

Israeli forces block entrances to Jenin as deadly raids continue in West Bank



Israeli army vehicles on a damaged road as Palestinians (background) leave Jenin refugee camp.

Ramallah, January 24 (RHC)-- Israeli forces have blocked four main entrances to Jenin city and its refugee camp on Friday as the deadly raid into the city entered a fourth day, officials said.

Mansour Saadi, deputy governor of Jenin, was quoted as saying by the Wafa news agency that the Israeli army “blocked all four main entrances to the city and its refugee camp with earth mounds, preventing entry and exit”.

Palestinian sources said Israeli forces launched drones with loudspeakers in the refugee camp and imposed a curfew from Thursday evening until Friday morning. Wafa news agency also reported that Israeli forces set fire to homes in the camp and blocked civil defence teams from reaching the area to put out the flames.

This comes after they issued forced evacuation threats to Jenin refugee camp residents on Thursday, as thousands of Palestinians fled amid the deadly assault by Israeli forces.

In addition to Jenin governorate, Israeli forces have been stepping up their operation across the occupied West Bank since January 21, just days after the ceasefire in Gaza came into effect on January 19.

On Friday, the situation at Jenin government hospital was “dire”, Saadi said, with medical staff struggling to provide care to patients amid power cuts and fuel shortages caused by the ongoing Israeli operation.

Al Jazeera’s Hamdah Salhut said many Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, including in Jenin, fear Israel will do “just as it did in Gaza.” “In their thousands, Palestinians have been forced to leave their homes in the Jenin refugee camp,” said Salhut, who is reporting from Jordan because Al Jazeera has been banned by the Palestinian Authority (PA) from reporting in the occupied West Bank.

“People there say Israeli forces want to raze these Palestinian towns to the ground just as they did in Gaza.” Sources told Al Jazeera that Palestinian fighters have also been fighting back against Israeli forces, targeting them with an explosive device while they were travelling along Jenin’s Nazareth Street. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

Later on Friday, the United Nations voiced serious concerns over Israeli military’s use of force in West Bank, including methods “developed for war fighting.” “We are deeply concerned by the use of unlawful lethal force in Jenin, in the occupied West Bank,” UN human rights office spokesman Thameen al-Kheetan told a media briefing in Geneva.

“The deadly Israeli operations in recent days raise serious concerns about unnecessary or disproportionate use of force, including methods and means developed for war fighting, in violation of international human rights law, norms and standards applicable to law enforcement operations.”

Al Jazeera’s senior political analyst Marwan Bishara said the Israeli government is shifting its focus from Gaza to the occupied West Bank. He said the operations in Jenin and other parts of the occupied West Bank serve as a “deflection” from the Israeli government’s failures of October 7. Bishara added that the operation also creates an opportunity for Israel to advance annexation policies.

Since the war on Gaza began in October 2023, Israeli forces have increased the size and frequency of their raids in the occupied West Bank, killing nearly 900 Palestinians and wounding thousands.

Israel says eliminating armed Palestinian fighters in the occupied West Bank is part of its overarching goals for the war on Gaza. United Nations Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese warns that Israel’s genocide would not be confined to Gaza if the military offensive in the West Bank does not end.

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