



**The Center for the Study of  
Contemporary European Jewry**  
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Faculty of Humanities  
Tel Aviv University

## PERSPECTIVES

No. 39, August 2024

The Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry publishes commentary and analysis on Jewish identity and culture. You are welcome to share your thoughts on our Perspectives with us: [cst@tauex.tau.ac.il](mailto:cst@tauex.tau.ac.il). We are glad to share with you the thirty-ninth issue of Perspectives.

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### Seeking Justice

*Thirty years after the bloodiest terror attack, Argentinian Jews still demand answers*

*Maia Bornsztejn*

I was born four years after the AMIA (Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina) terrorist attack in Buenos Aires in 1994. Every July 18, we remember the victims and demand truth and justice based on collective memory.

In Argentina, the Jewish community is united; we celebrate our differences and naturally integrate into the broader social mosaic of the country.

As a teenager, I attended the annual youth memorial held every July 17 at night, where songs and artistic performances renew calls for justice and pass the responsibility for seeking it to future generations.

One of my most vivid memories is from January 2015, when Alberto Nisman, a federal prosecutor, was preparing to present evidence about the AMIA bombing before the Argentinian Congress.

Everyone was filled with expectation and hope that this could finally bring us closer to the truth.

On January 18, Nisman was found dead in his apartment. He was assassinated.

I felt powerless, disappointed, and enraged; that's how injustice makes me feel.

That day, I and many others joined demonstrations around the city – protesting against injustice, against Nissim's killing, and against any ties with Iran.

At the AMIA memorial ceremony following Nisman's murder, the anger of the people was palpable and easy to feel. Their screams, whistles, and tears left no doubt. We had once again been let down as a society, left without justice.

Silence was not an option. Since then, the demand for justice has only grown stronger every year.

For Argentinian Jews, it feels as if the tragedy happened yesterday.

On July 18, 1994, at 9:53 am, a van filled with explosives impacted the front of the AMIA building at Pasteur 633, Buenos Aires. Eighty-five people were killed, and 300 people injured.

It was and still is the bloodiest terrorist attack in the history of Argentina and the Latin American Jewish communities to date.

Just two years earlier, on March 17, 1992, another terrorist attack struck Argentinian society. That time against the Israeli Embassy, leaving 29 dead and 242 injured.

The story of Marcelo Alguea, the brother of Silvana Alguea De Rodríguez, one of the AMIA bombing victims, is just one of many.

His sister Silvana worked in the AMIA building. She went to pick up Marcelo. That day, she was covering for a colleague on leave, and Marcelo had to go to work.

They first stopped to take Marcelo's niece to her first day at daycare; she was only nine months old.

When Silvana left Marcelo, they said goodbye quickly and casually with the certainty that they would see each other again some hours later. Silvana continued to her office in the AMIA building.

At 9:55 am, Marcelo received a call from his father wondering if Silvana was at work.

There had been an explosion at the AMIA building.

The first hospital near AMIA, Hospital de Clínicas, was chaotic. People were confused; there were many ambulances and police. Something was terribly wrong.

When Marcelo arrived at the site of the AMIA building, the smell of ammonia was unbearable. There was an enormous mountain of rubble, and people were climbing on it, trying to help, trying to understand, desperately looking for their loved ones.

Silvana's name was not on the list of the deceased or the list of the survivors.

Over the next six agonizing days until her body was found, the family was desperate. They could see her among the people in the street, but Silvana was not there. And she never will be.

This year's memorial was the 30th anniversary. Thirty years of calls for justice have only resulted in disappointment and impunity.

The international media coverage and the foreign presence in the memorial were massive, but there was almost no variation between this year's local media coverage and previous years.

The speech delivered by AMIA's president, Amos Linetzky, was filled with strength and hope for a different future.

The recently elected President of Argentina, Javier Milei, was present. The mayor of Buenos Aires directed all police cars and fire trucks to sound their sirens at 9:53 am to ensure everyone remembered the tragedy at the AMIA building.

The uniqueness of this year's memorial was the testimonies of the families of the victims.

They expressed their pain, this time declaring terrorism to be the enemy of Argentinian society as a whole, regardless of creed or religion.

There is no political rift that can divert the attention from the real enemy.

In the years that followed the terrorist attack, there have been investigations that indicated that Hizballah and Iran were responsible.

Despite having the information and Interpol's Red Alerts, no one has been arrested, imprisoned, or convicted.

Trials have been held. Investigations have taken place.

The first trial failed due to corruption and power struggles between politicians and judicial personnel, tainting the pursuit of justice with irregularities, deviations, and challenges.

On the 25th anniversary of the AMIA bombing in 2019, Argentina designated Hizballah as a terrorist organization. It stated that Hizballah continued to represent a threat to national security and the integrity of the countries in the region.

Following Argentina's lead, several other countries, including Colombia, Paraguay, Honduras, and Guatemala, also adopted the same designation of Hizballah.

Yet, Hizballah is still active and growing in the region, especially in the Tri-Border area, Bolivia, and Venezuela, carrying out activities related to recruitment, money laundering, drug trafficking, and closely related to organized crime.

In April 2024, the Argentinian Federal Criminal Court of Appeals declared Iran as the intellectual author of the worst terrorist attack in the country's history and Hizballah as the perpetrator.

It was a symbolic judgment, absent a judicial sentence or punishment of those involved.

The Jewish people have much experience building a collective memory and preserving the story of our ancestors, passing down the concept from Deuteronomy 16:20 of "Tsedek, Tsedek Tirdof" (Justice, Justice You Shall Pursue). It is our mantra and mandate from generation to generation.

Every July 18 at 9:53 am, Argentinian society gathers to uphold the truth, show no tolerance for impunity, and affirm their knowledge of those responsible for the attack, even without a formal judgment.

The call for justice is renewed alongside a living memory, this time led by a new generation committed to the values of peace and freedom, full of strength, knowledge, and determination to pursue justice.

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