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**Reports: 20 'Nakba' Protesters Killed as Israeli Troops Attack**

**Israeli Officials Praise Killings as 'Defense of Sovereignty'**

by Jason Ditz, May 15, 2011

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Israeli soldiers shot and killed at least 20 Palestinian protesters today, and wounded several hundred others, during Nakba rallies around the region. Nakba commemorates the expulsion of Palestinians from Israeli territory during the founding of the Israeli state, and is officially illegal to commemorate inside Israel.

Of the 20 killed, [10 protesters were slain inside southern Lebanon](#) when Israeli troops opened fire on demonstrators they decided had drawn too near a border fence. The [other 10 were killed along the Syrian border](#), as Palestinians rallied to the border with the Occupied Golan Heights.

In addition to the killings along the northern border, Israeli forces [shelled protests](#) in the Gaza Strip, wounded scores of Palestinians there. Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak [warned that he believes the protests are "just the beginning"](#) of a series of rallies against the occupation of the Palestinian territories and the Golan Heights.

At the same time, [Barak praised the military for its "restraint"](#) in killing only 20 Palestinians, saying they could have very easily had a "ruinous bloodbath." He insisted the killings were a defense of Israel's sovereignty, but [experts warn that killing civilian protesters who are "near" a disputed border might well violate international law.](#)

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Jason Ditz is news editor of Antiwar.com.

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