Palestinian boy dies after being shot by Israeli forces in Gaza

Friends of Hassan Abu al-Neil mourn during his funeral in Gaza City [Suhaib Salem/Reuters]

Gaza City, August 29 (RHC)-- A 12-year-old Palestinian boy who was shot in the head by Israeli forces during a demonstration at the Gaza-Israel border last week has died of his wounds, Gaza health officials said.

Hassan Abu al-Neil, who died on Saturday, was shot on August 21 during the demonstration organised by Gaza's Hamas rulers to mark the 52nd anniversary of the burning of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in occupied East Jerusalem and to protest against the crippling blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt.

The Israeli military said some protesters had tried to climb the border fence and hurled "explosive devices" at its soldiers.   Another Palestinian man, later identified as a member of the military wing of Hamas, died of his wounds on Wednesday.

An Israeli soldier remains in critical condition after being shot by a protester.

The clashes were the most violent along the border since the end of the weekly Great March of Return protests in 2019. From 2018 to 2019, thousands of Palestinians in Gaza protested at the border against the blockade and for their right to return to lands they were ethnically cleansed from as Israel was founded in 1948.

Hundreds of Palestinian protesters demonstrated on Wednesday near the Gaza-Israel border, again calling for the easing of the blockade, which Israel has imposed since 2007.

Under pressure from Egyptian mediators, Hamas kept demonstrators away from the separation fence and the protests ended without a recurrence of last week's deadly violence. Following Wednesday's protest, Israel said it was easing some of the commercial restrictions on Gaza, allowing vehicles, goods and equipment for rebuilding projects to enter the Palestinian enclave. Israel's Defence Ministry said the easing could expand further if things remain quiet.

Egypt, which had closed its border crossing with Gaza to put pressure on Hamas, also partially reopened the crossing to allow a light flow of traffic to enter Gaza from Egypt.

The Israeli government reached an agreement with Qatar on August 19, allowing the Gulf country to resume aid payments to families in the Gaza Strip, a move aimed at reducing tensions with Hamas in the aftermath of May's 11-day war – the fourth major Israeli assault on the coastal enclave since Hamas took power there in 2007.

Israel suspended aid payments in May and said the move was necessary to ensure Hamas did not benefit from cash injections.

At least 260 Palestinians were killed during May's Gaza-Israel war, including 67 children and 39 women, according to the Gaza health ministry. Hamas has acknowledged the deaths of 80 fighters. Twelve civilians, including two children, were killed in Israel, along with one soldier.

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