

License to kill: Israeli forces will no longer confiscate guns from settlers who shoot Palestinians



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Tel Aviv, July 10 (RHC)-- Ultra right-wing Israeli minister Itamar Ben-Gvir has announced that extremist settlers who shoot Palestinians will no longer have their weapons confiscated by police. The official Palestinian news agency Wafa quoting Israeli media reports said on Sunday that the new policy change is part of far-right Israeli national security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir's larger efforts to ensure a greater number of armed Israelis on the streets who are ready to kill Palestinians.

The decision to implement this new policy was agreed upon by both the police and the extremist minister, it added. Though the change in procedures is intended to encourage settlers not to hesitate to act in case of an attack, Israeli Channel 12 noted that there are concerns it could also loosen trigger fingers.

Previously, Israeli settlers who shot Palestinians would have their weapons confiscated by police at the scene as a precaution. Last month, senior Israeli authorities criticized what they called "nationalist terrorism" by some settlers, after a series of violent attacks took place around the Palestinian village of Umm Safr, north of Ramallah.

Israel's military, police and Shin Bet security service chiefs back then said in a statement that the settlers' actions amounted to "nationalist terrorism".

In response, the Palestinian authorities said that the Israeli authorities had been forced to make a "clear and public recognition of the existence of national terrorism committed by thousands of settlers carrying weapons, who enjoy public protection from the occupation army and political cover from ministers in the Israeli government."

The Palestinian Foreign Ministry said that the Israeli statement was issued to address international opinion, but "not intended to arrest settler elements and their terrorist leaders or start collecting their weapons." Last month, the United Nations also expressed grave concerns about surging violence perpetrated by Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank, slamming it as "terrorism" against Palestinians.

According to human rights groups, acts of violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians and their property are a daily occurrence throughout the occupied West Bank. The acts of violence and vandalism, known as price tag attacks, which are committed by Israeli settlers against Palestinians and their property, have risen in recent years.

However, Israeli authorities rarely prosecute the Israeli settler assaults on Palestinians and their property and the vast majority of the files are closed due to deliberate police failure to investigate properly.

The United Nations has already warned of a surge in Israeli settler violence against Palestinians, mostly in the areas of al-Khalil, al-Quds, Nablus and Ramallah.

UN raises alarms about surging terror acts by Israeli settlers in occupied West Bank

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