Israeli forces shoot dead two Palestinian boys in the occupied West Bank

Dec 30, 2023



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Ramallah, December 30, 2023—

Israeli forces shot and killed two Palestinian boys yesterday in the occupied West Bank.

Mahmoud Othman Mohammad Warani, 15, was shot by Israeli forces around 4 p.m .on December 29 in Al-Ezariya, southeast of Jerusalem in the occupied West Bank, according to documentation collected by Defense for Children International - Palestine. Mahmoud was participating in a demonstration in protest of the Israeli military offensive on the Gaza Strip near the Israeli separation wall when Palestinian youth confronted Israeli forces stationed at the wall. An Israeli sniper shot Mahmoud from a distance of 100 meters (328 feet). Mahmoud sustained two gunshot wounds in his chest and pelvis, and an

ambulance brought him to a medical center in nearby Abu Dis where he was pronounced dead after 30 minutes of resuscitation efforts.

Ammar Mohammad Abdelfattah Abu Hussein, 16, was shot by Israeli forces around 1:30 p.m. on December 29 near an Israeli military observation tower along Route 60 located southeast of the Palestinian city of Dura, southwest of Hebron in the occupied West Bank, according to documentation collected by DCIP. Ammar drove a car near the Israeli military tower located on the land of Wadi al-Shajneh village and collided with at least four Israeli soldiers who had arrived in a white SUV a few minutes earlier. After the car collided with the soldiers, Ammar exited the vehicle and tried to run away, according to an eyewitness. Israeli forces opened fire and Ammar fell to the ground.

“Israeli forces and settlers enjoy near complete impunity, empowering them to act without any bounds,” said Ayed Abu Eqtaish, accountability program director at DCIP. “The lack of any political will to restrain or end Israel’s military offensive in Gaza makes the international community complicit in genocide and gives a greenlight to escalating violations in the West Bank, too.”

Israeli forces summoned Ammar’s father and brothers to identify his body. Israeli authorities have not yet handed Ammar’s body over to his family. They were shown pictures of only his face so did not know where he was shot.

Route 60 is a main north-to-south route in the occupied West Bank used by Israeli forces and settlers that weaves between illegal Jewish-only Israeli settlements and Palestinian cities and villages, connecting Jenin, Nablus, Ramallah, Jerusalem, and Hebron.

81 Palestinian children have been killed in the occupied West Bank since October 7, according to documentation collected by DCIP, when the Israeli military began a full-scale military offensive on the Gaza Strip dubbed Operation Iron Swords.

So far this year, Israeli forces and settlers have killed at least 121 Palestinian children in the occupied West Bank, according to documentation collected by DCIP. Israeli forces and settlers shot and killed 102 Palestinian children with live ammunition, 14 Palestinian children were killed in drone strikes, four Palestinian children were killed by missiles fired from a U.S.-sourced Apache attack helicopter, and one child was killed in an Israeli warplane airstrike.

Under international law, intentional lethal force is only justified in circumstances where a direct threat to life or of serious injury is present. However, investigations and evidence collected by DCIP regularly suggest that Israeli forces use lethal force against Palestinian children in circumstances that may amount to extrajudicial or wilful killings.

Israeli forces have withheld the bodies of at least 23 Palestinian children since June 2016, according to documentation collected by DCIP. Three of the children's bodies have since been released to their families, while 20 Palestinian children's bodies remain withheld by Israeli authorities.

Israeli authorities' practice of confiscating and withholding Palestinian bodies is a violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, which include absolute prohibitions on cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, as well as stipulate that parties of an armed conflict must bury the deceased in an honorable way. For families, the practice amounts to collective punishment in violation of international humanitarian law.

In September 2019, the Israeli Supreme Court approved the practice of confiscating human remains after several legal challenges to the policy. On November 27, 2019, Israeli Defense Minister Naftali Bennett ordered all bodies of Palestinians alleged to have attacked Israeli citizens or soldiers to be withheld and not returned to their families. Israel is the only country in the world with such a policy of confiscating human remains, according to Adalah.

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