Israeli Soldier Killed in West Bank Ramming Attack

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<http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Initial-report-Suspected-car-ramming-attack-in-West-Bank-486259>

One Israeli was killed and another lightly wounded in a car ramming attack on Thursday morning near at a bus stop on Route 60, just outside of the West Bank settlement of Ofra.

The victim, IDF Sgt. Elchai Taharlev, 20, from the settlement of Talmon will be buried at 6:30 p.m. at Mt. Herzl Cemetery in Jerusalem.

Taharlev was posthumously promoted to the rank of Sergeant First Class.

The second victim, 19, was fully conscious after the attack and was taken to Hadasah Medical Center in Jerusalem's Mt. Scopus.

The IDF apprehend the suspected attacker at the scene. WAFA, the official Palestinian news agency identified the suspected attacker as Malik Hamad, 22, from the nearby village of Silwad.

Authorities were checking the circumstances surrounding the incident.

“The Palestinian vehicle had come up on the sidewalk, and rammed into a group of soldiers who were standing near the bus stop,” said Nachum Bienenfeld, a volunteer EMT with United Hatzalah, which also responded to the attack.

“The vehicle had continued and landed in a ditch by the side of the road. IDF medical teams treated those injured in the attack. Security poles that had been set up near the bus stop due to a previous ramming attack that had taken place at that bus stop prevented injury to other civilians who were standing at the bus stop,” Bienenfeld said.

MDA paramedic Ilan Klein said he had seen “a young 20 year old lying near the bus station unconscious with severe injuries. We provided medical treatment but could not detect pulse or breathing and shortly after arriving had to pronounce his death.”

Malik’s uncle, Uncle Abu Dhiab Hamid said he believed that the incident was a car accident and not a terror attack. Abu Dhiab explained that Malik had gone to work with his father work and had early to go home.

Malik is calm, a hard worker, and did not talk about resistance or carrying out an attack, the Abu Dhiab said.

On Facebook Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassim praised the attack saying that “the Jerusalem Intifada is continuing its work that will only end with with freedom.Once again, the Jerusalem Intifada proves that it isn't a passing event, but rather a Palestinian decision to continue the struggle until freedom from occupation.”

“Once again, there is no safety for the occupation army or settlers as long as they deny our rights, occupy our land, and attack our people and its holy sites..Once again the youth, who are rising up in the West Bank, affirm that Palestine is their compass and resistance is a necessity. The occupation can only be their enemy..Endorsing and supporting the intifada is a national necessity and priority.”

The attack comes as Israeli officials have warned of a possible increase in violence surrounding the Passover holiday. Security forces regularly step up their preparedness prior to the holidays, regularly imposing closure on the West Bank as there is often an uptick in tensions and violence.

On Saturday, three Israelis were hurt in a stabbing attack in the Old City in Jerusalem. Two civilians were lightly hurt and a police officer was moderately wounded. The suspected assailant, a 17-year-old Palestinian from Nablus, was shot dead.

Last week, Shin Bet Director Nadav Argaman warned the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that the current calm in violence is "deceiving" and that Hamas and other organized terror cells will try to carry out attacks over the Passover holiday.

“Hamas and global jihadi infrastructure are working every day in attempting to conduct terrorist attacks in Israeli territory,” he said, adding that “our goal is to ensure that the holidays are as quiet as possible.”