

Israeli forces shoot dead Palestinian at West Bank checkpoint

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Fri, 2019-10-18 18:38

JERUSALEM: Israeli forces shot a Palestinian who ran toward them with a knife near a military checkpoint in the occupied West Bank on Friday, Israel's defense ministry said, and Palestinian officials said he died of his injury. Israel's defense ministry said a Palestinian man ran toward a checkpoint between Israel and the central West Bank city of Tulkarem "with a knife in hand, with the apparent intention of attacking security personnel."

The ministry said in a statement that one of the forces called on the attacker to stop, "and upon his failure to do so ... fired toward and neutralized" him.

The Palestinian health ministry identified the individual as a Palestinian national and said he had died of his injuries. Palestinian officials did not immediately provide further details.

Israel's defense ministry circulated a photo of what it said was the scene of the incident. A black plastic sheet, which ministry spokeswoman Betty Ilovici said was laid over the Palestinian's body, could be seen against the roadside with the checkpoint meters away in the background.

The West Bank has seen simmering violence since US-sponsored peace talks with Israel broke down in 2014.

Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 Middle East war. Palestinians seek to establish a state there and in the Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital.



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[Tulkarem](#)

Palestinian in car ramming shot by Israel forces
Palestinian killed by Israeli fire in border clashes: Gaza ministry

[Iraqi blogger returns day after kidnapping](#)

Author:

AFP

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1571423256298002900

Fri, 2019-10-18 18:24

BAGHDAD: A prominent Iraqi blogger resurfaced Friday a day after he was seized by masked gunmen, his father said, as Amnesty International denounced a “climate of fear” in the country after protests and deadly violence. Shujaa Al-Khafaji’s family said armed men had snatched him from his home on Thursday without identifying themselves or showing an arrest warrant. Khafaji’s Facebook page, Al-Khowa Al-Nadifa (Arabic for “Those Who Have Clean Hands”), carries posts on political and social issues and has some 2.5 million followers.

"Around 15 men wearing masks and black uniforms" took Khafaji from his home, the blogger's father, Fares Al-Khafaji, told AFP.

He said they seized his son's phones and computers, but were not violent. Twenty-four hours later, Khafaji was "abandoned in a street with \$20 to pay for a taxi home," his father added.

The report of Khafaji's seizure sparked an outcry from activists and influential political leaders.

Rights watchdog Amnesty International denounced a "relentless campaign of intimidation and assault against activists in Iraq" by authorities.

"The Iraqi authorities must immediately rein in the security forces and dismantle the climate of fear they have deliberately created to stop Iraqis from peacefully exercising their rights to freedoms of expression and assembly," said Lynn Maalouf, the group's Middle East research director. The group said other activists, including a doctor and a lawyer, were "forcibly disappeared more than 10 days ago," and called on Iraqi authorities to reveal their whereabouts.

Firebrand Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr wrote on Twitter that "any act of aggression (against journalists or activists)... by the state constitutes an attack on freedom of speech."

Former prime minister Haider Al-Abadi's parliamentary bloc called on the government "to stop abuses of free media."

Iraq was gripped by anti-government protests between October 1 and 6, during which 110 people, mainly demonstrators, were killed in clashes with security forces.

During the protests, unidentified armed men in uniforms raided several local television stations in Baghdad, destroying their equipment and intimidating their staff.

Journalists and activists also reported receiving threats, mostly by phone, from unidentified callers accusing them of having sided with the protesters. Khafaji faced online harassment last month after a string of attacks on bases of the Hashed Al-Shaabi, a paramilitary force dominated by pro-Iran groups. The group on Thursday denied any involvement in the disappearance of activists, threatening legal action against anyone making such accusations. But according to Amnesty, the Hashed was involved in at least one abduction – that of lawyer Ali Hattab, who represented protesters and was seized on October 8 in the southern city of Amara.

He was snatched by "suspected members of a faction of the Popular Mobilization Units (Hashed)," Amnesty said quoting Hattab's relatives.

It happened two days after "two armed men from the PMU came to (his) home to warn him to stop being vocal about the killing of protesters on Facebook, otherwise they would kill him," Amnesty added.



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[Shujaa Al-Khafaji](#)

Iraqi blogger outspoken about country's corruption detained Australian travel-bloggers freed in Iranian prisoner swap

[Donald Trump says Erdogan told him he wants northern Syria cease-fire to work](#)

Author:

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1571415775647388600

Fri, 2019-10-18 16:13

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump said Friday that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had assured him that he wants the "cease-fire" with Kurdish militants in northern Syria to work.

Trump, in a series of tweets, said he had spoken to Erdogan and "he very much wants the cease-fire, or pause, to work."

“Likewise, the Kurds want it, and the ultimate solution, to happen,” the US president said.

“There is good will on both sides & a really good chance for success,” he said. “The US has secured the Oil, & the Daesh Fighters are double secured by Kurds & Turkey.”

Trump also said that “some” European countries, which he did not name, “are now willing, for the first time, to take the (Daesh group) Fighters that came from their nations.”

“This is good news, but should have been done after WE captured them,” he said. “Anyway, big progress being made!!!!”

Trump also tweeted “DEFEAT TERRORISM!” in all capital letters in response to a tweet by Erdogan saying “Mr. President, many more lives will be saved when we defeat terrorism, which is humanity’s arch enemy.”

Earlier Friday, Erdogan warned that Ankara would resume military operations against Kurdish forces in Syria if they did not withdraw from a “safe zone” along the Turkey-Syria border.

Turkey has agreed to suspend its offensive for five days in northern Syria while Kurdish fighters withdraw from the area, after high-stake talks with US Vice President Mike Pence in Ankara.



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Amnesty accuses Turkey of 'war crimes' in Syria 'Don't be a fool' Trump tells Erdogan in letter: World reacts

[Saudi Arabia, other Middle East countries warn citizens after protests erupt in Lebanon](#)

Author:

Reuters

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1571398438705592400

Fri, 2019-10-18 11:32

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's embassy in Beirut on Friday warned its citizens not to travel to Lebanon, and called on Saudi nationals already in the country to avoid protest areas.

The Kingdom's embassy in Beirut advised its nationals to be extremely cautious and to "stay away from places of protest," Al-Ekhbariya news channel reported.

It also announced that the Lancaster Plaza Beirut hotel in the capital's Raouche neighborhood is a gathering point from which Saudi nationals can be transported to Beirut airport.

Egypt's embassy in the Lebanese capital Beirut also called on its nationals in the country to avoid protest areas, Egyptian state news agency MENA said.

"The embassy calls on all Egyptian citizens in Lebanon to avoid the areas of gatherings and protests, to be careful in their movements and to abide by the instructions of the Lebanese authorities in this regard," MENA said.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's embassy in Lebanon asked citizens wishing to travel to Lebanon to wait because of the current protests and unrest.

"The embassy also calls on citizens currently in Lebanon to take utmost care and stay away from crowds and demonstrations," the embassy said in its tweet.

Bahrain warned against travel to Lebanon and called on its citizens in the country to leave immediately.

Protesters across Lebanon blocked roads with burning tires on Friday and thousands marched in Beirut, calling on the government to resign over an

economic crisis.



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[Saudi Arabia](#)

Protests sweep Lebanon for a second dayThousands take to the streets in Lebanon in protest against WhatsApp tax

[Sudan rebel faction holds 1st round of peace talks with govt](#)

Author:

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1571395749775353800

Fri, 2019-10-18 10:46

CAIRO: Sudan's largest rebel group is holding its first round of peace talks with the country's transitional government.

Friday's talks were taking place despite misgivings after a recent military crackdown on the Sudan Liberation Movement-North faction led by Abdel-Aziz Al-Hilu.

Over a dozen SLMN members were arrested earlier this week, and the group called off talks. But they returned to the table after the government declared a nationwide cease-fire.

Achieving peace with Sudan's numerous rebel groups is crucial for the transitional government. It's looking to slash military spending in order to revive the battered economy.

The transitional authorities have set a six-month deadline for making peace with the rebel groups.

The talks are taking place in Juba, the capital of South Sudan, which itself gained independence from the north in 2011.



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