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# One dead and three injured after man opens fire at San Diego Chabad shul

19-year-old armed with firearm launches attack against passover worshippers in California community

By JEWISH NEWS REPORTER  
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Two people hug as another talks to a San Diego County Sheriff's deputy outside of the Chabad of Poway Synagogue Saturday, April 27, 2019, in Poway, Calif. (AP Photo/Denis Poroy)

A gunman opened fire inside a synagogue near San Diego as worshippers celebrated the last day of a major Jewish holiday, killing a woman and wounding the rabbi and two others, authorities have said.

President Donald Trump and other elected officials decried the attack which comes exactly six months since 11 people were killed at a Pittsburgh synagogue in the deadliest assault on Jews in US history.

An off-duty Border Patrol agent working as a security guard at the Chabad of Poway fired at the shooter as he fled, missing him but striking his getaway vehicle, San Diego County Sheriff William Gore said.





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The gunman, identified as John Earnest, 19, used an AR-type assault weapon, Mr Gore said. There were indications that the gun might have malfunctioned after firing numerous rounds inside the synagogue, the sheriff said.

Shortly after fleeing, Earnest called police to report the shooting, San Diego Police Chief David Nisleit said.

When an officer reached the man, “the suspect pulled over, jumped out of his car with his hands up and was immediately taken into custody,” Mr Nisleit said.

A girl and two men were wounded as the Jewish congregation gathered for Passover, a weeklong commemoration of the deliverance of the ancient Hebrews from slavery in Egypt.

The three were in stable condition, authorities said.

A Jewish leader in the San Diego area identified the victims of the shooting.

Lori Kaye, 60, of Poway was killed, Rabbi Yonah Fradkin, executive director of Chabad of San Diego County, said in a statement.

Those injured in the shooting on Saturday were Rabbi Yisroel Goldstein, Noya Dahan, eight, and Almog Peretz, 34, he said.

“In the face of senseless hate we commit to live proudly as Jews in this glorious country,” he added.

“We strongly believe that love is exponentially more powerful than hate. We are deeply shaken by the loss of a true woman of valour, Lori Kaye, who lost her life solely for living as a Jew.”

British Jewish leaders were quick to offer condolences, with Board of Deputies president Marie van der Zyl saying: “Our thoughts & prayers





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remain with Lori Gilbert Kaye's family & those reported injured in the attack in Poway, near San Diego: Rabbi Yisroel Goldstein, Noya Dahan and Almog Peretz”.

Jonathan Goldstein, chair of the Jewish Leadership Council responded saying: “The senseless attack of Jews in prayer has left us feeling chilled. Again. This is a sharp reminder that the poison of antisemitism has seeped into society. It is incumbent upon all of us to redouble our efforts to fight the scourge of racism because this is sadly where it leads. Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their loved ones and all those affected.”

Chabad Lubavitch UK took to Facebook to write a tribute, saying it was “shocked to hear the news post pesach of the shooting at Chabad Poway.”

“Please say a prayer for the victim and those who are in need of recovery including our colleague Chabad Rabbi “Yisroel ben Chana Priva” Goldstein and the other victims of the shooting.”

It added that: “Rabbi Goldstein was shot in his hand and heroically continued to calm his community before going to the hospital. Please say a prayer.... give charity and learn some words of torah in their merit.”

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis said: “Once again we are united in grief.”

“As despicable attacks on innocent people at prayer become more frequent, whether in Sri Lanka, Christchurch or Pittsburgh, we will not be timid nor passive in our grief. We will fiercely challenge those who promote or excuse a narrative of demonization and we will be proud and unapologetic about our faith and the values we hold dear.”

Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, President of the Conference of European Rabbis, said that: “Jews around the world are distressed and saddened” in the wake of the attack, saying: “It is sickening to see that houses of worship are increasingly becoming targets for terrorists, bigots and extremists.





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“It is clear that the advancement of the internet, and social media in particular, mean that it is easier than ever to spread hate. Houses of worship have to be adequately protected by their Governments and that means clamping down on extremism online as well as further restrictions on assault weapons.

“We need Governments to act quickly to prevent this trend going any further.”

Meanwhile, mayor of London Sadiq Khan added it was “devastating to hear of another senseless, cowardly attack on innocent people at their place of worship. London stands in solidarity with the congregation of Chabad of Poway synagogue in California.”

Earnest has no criminal record, but investigators were looking into a claim he made in an online manifesto about setting a fire at a mosque in nearby Escondido last month, Mr Gore said. There was damage but no injuries.

Mr Gore said authorities were reviewing copies of his social media posts and were investigating the attack as a possible hate crime.

There was no known threat after Earnest was arrested, but authorities boosted patrols at places of worship as a precaution, police said.

Mino Anvari, a member of the synagogue, told media outlets that her husband was inside during the shooting. She said he called to tell her the shooter was shouting and cursing.

She called the shooting “unbelievable” in a peaceful and tight-knit community.

“We are strong; you can’t break us,” Ms Anvari said.

President Trump offered his sympathies on Saturday, saying the shooting “looked like a hate crime” and calling it “hard to believe”.

“Our entire nation mourns the loss of life, prays for the wounded and





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stands in solidarity with the Jewish community,” Mr Trump said later at a rally in Wisconsin.

“We forcefully condemn the evils of anti-Semitism and hate, which must be defeated.”

The mayor of Poway, who tweeted that he got a call from the president offering help, also denounced what he called a hate crime.

“I want you know this is not Poway,” Mayor Steve Vaus said.

“We always walk with our arms around each other and we will walk through this tragedy with our arms around each other.”

Residents of Pittsburgh gathered at the Tree of Life synagogue for a vigil in the wake of the shooting.

Pittsburgh mayor Bill Peduto tweeted a picture of the gathering of over 100 people in a steady rain.

It was accompanied by text that read: “We gather. Again. Always. Until we drive hate speech & acts of hate out of our city, our state, our nation, our world.”

The Tree of Life released a statement, saying “We know first-hand the fear, anguish and healing process such an atrocity causes, and our hearts are with the afflicted San Diego families and their congregation.”

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