Palestine | The al-Mughayyir killings demand consequences, not another closed investigation

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Two young Palestinians were killed by live fire on 2 September during a settler incursion into al-Mughayyir, northeast of Ramallah, in which Israeli forces were present and, according to the Israeli military, opened fire. The killings require independent scrutiny, but they also demand action by third states that have continued to treat repeated settler violence and military protection failures as incidents to be investigated by the same system that has failed to prevent them.

HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement condemns the killing of Omar Mohammad Na'ssan and Khalil Abu Alia in al-Mughayyir. Both were shot with live ammunition and died of their wounds. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society evacuated two Palestinians shot during the incident, one in the neck and one in the back. Local Palestinian reporting identified both as 19 years old, while the Palestinian Ministry of Health, cited by international news agencies, gave their ages as 16 and 19.

The available accounts agree on the central fact: two young Palestinians were killed during an incursion involving settlers and Israeli forces. The village council's account is more specific. It says settlers entered the centre of the village near the Grand Mosque, attacked two homes and took sheep, while Israeli forces were present. It also says Israeli snipers took positions on buildings before live fire was used against residents. The Israeli military said its forces entered the village to secure police officers and an Israeli civilian retrieving livestock, and that troops fired at "key instigators" during what it described as a violent disturbance involving stone-throwing.

Those competing accounts make an independent investigation necessary. They do not justify delay or deference to an internal review. If armed forces were positioned above a populated village, as the village council says, the questions are immediate: who authorised that deployment, under what rules of engagement, why live ammunition was used, and whether settlers involved in the incursion, alleged home attacks and seizure of livestock were investigated.

Al-Mughayyir has already seen lethal violence this year. In April 2026, 14-year-old Aws Hamdi Na'ssan and 35-year-old Jihad Abu Naiem were killed near a boys' school in the same village. A reservist was reportedly suspended and an investigation opened. No public outcome has been reported that delivered accountability to the families or changed the protection reality for the village.

That failure is not exceptional. Long-term monitoring of settler-violence cases from 2005 to 2025 found that 93.6 percent of investigation files concerning ideologically motivated offences by Israelis against Palestinians in the West Bank ended without an indictment, only 3 percent led to a full or

partial conviction, and police investigative failure was recorded in 82 percent of files closed on grounds reflecting law-enforcement failure.

The wider scale is also documented. As of 28 August, UN humanitarian monitoring had recorded 79 Palestinians killed in the occupied West Bank since the start of 2026, including 19 children, and around 1,870 injured. Twenty-three of those killed and more than 1,040 of those injured were harmed in the context of settler attacks. In the two weeks from 11 to 24 August alone, the UN documented 80 settler attacks causing casualties, property damage or both.

The same pattern has narrowed the space for those who document or deter this violence. In Qusra, Israeli settlers repeatedly attacked homes and Palestinian residents were detained after Israeli forces intervened. In Umm al-Khair, a British protective-presence volunteer was detained and deported after settlers physically held him and handed him to police. Press teams covering settler violence have also been attacked, including AFP journalists near Bethlehem and an NBC News team near Nablus. These are not peripheral incidents. Removing witnesses, restricting monitors and failing to protect journalists makes Palestinian communities more exposed.

Recent human rights documentation has described settler violence as operating with state backing, including through armed settler units, settlement-based emergency squads and security structures that blur the line between settlers and soldiers. UN human rights bodies have repeatedly raised concern about the involvement of Israeli security forces in settler violence, the lack of effective investigations, and the failure to provide Palestinians with protection and remedies.

Israel's obligations as the occupying power are clear. It must protect the Palestinian population under occupation, prevent and investigate settler violence, ensure accountability for unlawful killings and ill-treatment, and guarantee access for medical workers, journalists, legal observers and human rights defenders. The International Court of Justice has also made clear that third states must not recognise or assist in maintaining the unlawful situation created by Israel's continued presence in the occupied Palestinian territory.

> *"Palestinians in al-Mughayyir are not waiting for another announcement that an investigation has been opened. They are living with the consequences of investigations that close, settlers who return, soldiers who protect the wrong people, and states that keep treating each killing as an exception. If governments already know that this system almost never produces accountability, then asking Israel to investigate itself is not a policy. It is a decision to accept impunity."*
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> **Mostafa Fouad, Executive Director of HuMENA**

HRC63, which opens on 7 September, should treat the al-Mughayyir killings as part of the wider West Bank pattern of settler violence, military involvement, forced displacement pressure and impunity. States should press for an independent international investigation into the killings of Omar Mohammad Na'ssan and Khalil Abu Alia, the publication of the rules of engagement and operational orders governing the use of live fire in al-Mughayyir, and disclosure of the status of the April 2026 investigation into the killing of Aws Hamdi Na'ssan and Jihad Abu Naiem.

Third states should also move beyond statements of concern. The European Union has already used its Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime against settler organisations and individuals, including Amana, Nachala, Regavim and Hashomer Yosh. Those measures should be extended where evidence supports responsibility for serious settler violence, coercive displacement, obstruction of accountability, or command-level involvement in army-escorted settler operations.

States should review arms transfers, dual-use exports, trade preferences, public procurement, investment and business activity connected to the settlement enterprise and to the security structures that enable violence against Palestinian communities. They should also make protection of journalists, medical teams, legal observers and protective-presence volunteers an explicit part of bilateral engagement, including after attacks on those documenting settler violence.

The warnings are not missing. The evidence is not new. What is missing is consequence. Without external pressure, independent scrutiny and measures that reach both settler networks and the state structures that enable them, each investigation announced after Palestinian deaths becomes part of the same cycle that allows the next attack to happen.

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