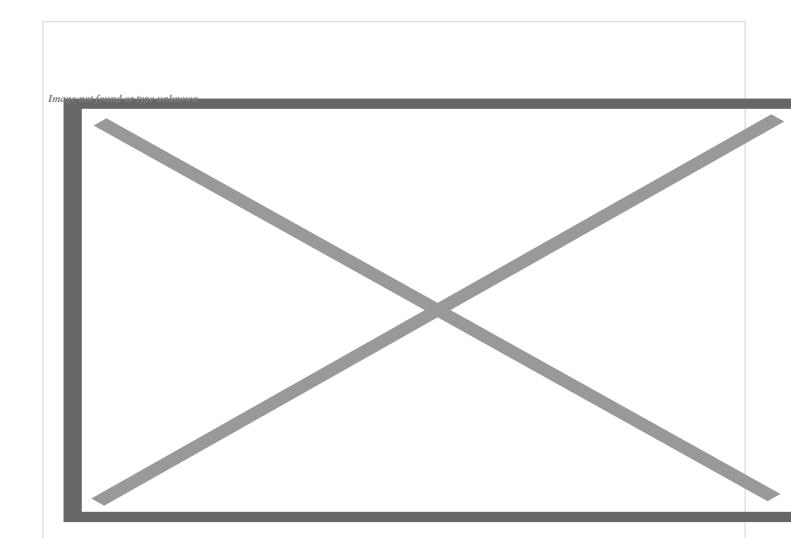# *Israel prepares to demolish family home of Palestinian gunman*

Israel sealed the family home of a Palestinian who allegedly killed seven Israelis on Friday as part of punitive measures aimed at relatives.

Ramallah, January 31 (RHC)-- Israel has sealed off the home of a Palestinian man who alledgelykilled seven people outside a synagogue in occupied East Jerusalem, in a preliminary step ahead of the expected demolition of the building.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet took steps towards approving other punitive measures against the families of Palestinian attackers, including potentially stripping them of citizenship rights and deporting them, and promising to expedite gun licences for Israeli citizens to shoot Palestinians.

The moves by Israel, along with escalating violence that has seen 34 Palestinians killed this month alone, further raised tensions as United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken landed in the region. Blinken's high-wire diplomatic act, focused largely on restoring calm, begins on Monday after he completes a brief visit to Egypt.

Earlier on Sunday, Israeli police sealed up the occupied East Jerusalem home of Palestinian Khairy Alqam, 21, who killed seven people and wounded three outside a synagogue on Friday night. Alqam was killed in a shootout with Israeli officers.

Israeli police released footage of army engineers welding metal plates over the windows of Alqam's family home and welding the front door shut. "We sealed the home of the terrorist who carried out the horrendous attack in Jerusalem, and his home will be demolished," Netanyahu told his cabinet.

"We are not seeking an escalation, but we are prepared for any scenario. Our answer to terrorism is a heavy hand and a strong, swift and precise response."

The planned demolition is among a series of punitive steps, including plans to "strengthen" its occupied West Bank settlements, announced by Israel in the wake of recent shootings. Netanyahu's office also said the government would seal the family home of a 13-year-old Palestinian boy who shot two Israelis on Saturday. The boy's victims were both badly wounded.

Israel routinely demolishes the homes of Palestinians who kill Israelis, a move that has long been decried by human rights organisations as collective punishment.

Dani Shenhar, a legal expert at Israeli rights group HaMoked, said sealing off Alqam's home overnight demonstrated the government's desire for "revenge against the families." The measure was carried out "in complete disregard for the rule of law", he said, adding that HaMoked would launch a protest with Israel's attorney general.

Netanyahu's office also said it was pushing ahead with plans that could strip the residency and citizenship rights of the families of Palestinian attackers, and potentially deport them to the occupied West Bank.

The punitive measures announced are in line with proposals from Netanyahu's far-right political partners, whose support enabled him to return to power at the end of December.

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