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MIDDLE EAST CRISIS

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Victim's mother shares grief

By ANDRA JACKSON
 Tuesday 21 August 2001

The mother of a Melbourne-born 15-year-old girl killed in a bombing in Israel 12 days ago described her daughter last night as "always special".

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Speaking from Israel via satellite, Frimet Roth shared her grief with an audience of more than 3000 - many in school uniforms - at the Caulfield Hebrew Congregation hall.

Malki Roth was killed in a Hamas suicide bombing at a fast food restaurant in Jerusalem on August 9.

Mrs Roth spoke from her house in Jerusalem, with husband Arnold holding his arm around her as she came close to breaking down.

"We always knew Malki was special but now we're finding out how very, very special she was, more special than we every imagined," she said.

In the days since Malki's death, people have told the Roths "how she reached out to them and others around them in an unusual, phenomenal way for a 15-year-old girl.

"Whenever she saw anyone who looked unhappy or had a problem, she would go over and embrace them or listen to them and help them and counsel them, just on her own."

She said Malki helped handicapped people including her baby sister.

In the past few years, Malki "worked tirelessly for the Israeli youth movement".

Mr Roth said the family had been comforted by messages of sympathy from children including Australians.

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The Roths were speaking at a day of solidarity with Israel in the Australia-Asia Pacific region organised by the Organisation of Rabbis of Australasia with the support of Magen David Adom, the Israeli ambulance service.

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The event linked audiences around Australia and New Zealand in prayer with rabbis and politicians in Israel and England including Israeli politician Nathan Sharansky and Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert.

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Mr Olmert said support from Jewish communities overseas could "make sure we have the strength and courage to fight for our lives and our country".

SITE MAP

Monash University student Anthony Herman, 22, of Caulfield, who was one of the speakers, said later that he had been back for a fortnight after working as a volunteer with Magen David Adom for three months. His call-outs included being on stand-by as a bomb was dismantled in Haifa.

He said many ambulance volunteers were students and told of one friend who had to be counselled after attending the scene of a fatal blast.



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