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When will Israel's occupation end?

Israeli bulldozer crushes Palestinian teenager

Israel faces UN, EU criticism over illegal collective punishment against Palestinians in Gaza.

GAZA CITY - A 16-year-old Palestinian boy was killed on Thursday after being run over by an Israeli army bulldozer during a military incursion in the Gaza Strip, medics and witnesses said.

Mahmud Kayed was run over by the bulldozer when it lurched towards a group of youths throwing rocks at the vehicle during the army incursion in the Al-Bureij refugee camp, they said.

Four Palestinians were wounded by Israeli gunfire during the operation, medics said.

Israeli bulldozers were ripping up farmland in the area, while soldiers were going house to house searching for militants and weapons, they said.

No comment from the Israeli army was immediately available.

The death brings to 5,866 the number of people killed since the start of the second Palestinian uprising in September 2000, the vast majority of them Palestinians.

Israel faced barrage of criticism over sanctions

Gazans stocked up on food and fuel on Thursday as Israel faced a barrage of criticism over its decision to brand Hamas-run Gaza a "hostile entity" and possibly cut its basic supplies.

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"I've started stocking fuel to be able to work if Israel interrupts supplies," said Nidal Eslim, a 33-year-old taxi driver and father of seven, for whom his taxi is the sole source of income.

"I will try to stock up 500 litres, which will last me for a couple of days. You have to live somehow."

Throughout the impoverished coastal strip -- which with 1.5 million residents is one of the world's most densely populated places -- residents were buying up food, water and fuel.

"It's the best thing to do to prepare ourselves for the coming days," said Rima, one of the women who rushed to buy up drinking water.

Israel's security cabinet on Wednesday declared Gaza "hostile" in response to continuing rocket fire from the territory where Hamas seized control three months ago in a showdown with its Fatah rivals.

The European Union on Thursday joined a rising chorus of opposition to the move, which has been branded as illegal collective punishment against the residents of a territory already reeling from economic sanctions, border closures and Israeli military operations.

"We are making the same appeal as the UN secretary general for Israel to reverse this decision," said the spokeswoman for EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana.

Britain also voiced "concern" over the decision, with a Foreign Office spokesman saying the government was "monitoring developments."

UN chief Ban Ki-moon on Wednesday urged Israel to reconsider its decision.

"Such a step would be contrary to Israel's obligations towards the civilian population (of Gaza) under international humanitarian and human rights law," he said in a statement.

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas condemned it as an "arbitrary decision" that will "aggravate" Gazans' suffering, while Hamas blasted the move as "collective punishment."

US-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) echoed the sentiment, saying: "Israel has the responsibility to protect its citizens, but not by collectively punishing the people of Gaza, which seriously violates the laws of war."

Israel withdrew settlers and soldiers from Gaza in 2005 after a 38-year occupation, but is still considered an occupying power under international law as it controls the territory's borders and nearly all aspects of daily life, HRW said.

The vast majority of food, medical supplies and other goods are transferred to Gaza through Israeli-controlled crossing.

China's foreign ministry warned that Israel's measures would "lead to the further escalation of tensions in Gaza and further affect the humanitarian situation there."

And Jordan's government spokesman warned of the "dangerous humanitarian, security and environmental repercussions", while stressing Israel's move would "not help create the suitable environment for progress in the peace process".

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