

IDF Fears Palestinian Man's Death Could Escalate Violence

Israeli troops shot a Palestinian man to death in a refugee camp near Hebron, Palestinian sources reported on Tuesday. Medical sources identified the man as Mahmoud Titi, a 25-year-old Hebron native.

One Palestinian man was in serious condition after he was shot in the stomach during the clashes in Al-Fawar, and a second Palestinian demonstrator suffered light wounds after he was shot in the leg, Palestinians sources added.

Titi and the two wounded men were rushed to a Red Crescent hospital in Hebron, where physicians pronounced Titi dead, an anonymous Palestinian medical source told *Israel Hayom*. He died of a bullet wound to the chest, the source added.

In Hebron, an official who preferred to remain unnamed blamed the Israel Defense Forces for provoking residents in the refugee camp. "The clashes erupted after IDF troops entered the camp and began arresting youths," he said.

The IDF said it sent troops to Al-Fawar to arrest Palestinian suspects for throwing improvised explosives toward a main road in the West Bank.

"From our initial investigations, we have determined that IDF troops were sent to Al-Fawar, southwest of Hebron, with the intention of detaining a number of Palestinians caught throwing Molotov cocktails on the main road south of Mount Hebron. A violent disturbance ensued instead. Palestinians began throwing stones at IDF troops. Some IDF soldiers felt their lives were in danger during the course of the disturbances and returned live fire at their attackers. One Palestinian man was killed and others were wounded as a result of IDF fire. The wounded men were transferred to a Red

Crescent medical center for treatment. The incident is currently under investigation," the IDF Spokesperson's Unit reported.

A senior Palestinian police officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity, rejected the IDF's claim that soldiers entered the refugee camp to arrest Palestinians residents for throwing homemade explosives.

"As far as we know, no one from this camp threw Molotov cocktails. Military forces entered the camp without prior coordination with the Palestinian authorities and fired on unarmed demonstrators," he said.

Defense officials, who have been warily following the upsurge of unrest in the West Bank recently, are concerned that the latest incident could incite a spate of violent disturbances in Judea and Samaria.

Defense officials believe that certain Palestinian elements are planning to use U.S. President Barack Obama's momentous trip to Israel next week as the impetus to stoke disquiet. In addition to the U.S. president's visit next week, Palestinians are marking Prisoners Day and three separate holidays that bemoan Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands: Land Day, Naksa Day and Nakba Day.

The IDF has tried to show restraint to prevent the deaths of Palestinian demonstrators. Defense officials want to quell unrest in the West Bank and ease tensions between both sides. The IDF fears any incident, such as Titi's death on Tuesday, could trigger a swell in violence that has the potential to spiral out of control.

According to the IDF, certain Palestinian elements want to see more violent clashes between the IDF and demonstrators because it reminds Palestinians of their ongoing conflict with Israel. Still, the IDF does not believe most Palestinians want a large-scale "Third Intifada."

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