




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Metro

# New Harvard grad a victim in Kenyan mall attack

## On humanitarian mission; partner was also killed

By **Matt Rocheleau** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT    SEPTEMBER 24, 2013

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A recent Harvard University graduate and her partner, who traveled together internationally doing humanitarian work, were among the dozens killed during the weekend terrorist attack at an upscale shopping mall in Kenya.

Elif Yavuz, a 33-year-old native of the Netherlands who earned a doctor of science degree from Harvard's School of Public Health in May, died during the attacks in

Nairobi, Harvard officials said. She was expecting to give birth to her first child next month.

“She was excited to be a mom,” said Jessica Cohen, who was Yavuz’s thesis adviser and among the many friends who were mourning her death Monday.

Yavuz was working in Tanzania as a senior vaccines researcher at the Clinton Health Access Initiative, a global organization chaired by former president Bill Clinton. She was preparing to publish dissertation research she completed while studying for her degree through the Department of Global Health and Population at Harvard.

Cohen, an assistant professor in the department, called her “one of the brightest students we’ve ever had.”

“She was incredibly warm and funny and she really did great work,” Cohen said by phone Monday.

Yavuz and her partner, architect Ross Langdon, had traveled to Nairobi because she was due to give birth soon and the city is home to an esteemed maternity hospital, Cohen said. Langdon was also killed during the attack.

“She felt safe, as many of us do, in that part of Nairobi,” added Cohen, who has visited the city and the mall where the attacks happened. “It’s a common place to visit for people who are working on development projects or for NGOs or nonprofits.”



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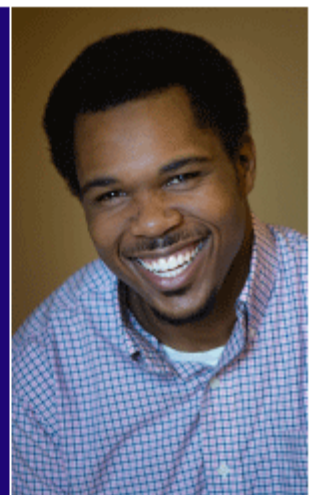
**Elif Yavuz and her partner, Ross Langdon.**

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Yavuz and Langdon were among at least 62 people killed in the assault Saturday by some 12 to 15 al-Shabab militants. The attackers wielded grenades and fired on civilians inside the mall, which includes shops for such retail giants as Nike, Adidas, and Bose.

The militants specifically targeted non-Muslims, and at least 18 foreigners were among the dead, including six Britons and citizens from France, Canada, the Netherlands, Australia, Peru, India, Ghana, South Africa, and China, the Associated Press reported. Nearly 200 people were wounded, including five US residents, the AP said.

Kenyan security forces battled the terrorists Monday as the siege continued.

Yavuz studied at Harvard for the past five years, though she spent a lot of time working on research and projects abroad, according to Cohen. Her thesis focused on malaria prevention and treatment in eastern Africa.

Yavuz recently met Clinton through her role with the Clinton Health Access Initiative, friends said. A picture, widely circulated on social media Monday and reportedly from Yavuz's Facebook page, showed her shaking hands with Clinton.

In a statement, Clinton, Hillary Rodham Clinton, and their daughter Chelsea said they were "shocked and terribly saddened" by Yavuz's death in the "senseless" attacks.

"Elif devoted her life to helping others, particularly people in developing countries suffering from malaria and HIV/AIDS," the Clintons' statement said. "Elif was brilliant, dedicated, and deeply admired by her colleagues, who will miss her terribly."

Julio Frenk, dean of Harvard's public health school, said in an e-mail to faculty, staff, and students that Yavuz committed her life to helping people in need.

"Her compassion was an inspiration to everyone she touched at HSPH and the broader global community in which she lived and worked," Frenk wrote.

She graduated in 2004 from Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies.

Family, friends, and colleagues who knew the couple posted tributes online Monday.

Langdon, a codirector of the architecture firm Regional Associates, was also involved in humanitarian efforts.

Peter Adams, a longtime friend of Langdon's who lives in Tasmania, remembered the couple in a post on his blog Monday.

“Both had dedicated their lives to working for a peaceful world. Both had so much to offer,” Adams wrote. “Besides a personal loss for myself, this is a major global loss.”

Langdon was about to start working on a \$35 million museum and had designed an AIDS hospital in Kenya, Adams said.

Cohen said she hopes to publish their near-complete research. “I think she would want the fruit of her work to come out,” Cohen said.

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