

Bombers Kill 10 in Israel and Derail Prime Ministers' Meeting

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meeting. Further preparatory talks, to be held Monday, were also canceled after the attack. The meeting between Mr. Sharon and Mr. Qurei had been expected to take place as soon as Tuesday.

Responsibility for the attack was claimed by Hamas and Al Aksa Martyrs Brigades, a militant offshoot of Yasir Arafat's Fatah faction. The factions attributed the bombings to the two teenagers, from the Jabalya refugee camp in northern Gaza. Thousands of Palestinians marched in Gaza late Sunday to celebrate the attack, Reuters reported.

The bombers exploded roughly 100 yards apart. The first somehow penetrated the 10-foot chain-link fence protecting the industrial zone here and detonated his bomb at the entrance to a warehouse for heavy machinery, shattering windows more than 50 feet up.

The second bomber blew up on a sidewalk on the far side of a road that runs outside the fence. His explosion reduced a small prefabricated office building to a tangle of twisted metal that blackened as paper inside burned to ash.

Itzhak Tubol, 33, said he was driving home past the warehouse when he saw the first explosion and stopped to help. "I saw the roof fly off and pieces of flesh fall down," he said. "I spotted a head on the road. I grabbed a plastic bag to pick up the head. As I bent down to pick it up, I felt the second blast."

Mr. Tubol said he was knocked flat and saw only black for a moment before discovering that he was covered in blood. As he spoke, he lay in Kaplan Medical Center, northeast of Ashdod near Rehovot, with a blood-stained bandage covering a gash in his forehead.

Gaza's militants have recently shown signs of a new daring. Last month, Mr. Sharon said he had intended to "disengage" from the Palestinians by evacuating most or all of the Israeli settlements in Gaza.

Mr. Sharon said he will pursue his plan unilaterally, without negotiating with the Palestinians, if he judges them to be unwilling to comply with the Bush administration's peace plan. The road map calls for peace between Israel and Arab states and a Palestinian state in three years.

Some Israeli officials said dangerous chemicals were stored at Ashdod's port and speculated that the Palestinians intended to carry out what the Israelis call a "mega-attack." But Superintendent Gil Klei-



Getty Images

Volunteers collected human remains yesterday in Ashdod, a southern Israeli town, after two suicide bombers killed 10 people and wounded at least 18. The attack was claimed by Hamas and Al Aksa Martyrs Brigades.



The New York Times

Israel said Ashdod bombers came from Gaza, undeterred by a fence.

man, a police spokesman, said the police did not suspect such strategic intentions. He said there were no dangerous chemicals in the area of the explosions.

"They were targeting people," he

said. "We have had a lot of preparation in the last year in regard to mega-terror, but this isn't it."

The authorities initially attributed the explosions to an accident. The police realized they were intentional only after rescue workers noticed the similarity between the wounds they were treating and those of suicide bombing victims. Investigators then found shrapnel at the scene.

Five bystanders were killed by the warehouse bombing and three by the second explosion, near the office. Two others died in the hospital.

Dr. Leon Pones, deputy director of the medical center, said, "The seriously injured patients sustained organ injuries, head injuries, crush injuries, multiple shrapnel."

After receiving news of one death, a group of sobbing friends and relatives stumbled out of Kaplan Medical Center. "Yesterday he helped me and now he's gone," said one woman, weeping as two others supported her.

Dore Gold, an adviser to Mr. Sharon, compared the attacks to the bombings Thursday that killed 200 people in Madrid. "These are attacks on sensitive areas of national infrastructure," he said. "And the organi-

Militant groups had vowed revenge for an Israeli raid in Gaza.

zations are clearly not driven by limited aims over which either Europeans or Israelis can have negotiations, but rather by maximalist goals to destroy the societies that they're targeting."

In central Gaza on Sunday, Israeli forces killed three Palestinian militants near the Israeli settlement of Netzarim. The army said soldiers had found explosives on the men's bodies.

Also on Sunday, a Palestinian court ordered the release of four men held on suspicion of killing three American security guards with a bombing attack on an American diplomatic convoy passing through northern Gaza in October.

The court cited a lack of evidence. American diplomats and Israeli security officials had previously expressed skepticism that the men being held were responsible.