

*Israel authorizes military to kill
Palestinians with drones in the
West Bank*

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Gaza City, October 14 (RHC)-- Commanders of the Israeli Occupying Forces (IOF) have been authorized to use armed drones to kill Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, with the approval of Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Aviv Kohavi.

Hamas called the order “a dangerous step” and urged Palestinians “to continue resisting the Israeli occupation with all means possible until they regain their legitimate rights.”

The authorization to expand the use of killer drones coincides with “a significant rise in shooting attacks and massive gunfire during arrest raids, specifically in the northern West Bank cities of Jenin and Nablus,” according to The Jerusalem Post. On September 28, the IOF killed four Palestinians and injured dozens more during protests in Jenin.

Since as early as 2008, the Israeli Air Force has been killing Palestinians in Gaza with drones. They have also been used to fire gas bombs and live rounds in occupied Jerusalem. Although drones have been employed for surveillance, this is the first time armed drones will be utilized in the occupied West Bank. Drones comprise 80 percent of the total flight hours in the Israeli Air Force.

Israel justifies targeting Hamas and Islamic Jihad “terrorists” with drones for “counter-terrorism” operations if armed gunmen are thought to pose an imminent threat to Israeli troops. But Israel has no right of self-defense against the people whose land it occupies. The Fourth Geneva Convention says that an occupying power has a legal duty to protect the occupied. As an occupying power, Israel cannot use military force against the occupied Palestinian people.

Under international law, the Palestinians have a lawful right to resist Israel’s occupation of their lands, including through armed struggle. In 1982, the UN General Assembly “reaffirmed the legitimacy of the struggle of peoples for independence, territorial integrity, national unity and liberation from colonial and foreign domination and foreign occupation by all available means, including armed struggle.”

In May, Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, known as the “voice of Palestine,” was reporting on an illegal IOF mass arrest raid on the Jenin refugee camp when she was assassinated by an Israeli sniper. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) classifies the targeting of war correspondents or journalists reporting from war zones or occupied territories by killing or physical assault as a war crime.

Although Israel initially denied that an Israeli shot Abu Akleh, it later said there was a “high possibility” that she was “accidentally hit by [Israel Defense Forces] gunfire.”

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