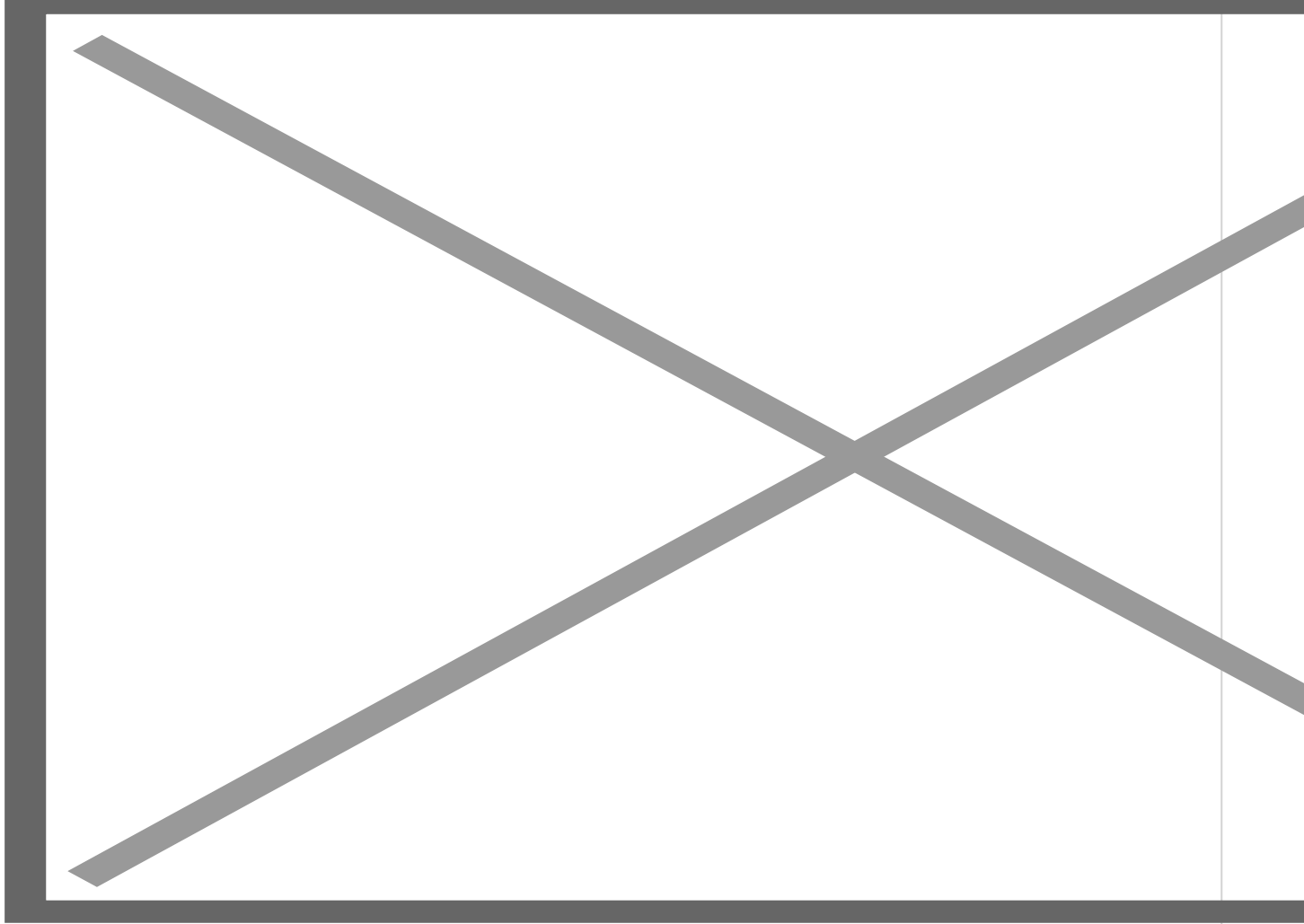


Israeli forces kidnap several Palestinians in dawn raids across West Bank

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Israeli soldier takes aim during clashes with Palestinian protesters in the village of Kfar Qaddum. (Photo: AFP)

Ramallah, January 31 (RHC)-- Israeli undercover agents have kidnapped a number of Palestinians in large-scale dawn raids across the occupied West Bank, local media reports say. Israeli forces arrested Palestinian civilians after storming several neighborhoods of Qabatiya, Nablus and al-Khalil (Hebron) cities at dawn on Sunday, the Palestinian Information Center reported.

In al-Khalil, a 22-year-old Palestinian was detained while he was passing through a checkpoint at the southern entrance to the city, the report said. Witnesses said that Israeli forces arrested two more Palestinians after breaking into a neighborhood of the West Bank city of Nablus. Both of the citizens are from Balata refugee camp, east of Nablus. At least three other Palestinians were forcibly taken away from an area of Qabatiya town, south of Jenin.

Local residents said violent clashes occurred between troops and local residents of Qabatiya with Israeli forces indiscriminately firing live rounds and tear gas canisters at protesters. Israeli forces also broke into several other parts of the occupied territories where they stopped vehicles at the neighborhood's entrance and searched them.

The circumstances surrounding the kidnappings are yet unknown, but the Israeli forces carry out such swoops on a nearly daily basis, taking away Palestinians, whom the regime usually accuses of acting against its so-called interests.

Israel holds more than 7,000 Palestinians in its jails. Most of the prisoners are being held without any charge, indictment or trial, under a controversial policy known as administrative detention.

Separately, Israeli military forces shot dead a young Palestinian man near the Gush Etzion settlement in the southern part of the West Bank for an alleged stabbing attempt against troops on Sunday morning. Many Palestinians have sustained injuries or lost their lives in similar incidents due to allegations that they attempted stabbing or car-ramming attacks.

Israeli troops have on numerous occasions been caught on camera brutally killing Palestinians, with the videos going viral online and sparking international condemnation. Tel Aviv has been criticized for its extensive use of lethal force against and extrajudicial killing of Palestinians who do not pose an immediate threat to the occupation forces or to the Israeli settlers.

Israel has built more than 230 illegal settlements on the occupied Palestinian territory since 1967 that have come to house some 600,000 settlers.

According to B'Tselem, an Israeli rights group, Israel has clearly allowed its settlers to assault Palestinians for years and inflict damage on their property as one of its policies. This has included provision of military protection for the attackers, and in some cases soldiers' active participation in the assault.

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