

Right-wing Israeli Fanatic Stabs Six at Gay Rights Parade

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Global Research, July 31, 2015

[World Socialist Web Site](#)

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

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A right-wing Orthodox Jewish zealot carried out an attack Thursday against a gay pride march in occupied East Jerusalem, stabbing at least six marchers. Two of them—a 17-year-old girl and a female border guard—were reported in critical condition.

The assailant was identified as Yishai Schlissel, who only three weeks earlier had been released on parole after serving nearly 10 years in prison for carrying out a nearly identical attack that left three participants in the 2005 gay pride march with stab wounds.

Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat acknowledged Thursday that “something went wrong” in the failure of police to monitor Schlissel, who while in prison had repeatedly used ultra-Orthodox social media to promote attacks on gays and describe his knifing spree as a “mission from God.”

The Israeli Hebrew daily *Maariv* reported that the assailant had published a handwritten letter the week before the parade, denouncing it as a “march of abomination.”

“It is incumbent upon every Jew to risk beatings or imprisonment and together to stop the desecration for the sanctity of His name,” the letter stated. “If we refrain from declaring war, they’ll feel free to spread this shame all over the world.”

Immediately after his release from prison, Schlissel gave an interview to an ultra-Orthodox radio station, declaring, “If a single person comes and wants to hold the [gay pride] parade, it’s worthwhile doing something extreme.” He added, “the objective—I need to stop this parade.”

Jerusalem Police Chief Chico Edry said there would be an investigation, but claimed that the police knew nothing of Schlissel’s plans. A protester interrupted Edry’s televised press conference, denouncing the failure to protect the parade and shouting, “Shame on the police.”

“The writing was on the wall,” commented Israel’s Channel 2 reporter Moshe Nussbaum. “Everybody knew, except the police...about Schlissel’s intentions.”

Schlissel reportedly attempted twice unsuccessfully to attack Thursday’s march, the second time charging at the crowd screaming, before on his third attempt he was able to reach and begin stabbing the marchers.

The attack prompted a ritualistic chorus of condemnation, including from right-wing

Orthodox politicians who have fomented the obscurantist backwardness that found violent expression in Schlissel's terrorist attack, as well as the other right-wing secular Zionist politicians who curry favor with these religious fanatics.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu issued a statement denouncing the attack as a "despicable hate crime" and declaring: "The state of Israel respects the private freedom of individuals which is a fundamental principle exercised in this country. We must ensure that every man and every woman can live in full security in any way that they choose."

What hypocrisy! Israel was built through the systematic expulsion of its existing Arab population. It continues its brutal subjugation of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, while Arabs within Israel itself are treated as second-class citizens, subject to unrelenting discrimination.

On the same day as the vicious knife attack against the gay pride march in Jerusalem, the Israeli parliament demonstrated its commitment to "the private freedom of individuals" by passing legislation authorizing the force-feeding of Palestinian political prisoners on hunger strike, a practice recognized as a form of torture.

The organization Physicians for Human Rights-Israeli commented in a statement that the legislation "pushes the medical community to severely violate medical ethics for political gain, as was done in other dark regimes in history." The group appealed to doctors "to refuse to serve as a fig leaf for torture."

Netanyahu and other Israeli politicians have cultivated the right-wing ultra-Orthodox elements that produced Schlissel, depending on their support for the creation of rightist coalition governments led by the Likud Party.

Moreover, they view these fanatical religious elements as a useful battering ram against the Palestinians, through their frenetic drive to expand settlements on the occupied West Bank—which they regard as the biblical territories of "Judea and Samaria"—and through their demands that Israel be recognized as a religious state. Schlissel was himself a resident of Modi'in Illit, a large, predominantly ultra-Orthodox, West Bank settlement founded illegally through the destruction of five Palestinian villages.

The ultra-Orthodox parties are afforded extensive privileges and substantial state funding to carry out religious and social welfare work that helps consolidate their hold on sections of the most oppressed. The ultra-Orthodox parties play a special political role as a constituency for the most right-wing social and political policies, while denouncing the perceived liberalism of secular Jews as a threat to Jewish values, to be countered by ever-increasing social control by the religious authorities.

Elements like Schlissel combine hatred of Palestinians with hatred of gays and abhorrence for virtually any form of social progress. The cultivation of this toxic religious right is—along with Israel's endless wars of aggression—an unmistakable symptom of the historic dead end and moral disintegration of the entire Zionist project.

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