**OFFICERS THWART TWO ATTACKS AT DAMASCUS GATE**

February 19, 2016

By: Daniel K. Eisenbud, Khaled Abu Toameh, Yaakov Lappin

Jerusalem Post

<http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Initial-report-Suspected-stabbing-of-2-Israelis-in-Old-City-Damascus-Gate-445474>

Two Border Police officers were wounded in a stabbing attack outside the Old City’s Damascus Gate on Friday morning carried out by a Palestinian man who was shot dead at the scene.

It was one of four violent incidents that occurred in the West Bank and east Jerusalem over the weekend, two of which occurred at the Damascus Gate.

On Saturday evening, at approximately 6 p.m., Border Police stationed at the Damascus Gate identified a suspicious-looking 18-yearold Arab male who pulled a knife when he was asked to show identification, police said. Aided by a police canine, the officers were able to quickly disarm and subdue the suspect without sustaining any injuries.

In the Friday incident, Muhammad Muhammad Abu Khalif, 20, attacked the two officers from behind at approximately 9 a.m.

outside the Damascus Gate, stabbing one of them in the head. The second officer sustained a light wound to his hand while disarming Khalaf, who is from the village Kafr Akab, north of Jerusalem.

An unidentified 50-year-old Palestinian woman from east Jerusalem sustained a light wound to her leg from shrapnel resulting from shots fired at Khalif by one of the officers, police said.

The officer stabbed in the head sustained moderate wounds was treated at the scene by Magen David Adom paramedics and was transferred to Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem.

Police said heightened security remains in effect in and around the Old City, with an emphasis on Damascus Gate, which has been the site of a series of deadly attacks carried out by Palestinian men, women and teenagers of both sexes since the terrorism wave engulfed the capital in October.

Despite markedly heightened security outside the Damascus Gate, the thousands of Palestinians who traverse the area daily, coupled by the random nature of the knife attacks, has largely flummoxed police officials on how to rein in the scourge.

Although Border Police have successfully disarmed multiple suspects of knives, guns and explosives before attacks have been carried out there, the sheer scope of passersby coming and going at the gate, which is open 24 hours a day, has made it virtually impossible to stop all the attacks.

Meanwhile, opposition leader Isaac Herzog’s recent proposal to separate Arab and Jewish neighborhoods in the capital to stop the bloodshed has been largely rebuffed by Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat and members of Knesset.

In the West Bank on Friday, IDF soldiers shot and killed Abed Raed Hamed, 21, as he tried to run over soldiers at the entrance to the village of Silwad, which is located east of Ramallah.

Border Police and IDF soldiers were dispersing a disturbance at the scene, when the ramming attack occurred. The attacker’s car plowed into a Border Police jeep after he was shot.

Some 3,000 Palestinians attended Hamed’s funeral later in the day, chanting slogans calling for revenge and praising him as a “hero” and martyr.”

Hamed’s mother, Um Mohamed, told reporters her son had driven her to a relative’s home in the village before he was shot dead by the IDF. She said that before she got out of the car Hamed asked her to forgive him and kissed her hand. “A few minutes later, I heard gunshots and deep inside I had a feeling that something happened to Abed,” she said.

Also Friday, soldiers shot and killed Khaled Tareq Taqatqah, 21, of the village of Beit Fajar, south of Bethlehem. Palestinian medics said he was killed during clashes that erupted between Palestinian rock-throwers and soldiers at the entrance to the village.

Taqatqah recently had been released from an Israeli prison where he was held for security-related offenses. Last month, he was lightly wounded during confrontations with the IDF near his village.

On Friday, Palestinian sources said the IDF raided the homes of the two 14-year-old boys who carried out Thursday’s stabbing attack at a Rami Levy supermarket and notified the families of Ayham Sabbah and Omar al-Rimmawi, who are from the Ramallah suburb of Beitunya, that their residences would be demolished.

The Palestinian Prisoners Commission said its lawyer, Akram Ajwa, had visited the two boys who are being treated in Israeli hospitals in Jerusalem.

Ajwa said the Ofer Military Court is expected to hold a session on Sunday to order the two remanded into custody, but that the boys, who are reported to be in serious but stable condition after being shot during the attack, would not be present.