

# AMIA bombing



The **AMIA bombing** was a suicide van bomb attack on the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA; Argentine Israelite Mutual Association) building in Buenos Aires, Argentina on 18 July 1994, killing 85 people and injuring hundreds. The bombing is Argentina's deadliest terrorist attack to date. Argentina is home to a Jewish community of 230,000, the largest in Latin America and sixth in the world outside Israel.

Over the years, the case has been marked by accusations of cover-ups. All suspects in the "local connection" (among them, many members of the Buenos Aires Provincial Police) were found to be not guilty in September 2004. In August 2005, federal judge Juan José Galeano, in charge of the case, was impeached and removed from his post on a charge of "serious" irregularities due to mishandling of the investigation. In 2005, Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, who would later become Pope Francis, was the first public personality to sign a petition for justice in the AMIA bombing case. He was one of the signatories on a document called "85 victims, 85 signatures" as part of the bombing's 11th anniversary.

On 25 October 2006, Argentine prosecutors Alberto Nisman and Marcelo Martínez Burgos formally accused the government of Iran of directing the bombing, and the Hezbollah militia of carrying it out. According to the prosecution's claims in 2006, Argentina had been targeted by Iran after Buenos Aires' decision to suspend a nuclear technology transfer contract to Tehran. This has been disputed because the contract was never terminated and Iran and Argentina were negotiating on restoration of full cooperation on all agreements from early 1992 until 1994, when the bombing occurred.

In 2015 Alberto Nisman filed a 300-page document accusing former President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner of covering up Iran's role in the incident. Nisman was murdered hours before he was due to testify against the former president, which the Federal Court of Buenos Aires ruled was a "direct consequence" of Nisman's accusations against Kirchner. In 2017, Judge Claudio Bonadio accused Kirchner of treason and called on the country's Senate to permit her arrest and trial for allegedly covering up Iranian involvement in the 1994 bomb attack. Kirchner is currently referred for public trial over alleged cover-up of Iranian involvement in the bombing.

The thirteenth anniversary of the bombing was commemorated on 18 July 2007. In addition to nationwide exhibitions and ceremonies, radio and television stations and police cars all across Argentina sounded sirens at 9:53 am, the time of the bombing. In 2019, Argentina officially declared Hezbollah a terrorist organization.



## Vocabulary

- Cover-up: an attempt to prevent people discovering the truth about a serious mistake or crime.
- Impeach: to charge (a public official) before a competent tribunal with misconduct in office.
- Signatory: a person, organization, or country that has signed an agreement.
- Prosecutor: a legal official who accuses someone of committing a crime, especially in a law court.
- Claim: to say that something is true or is a fact, although you cannot prove it and other people might not believe it.
- Targeted: directed at a particular group or activity.
- Disputed: used to describe something over which there is disagreement, especially official or legal disagreement.
- Former: in an earlier time.
- Treason: (the crime of) showing no loyalty to your country, especially by helping its enemies or trying to defeat its government.
- Allegedly: used when something illegal or wrong is said to have been done, but has not been proved

## Answer these questions

1. What kind of attack was carried on the AMIA?
2. When did it happen?
3. How many fatal victims were there?
4. What was the fate of the Argentinian suspects?
5. What happened to federal judge Juan José Galeano?
6. Who was the first public personality to sign a petition for justice in the AMIA bombing case?
7. Who formally accused the government of Iran of directing the bombing, and the Hezbollah militia of carrying it out?
8. What was Nisman's accusation against former President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner?
9. Why couldn't he testify?
10. What did judge Claudio Bonadio request the Senate?
11. What did radio and television stations and police cars all over the country do on the 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing?