

At least 44 killed in stampede at religious event in northern Israel



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Tel Aviv, April 30 (RHC)-- Israeli investigators are examining what caused a stampede that killed at least 44 worshippers and injured 100 more at a mass religious gathering in Mount Meron overnight.

Thousands of worshippers had crowded onto the mountain burial site to celebrate the Lag B'Omer holiday, an annual event where participants sing, dance and light fires in homage to second-century Mishnaic sage Rabbi Shim Bar Yochai

But, in the early hours of Friday morning, the festival erupted into chaos, as a huge wave of people trapped others beneath them, including children, witnesses told Reuters.

Dov Maisel, Vice President of Operations, of volunteer-based emergency organization United Hatzalah, told CNN that an estimated 100,000 people had been on the mountain. Hundreds of people were pouring into the site at the same time from different directions, leading to a "massive amount of congestion," he said. People tightly packed in a small area had fallen down a staircase and crushed each other, he added.

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