

# *Israeli Forces Attack Protesters in West Bank*

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Ramallah, January 3 (RHC)-- Israeli forces have attacked Palestinian demonstrators protesting against the ongoing Israeli settlement building and the separation wall in the occupied territories.

Media reports say Israeli soldiers fired teargas and live ammunition to disperse the protesters in several West Bank towns on Friday. Witnesses said dozens of Palestinians suffered temporary asphyxiation from teargas during the protest rallies.

The demonstrations were organized by the Popular Resistance Committee. Thousands of Palestinians stage weekly rallies to denounce the Israeli settlement activities and the separation wall, which has isolated large swathes of Palestinian territory.

International criticism is growing against Israel's settlement activities. The international community regards all Israeli settlements built on occupied Palestinian land as illegal.

More than half a million Israelis live in over 120 illegal settlements built since Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories in 1967. Israel occupied and then annexed the West Bank and East Jerusalem in the Six-Day War of 1967, but the move has never been recognized by the international community.

In a non-binding advisory opinion delivered in 2004, the International Court of Justice at The Hague called on Tel Aviv to stop the construction of illegal separation walls in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Rights groups harshly criticized the move and described it as "racism and discrimination."

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