



### Tensions Continue to Escalate in the Israeli-Occupied West Bank as Multiple Palestinians and Israelis are Killed Over the Weekend

United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to the Middle East has been primarily centered on rising tensions in the occupied West Bank after the killing of 10 Palestinians in a raid in the Jenin Refugee Camp this past week. This raid is just the most recent in a string of violence that has already killed at least 35 Palestinians, including 8 children, in just January 2023 alone. 7 Israelis were also killed in a shooting on Friday. The violence continued into the weekend, with at least 144 attacks by Israeli settlers on Palestinians being reported. These attacks are part of a more significant trend of growing fanaticism.

There has been a persistent escalation of events that contribute to the violence against Palestinian people. Because of increased settler and Israeli military violence, 2022 became the deadliest year for Palestinians in the West Bank since 2005. The attacks sparked a series of incidents that have brought the situation to a major escalation. The violence has not been isolated in Jenin but has spread throughout all of the West Bank. Last week's onslaught left its mark. The Gaza Strip has experienced five significant Israeli assaults in the past 15 years, in the deaths of thousands of Palestinians. Representatives of the Gaza-based Hamas stated that they were "prepared for anything" and hinted at the possibility of yet another war. In an illegal Jewish colony in occupied East Jerusalem, constructed on land confiscated from the Palestinian communities of Beit Hanina, Hizma, and al-Ram, a Palestinian man, 21-year-old Khairy Alqam, carried out a shooting attack on Friday that resulted in the deaths of seven Israelis. At least 35 Palestinians, including 8 children, have been slain by the Israeli army and settlements since 2023 began. Twenty of them came from or were located nearby Jenin. The Israeli army's open-fire policies, which it has utilized for more than a year, and intentions by Israel's new far-right government to arm more Israelis in retaliation to the shootings in Jerusalem have pushed the situation to the brink. These policies put Palestinians at great risk of being killed.

Blinken met with Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant on Tuesday to discuss the West Bank situation as well as collaboration to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. Since the most recent round of the U.S.-sponsored negotiations hit a dead end in 2014, hopes of securing a two-state solution with a Palestinian state have begun to wane. These brutal acts of violence committed by Israeli settlers and the army are entirely unjust and violate human rights. The United States has consistently sided with Israel and excluded Palestine. The Biden administration had pledged to reopen a Palestinian consulate that had been closed by former President Donald Trump, but it has not yet said when or where it will do so. In a speech given on Tuesday, Blinken called on both sides to take action and reduce hostility and reaffirmed America's commitment towards the two-state solution. This solution has been made impossible by continuing encroachment on and theft of Palestinian land by Israeli settlers. It is impossible to create borders for 2 states when one of these states is actively stealing land from the other. Polling has indicated that only 1/3 of Israelis and Palestinians believe in the plan to partition Palestine into a separate Palestinian and Israeli state.