

# Violent assault on synagogue in West Bloomfield, Michigan ends in death of attacker

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On Thursday morning, Ayman Mohamad Ghazali, a 41-year-old naturalized American citizen originally from Lebanon, rammed his pickup truck through the double front doors of Temple Israel in West Bloomfield, Michigan, one of the largest synagogues in the US.

According to law enforcement, Ghazali drove the vehicle an estimated 30-40 feet down an interior hallway. Before coming to a stop, the truck moved down the main hallway of the building in the direction of several classrooms where 140 infants and pre-K children were in daycare with 30 teachers and staff on site.

Security staff employed by the synagogue confronted the attacker almost immediately. Law enforcement has said that Ghazali was armed with a rifle and he began firing through the windshield of his vehicle, exchanging gun fire with one of the guards in the corridor. The guard shot Ghazali and, according to Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard, “neutralized the threat.” None of the children, teachers or other staff at Temple Israel were injured.

Police also reported that shortly after the vehicle hit the building, something in the truck ignited and set the vehicle ablaze. The building filled with smoke. A second security guard was apparently struck or knocked unconscious by the vehicle during the assault.

Firefighters and police moved in as teachers and staff carried out lockdown procedures, sheltering children and then escorting them out of the building once officers declared evacuation routes secure. Law enforcement later reported that around 30 officers were treated for smoke inhalation as they cleared the building and responded to the burning truck.

The FBI and federal agencies assumed control over the investigation, declaring the incident to be a “targeted act of violence against the Jewish community.” Authorities searched the vehicle and surrounding grounds for additional explosives and other devices before lifting local shelter-in-place orders.

According to the FBI, Ghazali was already dead when first responders were able to reach him as the fire was being extinguished. They said he died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head that occurred during the gunfight with security. Reports also said that investigators recovered his severely burned body from the truck bed along with remnants of fireworks materials such as mortar tubes and jugs believed to contain gasoline. Investigators have not disclosed exactly where or how Ghazali obtained the rifle or any explosive components. The FBI says these aspects remain under investigation.

Temple Israel is one of the largest Jewish congregations in the US and a central institution of Jewish life in Metro Detroit’s northern suburbs. Its campus includes a large sanctuary, social halls, offices and an extensive educational wing that houses a preschool and early childhood learning center serving local Jewish families.

West Bloomfield is a suburban enclave northwest of Detroit with a sizable Jewish population, where synagogues, day schools and community centers dot the area alongside residential subdivisions and commercial strips.

Federal and local officials have said Ghazali had been living in the Detroit area, including Dearborn Heights since 2011. He entered the US on an immediate relative visa as the spouse of a US citizen and became a citizen himself in 2016.

Reports from Lebanon and US media indicate that Ghazali was born in the town of Mashgharah in Lebanon’s Beqaa region. Lebanese officials and local figures quoted by Western outlets describe him as having maintained ties to his hometown and family there and whom remain in an area targeted repeatedly by the Israeli military in recent weeks.

Multiple reports from the Lebanese authorities, the Lebanese Health Ministry and US news media confirm that members of Ghazali’s immediate family were killed days before the West Bloomfield attack in an Israeli airstrike on Mashgharah. According to these accounts, two of his

brothers—named in some reports as Kassim and Ibrahim—were killed along with Ibrahim’s children in a strike on their multi-story family home.

Lebanese officials cited by CNN, NBC and the Associated Press state that four relatives were killed and that others, including at least one wife and Ghazali’s parents, were wounded in the same attack. Local sources describe one of the brothers as a soccer coach and personal trainer and another as a school bus driver. Some reports alleged family member ties to Hezbollah, but these accounts contained no confirming details of these relationships.

The airstrike on Mashgharah occurred around March 5, roughly a week before the Temple Israel attack, amid an ongoing Israeli air and ground offensive in Lebanon conducted under the cover of the war against Iran which began on February 28.

A Dearborn-area mosque held a memorial service for Ghazali’s relatives shortly before the events in West Bloomfield, underscoring that he was not an isolated individual but someone whose life and family were directly shattered by US-backed Israeli violence.

Following the vehicle ramming and firefight, West Bloomfield Township police, Oakland County Sheriffs, Michigan State Police and federal agents flooded the area around Temple Israel. Authorities issued shelter-in-place alerts and placed nearby schools and public buildings, including West Bloomfield High School and West Bloomfield Middle School, under lockdown while they searched for additional threats.

Roads around Walnut Lake Road and adjacent neighborhoods were sealed off as tactical units, bomb squads and fire crews converged on the synagogue. Emergency operations for Oakland County were activated, and local officials stressed that the response involved coordination between municipal police, county sheriffs, federal law enforcement and fire and EMS agencies.

Lockdowns were lifted later in the afternoon once officials announced that the attacker was dead, no secondary devices had been found posing an ongoing threat and all children and staff had been accounted for.

On Thursday afternoon, talking to reporters, Sheriff Bouchard praised the synagogue’s security staff and early childhood teachers for their rapid lock down and evacuation, stressing that their actions prevented mass casualties among the children.

On Friday, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer appeared with law-enforcement officials and hailed the guards as “heroes” who “threw themselves in harm’s way, engaging the suspect” and “saved lives.” Whitmer and other state leaders denounced antisemitism and portrayed the incident as an attack on the Jewish community that required

stepped-up security measures at synagogues and other religious institutions across Michigan.

The FBI, for its part, echoed that language and emphasized that it was handling the case as a violent hate-motivated attack, with the Department of Homeland Security focusing on Ghazali’s foreign origin and the international dimensions of the investigation.

The political establishment and corporate media are exploiting the West Bloomfield tragedy to intensify state repression, inflame Islamophobia and criminalize opposition to the joint US-Israeli onslaught in the Middle East.

By focusing narrowly on the attacker’s Lebanese background and seizing on unproven allegations concerning “terrorist ties,” officials are seeking to justify ramped-up surveillance and policing of Arab, Muslim and immigrant communities, as well as a clamp-down on protestors against the genocide in Gaza and the expanding US-Israeli war in Iran and Lebanon.

The airstrikes and invasion of southern Lebanon—including the bombardment of towns such as Mashgharah, where Ghazali’s family was killed—are being carried out under the cover of the assault on Iran and in pursuit of long-standing Zionist plans for territorial expansion and annexation under a so-called “Greater Israel.”

Jewish worshipers at Temple Israel and Jewish schoolchildren in West Bloomfield cannot be held responsible for the crimes of the Israeli state or US imperialism in the Middle East. At the same time, the precipitating factor in this horrific incident is the criminal and murderous assault by the Israeli military in Lebanon, fully supported and financed by the Trump White House and the both the Democratic and Republican parties in Congress.

The attack on Temple Israel, a misguided act of violence by a traumatized individual, is the tragic outcome of the immense human and social toll of imperialist war. So long as the US-Israeli war continues and expands—devastating Gaza, Lebanon, Iran and the wider Middle East—more such incidents within the United States are inevitable.



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