

PERUVIAN MUM OF TWINS AND BELGIAN LAW STUDENT AMONG DEAD

BRUSSELS: They came from Peru, Morocco, North America and Europe, and their lives—whether as a mother, civil servant, student or missionary—were just as diverse. This is the picture slowly emerging of those caught up in the airport and metro bomb attacks in Brussels on Tuesday, which killed 31 people and left 300 injured, 61 critically. Belgian Foreign Minister Didier Reynders said around 40 nationalities were among the dead and wounded, reflecting the cosmopolitan nature of Brussels, Europe's symbolic capital.

They included citizens of Britain, Colombia, Ecuador, France, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, Spain and the United States. Among the first fatalities named was Adelma Marina Tapia Ruiz, a 37-year-old woman from Pucallpa in the Peruvian Amazon, who had lived in Belgium for nine years. She was killed in the two blasts at Brussels airport, where she had been about to travel to New York with her Belgian journalist husband Christophe Delcambe and their three-year-old twin daughters.

The others survived the blast as the girls had run off and Delcambe had chased after them, though one of the girls was wounded by flying debris. "They took away everything she wanted to do with her life," her brother Fernando Tapia told Peruvian media, after she was identified by the foreign ministry in Lima. Tapia had studied as a chef and wanted to open a restaurant in Brussels, the family was quoted as saying. Doctor Muriel Brugmans, who treated her in hospital, said on Facebook: "Tonight I'm thinking very much about my patient, mother of two adorable little girls. "She was... so worried for her daughters."

'Good student'

The task of identifying the dead was proving to be a painstakingly slow one, with names only gradually emerging as experts pored over the

remains of victims at both attack sites. The process has been "complicated by the particularly violent explosions and also because there are a lot of foreigners," a federal police spokesman told RTBF television. Another victim named was 20-year-old Belgian law student Leopold Hecht.

He was killed in the attack on a metro train close to the EU's institutional hub, said Pierre Jadoul, the rector of Brussels' Saint-Louis University. "There are no words to describe our distress," he said. Naji Masri, a student in Hecht's year at university, told AFP: "He was a good student, always in the front row." Civil servant Olivier Delespesse was named among the dead by his employer, the Federation Wallonie-Bruxelles. He was killed in the metro attack, local media reported. His old friend Francois Mespreux recounted evenings spent with Delespesse during which he sang songs by Georges Brassens, the French singer and poet.

Newspaper front pages around the world carried a picture of Indian flight attendant Nidhi Chaphekar in the tattered remains of her yellow Jet Airways jacket with blood running down her face. Her family said they had not yet managed to contact the 40-year-old mother of two, but were flying from Mumbai to Brussels to be with her. "All we know is that she is in stable condition now," her brother-in-law Nilesh Chaphekar said, adding: "It has been a very traumatic experience." Jet Airways said both Chaphekar and Amit Motwani, another employee also hurt in the airport blasts, were both recovering well.

Mormon survives third attack

A Facebook page where worried relatives and friends can post notices of the missing has been set up. Pictures uploaded showed men and women, young and old, from Belgium, the United States, Britain and beyond. Mason Wells, 19, was

one of three Mormon missionaries from Utah in the United States who were seriously wounded in the airport blasts. In a twist of fate, Wells had attended the Boston marathon in April 2013, which was hit by a bomb blast, and had been in Paris during the November 2015 attacks. No Americans were immediately known to have been killed in the twin attacks, but a number remained unaccounted for. US State Department deputy spokesman Mark Toner said the situation remained "very fluid," with the list of missing US citizens continuing to grow as family members

contact US authorities about loved ones they have been unable to reach. A woman from Morocco was killed in the metro attack, according to Moroccan news agency MAP, which said three other Moroccans were unaccounted for. At least 21 Portuguese nationals were injured, minister Jose Luis Carneiro said, according to the Lusa news agency. Rome said it was "highly likely" that an Italian woman had been killed in the metro explosion. London said one British national was missing and four injured, while several other capitals said their nationals had been wounded.—AFP



BRUSSELS: Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel (center) joins King Philippe - Filip of Belgium (right), Queen Mathilde of Belgium (second right) and European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker (fourth right) after delivering a speech during a homage ceremony at Palais de la Nation in Brussels yesterday.—AFP

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