



By: TA | AP Insight

US Jews worry about the safety of their public gatherings after the mass shooting in Australia



Leading Jewish groups in the United States are urging all Jewish organizations to ratchet up security measures at public events — including restrictions on access — following the deadly **mass shooting** that targeted a Hanukkah celebration on a popular Australian beach.

The groups — including three which specialize in security issues — said Jewish public events in the coming days should be open only to people who had been screened after preregistering.

“Provide details of location, time, and other information only upon confirmed registration,” the groups’ advisory said. “Have access control (locks and entrance procedures) to only allow known, confirmed registrants/attendees into the facility/event.”

Coinciding with this urgent appeal for increased precautions, some rabbis said their synagogues would proceed with large-scale celebrations, intended to demonstrate resilience.

The mass shooting is the latest reminder of the Jewish community's longstanding reality of having to factor security into religious practice.

“This week, let us choose Jewish joy, communal strength, and courageous hope,” said a message posted by Temple Beth Sholom, one of the largest synagogues in the Miami area. “We invite every member of our family ... to join us this week as we celebrate Chanukah. Let us gather to share the warmth of the candles and reaffirm our unbreakable connection.”

Similar sentiments were expressed by Rabbi Jeffrey Myers of Pittsburgh’s Tree of Life Congregation, a survivor of the **2018 attack** by an antisemitic gunman that killed 11 worshippers at the synagogue.

“Hanukkah is supposed to be a time of light, celebrating the resilience of our people,” Myers said. “In the face of antisemitism and violence, my prayer is that we don’t let the fear win but instead lean into our Jewishness and

practice our tradition proudly.”

A rabbi's appeal: ‘Be more Jewish’

At least 15 people died in Sunday's attack, which fueled criticism that Australian authorities were not doing enough to combat a surge in **antisemitic crimes**.

On Monday, Australia's leaders promised to overhaul already-tough **gun control laws** after the targeted attack on Sydney’s Bondi Beach

Among those killed was Eli Schlanger, assistant rabbi at Chabad of Bondi and an organizer of the Hanukkah event, according to Chabad, an Orthodox Jewish movement that runs outreach worldwide and is known for its public menorah lightings.

Just a year earlier, according to Chabad, Schlanger had urged his fellow Jews to be uncowed in the face of rising antisemitism, voicing this message, “Be more Jewish, act more Jewish and appear more Jewish.”

Chabad.org said Chabad centers worldwide are going ahead with thousands of planned public menorah lightings and community Hanukkah celebrations “while taking greater security precautions — calling on the Jewish community to drown out hate with greater light and goodness while mourning those lost and wounded in Sydney.”

The Sydney shooting reinforced the importance of the public celebrations - Rabbi Chaim Landa

The Sydney shooting reinforced the importance of these public celebrations, said Rabbi Chaim Landa with Chabad of Greater St. Louis.

The organization proceeded with its planned Sunday night menorah lighting near the Gateway Arch but with a greater police presence. He believes it is what Schlanger

would have wanted.

"There's a couple pieces to this. There's making sure that it's safe, and there's also making sure that people feel safe. And we want both," said Landa, who estimates close to 300 people attended the outdoor event in below-freezing temperatures.

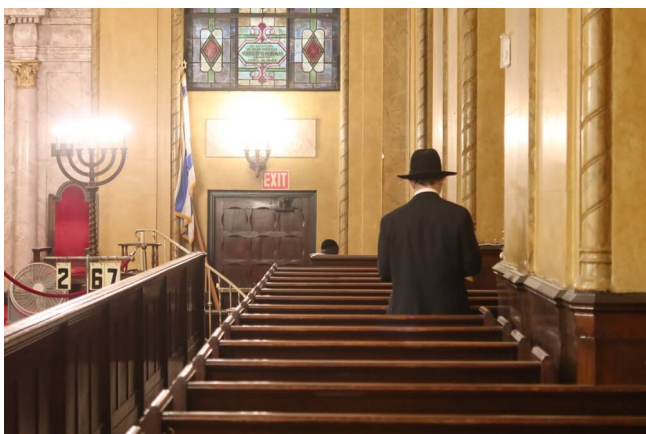
"People wanted to come out, and they wanted to be together. So it's very important that people feel that they can do that, and that's what we want to ensure."

At Colorado attack site, 'We're standing strong'

On Monday night, at the spot earlier this year where a man hurled fiery Molotov cocktails at people demonstrating in support of Israeli hostages in Gaza, members of the Jewish community in **Boulder, Colorado**, were set to light a dramatic new menorah.

The theme of the ceremony is "flames of love" -- in response to the June 1 attack that killed an 82-year-old woman and injured 12 others.

Yitzchok Mouly, a rabbi and artist, said he was inspired to create a 7-foot-tall (2-meter), stainless steel menorah for the community in Boulder following the firebombing.



Our Jewish community will not go into hiding - Rabbi Rick Jacobs

"We are here and we're standing strong and we're not cowering in the darkness," said Mouly, who is originally from Melbourne,

Australia.

In a speech delivered after the Australia attack, the president of the largest branch of Judaism in North America elaborated on the mix of dismay and determination being experienced through the Jewish community.

"We are thinking about security and how to live openly and safely as Jews — asking questions that are newer to us but would have been all too familiar to generations of our ancestors," said Rabbi Rick Jacobs of the Union for Reform Judaism.

"We need to ask these hard questions. We need to be smart about security and protecting ourselves and our fellow Jews — whether within the synagogue walls, or when we walk down the street wearing a kippah," he added. "But the spirit of the defiant Maccabees is also part of the Hanukkah story. Our Jewish community will not go into hiding. We are proud Jews and will remain so even as we make the security of our Jewish community a primary obligation."

Jacobs referred to the Jewish tradition of placing the Hanukkah menorah in a window for others to see.

"But in the Babylonian Talmud we are taught that in a time of danger, we do not do that," Jacobs said. "We have been living in a time of growing danger for several years now. And for too many Jews, putting a menorah in the window is too dangerous."

Alon Shalev, a research fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem, argued that Jews — following the attack — should be bolder in boosting their public profile.

"When Jews are attacked for being visibly Jewish, the instinct to retreat is understandable — but it is precisely the wrong response," he told The Associated Press via email.

"Jewish safety in democratic societies depends on open, shared civic affirmation, supported by political and community leaders and by

fellow citizens, not on retreat behind closed doors," he added. "Stepping into the public square and normalizing Jewish presence is how we defend ourselves."