

## **UN Human Rights in Occupied Palestinian Territory**

Ramallah

28 August 2024

### **UN Human Rights Office calls on Israel and on Member States, particularly those with influence, to stop attacks by the Israeli Security Forces, settler violence and forcible transfer of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank**

The UN Human Rights Office condemns the Israel Security Force's (ISF) increasingly military response in the Occupied West Bank in a manner which violates international law and risks further enflaming an already explosive situation. At about 22:30 on 26 August, the Israeli air force launched at least four airstrikes in the Nur Shams Refugee Camp in Tulkarem and killed three Palestinian men and two boys aged 13 and 15. There were no clashes or confrontations taking place at the time, but ISF claimed that the airstrikes they had targeted an "operations room." According to information gathered from multiple sources, three of the fatalities, including the two boys, were killed while they were passing by the targeted house, which was located in one of the small and cramped alleyways in the camp.

Since October 7 and as of 27 August, 628 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Of these, 609 Palestinians were killed by ISF, 11 killed by settlers, and 8 either by ISF or settlers in joint attacks. However, 159 of those killed, including 29 boys and 3 women, died as a result of airstrikes.

The violence between the ISF and armed Palestinians in the West Bank does not constitute an armed conflict under international humanitarian law, and as such the use of force in the West Bank must comply with human rights norms and standards applicable to law enforcement. The ISF use of airstrikes and other military weapons and tactics violates these standards and is resulting in extrajudicial executions and other unlawful killings and destruction of Palestinian homes and infrastructure.

Palestinians also continue to be targeted in other violence. On 26 August, at about 23:30, dozens of armed Israeli settlers attacked Wadi Rahal village in Bethlehem, and either armed settlers or army reservists shot in the back and killed 37-year Khalil Salem Khlawi. Settlers reportedly shot and injured three other Palestinian men and prevented Palestinian ambulances from reaching the injured. According to some sources, ISF stood by observing until the man was killed, and only later dispersed the settlers, without arresting any of them. According to Israeli media, ISF stated that their reservists opened fire and "hit several Palestinians".

The killing of Khlawi is not an isolated incident and is a direct consequence of Israel's policy of settlement of the Occupied West Bank, in violation of international law, accompanied by ISF complicity and the prevailing environment of impunity. OHCHR continues to document daily settler attacks and harassment of Palestinians, including settlers physically assaulting Palestinians, setting fire or damaging their property and crops, stealing sheep, blocking them from accessing their land, water and grazing areas, and forcing them to leave their homes and lands. According to OCHA, since 7 October 2023, 259 Palestinians households comprising 1,547 people, including 753 children, have been forcibly displaced in the context of such incidents related to Israeli settlers.

The UN Human Rights Office has reported for years on settlers attacking Palestinian communities in their land in the West Bank with impunity. This longstanding trend has dramatically escalated since 7 October, as the settler movement, with political backing at the highest levels of Israeli government, has seized the opportunity to escalate attacks against Palestinians, forcing them to leave their lands, and expand settlements and Israel's control over the West Bank. Despite the announcement of investigations, following some instances of settler violence, and the sporadic arrests of alleged perpetrators, no settler has been indicted since 7 October on charges related to settler violence.

In East Jerusalem, Israeli authorities continue to apply Israeli laws, including discriminatory zoning laws and policies, to demolish Palestinian homes, in violation of international law, and thousands of Palestinians are at risk of forcible eviction in Silwan. On 27 August, Israeli authorities demolished the house of the Odeh family in Al Bustan area in Silwan, displacing 10 Palestinians including two children. Six other Palestinian homes have been demolished in this area since 7 October. Israeli authorities have threatened to destroy the neighbourhood, home to 1,550 Palestinians, to make space for a "green area" in this strategic location in the heart of East Jerusalem.

The UN Human Rights Office is concerned that the situation in the Occupied West Bank, which has rapidly deteriorated since 7 October, could worsen dramatically if ISF continue to systematically use unlawful lethal force, and ignore violence perpetrated by settlers. The UN Human Rights Office calls on Israel to comply with their obligations under international law to end the unlawful settlement project, restore order and protect Palestinians, including through the evacuation of all settlers as called for by the International Court of Justice.

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