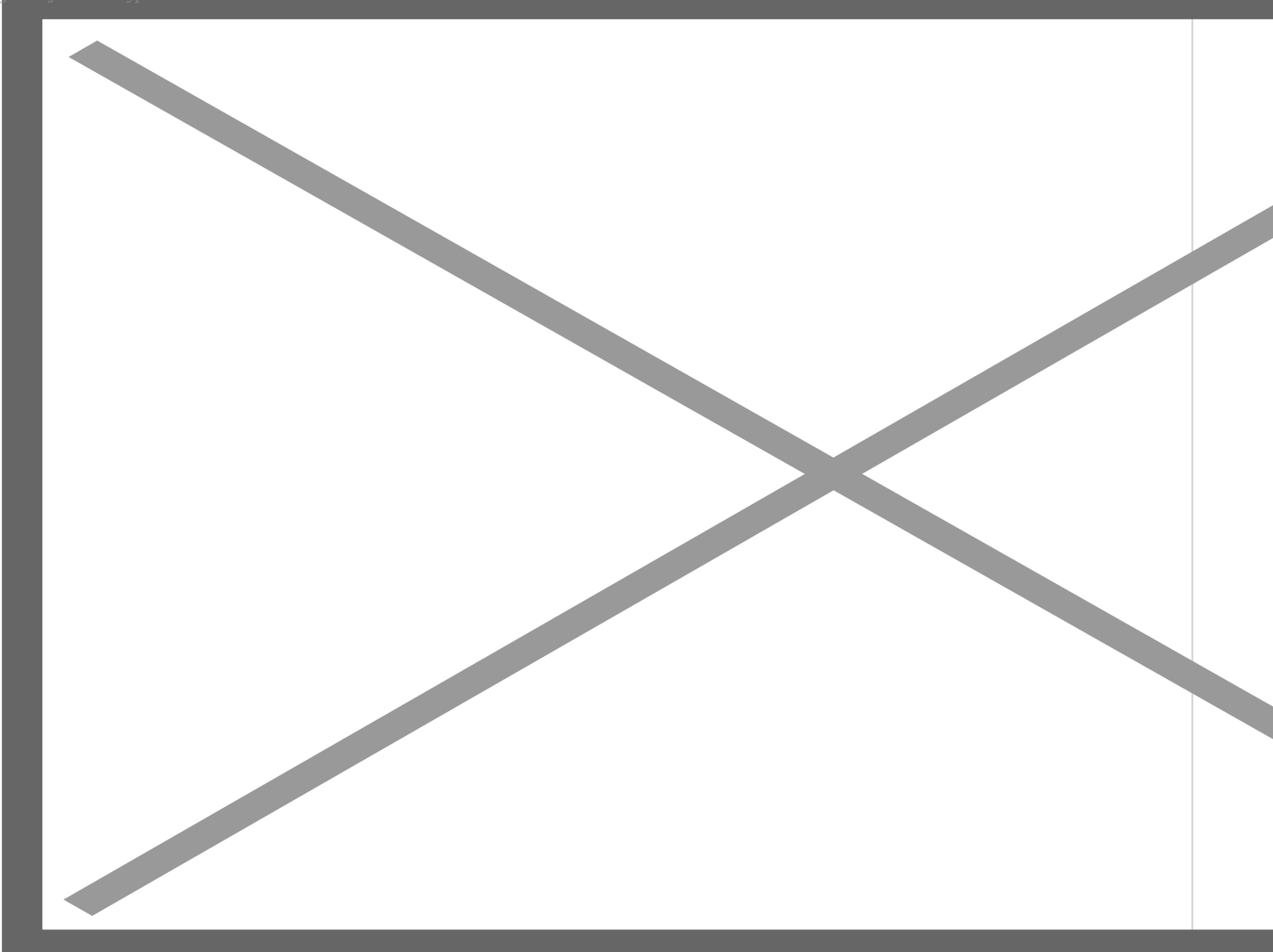


# *Israeli forces kill three Palestinians in occupied West Bank*

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Ramallah, March 13 (RHC)-- The Israeli military says its forces shot and killed three Palestinian men who opened fire on soldiers in the occupied West Bank, the latest bloodshed in a year-long wave of violence in the region.

The Palestinian Ministry of Health said the men were killed on Sunday by Israeli fire near the city of Nablus and identified them as Jihad Mohammed al-Shami, 24, Uday Othman al-Shami, 22 and Mohammed Raed Dabeek, 18.

The Israeli army said “gunmen opened fire” at an army position near the Jit junction west of Nablus, with the soldiers responding with “live fire.” “Three armed gunmen were neutralised during the exchange of fire and an additional armed gunman surrendered himself to the forces,” the army said in a statement, noting that none of the Israeli soldiers was wounded.

The soldiers, members of the elite infantry Golani reconnaissance unit, confiscated three M-16 rifles and a pistol used by the Palestinians, the army said. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, an armed offshoot of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas’s Fatah party, claimed the men who were killed as members.

Israeli forces have arrested thousands of Palestinians in the West Bank and killed more than 200 Palestinians, civilians as well as fighters. More than 40 Israelis and foreign nationals have died in attacks by Palestinians over the same period.

On Friday, an Israeli settler shot dead a Palestinian man near an illegal settlement in the northern occupied West Bank. A day before, a Hamas gunman opened fire in Tel Aviv, wounding three people, one of them critically, before being killed by police and passersby. The group said the attack was a response to an Israeli raid killing three Palestinian fighters in the West Bank earlier that day.

Israeli raids have become deadlier this year since a new far-right government came into power, empowering settler groups in the occupied West Bank, who recently rampaged through the town of Huwara in an attack that has been labelled a “pogrom”.

Israeli settlements, illegal under international law, house between 600,000 and 750,000 Israeli settlers across the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, despite Palestinians seeking the land as part of a future state.

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