



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on November 19, 2014

Israel Considering Relaxing Gun Laws Following Synagogue Attack

Following the horrific attack by two Palestinians on unarmed worshipers at a Jerusalem synagogue on Tuesday, Israel's public security minister, Yitzhak Aharonovitch, [vowed to ease restrictions](#) on carrying firearms for self-defense. The attack by the Palestinian cousins who wielded knives and a gun resulted in four deaths and eight seriously wounded. Police who arrived at the scene killed the attackers but only after the innocents had been slashed, shot, and murdered.



Aharonovitch announced other measures as well, including moving some border patrol officers into Jerusalem, reinforcing existing police patrols across the country with civil guards and police volunteers, and setting up more checkpoints in Arab areas in East Jerusalem. As further deterrence, Aharonovitch also ordered that the attackers' bodies be buried outside of Jerusalem and that their houses be demolished.

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A closer reading of Aharonovitch's announcement reveals that the easing of gun-control regulations will apply only to those already chafing under Israel's insane gun regulations: security personnel and ex-Israel Defense Force officers. Common everyday citizens will remain unarmed, inviting further attacks from terrorists who know most civilians continue to be sitting ducks.

In Israel, for a civilian to protect himself and his family and loved ones from being ravaged by terrorists, the restrictions are daunting: To receive a permit to carry a firearm concealed, he must be over 21 (or over 45 if he lives in the most dangerous part of Jerusalem!), must have been a resident of Israel for at least the last three consecutive years, have no criminal record, must be in mental and physical health, and must survive a background check by the Public Security Ministry, and finally, must pass a weapons-training course.

Once granted, the citizen-survivor of these requirements must renew his license every three years, and may own only one handgun. In addition, the government allows him to purchase as a *lifetime supply* of ammunition 50 rounds.

These draconian restrictions have essentially disarmed people facing grave threats from neighbors who have repeatedly and publicly called for their extermination. As a result there are just 170,000 legally owned firearms in Israel, a country of more than eight million. Even including guns held privately by citizens unwilling to go through the licensing process — estimated at 500,000 — that's still a ratio of weaponry to population of one weapon for every 12 citizens. By comparison in America the ratio is nearly one-to-one. As Yaakov Amit, head of the Public Security Ministry's Firearms Licensing Department, explains:

There is an essential difference between [Israel and America]. In America the right to bear arms is



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written in the law. Here it's the opposite...only those who have a license can bear arms, and not everyone can get a license.

Correction: it's nearly impossible for anyone to get a license. It's difficult even for weapons instructors in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to get a license. Boaz, a high-tech employee and IDF shooting instructor, said it took several months for him get receive his weapons permit from the government:

It actually took a few months to get the license and this was back when buses were being blown up every day, so there was pressure to arm people.

But they still weren't in a hurry.

That such limitations on private ownership of firearms imperil Israeli Jews should be clear, yet Yohanan Danino (shown), the chief of the Israel police, who in the past has headed up its International Crime Investigations unit and served in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in the Paratroopers Brigade, has claimed that there is virtually no way to defend against "lone wolf" operations such as that perpetrated by the two Palestinian cousins:

It is very difficult to know ahead of time about every incident like this. Therefore it is our job to do whatever we can as security forces in order to bring back security.... [We] have no magic solution for incidents like these.

One would be hard-pressed to find a better, more concise argument for allowing civilians to own and carry firearms for their own security.

Instead, other disaffected terrorists looking for new opportunities to wreak havoc, destruction, and death upon Jewish innocents are likely to look at Danino's remarks as a virtual invitation to carry out more of those attacks.

Danino has had plenty of warning. In January 2008, two terrorists entered the Mekor Hayim High School Yeshiva, located south of Jerusalem, and stabbed two students before being subdued and eliminated by two school counselors.

The next month a 73-year-old woman was killed and 40 others seriously injured when a suicide bomber blew himself up in a shopping center in Dimona in southern Israel. A second bomber was shot by a police officer who noticed him reaching for the trigger on his explosive belt.

One month later eight men, seven of them teenagers, were killed when a Palestinian gunman entered the Merkaz HaRav Yeshiva in Jerusalem and opened fire. He wounded another nine before being terminated by officers arriving late to the scene.

Similar attacks have occurred on almost a monthly basis since then.

The best that Aharonovitch can come up with, however, to deter future attacks is this: "We have instructed synagogues to place security guards at their entrances."

How much better and safer would it be for Aharonovitch to allow armed citizens inside?

Photo: Levy Dudy

A graduate of an Ivy League school and a former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at www.LightFromTheRight.com, primarily on economics and politics.



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