

Israeli settlers launch fresh attacks after rampage as Palestinians mount night patrols

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Israeli forces stand by as settlers throw stones at Palestinians during clashes in the town of Huwara in the occupied West Bank. (File photo by AFP)

Ramallah, March 4 (RHC)-- A large group of marauding settlers hurled stones at passing vehicles in the north of the occupied West Bank late last night, shortly after they rampaged through the Palestinian villages, torching cars and houses.

According to Israeli media reports, the settlers resorted to fresh aggression after being stopped by the Israeli forces on their way to the illegal Evyatar outpost. The latest attack comes days after illegal Israeli settlers went on a rampage in the occupied West Bank villages, torching dozens of houses and cars.

One Palestinian was killed and at least 390 injured in the ferocious attacks on Sunday, with Palestinian media reporting stabbings and attacks with metal rods and rocks. The settlers were reportedly angered by the killing of two Israeli settlers by a Palestinian gunman in Huwara.

As settlers took to the streets again Thursday night, pelting stones at cars belonging to Palestinian residents, Israeli regime forces refused to stop them or make arrests, in line with the standard operating procedure of being the facilitators of settler aggression.

With tensions running high, Palestinians in the north of the occupied West Bank have launched night patrols to stave off attacks by Israeli settlers. Armed only with sticks and flashlights, these young men gather at Turmus Ayya and are ready to raise the alarm in the event of a raid by Israeli settlers, who have set up bases in outposts around the village, AFP reported.

"We do not intend to attack anyone -- we work to defend our people and our village, our home, our land, and our honor," one of the men was quoted as saying, requesting anonymity for fear of arrest by Israeli regime forces. "These are our weapons -- sticks and flashlights -- and we have nothing but them to defend ourselves."

According to the AFP report, the team was formed last year after tensions rose with the Israeli settlers, but they increased patrols after attacks this year, moving around on foot or on off-road buggies. "We, the youth, formed guard committees... we take turns with each other to fend off any possible attack," another man was quoted as saying.

According to UN figures, a total of 496 incidents of settler violence against Palestinians occurred in 2021, including 370 attacks that resulted in property damage 126 attacks that resulted in injuries and three of which were fatal.

Israeli settlers and regime troops have escalated attacks on Palestinians since late December 2022, when Benjamin Netanyahu staged a comeback as the regime's prime minister at the head of a cabinet of far-right parties.

At least 68 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli forces and settlers' attacks since the start of 2023.

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