

## One law for all terror victims

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An interministerial committee headed by a Defense Ministry official recently decided that people wounded in the terror attack in Shfaram and the families of the slain would not be recognized as terror victims under the Victims of Enemy Action Law. Even though Prime Minister Ariel Sharon described Eden Natan-Zada's act as a "terrorist incident" and promised to grant the victims the status of terror victims, the committee's decision deprives them of the right to the monthly payments that are given to victims of Palestinian terror. The wounded and the bereaved families will have to make do with a one-time grant "beyond the letter of the law."

The committee's decision was based on a legal interpretation of the law that grants the status of terror victims, for the purpose of compensation, only to Israeli citizens killed or wounded by "a member of an organization hostile to Israel." According to this interpretation, the organization must specifically be hostile "to the existence of the state." The legislator never considered the possibility that a lone Jew, or a member of a right-wing extremist group, would be involved in acts of terror against Israeli citizens. The attacks in Shfaram and in Shiloh, which were intended to thwart the disengagement, the massacre in the Hebron mosque, which was meant to sabotage the Oslo Accords, the murders of prime minister Yitzhak Rabin and peace activist Emil Grunzweig all indicate that terror is not the exclusive province of Arabs who seek to undermine Israel's existence. But despite this, in 1994, the Knesset rejected a proposed amendment to the Victims of Enemy Action Law that would have made the law apply to any victim of nationalist violence.

Haaretz reported yesterday that the Prime Minister's Office has asked Attorney General Menachem Mazuz to reexamine the issue of recognizing victims of Jewish terror. But the responsibility for fixing this legal lacuna, which causes severe discrimination, rests with the government and the Knesset. The prime minister must submit an amendment to the law that would define any politically inspired murder, whether by an individual or an organization, as a terrorist action. It must be hoped that ministers and Knesset members will vote unanimously in favor of ending the discrimination between victims of Jewish terrorists and victims of Arab terrorists, or terrorists of other faiths or nationalities. A state that has declared an all-out war on terrorism, regardless of nationality or motive, is obligated to compensate its victims regardless of nationality or motive.

Politicians, who will soon be soliciting Arab Israeli votes once again, should pay attention to the response of Nazia Hayek the brother of Nader Hayek, who was killed in the attack- to the committee's decision to deprive his family of the compensation reserved for terror victims: "What kind of message does this send to the public, especially to those who think like Eden Natan-Zada? That killing Arabs is not considered terror?"

The Or Commission highlighted the ongoing discrimination against Arab Israelis and recommended steps to correct the situation. We are still a long way from equal rights for Arabs and Jews in this state; we must not allow terrorists also to cause discrimination between Arab and Jewish blood.