

Wounded Ukrainian Mayor 'Stable' in Israel Hospital

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The mayor of Ukraine's second-largest city was being treated at an Israeli hospital Tuesday, the hospital said, a day after he was shot in the back in Ukraine.

The Elisha hospital in the northern Israeli city of Haifa issued a brief statement saying the patient's surgeries appeared to have been successful. It would not comment any further.

Hennady Kernes, the mayor of Kharkiv, was shot in the back Monday while cycling outside the city. One presidential candidate said the mayor was deliberately targeted in an effort to destabilize the city in eastern Ukraine, a hub of 1.5 million people. Officials have not commented on who could be behind the attack.

On its website, the Kharkiv city legislature confirmed Kernes was in Israel.

It said Kernes, who is Jewish, arrived in Israel early Tuesday morning accompanied by his wife and a team of Israeli doctors. The site said that once his condition was stabilized and he was found fit to travel, he was flown to Israel where doctors have more experience treating

gunshot wounds. It said Kernes is now in a chemically induced coma and on lung ventilation.

Monday's brazen shooting attack marks a new high in the unrest plaguing eastern Ukraine.

Armed insurgents tacitly backed by Moscow are seeking more autonomy in the region — and possibly even independence or annexation with Russia. Ukraine's acting government and the West have accused Russia of orchestrating the unrest, which they fear Moscow could use as a pretext for an invasion.

Kernes was a staunch opponent of the pro-West Maidan movement that toppled President Viktor Yanukovich in February and was widely viewed as the organizer who sent activists from eastern Ukraine to harass demonstrators in Kiev.

But he has softened his stance toward the new Kiev government. At a meeting of eastern Ukrainian leaders and acting Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk earlier this month, Kernes insisted he did not support the armed pro-Russian insurgents and backed a united Ukraine.

Kernes' friend and former Kharkiv governor, Mykhailo Dobkin, told journalists the attackers had aimed at Kernes' heart and wanted to kill him to destabilize the city.

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