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A makeshift memorial at Palmadeo Park has been created for the six people killed in the horrific stabbing spree the night of Wed., March 6. The incident at a Berrigan Drive home in Barrhaven is the worst mass killing incident in Ottawa history, and left residents of Barrhaven in shock. For the full story, see pages 4, 5, 7 and 11. CHARLIE SENACK PHOTO





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Ottawa's worst mass killing spree leaves six Barrhaven residents dead

BY CHARLIE SENACK

A layer of innocence in our community has been peeled away by one of the most horrific mass killings in Canadian history.

A typically quiet Barrhaven street was the scene of Ottawa's worst mass killing in recent history. On March 7, the bodies of six Sri Lankan newcomers to Canada were pulled out of a home on Berrigan Drive.

Ottawa Police received two calls shortly before 11:00 p.m. on March 6 reporting a "suspicious incident". Neighbors reported a man could be heard yelling for help outside. Upon arrival, the lifeless bodies of four children and two adults were discovered inside the home by horrified members of the Ottawa Police Service.

Darshani Banbarayake Gama Waluwe Darshani Dilanthika Ekanyake, age 35, was killed alongside her four children: Inuka Wickramasinghe, 7, Ashwini Wickramasinghe, 4, Rinyana Wickramasinghe, 2, and Kelly Wickramasinghe, who was only two months old.

An acquaintance to the family, Amarakoonmubiyansela Ge Gamini Amarakoon, 40, was also found dead. He was living in the home, said police. Husband and father Dhanushka Wickramasinghe survived the attack and is listed in serious but stable condition.

The sinister act was

allegedly carried out by 19-year-old Ferbio De-Zoysa, a Sri Lankan foreign exchange student who was staying with the family. He was arrested on scene without altercation and has been charged with six counts of first degree murder and one count of attempted murder.

Ottawa Police Chief Eric Stubbs said the incident has left the community in shock and sadness. Investigators don't believe the homicide involved intimate partner violence.

"This was the largest murder in Ottawa's history in recent memory," he said. "This was a senseless act of violence perpetrated on innocent people."

While the incident was first labeled as a mass shooting, those reports turned out to be false. Stubbs said an edged weapon like a knife was used in all the attacks. Police aren't commenting further on what led up to the events.

"Our investigators and forensic teams are working very hard to determine all the facts and ensure justice is done," said Stubbs. "The community is going to be greatly impacted, the City of Ottawa, let alone the specific neighbourhood. We're thinking of them and sending all empathy to those involved. Family, friends and neighbours."

On Thursday morning, police held up white tarps as the six bodies were carried out of the home. Police tape blocked off



A recent family photo shows the family at a birthday party. Only the father, left, survived the March 6 late night attack.

an alleyway connecting the backyards, and blood could be seen on the sidewalk and door of the neighbouring residence.

The Sri Lankan High Commission said support is being given to their community. It is in touch with family members who primarily live in Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka.

The Ottawa Catholic School Board said two

of the victims attended Junior Kindergarten and grade 2 at nearby Monsignor Paul Baxter School. Principal Vincenza Nicolotti said due to the sensitivity of the topic and lack of details, students would not be given much information at this time.

KILLING SPREE
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“Our deepest sympathies and sincerest condolences go to the families and loved ones of the victims during this incredibly challenging time,” Nicoletti wrote in a statement. “We cannot imagine the pain and sorrow they must be experiencing.”

The board said grief counselors and crisis support teams would be on hand for students.

Shocking violence

Soon after news of the brutal killings started to circulate, Ottawa Mayor Mark Sutcliffe wrote on the platform X, formally known as Twitter, that he was devastated and shocked to learn about one of “the most shocking incidents of violence in our city’s history.”

Speaking at a police press conference, Sutcliffe reiterated there is no further threat to public safety.

“It’s particularly troubling for me as a parent to hear of the loss of four children at very young ages. It’s very difficult to think about; very difficult to process,” he said. “When I say that Barrhaven is a wonderful and rapidly growing community full of warm and welcoming families and neighbors, it’s hard to believe something like this could happen there or anywhere else in our city.”

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau also chimed in and said his first reactions were of “shock and sadness.”

“We are expecting that the

community reaches out to support family and friends as Canadians always do,” said Trudeau.

While Ottawa is no stranger to homicides, the magnitude of this one is unmatched to any ever reported before. In early September, two people were killed during a shooting at a wedding being held at the Infinity Convention Centre in the city’s south end. Nearby in December 2016, two sisters were stabbed and killed at their residence on McCarthy Road. Ottawa was also home to Canada’s second-ever school shooting when then 18-year-old Robert Poulin shot up his class at St. Pius X High School. Including himself, three people were killed.

In Barrhaven, the community reeled over the death of 18-year-old Jennifer Teague, who was raped and murdered by Kevin Davis in September 2005. In 2010, Barrhaven teen Michael Swan was killed, execution style, at the home he and friends were renting on Moodie Drive near the Trail Road waste facility. Then in January 2015, Jagtar Gill was found murdered. Former Barrhaven lovers, neighbours, and OC Transpo drivers, Bhupinderpal Gill and Gurpreet Ronald, were found guilty for her death. And in November 2021, 64-year-old Linda Frederick was murdered by her son Conor Donnelly. Former Ottawa Police Chief Peter Sloly called it



Candles were lit the evening of March 7 for the victims at Palmadeo Park, near the home.

CHARLIE SENACK PHOTOS

a “house of horrors” at the time.

In this case, Berrigan Drive residents said incidents like this only take place in the movies; they never expected to experience it in their sleepy suburb. They learned of the dark acts which occurred inside the home as dawn broke.

Neighbours who the Barrhaven Independent spoke with said they didn’t know the family, but always called

it a safe neighborhood “where you could leave your doors unlocked.” One resident said she saw the police cars speeding to the scene and officers running down the street.

At 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, less than 24 hours after the killings, an echo of silence spread though Palmadeo Park as the community gath-

ered for a vigil to honor the lives lost. Over 100 people, many of them children, placed flowers, stuffed animals and a rattle on a picnic table with a message reading “our hearts are shattered.”

A separate vigil was scheduled for the local politicians and the High Commissioner of Sri Lanka on Saturday. At Queen’s Park, a

moment of silence was held. Nepean MPP Lisa MacLeod shared her condolences on the platform X.

“My community has woken up to shock, grief and tragedy today,” said MacLeod. “There are no words for the heartbreak me and my neighbours feel for the surviving family, friends and playmates of the deceased.”



Berrigan Drive residents woke up to see a crime scene at a usually quiet townhouse



Ottawa Police were at the Berrigan Drive home minutes after receiving the 9-1-1 call. They walked into one of the most horrific scenes in Canadian history.