Right-wing Israeli minister hails settlers for killing Palestinian teenager

Tel Aviv, August 7 (RHC)-- Hawkish Israeli minister Itamar Ben-Gvir has released a message of support to extremist settlers who killed a Palestinian teenager in the occupied West Bank.   The far-right minister

said on Sunday that anyone defending themselves against "stone-throwing" should "receive a commendation."

Ben-Gvir's statement was referring to two heavily-armed settlers involved in the fatal shooting of 19-year-old Qusai Jamal Maatan in the Palestinian village of Burqa on Friday.   The pair were arrested by Israeli forces on Saturday and held for further investigations.

One of the two suspects is a former spokesman of an MP with Ben Gvir's Jewish Power party. Some right-wing Israeli MPs have also echoed support for the murderous settlers after their arrest.

Earlier on Friday, Israeli settlers shot dead the young Palestinian in the village near the city of Ramallah. According to Palestinian media, Israeli settlers accompanied by regime forces raided Burqa village.

Residents said armed settlers opened fire on Palestinian properties and set several cars on fire across the area. Armed settlers reportedly arrived at the village from a nearby settlement outpost and attacked them from three directions.

"They assaulted the residents and torched two vehicles," eyewitness Ahmed Barakat was quoted by Middle East Eye as saying. When young people in the village came out to confront the settlers and push them back, throwing stones at them, they were met with live fire, Barakat said.

At least three people were hit with bullets, which wounded three young men, including Maatan. He later died in hospital.

The United States, Israel's key backer, on Saturday, called Maatan's killing a "terror attack" carried out by "Israeli extremist settlers" and urged "full accountability and justice." The UN special coordinator for the Middle East peace process, Tor Wennesland, issued a similar condemnation.   "I strongly condemn the deplorable acts of settler violence against Palestinians," he said. "I call for this incident to be investigated and the perpetrators held accountable."

Hussein al-Sheikh, the secretary-general of the executive committee of the Palestine Liberation Organisation and a Palestinian Authority minister, urged for Ben Gvir's party to be designated as a "terrorist party".

The Palestinian Hamas resistance movement also strongly denounced the extremist minister for calling to award a medal of honor to those Jewish settlers who shot dead Maatan during the attack in eastern Ramallah on Friday. In a statement on Sunday, Hamas spokesman Hazem Qasem said that Ben Gvir's call reflected the enormity of terrorism, fascism and racism that dominates the right-wing Israeli regime's policies.

Qasem also accused the Israeli regime of disrespecting international law and behaving like a terrorist militia.

Dozens of Palestinians have been injured and suffered breathing difficulties after Israeli military forces raided the eastern flank of the occupied West Bank city of Nablus.

Although the Israeli army said they are investigating the Friday shooting, Israeli authorities have been previously accused of enabling settler violence and failing to prosecute Israeli offenders or protect Palestinians.

Meanwhile, the United Nations on Friday warned of a dramatic rise in Israeli settler attacks targeting Palestinians, their property and Muslim holy sites, stating that nearly 600 cases of such acts of vandalism have been recorded so far this year.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said in a statement that it had registered 591 settler-related incidents in the occupied territory in the first six months of the current year, which resulted either in casualties, property damage, or both.

Israeli regime troops and settlers have been escalating their terror attacks against Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories, in an attempt to forcibly expel Palestinians from their lands and make way for expanding illegal Zionist-only settlements.

More than 700,000 Zionists live in some 280 illegal settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East al-Quds. All the settlements are considered illegal under international law. The UN Security Council has condemned in numerous resolutions the Israeli regime's settlement constructions in the occupied territories.

According to human rights groups, acts of violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians and their property are a daily occurrence throughout the occupied West Bank.

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