

Man fights for life as city murder toll reaches six

Eugene Hogan

LIMERICK'S murder tally rose to four yesterday in the space of just two weeks — while a fifth man fights for his life.

An 18-year-old man, named locally as Eric Leamy, from St Munchin's Street became the sixth person to die in the city this year as a result of violent assault.

Mr Leamy is understood to have received a stab wound to the upper body following a row at Lee Estate, St Mary's Park, sometime between 12.30 and 12.45am. He was rushed to Limerick Regional hospital, where he died at 9.40am.

And in what appears to have been a related attack, a second man — Jonathon Edwards, from Corbally, was beaten viciously with an iron bar at St Ida's Street, also in the St Mary's Park area, within 30 minutes of Mr Leamy being pronounced dead.

Speaking at a press conference last night, Chief Supt Gerry Kelly said that while they are carrying out separate investigations, they were not ruling out the possibility that the two assaults were linked, or that the second had a revenge motive.

A huge garda investigation into the two incidents swung into operation yesterday, with local resources backed by members of the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation.

While gardai are still trying to establish the motive for Mr Leamy's murder, it appears that the victim was with a number of other people gathered in an open area in the Lee Estate and may have been drinking in the run up to the attack.

Chief Supt Kelly said that the dead man and the injured man were known to each other but it is not known if they were on friendly terms. The Chief Supt described the attack on Mr Leamy as spontaneous, and while there were a number of people in the area at the time, there may have been a lone assailant.

The attack on Mr Edwards occurred at around 10am, less than a half a mile from where Mr Leamy was assaulted. It is understood to have occurred in full view of a number of witnesses whom gardai are seeking to interview. Mr Edwards's condition was described last night as "very serious". He is understood to be on a life support machine at University College Hospital in Cork.

State pathologist Dr John Harbison, meanwhile, carried out a post-mortem on Mr Leamy's body at Limerick Regional Hospital, confirming that death was as a result of a knife wound.

Mr Leamy is the fourth person murdered in the city in the space of just over two weeks. On Sunday morning last, 20-year-old Brian Hanly, from Beechcourt House, Meelick, died from a stab wound following a row at Cregan Avenue, in the north side of the city.

He was on bail on charges arising out of the seizure of 100,000 ecstasy tablets — with a street value of £1m — three months ago and gardai believe his death was related to a drunken brawl and not connected to gang feuds in the city.

Two weekends ago, 45 year-old Anthony Casey was found dead in a laneway at Lady's Lane close to the city centre. Two men and two women were yesterday arrested in connection with his death and are being held under Section 4 of Criminal Justice Act.

And on the same weekend, John O'Sullivan (24), from Craeval Avenue, Pine View Gardens, Moyross died as a result of a stabbing incident. A 29-year-old man from the city has been charged in connection with his death.

Meanwhile, a Limerick publican who barred a man from his premises, had shots fired at his pub on Monday night. A man in his 20s was arrested for questioning.

Analysis: Page 10