**2 soldiers killed in West Bank terror shooting; civilian, serviceman hurt**

By: Judah Ari Gross

Times of Israel

December 13, 2018

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/four-seriously-wounded-in-suspected-terror-shooting-near-ramallah/>

Two Israeli soldiers were killed and two people were injured — a serviceman critically and a civilian woman seriously — in a terrorist shooting attack in the central West Bank Thursday, close to where another terror attack occurred earlier in the week, officials said.

The perpetrators fled the scene of the attack, which occurred at a bus stop along the highway near the Palestinian town of Silwad and the Israeli settlement of Ofra, north of Jerusalem, prompting a large-scale manhunt, the army said.

According to the Israel Defense Forces, one gunman exited a vehicle along the Route 60 highway and opened fire at a group of Israelis at the bus stop, among whom were both soldiers and civilians, before running away.

According to Palestinian media, the vehicle used in the attack was abandoned nearby, and the two suspects — the driver and the shooter — continued on foot. The IDF said they fled in the direction of Ramallah.

Two of the victims, soldiers in their early 20s, were declared dead at the scene.

The injured soldier, 21, was in critical condition with a gunshot wound to the head, according to Jerusalem’s Hadassah Hospital Ein Kerem.

“His condition is very serious. There is a threat to his life,” a Hadassah spokesperson said.

The female civilian was seriously injured with a gunshot wound to the pelvis and taken to Shaare Zedek Medical Center’s trauma unit in Jerusalem for treatment, the hospital said.

Doctors there said her condition stabilized after she received blood transfusions, and she was taken into surgery to repair the damage caused by the bullet.

The military censor initially prevented publication of the fact that three of the victims were soldiers until their families could be notified.

The servicemen were guarding the bus stop when the shooting occurred.

Thursday’s attack took place on Route 60 near the Givat Asaf outpost, some two kilometers (1.25 miles) from Ofra, where on Sunday a number of terrorists driving in a white car opened fire at a group of people standing at the settlement’s bus stop, hitting seven of them, including a seven-months pregnant woman who was critically injured and whose baby later died as a result of the attack.

It was not immediately clear if the two attacks were carried out by the same group — according to the army, only some of the perpetrators of Sunday’s shooting have been apprehended — or if it was a “copycat” attack, according to IDF spokesperson Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus.

The Hamas terror group praised Thursday’s attack, but did not claim responsibility for it.

“The heroic Silwad operation is a response to the Zionist occupation’s crimes and behavior in the occupied West Bank,” Abdelaltif al-Qanou, a spokesman for the terror group, wrote on Twitter. “The West Bank’s youth and men will remain rebels against the occupation and continue to clash with it until it is banished.”

The IDF said it closed off the entrances to the nearby city of Ramallah and set up roadblocks throughout the area in an effort to locate the perpetrators. The army said it was not yet sure how many people were involved in the attack.

Palestinian media also reported that Israeli troops launched raids in the Ramallah suburb of el-Bireh.

Additional infantry battalions were sent into the West Bank both to defend roads and settlements and to conduct additional searches and arrests, the army said.

The West Bank has seen a significant increase in the number of attacks on Israeli civilians and soldiers in recent weeks, after months of relative calm in the area, raising concerns of a potential renewed outbreak of regular, serious violence in the region.

The military blamed the increase in attacks both on terror group’s ongoing efforts, the “copycat” phenomenon and a number of significant dates coming up this week, notably the anniversary of Hamas’s founding.

On Wednesday night, the Israeli military arrested a number of suspects who were believed to have carried out Sunday night’s shooting attack and shot dead a third, who security officials said tried to attack Israeli troops during an escape attempt. On Thursday, the army said the search for additional perpetrators was ongoing.