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: Tens of thousands rally in Tel Aviv over violence in Arab society, call for govt action



THOUSANDS OF Israelis attend a protest against the violence in the Arab sector in Tel Aviv last night. (Avshalom Sassoni/Flash90)

# Tens of thousands rally in Tel Aviv over violence in Arab society, call for govt action

• By MOSHE COHEN

Tens of thousands of people gathered at Habima Square in Tel Aviv on Saturday night to protest the government's handling of violent crime in Israel's Arab society, with Arab and Jewish Israelis marching together, calling

for stronger law enforcement and safer streets.

Many demonstrators waved black flags and held signs reading, "Stop the war of crime," "We are with you; you are not alone," and "This isn't helplessness; it's policy." The rally followed a protest march from Hostage Square

to Habima Square.

A bereaved mother whose son was murdered addressed the crowd in tears, shouting, "Enough of the injustice; enough of the loss."

Talal Alkernawi, the mayor of Rahat, criticized what he described as daily home demolitions and threats facing

Bedouin communities in the Negev and warned against broad measures that would punish entire communities.

"The government should enforce the law the way it does everywhere," he said. "Do not make generalizations. Do not

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Later on Saturday, a man was killed and two people were wounded in a shooting near the district court in Lod. The victim was identified as Omar al-Shamli. The wounded, Basel al-Shamli and 19-year-old Louay al-Shamli, were taken to Shamir Medical Center with penetration wounds, with one listed in serious condition and the other in light condition.

The incident was reported as the 23rd murder victim from Israel's Arab society since the start of 2026. •

## VIOLENCE

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impose collective punishment. Do not close communities. Do not provoke young people."

Alkernawi rejected claims that Bedouin residents are defined by crime, saying they include doctors, nurses, lawyers, judges, teachers, public transportation drivers, and contractors who help build infrastructure and develop agriculture in the region. He also criticized plans he said would establish new Jewish communities in the Negev without recognizing Bedouin localities or providing adequate housing solutions.

Prof. Barak Medina, former rector of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, said the rally aimed to show solidarity with Arab citizens facing "pain, fear, and frustration" and accused the government and police of failing in their basic duty to protect life.

"The struggle is a shared struggle," Medina said, describing it as a joint effort of Arab citizens and Jewish Israelis and urging a commitment to equal protection and equal rights in security, education, health, housing, budgets, and infrastructure.

Veteran actress Rivka Michaeli told demonstrators she came because she felt afraid, warning that ongoing disregard for deadly violence in Arab society was spreading across the country. Michaeli spoke about coexistence in Israel's hospitals and said an Arab surgeon had saved her life. She also cited figures she said she received from an AI tool about Arab representation in medicine and pharmacy while arguing that many Arab professionals are also being killed by criminal organizations.

Michaeli also referenced Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, adapting a well-known passage to emphasize shared humanity, and invoked Theodor Herzl while expressing concern that Israel is drifting away from the promise of equality.