

Israel hits Bethlehem in Christmas Day raids on occupied West Bank

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Israeli troops assault occupied West Bank (File photo)

Ramallah, December 25 (RHC)-- Christmas Day in the occupied West Bank began with an attack on the Jenin refugee camp and several arrests. The raid on Monday morning followed several others across the territory, which saw dozens of arrests and the shooting in the neck of a 17-year-old boy. Among towns hit was Bethlehem.

Jenin, commonly viewed as a symbol of Palestinian resistance to occupation, has been repeatedly targeted by Israeli forces since its war of aggression in Gaza began on October 7th.

On Monday, the Jenin-based Freedom Theatre, a popular symbol of peace and hope that was recently raided and vandalised by Israeli soldiers, described how Israeli forces lit up the sky “with flare bombs” whilst raiding the camp.

Reporting from the Jenin refugee camp, Al Jazeera’s Imran Khan said that the Israeli army raided at least 10 houses saying they were looking for Palestinians to arrest. However, no detentions were made. “Israeli forces did call for Palestinian fighters to come out and give themselves up but that didn’t happen either. Residents are telling us that this is simply a campaign of harassment,” Khan said.

“Jenin refugee camp is now the most raided camp in the occupied West Bank. The Israeli forces are destroying any symbol of resistance or nationalism in the camp.”

While the raids in the camp and Jenin region have now reportedly ended, at least nine young men were arrested in the al-Jalama village, northeast of Jenin. Regions in and near Nablus, Jericho, Ramallah and Bethlehem – which Christians believe is the birthplace of Jesus Christ – were also raided overnight by Israeli forces, Al Jazeera’s Hamdah Salhut reported.

In the village of Burqa, northwest of the city of Nablus in the occupied West Bank, Israeli forces arrested at least 20 people, including senior citizens.

Moreover, Palestinian news agency Wafa said that a 17-year-old boy was injured after he was hit in the neck when Israeli forces fired live ammunition during a raid in the town of Aqaba, north of Tubas.

Wafa reported that Israeli forces also arrested another resident of Tubas before withdrawing from the town.

The West Bank has seen surging violence and arrests in parallel to Israel’s war on the Gaza Strip which has killed more than 20,000 Palestinians. Israel says it is targeting Hamas in Gaza, but the violence in the West Bank is taking place despite Hamas having limited presence in the territory.

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