‘Screams of terror’: 7 hurt, including 2 seriously, in shooting near Western Wall

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Seven people were hurt, two of them seriously, in a terror shooting attack just outside Jerusalem’s Old City in the predawn hours of Sunday, officials said.

According to authorities, shots were fired at a bus on a street near the Western Wall, and also at a nearby parking lot near King David’s Tomb, outside the Old City’s Zion Gate.

Those wounded in the attack included a 35-year-old pregnant woman who was shot while sitting in a nearby car, Hebrew media reported. Her abdominal injury was described by doctors as “complex” and her life was said to be in danger. Shaare Zedek hospital said she had undergone an emergency delivery and that the newborn was in serious but stable condition.

Also among the injured were reportedly four members of a Satmar Hasidic family who came from the United States as tourists on Wednesday. The parents, son and daughter were waiting for a taxi at a bus stop when they were shot near King David’s Tomb. The family’s father was said to be in serious condition, under sedation and on a ventilator, while the mother was in moderate condition.

The perpetrator had reportedly waited for the bus’s arrival and fired the shots while passengers were boarding, then fled on foot to the nearby Silwan neighborhood, where police were conducting a widespread manhunt throughout the night.

“The bus was full, jam-packed. I stopped at a bus stop at King David’s Tomb and then I heard gunfire, people started yelling, people were hurt inside the bus,” the bus driver, Daniel Kanievsky, said.

The driver said he had wanted to drive away but couldn’t because passengers were helping a wheelchair-bound woman board the bus, with the lowered ramp blocking the door from closing.

“I waited half an hour before the bus came,” the Ynet news site quoted eyewitness Avraham Deutsch as saying. “I heard three shots, I jumped inside the bus and lay low with everyone. I immediately understood it was a terror attack, and then there were screams of terror. Everyone called police. I saw two older people on the ground and two young people who were hurt in the shoulder.”

“It was a very difficult scene, the blood-soaked tzitzit and abandoned baby stroller will remain in my memory for many years,” said Moshe Levy from the United Hatzalah emergency organization, referring to knotted ritual fringes worn by observant Jews.

The Magen David Adom (MDA) ambulance service said its medics treated two people who were seriously hurt, as well as five others who were said to be in light and moderate conditions.

The victims were all taken to hospitals in Jerusalem, MDA said. Shaare Zedek Medical center said five people arrived from the incident, including two in serious condition, one in moderate condition and two with light injuries. Hadassah Mount Scopus hospital said two people arrived with gunshot wounds and were being examined, and four people suffered from acute anxiety following the shooting.

Prime Minister Yair Lapid was briefed overnight on the attack, his office said Sunday morning.

“The security forces… are working to get the despicable terrorist and will not stop until he is caught. Let all those who wish us evil know that they will pay a price for any harming of civilians,” Lapid said in a statement.

“Jerusalem is our capital and a center of tourism for all religions. Police forces and the IDF are working to restore calm and the feeling of security to the city,” the premier added, while wishing a speedy recovery to the wounded.

Defense Minister Benny Gantz also said security forces were working to track down the assailant and any accomplices.

The assailant reportedly fled the scene in the direction of the nearby East Jerusalem neighborhood of Silwan, with police saying they were treating the incident as a suspected terror attack.

“A large number of police forces have arrived at the scene and begun securing the area, investigating the case and searching for the suspect who fled,” police said, adding that Jerusalem District Commander Doron Turgeman held a situation assessment at the scene.

Police sealed off the area following the attack and briefly prevented worshipers from entering and exiting the Western Wall compound.

Jerusalem Mayor Moshe Lion toured the scene in the early morning hours, met Police Commissioner Kobi Shabtai and Turgeman, and said he trusted the police “to put their hand on the despicable terrorist already tonight.”

“Jerusalem is stronger than any incident and we won’t let any terrorist harm everyday public activity,” he said.

According to Palestinian media reports, officers entered Silwan to search the area for the gunman.

Palestinian terror group Hamas, which rules the Gaza Strip, was quick to praise the attack, branding it “heroic” and saying it was “a natural response to the occupation’s daily crimes against our people, our country and major Muslim and Christian sites.”

The incident happened a week after a three-day intense round of fighting between Israel and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), an Iran-backed terror group that is also based in Gaza and is considered more hardline than Hamas. Over 1,000 rockets were fired at Israeli cities, as the Israel Defense Forces conducted airstrikes aimed at PIJ targets in the Strip. Gazan authorities say 49 Palestinians were killed, many of whom Israel says were killed by misfired PIJ rockets that landed inside Gaza.

Since March, 19 people — mostly Israeli civilians inside Israel — have been killed in attacks, mostly by Palestinians. Three Arab Israeli attackers were also killed.