

The changing reality **OF TERROR**

Life must go on even though our response may need to change

BY JEFF KATZ, NATIONAL CHAIRMAN, SAJBD



AT THE TIME OF WRITING THIS, CONCERNS ABOUT the threat of global terrorism are at an all-time high in light of the many attacks that have been carried out over the past few months. Hardly a day goes by now without hearing of at least one attack somewhere in the world, whether in war-torn Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, or in France, Belgium, Germany, and other European countries, in the United States or in Nigeria, Kenya, Somalia or other parts of our own continent. Thankfully, no such attacks have as yet taken place in South Africa, but we know all too well that extremist ideologies can just as easily take root in our own country and, to an extent, they already have. This became starkly clear in mid-July when several people in Johannesburg were arrested on charges of having allegedly planned to carry out bombing attacks against a US mission and unspecified “Jewish institutions”.

Reports of alleged terrorist plots within our society are deeply concerning, particularly when, as in this case, our own com-

munity has been named as a target. That being said, we must always bear in mind how this is a global, not a specifically South African problem. A new and frightening reality today confronts the world, one where the so-called Islamic State (IS) has metamorphosed from a Middle East-based operation to one that now seeks to carry out terrorist operations everywhere. The nature of the attacks has also changed. Whereas there were once identifiable command structures and an identifiable modus operandi on the part of terror groups, today we are seeing an increasing process of decentralisation. More and more, attacks are being carried out by small groups, and sometimes even individuals, acting independently in response to IS’s hate-filled message. This

makes anticipating and preventing attacks all the more difficult and requires a major process of rethinking and adaptation on our own part in order to determine how best to deal with this emerging reality.

In view of this, on 14 July the SAJBD and the CSO jointly convened a meeting of communal representatives at Beyachad to brief them on the local security situation and what kind of response this necessitated from our community at large. It was explained how recent developments, both at the local level and internationally, had made it imperative for us to relook at our existing security structures and practices, and identify where and how these should be adapted to meet our needs in the current environment. We also emphasised how vital it was for every member of our community to do his or her part in making themselves and their environment safer, and for those who head up our various communal organisations to take the lead in this regard.

That we need to take the threats facing us seriously and plan accordingly is obvious to all of us. What we should not do – and this cannot be emphasised enough – is yield to a sense of panic, nor should we become despondent. Rather, we must continue to live and enjoy our lives as normal, as proud Jews and as proud South Africans. At the same time, however, we must adopt a disciplined, responsible, and alert approach to keeping our environment as secure as possible. It is something that individual organisations need to commit to taking on themselves in close consultation and, where required, with the support of the CSO.

I urge all community members to continue their vigilance and report any suspicious activity to the CSO immediately on 086 180 0018. Should you require any advice in improving the security of your installation, please email jhbroutine@csso.org.za

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