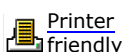
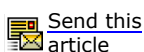


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Friends in life and death

By Etgar Lefkovits

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JERUSALEM (August 13) - They were the best of friends. Two teenage girls, both 15, from the same neighborhood, the same Ezra youth movement. Malka Roth and Michal Raziel of the northern Jerusalem neighborhood of Ramot were constantly at each other's homes. They shared everything.

Gregarious girls full of life, they were among the 15 killed in the suicide bombing at the Sbarro pizzeria in the center of Jerusalem on Thursday.

They were on their way to an activity of the youth movement in Talpiot when they stopped to meet a third friend at Sbarro for lunch, Roth's father, Arnold, said yesterday.

"From the very beginning they were the best of friends," he said, noting that when the family made aliya from Australia in 1988, they rented the Raziels' apartment, because they were going away to England.

After the Raziels returned, the Roths bought a place of their own two buildings away. "They were good friends from a very early age who did everything together - shared clothes, shared experiences, shared life," said Aviva Raziel, Michal's mother. "They were the same kind of people - outgoing, wanting to help others."

Malka, or Malki as she was known, studied at the prominent Horev girls' school in the city, while Michal went to Or Torah in Ramot.

Before going to lunch, the last thing the girls did together was decorate the room of a friend who was returning to Israel later that day. By the time the friend came back, the girls were no longer alive.

"She was an extraordinary girl, full of love. Her whole life was an act of beauty," Roth said.

A gifted musician who played the classical flute, Malka's music would bring tears to her family's eyes.



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Born in the middle of three older brothers and three younger sisters, one of whom is severely handicapped, Malka helped her mother caring for the handicapped child. Based on her experience with her handicapped sister, she volunteered to work with handicapped children.

"She came back glowing from energy and love," her father said.

The family came to Israel from Australia when Malka was two. "We were old-fashioned Zionists, and we wanted to bring up our children in the place where Jewish life is supposed to be lived," Roth said.

Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer personally conveyed his condolences to the Roth family. "I have directed the embassy in Tel Aviv to provide whatever support they can in this dreadful situation," he said.

Federal Member for Melbourne Ports Michael Danby, the only Jewish member of the Australian Parliament, also expressed shock at the tragic loss of life, saying in a letter to the family that Malka's death would be deeply felt in Melbourne where she was born.

(Mark Schulman contributed to this report.)

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