

19-Year Old Jewish Hacker Living in Israel Arrested For Bomb Threats Against Jewish Facilities In US



An international investigation led to the arrest of a 19-year old with dual US-Israeli citizenship in Israel for making bomb threats over the phone to Jewish facilities in the US, using masking technology to hide his tracks. His lawyer says the young man suffers from a “very serious” medical condition that may have affected his behavior. –GEG

JERUSALEM (AP) – The Latest on Israeli police saying they have arrested a Jewish Israeli man who is the prime suspect behind a wave of bomb threats against Jewish community centers and other institutions in the United States (all times local):

7:45 p.m.

Jewish community leaders in Florida expressed relief that a suspect has been arrested in the wave of bomb threats against Jewish targets across the United States in recent weeks but said it was unclear whether he was the sole perpetrator.

Michael Balaban, president of the Jewish Federation of Broward County, and Scott Ehrlich, chief executive officer of the David Posnack Jewish Community Center, said in a joint statement they “are glad a suspect has been arrested.”

Israeli police say they arrested a Jewish hacker with Israeli

and American citizenship who they suspected was behind the threats.

But Balaban and Ehrlich said that “based on the limited information provided, we don’t know whether this is the main perpetrator or a copycat. We are grateful to law enforcement for their efforts and at this time await further details.”

The Posnack Center in Davie, Florida, which has about 500 students from kindergarten through high school, received threats on Feb. 27 and March 7, leading to evacuations. The suburban Fort Lauderdale school had armed guards at its entrances on Thursday.

The Anti-Defamation League says there have been more than 150 bomb threats against Jewish community centers and day schools in 37 states and two Canadian provinces since Jan. 9. The threats were accompanied by acts of vandalism on several Jewish cemeteries.

7 p.m.

The lawyer for the Israeli suspect in the bomb threats on U.S. Jewish community centers says her client suffers from a “very serious” medical condition that may have affected his behavior.

Galit Bash told reporters outside a courthouse that the young man’s condition had prevented him from serving in the army or going to school. She says the medical condition could “affect the investigation.”

Police have banned publication of the man’s name, saying only that the 19-year-old is Jewish and a dual U.S.-Israeli citizen.

4:50 p.m.

Israeli police say the suspect in a wave of bomb threats against Jewish targets in the U.S. will remain under arrest until March 30.

In a statement Thursday, police confirmed the 19-year-old was a dual U.S.-Israeli citizen. They have banned publication of his name.

4:45 p.m.

An Israeli police official says the suspect in a wave of bomb threats against Jewish targets in the U.S. used sophisticated methods to hide his tracks.

Yaniv Azani, head of technology in the Israeli police's cyber unit, says the suspect used "several different means to camouflage the various layers of communication mechanisms" to carry out the calls.

Nimrod Vax, co-founder of U.S.-Israeli cybersecurity firm BigID, says the phone calls required a certain level of sophistication, but were "not too difficult" for an experienced hacker

He says tracking down the suspect would take significant resources and court orders to obtain and comb through hordes of electronic records.

Israeli police say they have arrested a 19-year-old Israeli Jewish man as the primary suspect behind the threats.

4:20 p.m.

The head of a Jewish community center in New Jersey that had been targeted by bomb threats says he's thankful that U.S. and international law enforcement prioritized the investigation and have caught a suspect.

Jordan Shenker, head of the Kaplen JCC on the Palisades in Tenafly, says he is cautiously optimistic that the man arrested in Israel on Thursday acted alone and that the threats will be over.

Shenker says the arrest has led to a feeling of being able to exhale, but that the center has always prioritized security and will continue to do so.

The Anti-Defamation League says there have been more than 150 bomb threats against U.S. Jewish community centers and day schools in the U.S. since Jan. 9, including Tenafly and Cherry Hill.

Israeli police say they have arrested a 19-year-old Israeli Jewish man as the primary suspect in the nationwide threats.

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4:15 p.m.

U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions says the arrest of a 19-year-old Israeli Jewish man in a string of bomb threats targeting U.S. Jewish community centers shows the Justice Department will not tolerate religious-oriented attacks.

Sessions said in a statement Thursday that the arrest is the result of a large investigation into hate crimes against the Jewish community. He says the Justice Department “will not tolerate the targeting of any community in the country on the basis of their religious beliefs.”

He called work by the FBI and Israeli police “outstanding.”

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