Israeli police disguised as Palestinians attacked by Jewish teens in no-Arabs-allowed settlement

Tel Aviv, January 2 (RHC)-- Two teenage boys from the Jewish-only settlement of Bat Ayin have been arrested for attacking a pair of cops disguised as Palestinian laborers in what the right-wing legal aid group defending them has condemned as a "provocation."

The youths pounced on the officers dressed as Palestinian technicians, hitting and pepper-spraying them, after the men refused to give a clear explanation of why they were walking around the center of the West Bank settlement on Tuesday, local media reported. They were subsequently taken in for questioning and, their lawyer Moshe Polsky has claimed, held overnight. The boys' names were not released as they were both minors.

Polsky, defending the boys on behalf of right-wing legal aid group Honeinu, slammed the officers for "committing provocations" during a "stressful security period." The police declined to comment on the

nature of their undercover work to the press, and it's easy to see how their presence might have raised a few eyebrows. Bat Ayin, unlike many other Jewish settlements in the West Bank, bars even Arab laborers from entry under a principle euphemistically called "Hebrew labor."

The attorney told a different version of events in which the disguised cops - along with other police hiding nearby - "jumped" the boys, insisting the pepper-spray-wielding teen was forced to come to his friend's aid only after he saw the other boy being attacked.

Settlers are often heavily armed, and anonymous residents told Arutz Sheva that the officers were lucky no armed inhabitant had passed by the confrontation. Settlement youth have been let off the hook for attacking police dressed as Palestinians before - the Jerusalem Magistrate's Court absolved three teens from charges they had attacked disguised cops, calling the officers' actions "provocation."

Last month, an unnamed security official highlighted a sharp uptick in settler violence against Palestinians near Bat Ayin over the preceding weeks, telling the Times of Israel that the perpetrators were coming to the settlement from Yitzhar, another recent hotspot for ethnically-motivated violence, because of a military crackdown on the anti-Palestinian attacks in that area. In Bat Ayin last month, two settlers were arrested for throwing rocks at a Palestinian vehicle, and Palestinian bus driver was attacked while driving through the settlement in November.

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