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Spike in West Bank violence condemned

Five members of the Fogel family were stabbed to death in their home in the West Bank settlement of Itamar, near Nablus.

Since Saturday morning, Israeli settlers have reportedly used stones, Molotov cocktails, guns, clubs and knives to attack Palestinians in vehicles and in their homes in villages and towns across the West Bank. Settlers have also burned fields, cars and property.

“We utterly condemn the killing of the Fogel family in Itamar. There must be a prompt and effective investigation to identify those suspected of involvement and ensure that they are brought to justice in a fair trial,” said Philip Luther, Amnesty International’s Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

“The Israeli security forces must act to prevent reprisals against Palestinian civilians by armed Israeli settlers and bring those responsible to justice”

In some cases Palestinians have reported that Israeli security forces on the scene did nothing to stop the settler attacks.

The Israeli military is also reported to have imposed a curfew in the village of Awarta, near Itamar, since Saturday morning, and to be detaining some 300 village residents.

On Sunday, the Israeli cabinet approved the construction of 500 additional housing units in West Bank settlements in response to the killing of the Fogel family.

“The timing of this announcement on settlement construction was deliberate. But the deplorable killing of the Fogel family must not be used as a pretext for acts by Israeli authorities that lead to further human rights violations,” said Philip Luther.

“Amnesty International has repeatedly called on the Israeli authorities to end settlement construction as a first step towards completely removing unlawful Israeli settlements from the Occupied Palestinian Territories.”

Israel’s policy of establishing settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, violates the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The killing of five members of the Fogel family - parents Udi, 37, and Ruth, 36, and three children, Yoav, Elad and Hadas, aged 10 years, four years and three months respectively – has been condemned by the Palestinian Authority.

The perpetrators of the attack have not been identified.

Major Palestinian armed groups including the Fatah-affiliated al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade and Hamas-affiliated Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades have denied responsibility for the attack. An initial claim of responsibility by the Imad Mughniyya group was retracted later on Saturday.