Shin Bet: Murder of Jewish man in Arab city was terrorism, 2 arrested

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The Shin Bet security agency on Sunday said two Palestinians were arrested over the recent murder of a Jewish man in the Arab Israeli city of Kafr Qassem, confirming that the killing last Wednesday was a terror attack.

In a statement, the Shin Bet said the Palestinian suspects, both from the West Bank city of Qabatiya, were arrested last week in connection with the murder.

Reuven Schmerling, a resident of the West Bank settlement of Elkana, was found dead in a storage unit belonging to his business in Kafr Qassem’s industrial area on Wednesday, hours before the start of the Jewish festival of Sukkot.

Police and the Shin Bet, Israel’s internal security service, opened a joint investigation into the murder, looking at possible motives including a work- or money-related dispute. Schmerling owned a coal business in Kafr Qassem, employed residents of the city and had business contacts there.

A spokesman for the Elkana settlement, Schmerling’s hometown, said the Shin Bet statement confirmed initial suspicions the murder was carried out for nationalistic reasons.

“To those who knew the murder victim, his values, his righteousness and the Elkana settlement where he lived, it was clear from the outset this was a nationalistic terror attack,” the spokesman said in a statement. “The tough [crime] scene and the manner of the murder also left no doubt.”

“We thank the security forces, the Shin Bet, the IDF and the police for capturing the murderers and expect significant action against the terrorists and their dispatchers,” the statement added.

[Earlier Sunday](https://www.timesofisrael.com/police-minister-says-reuven-schmerling-murder-is-apparently-terror/), Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan said he believed the murder would be designated as a terror attack. Schmerling’s family said Thursday it had “[no doubt](https://www.timesofisrael.com/family-of-jewish-man-murdered-in-kafr-qassem-convinced-it-was-terrorism/)” the killing was an act of terrorism since his body was discovered by one of his sons covered in stab wounds.

A court has imposed a gag order on publishing details of the investigation. The Shin Bet said couldn’t elaborate on what findings led them to suspect terror because of the gag order.

Schmerling was buried on Friday. His family wore shirts to the funeral they had made for his 70th birthday, which he was set to celebrate on Thursday with his children and grandchildren at home in Elkana.