

# Boy, 10, shot in chest at home

The 10-year-old son of a community leader is fighting for his life in hospital after he and another person were shot by ruthless gunmen who kicked in their front door while they were asleep.

Ezra van Ballen, who is a keen soccer player for the ACSA Stars Soccer Club in Delft, had to undergo a four-hour operation on Friday morning at the Red Cross Children's Hospital. Little Ezra had been fast asleep with relatives inside his home in N2 Gateway, Symphony Way in Delft, when gunmen rattled their windows and doors as they tried to get inside.

Ezra is the son of Ethel van Ballen, 47, who is a community leader and lived in Blikkiesdorp for nearly 10 years before she received a house in 2017. Ethel's son-in-law, Andre Joubert, 26, explains what happened: "Just before 12am on Thursday, the *skelms* tried to get through by the window, but they struggled. "That is when Ezra woke up. We were four people inside the house. "They gave the door one kick and it opened. They started to fire shots. "Ezra came out of the room and we ran to the toilet which is near the back door because there is no light there, it is dark."

He says the shooters were looking for someone. "They were looking for a friend of mine who isn't a gangster, but he was walking with them. Someone tipped them off that he is here in this house, that he lives here. But he wasn't here when it happened."

Andre says they only realised Ezra had been shot when the boy was crawling on the floor in pain. The gunmen fled the scene in a red Toyota Corolla and the family rushed Ezra to the hospital.

"Ezra was shot in the chest and the bullet travelled to the back," says Andre. "I picked him up and ran to the day hospital. One other guy who lives here was shot in the leg."

A distressed Ethel adds: "My son had to go into theatre for four hours, I do not feel safe there anymore for my family."

Ezra's soccer coach, who asked not to be identified, says they are devastated: "What hurts us the most is that he is an innocent child. "He is our striker and we still practised on Thursday for our first season match this Saturday and now he cannot participate."

Police spokesperson, Sergeant Noloyiso Rwexana, confirms the incident and says: "The suspects fired shots to the victims and two of them, aged 10 and 24, were wounded. Cases of attempted murder were opened for investigation with no arrests so far."

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