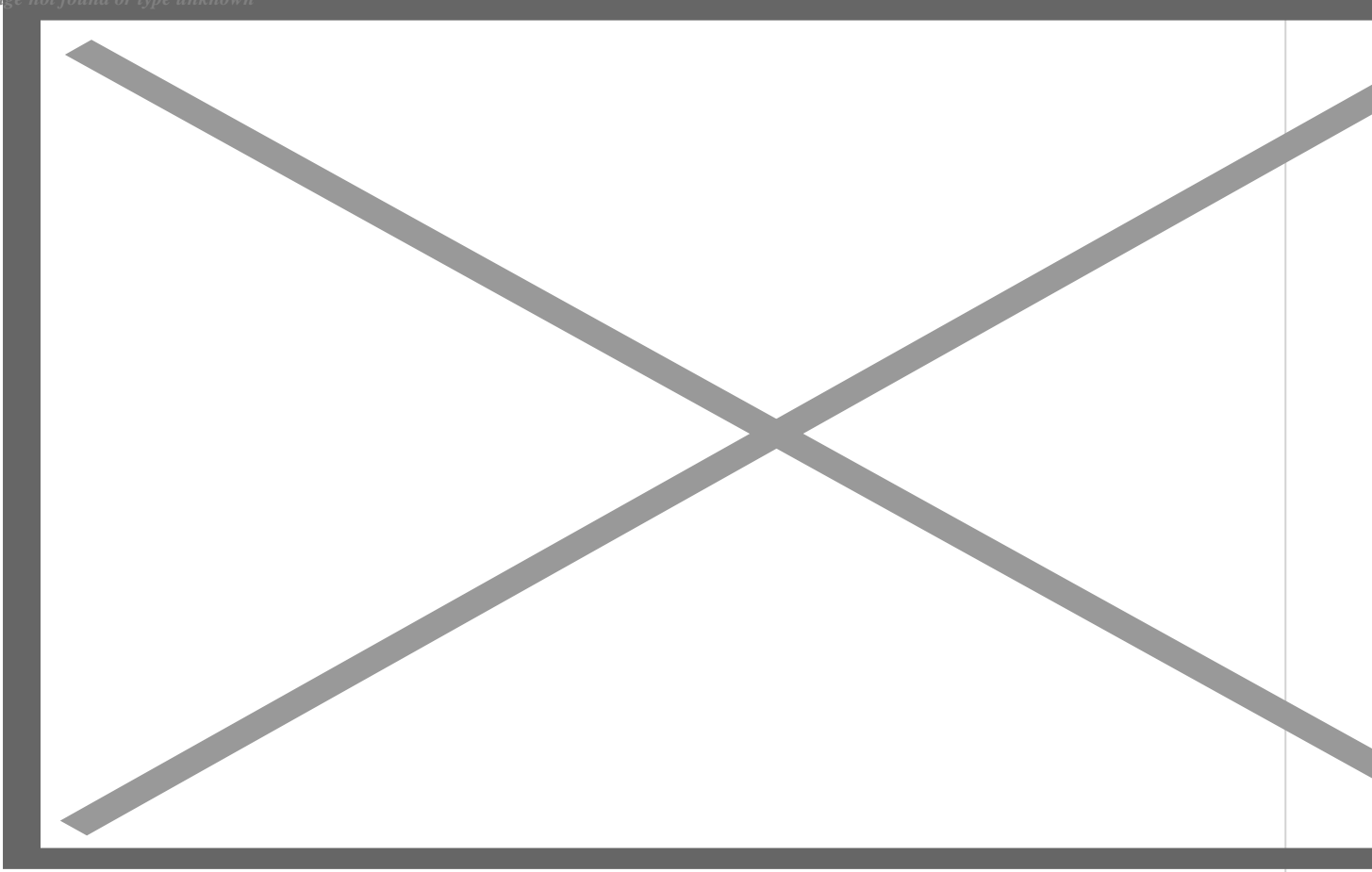


Islamic Jihad says Israeli settlers are legitimate target of resistance

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**An armed Israeli settler stands guard near the Israeli settlement of Kiryat Arba, near Hebron.
(File photo byAFP)**

Hebron, July 18 (RHC)-- The Palestinian Islamic Jihad resistance movement says Israeli settlers are the "legitimate target" of the Palestinian resistance due to recent reports showing that settlers and occupation forces cooperated in attacks that killed a number of Palestinians.

"What the Hebrew-language media revealed about the involvement of settlers in the killing of 11 Palestinians in the West Bank over the past month is clear evidence of the level of terrorism to which our nation is exposed," said Tariq Salmi, the movement's spokesman, according to Palestine Today.

Salmi said that the Israeli regime's army supports the terrorist acts of Israeli settlers against Palestinians, adding that "all Zionists" are involved in any crime against the Palestinian nation, which shows that "Palestinians are the target of Zionist scenarios arising from murder, occupation, burning of lands and agricultural crops, attacks, and destruction of [Palestinians'] properties and assets with the aim of expelling them from their land."

He also said that the reports revealing the cooperation of Israeli forces and settlers to kill Palestinians confront international institutions with their responsibilities. "The world's conscience must be awakened against such terrorism," he said.

"We, as Palestinian people, have a priority and a fundamental right to defend ourselves against this terrorism," the spokesman said, adding, "Therefore, the settlers are the legitimate target of the resistance."

In recent years, there has been a sharp spike in acts of aggression committed by Israeli settlers against Palestinians. While attacks by settlers on Palestinians, as Israeli soldiers stand idly by, are a common occurrence in the occupied territories, recently-surfaced photos and videos have shown that settlers and soldiers have cooperated to attack villages with live ammunition.

One video, obtained by the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem, shows a shirtless settler with a face covering, armed with an automatic rifle, takes aim toward Palestinian villages and opens fire while standing in front of an Israeli soldier.

Israeli forces also repeatedly destroy Palestinian homes under the pretext that they lack building permits, despite the fact that the Tel Aviv regime does not provide such permits to Palestinians, to build more illegal houses for its settlers.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said on Friday that the Israeli authorities have demolished, seized or forced people to demolish at least 474 Palestinian-owned structures, including 150 donor-funded ones, displacing 656 people, including 359 children, across the occupied West Bank since the beginning of this year.

"This represents a near 70 percent increase in the number of people displaced, with a near 75 percent increase in children, compared with the equivalent period in 2020." OCHA said. It also said the United Nations has repeatedly called on Israel to halt its demolition and confiscation of Palestinian property and bring its conduct in line with its obligations as an occupying power under international humanitarian law.

The Israeli regime's violence against Palestinians, in particular its plots to demolish Palestinian houses in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, led to an 11-day war between Palestinian resistance groups in the Gaza Strip and the regime in May, as a result of which over 250 Palestinians, including 66 children, were killed in the besieged Gaza.

In spite of a ceasefire that ended the aggression, Israel has continued its land theft policy and violence against Palestinians throughout the occupied territories.

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