

Doctor among two Palestinians killed by Israeli forces in Jenin

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Israeli soldiers take part in a raid near the illegally occupied West Bank city of Jenin [File: Alaa Badarneh/EPA]

Ramallah, October 15 (RHC)-- Israeli forces have shot and killed two Palestinian men, including a physician, during a raid on the city of Jenin in the northern occupied West Bank. The Palestinian health ministry identified the doctor as Abdullah al-Ahmad, in his 40s, and said he was shot in the head by Israeli forces on Friday morning in front of the Jenin public hospital.

The second man killed on Friday morning is 20-year-old Mateen Dabaya, a health ministry spokesperson told Al Jazeera. In a statement, the Jenin Brigades, a Palestinian armed resistance group that was formed last year, identified Dabaya as a local commander in their group. Dabaya was shot with a bullet to the head, ministry spokesperson Mohammad Awawdeh said.

The killings took place shortly after dozens of Israeli armoured vehicles raided Jenin on Friday at 8am (05:00 GMT), during which armed clashes and confrontations broke out with Israeli forces. Videos shared by local journalists appeared to show Israeli forces shooting at ambulance crews.

At least five other Palestinians have been wounded with live ammunition on Friday morning in Jenin, according to the health ministry. Earlier on Friday, the state news agency Wafa announced that a Palestinian teenager had succumbed to wounds he sustained during his arrest by Israeli forces last month. Wafa, as well as the Palestinian Authority's Detainees Commission, identified him as 17-year-old Mohammad Maher Ghawadreh.

Ghawadreh, from the Jenin refugee camp, died while being treated at the Tel Hashomer hospital in Israel. He was arrested after he allegedly carried out a shooting attack on a bus full of Israeli soldiers in the occupied Jordan Valley, wounding seven, on September 5.

Tensions on the ground between Palestinians on one side, and Israeli forces and settlers on the other, have escalated over the past week. On Saturday, an Israeli soldier was killed by a Palestinian man in a drive-by shooting attack at the main checkpoint into the Shuafat refugee camp in occupied East Jerusalem.

Israeli forces proceeded to enforce a blockade on the camp and surrounding areas, where some 130,000 Palestinians live, for four days, while searching for one identified suspect, who remains on the run. Residents of the camp and surrounding areas called for Palestinians to mobilise and launched a general strike on Wednesday to pressure for ending the siege, which was slowly lifted on Thursday morning.

Confrontations broke out with Israeli forces and settlers in dozens of neighbourhoods, towns and villages across occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank on Wednesday and Thursday. A Palestinian youth, 18-year-old Osama Adawi, was shot dead by the Israeli army during the confrontations on Wednesday in the Arroub refugee camp north of Hebron city in the occupied West Bank.

On Thursday night, dozens of Israeli settlers shouting "death to Arabs" attacked residents and their properties in the flashpoint Palestinian neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah in occupied East Jerusalem.

The Palestinian Red Crescent reported that its medical teams dealt with 20 injuries from physical assault and rock-throwing by settlers, including five that were transferred to hospital for treatment.

One Palestinian man suffered a broken arm, while another, a 48-year-old man, is suffering internal bleeding due to fractures to his skull and is currently hospitalised, according to residents and local media.

Mahmoud Ramadan, a resident of Sheikh Jarrah, said Thursday night's escalation of violence was serious. "There is nothing left other than they start raiding our homes under the protection of the police. They used rocks, pipes, pepper spray," Ramadan told Al Jazeera.

"They were hitting us and breaking our cars in front of the eyes of the police and in front of the surveillance cameras," he continued, adding that Israeli forces arrested at least 10 youth from the neighbourhood. "The rocks they were throwing could kill some one. They come in a monstrous way like they are ready to kill. We have zero faith in Israeli police to protect us, just as we have zero faith in Israeli courts," he added.

Local journalists said right-wing member of the Israeli parliament (Knesset) and one of the most popular politicians, Itamar Ben-Gvir, raided Sheikh Jarrah along with the settlers on Thursday night. Ben-Gvir pulled out a gun and told settlers that “If [Palestinians] throw stones, shoot them,” according to the journalists.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, gangs of armed Israeli settlers also attacked residents, homes and stores in the Palestinian town of Huwarra south of Nablus in the occupied West Bank. Wajeeh Odeh, a member of the local council, said Israeli settlers armed with rifles, rocks and pipes smashed stores, cars, and physically assaulted residents under the protection of Israeli forces. The attack was documented in videos shared by journalists.

“The attacks have been going on for two days in a row, with support from the Israeli army,” Odeh told Al Jazeera. “Some residents were physically beaten, while youth were injured with rocks and pepper spray.” Odeh said both settlers and the Israeli army fired live bullets towards residents and into the air, but that there were no injuries from live ammunition. “The settlers were shooting live ammunition in front of the soldiers,” he continued. “This is creating a state of horror for people.”

Between 600,000 and 750,000 Israeli settlers live in at least 250 illegal settlements scattered across the occupied West Bank and occupied East Jerusalem. The majority were built by the Israeli government, or were retroactively legalised by it.

Israel has been carrying out near-daily raids in the West Bank, largely focused on the towns of Jenin and Nablus, where Palestinian armed resistance is becoming more organised.

Shooting attacks and killings of soldiers by Palestinians have increased over the past month. On Tuesday, an Israeli soldier was killed near the illegal settlement of Shavei Shomron, northwest of Nablus, in a shooting attack by a Palestinian man from a passing vehicle.

Israeli forces closed off all roads leading to Nablus, which lies on the main road between Jenin and Ramallah, and heavily restricted movement for two days following the shooting. The Lion’s Den armed group in Nablus claimed responsibility for the attack.

At least 160 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces in the illegally occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip since the beginning of the year, including 51 Palestinians during Israel’s three-day assault on Gaza in August, according to the Palestinian health ministry.

Local and international rights groups have condemned what they call Israel’s excessive use of force and “shoot-to-kill policy” against Palestinians including suspected assailants in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which Israel occupied in 1967.

Senior Israeli politicians have encouraged “Israeli soldiers and police to kill Palestinians they suspect of attacking Israelis even when they are no longer a threat”, according to the Human Rights Watch.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has noted in its reports that Israeli forces “often use firearms against Palestinians on mere suspicion or as a precautionary measure, in violation of international standards”.

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