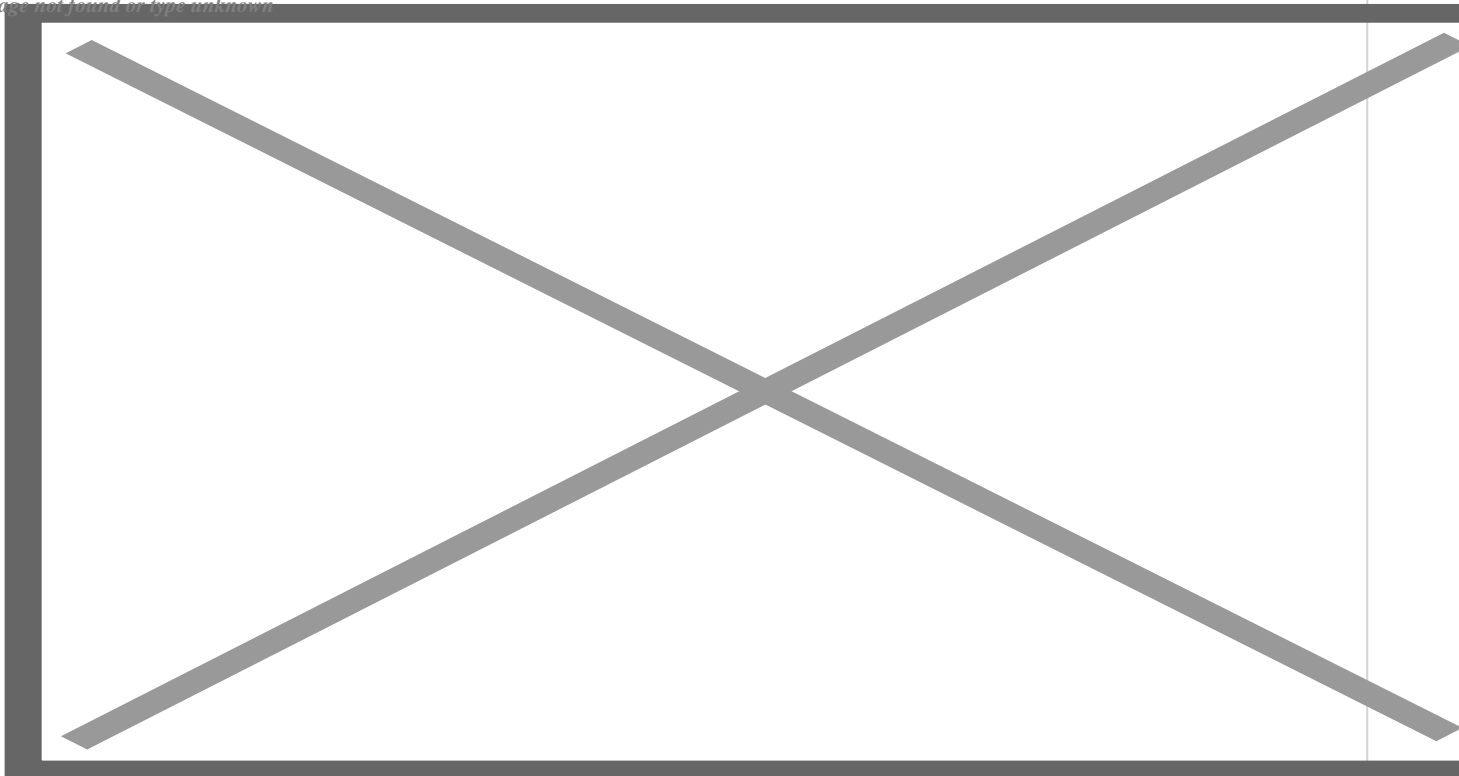


Israeli forces kill 14-year-old Palestinian boy in West Bank

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Palestinian boy trampled by Israeli troops (Photo> File)

Ramallah, February 23 (RHC)-- Israeli forces killed a teenage Palestinian boy in the occupied West Bank on Tuesday, the Palestinian health ministry said. "Mohammed Shehadeh, 14, was killed by Israeli forces' gunfire in Al-Khader," in the Bethlehem area, a ministry statement said, urging an international investigation.

The Palestinian Wafa news agency quoted local activist Ahmad Salah as saying that Israeli soldiers opened live fire injuring Shehadeh before detaining him and that soldiers prevented ambulances from reaching him.

Israel's army confirmed in a statement the death of a Palestinian, whom it said was among three suspects who "hurled Molotov cocktails at passing drivers, endangering their lives." Troops were "conducting counterterrorism activity" in the Al-Khader area where numerous civilian vehicles had been targeted by the incendiary devices during the past month, the army said.

“The troops operated to stop them, firing at one of the suspects that hurled a Molotov cocktail toward passing vehicles. The suspect was hit,” it said. Troops provided first aid but the suspect died, it added.

The killing comes days after another teen, 19-year-old Nehad Amin Barghouti, was killed and shot by Israeli forces in the West Bank town of Nabi Saleh. Palestinian and international rights groups have long condemned what they see as a policy of shoot to kill and excessive use of force.

B’Tselem, an Israeli rights group, said it had recorded 77 Palestinian deaths at the hands of Israeli forces in the West Bank last year. More than half of those killed were not implicated in any attacks, it added.

Earlier this month, Amnesty International said in a new report that Israel was carrying out “the crime of apartheid against Palestinians” and must be held accountable for treating them as “an inferior racial group.” Israel occupied the West Bank and East Jerusalem after the 1967 Middle East war.

Israeli settlements built on Palestinian land are considered illegal under international law. Today, between 600,000 and 750,000 Israeli settlers live in at least 250 illegal settlements in the West Bank and occupied East Jerusalem.

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