

Israeli forces kill Palestinian man in occupied West Bank

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Palestinian protesters evacuate an injured man during confrontations with Israeli forces in Beita after a protest against the Israeli settler outpost of Evyatar [File: Jaafar Ashtiyeh/AFP]

Ramallah, July 28 (RHC)-- A Palestinian man has been killed in Israeli gunfire in the occupied West Bank, the scene of confrontations between protesters and Israeli forces for weeks, Palestinian officials said.

Shadi Omar Lotfi Salim, 41, was shot dead late on Tuesday near the flashpoint Palestinian village of Beita, the Palestinian health ministry said.

“He was killed in cold blood,” the deputy mayor said, adding that there had been no protests in the area on Tuesday night. Local Palestinian news agency Maan quoted security sources saying Salim was killed in an ambush the Israeli army had set up for him at the village’s junction.

Salim was responsible for water engineering in the village municipality, and became the seventh Palestinian to be killed since protests began in Beita against the illegal settlement set up on the village’s lands last March.

The Israeli army issued a statement saying that while on routine duty soldiers “spotted a Palestinian suspect in the area”, south of Nablus.

“When the Palestinian began advancing rapidly towards the troop with a suspicious object identified as an iron bar in his hand, the troop operated to stop the suspect following the standard procedures, including by firing warning shots into the air,” the Israeli army said in a statement.

Protests in Beita against the Israeli army broke out after news of Salim’s killing, with the Red Crescent documenting 106 Palestinian injuries.

For several months, Beita has been the scene of frequent unrest, when dozens of Israeli families settled on the village’s Mount Sabih and began building the wildcat outpost of Evyatar in defiance of Israeli and international law.

The land expropriation threatened the livelihoods of at least 17 Palestinian families – more than 100 people – who depend on harvesting their olives on land they have owned for generations.

After weeks of protests from the Palestinian residents of Beita, the government of nationalist Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett struck a deal with the settlers that saw them leave the Evyatar outpost.

In addition to the rudimentary homes built by the settlers, a military base and religious school, or yeshiva, also remained in the outpost, until the Israeli defence ministry determines whether the land can be considered state territory.

The agreement was rejected by the mayor of Beita, who said last Thursday that “confrontations and protests will continue” as long as any Israeli “remains on our land.” All Jewish settlements in the West Bank are regarded as illegal by most of the international community.

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