

Press Release

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Canberra, Australia

Escalating Violence by Israeli Occupation Forces and Extremist Settlers

The situation in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of occupied East Jerusalem is critical; the neighbourhood is currently under siege, facing constant and escalating attacks by Israeli occupation forces (IOF) and extremist Jewish settlers as part of Israel's official pursuit of the Judaization of Jerusalem and attempts to decide the future of the city unilaterally, by force. Israel's continuous aggression against Jerusalem, its holy sites, its citizens, their land, homes and property, is not only in flagrant violation of international law, but also constitutes official Israeli defiance of international norms and UN resolutions, and deliberate sabotage of regional and international efforts to calm the situation and revive the peace process.

Settler violence has continued to escalate as extremist settlers are free to violently assault Palestinians with no consequences, while enjoying the support and protection of a colonial regime that shares their goals of expelling all Palestinians from the land. The Salem family of Sheikh Jarrah, East Jerusalem, have been targeted and face imminent expulsion from their home in a state-sanctioned takeover by the extremist settlers who are terrorising them. The IOF have blocked entry to Sheikh Jarrah with iron mounds and forcefully removed Palestinian, Israeli, and international activists, journalists, and protesters gathered in solidarity with the Salem family. At least 13 have been arrested, and dozens have been injured, including 75-year-old Fatma Salem. Meanwhile, extremist Knesset member, Itimar Ben Gvir, a Kahanist who is openly racist, anti-Arab, and allied with extremist settler groups, established a so-called "parliamentary office" outside the Salem family home in order to threaten and incite violence against this family, and against any Palestinian presence in Jerusalem.

In the past two weeks alone, the IOF have injured more than 215 Palestinians, including 28 children, for protesting Israel's illegal settlement activities and land theft, and arrested at least 126 Palestinians, including some children. On February 8, the IOF fired more than 80 bullets at three Palestinian men (Adham Mabrouka, Ashraf Mubaslat and Mohammed Dakhil) in Nablus in broad daylight, in an incredibly violent and flagrant extrajudicial killing. While surrounding a village near Jenin to demolish a Palestinian home, the IOF injured 20 residents and shot 17-year-old Mohammed Akram Abu Salah in the head, then prevented ambulances and medics from reaching the villagers to provide medical treatment. Teenaged Mohammed later died from the injury.

Without accountability, Israel's illegal occupation and apartheid regime is becoming increasingly emboldened and aggressive. The international community must not wait any longer to fulfil its legal, moral, and ethical responsibilities, and provide immediate international protection for the Palestinian people and call for an international peace conference with clear terms of reference based on international law and relevant United Nations resolutions.

For more information, please contact the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific: ph. (02) 6286 9193.