

Thursday, July 19th, 2012 |

Suicide bomber attacks tourist bus in Bulgaria



A suicide bomber has carried out an attack on Israeli tourists at Bulgaria's Burgas airport, killing seven people. (AP)

"The explosion was caused by a man who died in the attack and whose identity has not yet been established," Tsvetan Tsvetanov, Bulgaria's interior minister, said at the airport a day after the attack on Thursday, which Israel blames on Iran.

"The suicide bomber, wearing shorts and carrying a backpack, looked like any other tourist. He put his bag in the luggage compartment of the bus that blew up," the minister told a news conference.

"His travel document was a fake driving licence from the [US] state of Michigan."

The blast on Wednesday afternoon ripped through a bus carrying Israeli tourists who had just arrived by plane from Tel Aviv, killing six of them as well as the vehicle's Bulgarian driver and the bomber, officials said.

The attack, the deadliest on Israelis abroad since 2004 and which came on the anniversary of the 1994 bombing of a Jewish community centre in Argentina that killed 85 people, also injured around 30 people.

Wounded

One of those wounded died in hospital, as did the driver, while the others perished at the scene. Two of the injured were still in a coma on Thursday and were transferred to hospital in the capital Sofia.

The others were taken in eight ambulances, a bus and three minibuses to Burgas airport on Thursday morning amid a tight security, to be flown home to Israel, an Agence France-Presse reporter at the scene said.

The injured included a pregnant woman and a girl of around seven or eight years old who was carrying her flip-flop because her right foot was wrapped in bandages.

Around half of the injured were teenagers. Many of those hurt were brought out to the ambulances in wheelchairs with many having sustained burns and tear wounds on their legs and arms.

Others limped to the ambulances on their own – some blood-stained, barefoot, clutching shoes and other scanty personal belongings they had on them when the explosion hit. They refused to talk to reporters, with many talking on phones.

“They will be transported by airplane to Israel,” said Uri Shacham, an assistant to the director-general of the Magen David Adom, the Israeli equivalent of the Red Cross.

Around 20 Israeli paramedics arrived overnight to help treat the wounded. Apart from the flight back to Israel, Burgas airport remained closed on Thursday morning. – AFP