

Violent confrontations break out between Israeli police and Palestinians



People run after Israeli troops launch tear gas canisters following Friday prayers in the Silwan neighbourhood in occupied East Jerusalem [Ammar Awad/Reuters]

Occupied East Jerusalem, July 2 (RHC)-- Violent confrontations broke out following Friday midday prayers between Israeli police and residents, with a number of Palestinians wounded and arrested.

Israeli forces fired stun grenades, rubber-coated steel bullets, and tear gas canisters at Palestinian demonstrators angered by ongoing home and business demolitions in the area.

Tensions continue after Nidal Rajabe, his brother Fadi, and several other Palestinians from Al Bustan were released to house arrest for five days on Friday, after paying 500 shekels (\$150) bail each. The men were charged with assault when they resisted arrest after Rajabe's butchery and another Palestinian home were destroyed by Israeli authorities using CAT excavators on Tuesday.

Images of a distraught Rijabe trying to defend his butchery, and livelihood, from being demolished and his subsequent arrest – and those of the other young men who were all beaten – made the rounds on social media almost instantaneously, fuelling a growing vortex of collective anger in occupied East Jerusalem.

Since 2005, Israel has sent demolition notices to residents of about 100 homes in Silwan warning their abodes – housing more than 1,500 people – are to be destroyed on the grounds they were built without a permit.

However, it is almost impossible for Palestinians to get building permits in East Jerusalem, as only about 13 percent of the illegally occupied part of the city has been allocated for Palestinians. Simultaneously, Israeli settlements are actively encouraged with financial incentives and the protection of Israeli law.

The demolitions are to make way for an Israeli settler organisation that seeks to turn the land into a national park, linked to the archaeological City of David area. According to a statement released by Fakhri Abu Diab, co-director of the Jahalin Solidarity organisation and spokesman for Silwan residents, members of the US Congress are currently discussing Israel's ongoing displacement of Palestinians and the destruction of their homes in East Jerusalem in contravention of international law.

“People know members of Congress are speaking out about these issues, yet current events witnessed by Palestinians prove that Israel is prepared to defy the international community, including members of the U.S. Congress,” said Abu Diab.

Recently, a number of homes and buildings in Silwan were ordered to self-demolish or face a fine of \$6,000 if the municipality carried out the demolitions. Nidal Rijabe was one of them.

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