenty four hour stand off.

Subsequent investigations showed that Merah had sought to join terrorist groups in Pakistan and Afghanistan but had been arrested and returned to France, and that his brother and mother had participated in his radicalisation process. With his brother, he had engaged in petty crime and had a criminal record.<sup>18</sup>

### **Brescia, Italy, 15 March 2012**

A court in Brescia sentenced Mohamed Jarmoune, an Italian of Moroccan origin, to five years imprisonment for planning an attack on the main synagogue in Milan.

Investigators found an analysis of the security measures covering the synagogue on his computer, and that he had been accessing a passworded Facebook site that allows members of Sharia4Italy (an offshoot of the banned British Al Muhajiroun group) to exchange information on the use of explosives and arms. An unnamed woman, thought to be an accomplice, was arrested by British police in connection with the same investigation.<sup>19</sup>

### **Baku, Azerbaijan, 13 March 2012**

The Azerbaijan security services arrested 22 people in Baku in connection with a plot to bomb American and Israeli targets, possibly including a synagogue. The announcement was made in March but the arrests are believed to have been made in late January or February.

The Azeri plotters are reported to have amassed large amounts of military and espionage equipment, and are believed to have been recruited from 1999 onwards, and to have received training in Iran.<sup>20</sup>

### **Bangkok, Thailand, 14 February 2012**

An Iranian team of at least six people were involved in a plot to bomb the Israeli Embassy in Thailand, but failed after a premature explosion in the house they had rented in the Ekkamai neighbourhood.

The explosion sparked a dramatic attempt to flee the country, during which one of them threw a grenade at a taxi which had refused to pick him up.

The grenade ricocheted and blew the legs off Saeid Moradi. A second man, Mohammed Khazaei, was arrested at Bangkok airport; a third man, Masaoud Sedeghat Zadeh, was



arrested in Malaysia after fleeing there; a fourth man, Madani Seyed Mehrded, was arrested after having overstayed his visa; a fifth man, Norouzi Shayan Ali Akba, said to be the cell leader, fled to Iran, as did Leila Rohani, who is believed to have found their accommodation.

The plot was discovered after investigators tracked down phone messages between the cell members and the group responsible for the New Delhi attack the previous day.<sup>21</sup>

### **New Delhi, 13 February 2012**

An explosive fixed to the rear of an Israeli Embassy people carrier exploded as the car was being driven away from the building, which is 500 metres from the residence of the Indian Prime Minister.

Mrs Tali Yehoshua-Koren, wife of the defence attaché, was moderately injured but was spared more serious injuries as she was able to jump clear of the burning vehicle. Two passersby were also hurt.

The bomb had been affixed by a passing motor cycle passenger. An Indian journalist believed to have worked for an Iranian agency, Syed Mohammed Kazmi, was arrested on suspicion of involvement, but arrest warrants were subsequently issued in connection with the attack, naming four Iranian nationals.<sup>22</sup>

### **Tbilisi, Georgia, 13 February 2012**

Georgian police neutralised a bomb attached to the underside of the Israel ambassador's car, which was discovered by his driver.

Subsequent statements by the Israeli authorities identified it as similar in construction to that used in the New Delhi attempt.<sup>23</sup>

### **Singapore, 13 February 2012**

A plot to assassinate Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak during a visit to Singapore was foiled by the local security services, following the arrest of three men said to be connected to Hizbollah. Barak was in the country for Israel Singapore bilateral discussions, and to attend the annual air show.<sup>24</sup>

### **Bangkok, Thailand, 13 January 2012**

Thai security services disrupted an Iranian plot to attack Jewish community institutions, based on information reportedly passed to them by Israel in December 2011. The subsequent investigation found large amounts of chemicals, which could be used to make explosives, in a commercial building on the outskirts of Bangkok.

Atris Hussein, a Lebanese national alleged to be travelling on a Swedish passport and to be a member of Hezbollah, was arrested at Bangkok airport as he tried to leave the country.<sup>25</sup>

### **New Jersey, USA, 3 January 2012**

On 20 May 2013, Anthony Graziano, an unemployed teenager, and Aakash Dalal were charged with firebombing two synagogues, the Congregation K'Hal Adath Jeshurun in Paramus, NJ on 3 January, and Congregation Beth El in Rutherford, NJ on 11 January 2012.

Graziano was also charged with the attempted murder of Rabbi Nossun Schuman and his family when his home was attacked with Molotov cocktail firebombs in January 2012.

Although not members of any terrorist group, they had been radicalised by material they had viewed on the Internet. Their motivation was hatred of Jews, according to the county prosecutor, and would have led to deaths had the fires not been discovered. They remain in custody awaiting trial.<sup>26</sup>

### **Baku, Azerbaijan, January 2012**

Rasim Aliyev, Ali Huseynov and Rauf Abilov were sentenced on 26 September 2012 to between eight and fourteen years imprisonment at the Baku Serious Crimes Court in connection with a plot to kill the head of the Ohr Avner Chabad Jewish Day School, and other targets. The court stated that the plotters had been hired by Balargadash Dadashov, a member of a local criminal syndicate, who had been recruited by Iranian intelligence officers.<sup>27</sup>

### **Rome, Italy, 14 December 2011**

Five members of Militia, an extreme right-wing group, were arrested on suspicion of planning an attack against Rome's Jewish community. A further 16 members of the group were also placed under investigation. The group had issued threats against the head of the Rome Jewish community, Riccardo Pacifici, and local politicians, in what was described as part of a "revolutionary war."<sup>28</sup>

### **Somalia, 7 June 2011**

The unplanned killing by Somali security forces of al-Qaeda leader Fazul Abdullah Mohammed at Afgooye near Mogadishu, on 7 June 2011, brought to light a potential al-Qaeda plot to attack Jewish areas of north London. According to plans found on Mohammed's memory stick, other targets were the central London Ritz and Dorchester hotels, Eton College, and some Arab embassies. Notes attached to the plan suggested attacking the predominantly Jewish London suburbs of Golders Green and Stamford Hill at Chanukah, as the areas would be full of Jews at that time.

Mohammed had been indicted by the US government for the 1998 bombings of the American embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, and was on the FBI's list of most wanted terrorists.

A subsequent press report speculated that Samantha Lewthwaite, the widow of London Underground bomber Jermaine Lindsay, who was one of the bombers in the 7 July 2005 London transport bombings with three others, had carried out the reconnaissance for al-Qaeda before fleeing to Africa.<sup>29</sup>

### **New York City, USA, 11 May 2011**

Algerian born Ahmed Ferhani was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment on 15 March 2013, after pleading guilty to plotting to attack synagogues in Manhattan, in what has come to be known as the Manhattan Terrorism Plot.

Together with Mohamed Mamdouh, he had conspired to purchase firearms and a grenade from an undercover police detective, and had been arrested in May 2011. In court he stated

that, “I intended to create chaos and message of intimidation and coercion to the Jewish population of New York City, warning them to stop mistreating Muslims.” Mamdouh had pleaded not guilty, was tried separately and sentenced to 5 years imprisonment on 26 April 2013.<sup>30</sup>

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## Notes

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