

Israel to deploy automatic weapons in occupied West Bank to protect settlements



Tel Aviv, December 16 (RHC)-- Israel is set to deploy remotely operated automatic machine guns to the West Bank in an attempt to prevent potential attacks on illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied territory.

Israel's Army Radio reported on Sunday that the Israeli military has decided to install the automated weapons on watch towers around dozens of settlements and near their entrances to protect them against "armed attacks and infiltration operations" by Palestinians.

The 636th Reconnaissance Unit of the Army's West Bank Division will remotely control and operate the systems, the report said. It added that the Israeli military will first send the automated weapons, developed by Rafael Combat Systems, to locations it defines as 'high-risk,' and expand their deployment over time to include additional locations.

In a post on X, Israeli right-wing minister Itamar Ben-Gvir also said over 120,000 weapons have been distributed to "eligible" Israeli settlers in the West Bank, while tens of thousands more received conditional approvals." "We intend to continue arming Israel. That's what we did, and that's what we'll continue to do!" he said.

The latest deployment of weapons comes at a time of heightened tensions in the occupied West Bank, where unrest has risen sharply since the outbreak of the Gaza war.

Since Israel unleashed a war on the besieged Gaza Strip in early October 2023, casualties have been rising in the West Bank as a result of intensified near-daily Israeli raids into villages and cities in the occupied territories.

More than 812 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank by Israeli forces or extremist Jewish settlers since the war began. More than 6,450 Palestinians have been wounded as well, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health.

At least 44,875 Palestinians, most of them women and children, have also been killed in Israeli attacks across the Gaza Strip during the regime's genocidal war.

Meanwhile, there are fears of widespread evictions and intensified settlement expansion following the recent re-election of former US President Donald Trump.

In the months leading up to the election, Trump reiterated his unwavering support for Israel's settlement policies, which will make the Israeli regime feel empowered to accelerate evictions, particularly in areas that are seen as strategic for future settlement developments.

The issue of evictions is a painful chapter in the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with many Palestinians in the West Bank, including East al-Quds, facing court orders to leave their homes for what the Israeli regime deems to be 'legal' settlements, aimed at displacing communities to enhance Israeli sovereignty in disputed territories.

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