

Israel encourages settler attacks on Palestinians in West Bank



Israeli soldiers speak with extremist Jewish settlers in the occupied West Bank town of Huwara near Nablus (Photo by AFP)

Tel Aviv, August 7 (RHC)-- Israel has given the go-ahead to extremist Jewish settlers to continue their acts of violence against Palestinians across the occupied West Bank, according to an Israeli military

official. "What we have seen in recent weeks are dozens of terrorist operations [by settlers] against Palestinian villages, without resulting in arrests," Reserve Colonel Kobi Merom said.

He added that these attacks are "greenlit" and supported by hawkish ministers, including Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and others. "Smotrich allows the establishment of illegal outposts. Amid the state of collapse that we are spiraling down toward ... I am not surprised by the armed incident that took place in [in the village of] Burqa," Merom noted.

He was making a reference to the killing of a 19-year-old Palestinian, Qosai Jammal Mi'tan, who was shot dead by extremist settlers east of Ramallah on August 4th. Earlier that same day, Israeli soldiers had shot dead another young Palestinian, identified as 18-year-old Mahmoud Abu Sa'an. He was shot in the head by Israeli soldiers at point-blank range as they stormed the Nur Shams refugee camp in Tulkarm.

The official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported that local witnesses said an Israeli soldier got out of one of the military vehicles and shot Abu Sa'an in the head while he was lying on the ground. "If the prime minister ... does not stop this matter and put his foot down at the cabinet table, we are heading toward complete chaos on the ground," the Israeli colonel warned.

The United Nations on Friday warned of a dramatic rise in Israeli settler price tag attacks targeting Palestinians, 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.

"That's an average of 99 incidents every month, and a 39-percent increase compared with the monthly average of the whole of 2022, which is 71," spokesman Jens Laerke told reporters in Geneva.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian Foreign Ministry condemned Israeli minister Itamar Ben-Gvir for praising settlers involved in the killing of the 19-year-old Mi'tan as "heroes." The ministry said in a statement that Ben-Gvir's remarks "are another call to encourage terrorist settlers to commit more pogroms against Palestinian citizens and to escape punishment later under the flimsy pretext of 'self-defense'."

The statement further said that the hawkish Israeli minister's comments are evidence of the hard-right Israeli cabinet's endorsement and support of settler terrorism, and confirm the extent of racial discrimination committed by Israeli authorities in the West Bank.

"The Israeli regime is applying two laws in the West Bank: one of which is applied against the Palestinian citizens, who can be arrested for no apparent reason, while another law provides protection for terrorist settlers and their ideas of incitement to murder."

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