Two killed in Jerusalem terror ramming, including 6-year-old boy; driver shot dead

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<https://www.timesofisrael.com/at-least-6-wounded-2-seriously-in-suspected-car-ramming-attack-in-jerusalem/>

A six-year-old boy and a 20-year-old man were killed and at least five others were wounded in a car-ramming terror attack near East Jerusalem’s Ramot neighborhood, police and medics said Friday. One of those wounded was a child in critical condition.

Graphic footage from the scene showed several people strewn on the ground after a blue Mazda vehicle crashed into a bus stop near the Nebi Samuel site, between Jerusalem and the Palestinian city of Ramallah.

Several bystanders were seen aiming firearms at the car. Police said the driver was shot dead by an officer who was at the scene.

The attacker was identified as Hussein Qaraqa, an Israeli citizen and resident of the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Issawiya.

Police designated the incident as a terror attack, and officers were seen operating in Issawiya shortly after.

The Magen David Adom ambulance service said the boy, 6, was pronounced dead at the scene. He was named as Yaakov Yisrael Fali.

The second victim was identified as Alter Shlomo Lederman, a 20-year-old yeshiva student who had gotten married two months ago. He and his wife had been on their way to his parents’ home for Shabbat. Lederman was rushed to Shaare Zedek Medical Center in critical condition, where he succumbed to his wounds.

Hebrew-language media reports claimed Lederman had been shot during the incident, and was not rammed. But a police spokesperson denied the claim and said all the victims had been hurt by the car-ramming.

Another eight-year-old boy was in critical condition at Shaare Zedek.

“When we arrived at the scene, the sight was shocking,” said MDA medic Shraga Rosenthal. “We saw a car near the bus station after it hit pedestrians who were waiting at the station.”

“We saw six victims lying next to each other, among them, two were children about 6 years old who were unconscious with severe multisystem trauma,” he said.

The other victims included two men in their 20s in serious condition, a man in his 40s in moderate condition, and a 10-year-old boy in light condition, medical officials said.

The victims were taken to the Shaare Zedek and Hadassah Mount Scopus hospitals in the capital.

Police said a large number of forces were at the scene.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office said the premier was being updated on the attack and had decided to seal the home of the attacker.

“On behalf of all the citizens of Israel, I send my condolences to the families of those murdered in the attack in Jerusalem. I conducted a security assessment and ordered an increase in forces, to carry out arrests and act immediately to seal the terrorist’s house and demolish it,” Netanyahu said.

As a matter of policy, Israel demolishes the homes of Palestinians accused of carrying out deadly terror attacks. Sealing the homes of attackers is often a replacement or stopgap for demolishing them. Last month, police welded the doors and windows shut of the home of a Palestinian terrorist who killed seven in Jerusalem, as a temporary move ahead of its full demolition.

President Isaac Herzog noted the attack came just before Shabbat, the Jewish day of rest.

“Just before Shabbat and our hearts ache with terrible pain after a despicable terrorist took the lives of a small child and a young man in a ramming attack in Jerusalem,” Herzog said.

“Together with all the people of Israel, I feel the pain of the families and pray for the healing of the wounded,” he said.

Speaking at the scene, National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir said he had ordered police to set up roadblocks around Issawiya, where the terrorist came from “as a deterrent.”

“We have to act with determination and aggression to protect our children,” he said.

Ben Gvir, of the far-right Otzma Yehudit party, said that he wanted to “completely besiege” the neighborhood, but there were legal problems with this, adding that he was continuing to work to pass legislation calling for the death penalty for terrorists.

After his remarks, several angry bystanders shouted at the minister. “The biggest terror attacks were on your watch,” one said, while a group of Ben Gvir supporters chanted “death to terrorists.”

In a later statement, Ben Gvir called on police to “prepare plans for Operation Defensive Shield 2 in East Jerusalem,” referring to the Israeli military’s operations in the West Bank during the Second Intifada in the early 2000s.

“Ben Gvir instructed the police to ready and prepare plans for Operation Defensive Shield 2 in East Jerusalem starting this coming Sunday, to deal with the terror nests in East Jerusalem,” his office said.

The US Embassy in Jerusalem’s Office of Palestinian Affairs issued a condemnation of the attack. “We urge steps to prevent further escalation. We will continue our efforts with leaders in Israel and the West Bank to work towards restoring calm,” it tweeted.

US Ambassador Tom Nides added, “Incredibly sorrowful news that a vicious terrorist attack has killed a small boy and a young man in Jerusalem today. I want to express my deepest condolences to the families of the victims and pray for a speedy recovery for the wounded.”

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas terror groups, the latter of which rules the Gaza Strip, praised the attack but stopped short of claiming responsibility.

A Hamas spokesperson called the attack “a heroic response to the crimes of the occupation.”

The attack came at a time of rising violence in the region, with the Israeli military pressing on with an anti-terror offensive in the West Bank to deal with a series of attacks that left 31 people in Israel dead in 2022, and seven more in an attack in Jerusalem last month.

The IDF’s operation has netted more than 2,500 arrests in near-nightly raids. It also left 171 Palestinians dead in 2022, and another 42 since the beginning of the year, many of them while carrying out attacks or during clashes with security forces, though some were uninvolved civilians.