

Israeli troops kill Palestinian during Gaza blockade protest



Palestinians gather during a night protest near the Israeli fence in Gaza [Said Khatib/AFP]

Ramallah, September 3 (RHC)-- Israeli troops have killed a Palestinian in the besieged Gaza Strip, Gaza's health ministry has said, as hundreds took part in a protest against Israel's 14-year blockade of the territory.

Ahmad Saleh, 26-years-old, was shot in the abdomen, the ministry said on Thursday. At least 15 others were wounded by Israeli fire, including a child who was in serious condition, it said.

The Israeli military said that over 1,000 Palestinians had gathered along the Israeli fence in Gaza, setting tyres ablaze and throwing explosive devices. "IDF [Israeli military] troops deployed in the area are using riot dispersal means, including when necessary live fire and .22 Caliber rounds," the military said in a statement.

Sanctioned by Hamas, the Palestinian group that rules Gaza, Palestinians have staged nightly protests along the Israeli fence this week to voice anger at an Israeli-led blockade of the territory. Israel cites threats from Hamas for the restrictions.

The protests add to a recent rise in violence that has tested a fragile truce that ended 11 days of deadly Israel-Hamas fighting in May. Since the Egyptian-mediated ceasefire, Palestinians have sporadically sent balloons carrying incendiary material into Israel, igniting brush fires and drawing Israeli air strikes on Hamas facilities in Gaza.

In the first deaths since the May fighting, a Palestinian boy and an Israeli soldier succumbed to their injuries this week after being shot in cross-border fire during border clashes on August 21st. Egypt and the United Nations have stepped up mediation efforts in recent weeks, helping facilitate Qatari aid to Gaza in a move that was widely seen as bolstering the May 21 truce.

At least 256 Palestinians and 13 people in Israel were killed in the May conflict, in which Gaza armed groups fired rockets towards Israeli cities and Israel carried out air strikes across the coastal enclave.

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