Father of 12 succumbs to injuries from Sunday terror attack

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Rabbi Achiad Ettinger died of his injuries Monday, a day after being shot by a Palestinian terrorist during an attack in the northern West Bank, a family spokesperson said.

Ettinger, 47, was a father of 12 from the settlement of Eli. Doctors had been working to save his life since the attack near Ariel Sunday morning in which a soldier, Gal Keidan, was also killed.

Ettinger was shot in the head and neck as he drove by the Ariel Junction by terror suspect Omar Abu Laila, 19, who had stolen Geidan’s gun and opened fire on passing cars, according to the IDF.

He was rushed to Beilinson Hospital in Petah Tikva in critical condition and doctors worked for a day to save his life before he succumbed to his injuries, the hospital said.

Relatives of Ettinger told reporters Sunday that despite having been shot and bleeding profusely, he turned his car around and fired four bullets in the direction of the attacker, who managed to escape in a vehicle abandoned by a fleeing driver.

“This self-sacrifice characterized him over the years,” his family said in a statement, noting his decision to live for several years in south Tel Aviv “to strengthen Jewish identity” in the working class neighborhood.

His family asked that his organs be donated, Ettinger’s sister told reporters.

“We hope that after the great mourning we will see this nation unite, and from this great unity we will also see great joy,” the statement from the family read.

Ettinger leaves behind a wife and 12 children; his oldest daughter is 22 and his youngest is a year old.

“We are shocked and in pain, and we expect that Israel will deal harshly with the murderers,” a family friend told the Ynet news site on Monday. “A family with 12 children who now must bury their father is hard to grasp.”

Ettinger was the founder of south Tel Aviv’s Oz V’emuna hesder yeshiva, which combines Torah study with military service for young men. He was also active in the campaign against African migrants in the city’s southern Neve Sha’anan neighborhood.

A number of Ettinger’s students gathered at the seminary to pay condolences to the man many of them looked up to as a father figure.

“He was like a father to me,” one student told Ynet. “He used to always tell me ‘I’m not impressed by success, I’m impressed by hard work.’ He called me 14 minutes before the attack, but I was studying and I missed the call.”

The funeral procession for Ettinger was scheduled to leave Eli at 2 p.m. and pass through Ariel Junction, where the attack took place, before concluding at the Segula cemetery in Petah Tikva.

“The people of Israel mourn over the murder of the late Rabbi Achiad Ettinger. I wish to send condolences to his family at this difficult time. May his memory be a blessing,” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu tweeted.

“Rabbi Ettinger’s life’s work will continue with us even after his passing, and the strength he gave his students and the community he led will continue to strengthen us through this enormous grief and sorrow,” said President Reuven Rivlin in a statement.

Ettinger’s colleague Rabbi Yaron Adorian eulogized him as a “wonderful man” who worked tirelessly for others.

“Everyone has their own personal story about this wonderful man,” Adorian said. “There aren’t many people like him, who put aside his personal like and entirely devoted himself to the community, the Jewish people and the rest of the world.”

Alexander Dvorsky, a soldier shot and injured by Abu Laila when he drove to nearby Gitai junction and opened fire again, remained in serious condition Monday.

The manhunt after Abu Laila was still ongoing Monday. Israeli security forces detained his father and brother in the nearby town of Az-Zawiya, according to the Ma’an Palestinian news site. Authorities believe Abu Laila fled into the village of Bruqin on foot after the attacks.