

West Bank: Six Palestinians Killed as Israeli Troops Launch Large-scale Raid on Lions' Den

Intense overnight fighting rocks Nablus as dozens of Israeli troops storm the city and target nascent armed group

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Global Research, October 26, 2022

[Middle East Eye](#) 14 October 2022

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

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[Israeli](#) forces killed six [Palestinians](#) and wounded at least 20 more after a violent army raid in the northern occupied West Bank on Tuesday.

A large army force stormed Nablus around midnight local time, equipped with dozens of armoured vehicle and anti-tank guided missiles, and clashed with Palestinian fighters in the city.

Five Palestinians, at least two of them unarmed, were killed during the three-hour raid and a sixth person was fatally shot in Ramallah hours later, according to the Palestinian health ministry.

The names of those who died during the Nablus assault were identified as Hamdi Sobeih Ramzi Qayem, 30; Ali Khaled Omar Antar, 26; Hamdi Muhammad Sabri Hamid Sharaf, 35; Wadi Sabih Houh, 31; Mishaal Zahi Ahmed Baghdadi, 27.

The sixth Palestinian, identified as Qusai Tamimi, 20, was killed in a separate incident in the village of Nabi Saleh in the Ramallah district.

فلسطين تودع ٦ شهداء خلال اشتباكات ومواجهات فجر اليوم.

١- حمدي صبيح رمزي قيم 30 سنة

٢- علي خالد عمر عنتر 26 سنة

٣- حمدي محمد حامد شرف 35 سنة

٤- وديع صبيح حوح 31 سنة

٥- مشعل زاهي بغدادي 27 سنة

٦- قصي محمود التميمي/ رام الله pic.twitter.com/ELRHyyvqkaN

— شجاعة (@shejae3a) [October 25, 2022](#)

A general strike and a day of mourning were observed across the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip on Tuesday, as thousands of angry residents joined the funeral processions in Nablus.

“The situation this morning, the city woke up so sad, they lost five lives. The atmosphere is very sad and there are strikes across the West Bank today,” Zayd al-Azhary, a Nablus-based activist, told Middle East Eye.

The Tuesday operation came amidst a 14-day siege on Nablus by the Israeli army, which has blocked the city’s entrances and crippled people’s movement in and out.

The Israeli army says the measures were enforced to stop attacks against Israeli targets carried out by a newly-formed armed group in the city called the Lions’ Den.

Nablus and neighbouring city Jenin have witnessed a resurgence of armed resistance in recent months. Palestinian fighters have been increasingly attacking army checkpoints and posts, as well as confronting Israeli troops during city raids.

Undercover incursion

According to Palestinian media, the attack on Nablus began just after midnight on Tuesday when security forces belonging to the Palestinian Authority (PA) pulled over a “suspicious vehicle” next to the Old City.

The vehicle was carrying undercover Israeli special forces, local sources said. When the PA officers confronted the Israeli forces in the vehicle, the Palestinian officers reportedly came under fire from Israeli snipers that were stationed on rooftops in the area.

After the Israeli special forces’ cover was blown, an exchange of fire reportedly took place between the PA forces and Israeli soldiers, resulting in the injury of four PA officers, according to local reports.

The gunfire exchange between the PA officers and Israeli soldiers tipped off armed groups in Nablus’ Old City that an Israeli operation in the city was underway.

Snipers are being positioned at the mountains, ISF are firing from planes.
pic.twitter.com/2sGcWb1rNh

— Younis Tirawi - الطيرايوي (@ytirawi) [October 24, 2022](#)

Palestinian fighters began exchanging fire with Israeli forces who raided the area, while dozens more Israeli army jeeps began rolling into the city.

One resident said “chaos broke out” after that, as Israeli troops descended on the Old City in large numbers, targeting members of the Lions’ Den group.

The Israeli army confirmed in a statement that the operation targeted a site “used by the main operatives of the Lion’s Den”, describing it as a “headquarters and a workshop for making weapons”. It added that it “responded with live fire toward the armed suspects shooting at them.”

The Lions' Den group also said in a statement on Telegram that it engaged in shootouts with Israeli troops and confirmed that at least one of its members was killed.

'War zone'

Local sources said approximately 60 Israeli armoured military vehicles were used in the operation in which the Old City was raided and besieged.

The first two Palestinians that were shot were reportedly bystanders walking through the Old City.

"They were in the wrong place at the wrong time," al-Azhary told MEE. "They were just walking down the road and of course, the Israelis shot them without asking any questions."

It remained unclear the identity of the first two Palestinians that were killed, and if they were members of the armed groups who were fighting against the army incursion. Videos published on social media showed Palestinian medics attempting to resuscitate two Palestinians in civilian clothing as they lay on the street, bleeding and unconscious.

At around 1am, as gunfire rang throughout the city of Nablus, Palestinians in the Old City turned to the minarets in mosques to call for backup from residents to support the resistance fighters and civilians stuck inside.

An hour later, Israeli forces reportedly struck a vehicle in the Ras al-Ain area with a missile, killing a man in his car. Another Palestinian, Wadee al-Houh, who Israel was reported to be one of the commanders of the Lion's Den group, was killed in his house.

The Israeli military released a statement saying that al-Houh was one of the primary targets of the army's operation in the city. The Lions' Den group released a statement on Tuesday morning commemorating Houh but did not specify his role in the group.

As Palestinian armed groups continued to clash with Israeli forces into the early hours of the morning, confrontations were reported across the city, including the Balata refugee camp.

Al-Azhary described the scene as a "war zone".

"More than 9,000 people live in the Old City and all of them were under fire, and in danger - kids, old people, families etc, not just resistance fighters. It is not an easy life or position to be in," he said.

'Trying to resist'

Thousands of Palestinians joined the funeral procession of the five people killed in the Israeli raid as protests are expected to take place across the West Bank against growing Israeli violence.

The Tuesday raid took the Palestinian death toll this year to more than 175 people who have been killed by Israeli forces and settlers, including killed 125 in occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

More than 44 were killed in the last two months alone.

According to the UN, 2022 is so far “the highest year for Palestinian fatalities in the West Bank, compared to the same period in the previous 16 years”.

Nablus was placed under blockade earlier this month after an Israeli soldier was killed on 11 October at a military post on the outskirts of Nablus city. The Israeli army embarked on a widespread manhunt for the shooter, who reportedly belonged to the Lions’ Den.

On Sunday 23 October, a Palestinian member of the nascent group, Tamir al-Kilani, was killed in a remote explosion in the Old City of Nablus. The group claimed he was assassinated by the Israeli army, though the military did not publicly comment on the killing.

Following the raid on Tuesday, Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid told the Kan public broadcaster “Israel will never be deterred from acting for its security,” saying that members of the Lions’ Den “are the people who hurt Ido Baruch,” referring to the soldier who was killed on 11 October.

On Twitter, Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz vowed that the military will continue its crackdown on the Lions’ Den and other armed groups, saying: “There aren’t and won’t be sanctuary cities for terrorists.

“We will continue to act against anyone who tries to harm the citizens of Israel, wherever and whenever necessary,” he said.

In response to the statements, al-Azhary dismissed Israeli claims the Palestinian groups are “terrorists”, saying they were created as a response to the ongoing Israeli mistreatment and occupation of Palestinians.

“Palestinians are trying to resist Israel taking away their rights and dignity as people. They are not terrorists, they are a group of people who have been pushed into a corner,” al-Azhary said.

“What Israel is doing now is trying to make this group into a terrorist group instead of focusing on what we as Palestinians actually need.”

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