

Palestinian unrest spreads across Israel

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Unrest among Palestinians spread across Israel and the West Bank this weekend in the wake of the funeral of Muhammad Abu Khudair, the 16-year-old boy seized outside his Jerusalem home and murdered by right-wing Israeli Jews last Wednesday.

Popular outrage intensified with the release of new details of the killing. The attorney general of the Palestinian Authority said Khudair was burned alive. An autopsy conducted by Israeli doctors in Tel Aviv, with a Palestinian doctor observing, found soot in the teenager's lungs and intestinal tract. Burns covered more than 90 percent of his body.

There were violent clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli police and troops in northern Israel, in several neighborhoods of East Jerusalem, and in the far south, outside the city of Beersheba. Police closed off a number of major highways.

The biggest clashes took place in northern Israel, home to most Israeli Arabs. Some 200 Israeli Arabs, many wearing masks, threw rocks and firebombs at riot police near the town of Tamra. Fourteen were arrested. There was fighting near Nazareth, where 67 have been arrested in two days, at I'billin, Taibe, Tira, Kafr Qara, Sakhnin and the Yavor junction on Route 70, where several hundred demonstrators blocked the road.

Other disturbances broke out in the central Israeli towns of Jaljulia and Qalansuwa, where police responded with tear gas and sonic bombs and arrested more than a dozen Israeli Arabs.

Across East Jerusalem there were Palestinian protests in the neighborhoods of Shuafat, where the Khudair family lives, Hizmeh and A-tor. Violent attacks on individuals were reported in Mt. Scopus and in the Old City.

Right-wing and Orthodox Israeli Jews fought with police in several locations in west Jerusalem, or staged attacks against individual Arabs in the central area that forms the effective border between the Jewish and Arab

sides of the city. Hundreds of Orthodox Jews tried to block Bar-Ilan Junction in Jerusalem with burning tires, shouting racist anti-Arab slogans, but were dispersed by mounted police. Right-wing Israelis also attacked a left-wing demonstration held at Zahal Square in west Jerusalem, with one right-winger reportedly arrested for assault.

In southern Israel, there were protests in many Bedouin communities, traditionally distant from the more urbanized Palestinian Arabs (and the only Arabs permitted to enlist in the Israel Defense Forces). Several hundred Bedouins blocked Route 60 outside Beersheba, and another group blocked Route 80 outside Tel Arad in the Negev region.

The Israeli military continued air strikes on the Gaza Strip, while Islamic militants fired a handful of rockets on Israeli border towns. Most of the rockets fell in empty and unpopulated areas, while Israeli bombs and missiles hit the most densely populated urban region on the planet, killing two more Palestinians Sunday. This brings the death toll among Palestinians to 12 since the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli youth in June.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has ordered Israeli tanks and troops to the border with Gaza. He threatened a direct military intervention into the Palestinian territory in a speech at the residence of the US ambassador Thursday. "One possibility is that the fire [rockets launched from Gaza] stops, and the quiet continues," he said. "Otherwise, the fire will continue, and then reinforced troops in southern Israel will use force."

There were news reports in Gaza that Netanyahu had given leaders of Hamas, which rules Gaza, 48 hours to shut down the rocket attacks, most of which are launched by Islamic Jihad and other groups not under Hamas control. Mushir al-Masri, a Hamas official, told reporters that back-channel talks were in progress to restore the cease-fire that ended the last major Israeli

attacks in Gaza in November 2012.

Israeli police and the Shin Bet domestic secret service jointly announced Sunday the arrest of six Israeli men, some of them youth under 18, for the murder of Muhammad Abu Khudair. Israeli television channels reported that one of the six had confessed his involvement and was giving evidence against the others. Several of the six were residents of Adam, a West Bank settlement near Jerusalem, while others live in Jerusalem or the neighboring city of Beit Shemesh.

The six, whose names have not been made public, were arraigned Sunday in a court in Petah Tikva. The court ordered five of the six held for investigation for eight days without being given access to defense counsel, while the sixth was ordered held for five days. This is a procedure frequently employed by the Israeli police in criminal cases.

The police declared that the motive for the killing was Khudair's nationality. Israeli television reported the six were extremists who had participated in a march in Jerusalem last Tuesday where demonstrators chanted "death to Arabs" and called for revenge for the killing of the three Israeli youth near Hebron on the West Bank.

According to police officials who briefed the press, several of the six arrested men had been linked to an attempted kidnapping of a Palestinian child in the same neighborhood of East Jerusalem the night before Muhammad Abu Khudair was kidnapped and murdered. The child, eight-year-old Mousa Zaloum, was saved by his mother, who fought with the kidnappers. The attack was reported to Israeli police, who ignored the complaint, thus facilitating the follow-up attack that killed Khudair.

The uncle of one of the three murdered Israeli teenagers, Naftali Fraenkel, telephoned the Khudair family Sunday to offer his condolences on the murder of their son. Yishai Fraenkel acted after two Palestinians visited the Fraenkel home in the Nof Ayalon settlement as the family sat *shiva*, mourning their boy's death.

The Palestinians said that Yishai Fraenkel's statement earlier in the week, deploring the murder of Muhammad Abu Khudair, had "touched a large portion of the Palestinian people." Yishai Fraenkel then called Hussein Abu Khudair, father of the murdered youth.

He told the Ynet news web site, "We expressed our

deep empathy with their sorrow, from one bereaved family to another bereaved family. I think it's very good they seem to have found the culprits. We expressed our absolute disgust with what had happened. He accepted our statements. It was important for him to hear it."



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