

West Bank: Israeli condemnations ring hollow after settler pogrom in Jit

Thursday 29 August 2024, by [ZIV Oren](#) (Date first published: 19 August 2024).

Palestinians describe the latest in a surge of settler rampages in the West Bank, and demand justice for Rashid Sidda as his murderers roam free.

As night fell, settlers descended upon the village. “There were more than a hundred of them — masked and armed with guns and clubs. They smashed the windows of my two cars and threw gasoline inside, setting them alight along with the entrance to my home. We rushed out with water to try to douse the flames. We had nothing to protect ourselves with except stones.”



Ibrahim Sidda, August 16, 2024. (Oren Ziv)

This was the scene on Aug. 15, as described by Ibrahim Sidda, in the Palestinian town of Jit — the latest in the occupied West Bank to suffer a pogrom at the hands of Israeli settlers. Sidda was at home, enjoying a meal with his family, when the invaders arrived. “We are peace-loving people,” he told +972 after the attack, still in disbelief at what had befallen him and his community.

In all, the settlers burned three cars and four houses, but their violence didn’t stop at property damage: they attacked any Palestinian who dared to come out and try to defend themselves and their families, shooting dead 23-year-old IT technician Rashid Sidda and wounding five more. According to Ibrahim Sidda, it took Israeli soldiers around an hour to arrive and put a stop to the pogrom; another [testimony published in Haaretz](#) alleged that soldiers were present in the town during the attack and did nothing to stop it.

The following morning, residents walked among the charred frames of their cars and blackened entrances to their homes, in a scene that has become eerily familiar across the West Bank in recent months. Such attacks have surged amid the war in Gaza, with settlers [killing six Palestinians](#) in the first week following October 7. In April, [settlers rampaged through](#) more than a dozen Palestinian towns and villages in one weekend, killing at least three people and burning hundreds of homes, cars, and businesses.



The interior of a house burned by settlers in the Palestinian town of Jit, August 16, 2024. (Oren Ziv)

There had already been a marked [increase in settler pogroms](#) going back to the election of the far-right Israeli government in late 2022 — from [Huwara](#) to [Al-Lubban ash-Sharqiya](#) to [Turmus Ayya](#). Across the West Bank, Palestinians face daily harassment from Israeli settlers, often with the army's backing, and at least [18 communities](#) have been [forcibly displaced](#) since the war began.

What was different this time, however, was the immediate condemnations of the attack by Israeli politicians. Evidently spooked by the recent wave of U.S. and international sanctions targeting violent settlers and their organizations — and the looming threat that these could soon be leveled at [senior government figures](#) and [state-funded bodies](#) — Israeli leaders were quick to denounce the latest pogrom.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, and MK Zvi Sukkot — himself a former member of the [recently-sanctioned](#) “hilltop youth” — were among the first to voice their condemnations. Yossi Dagan, the head of the Shomron Regional Council, declared: “We are already standing here against terrorism, facing political difficulties at home and abroad, and we do not need your acts of violence.”

Notwithstanding this flood of official condemnations, the authorities do not appear to be in any hurry to bring the perpetrators to justice; only [one person was arrested](#) in the aftermath of the attack, and subsequently released. Settler impunity has long been the norm: according to [data](#) from the Israeli human rights group Yesh Din, 97 percent of police files opened into cases of settler violence since 2005 have been closed without convictions.



Mourners attend the funeral of Rashid Sidda, killed by Israeli settlers in the Palestinian town of Jit, August 16, 2024. (Oren Ziv)

In his statement, Dagan also claimed that the attack was carried out by “young people who come from outside [the West Bank] and create violence.” But the testimonies from Palestinian residents of Jit were clear: the attackers came from the adjacent illegal outpost of Havat Gilad.

“This is the first time there has been an attack of this magnitude,” said Muhannad Sidda, who recounted seeing 20 to 30 cars arriving via the main road into the town. “We are surrounded by settlers.”

‘They came to burn, and there was no one to help’

“They had a plan, they worked like [they were] in the army,” Samer Arman, a resident of Jit, recalled of the attackers. “They came on foot and acted quickly so that we wouldn’t be able to defend ourselves,” adding that “some of them had long weapons.” Rashid Sidda, he went on, “was shot by a single bullet, but they shot at the youths with automatic fire.”

Arman confirmed that the pogrom was not preceded by any other incident, which [Israeli officials also acknowledged](#). “There are no problems here, there was nothing,” he said. “[The settlers] came in the past, but the young people [in the town] came out [to confront them] and they left.” This time, however, “they came to burn, and there was no one to help.”



A banner announces the death of Rashid Sidda in the Palestinian town of Jit, August 16, 2024. (Oren Ziv)

“How do we stand up to armed settlers? What can we do? Even if the whole village came out and stood in front of them, it wouldn’t help. They want to scare the people so that we leave the village, that’s their strategy.”

Muawiya Sidda lives in a house on the edge of the town closest to Havat Gilad. His children were playing in the yard when the pogrom started. “When we saw them coming masked and with weapons, I took the children, put them in the car and we drove away quickly,” he said while standing in the charred remains of his living room. “If I hadn’t taken them, they would have killed them all.”

“There were dozens — some with weapons, some with [tear] gas and flammable materials,” he continued. As he testified to +972, the settlers first burned down his neighbor’s house as well as a car parked outside it, and then came for his home — smashing the windows, pouring gasoline inside, and setting it on fire.

“They do what they want,” he said. “The army stood at the entrance to the village the whole time, preventing the arrival of firefighters and an ambulance. [The emergency services] arrived only after we had extinguished the fire ourselves. The army fired in the air, and the settlers left.”



A vehicle set on fire by Israeli settlers in the Palestinian town of Jit, August 16, 2024. (Oren Ziv)

Muhannad Sidda, the uncle of the victim Rashid, also described a well-organized attack. “We were at home when settlers came from the direction of Havat Gilad. Residents were calling out for help, so we went outside. There were about a hundred [settlers], ready with gasoline and weapons, others

also with clubs. They had everything. When the youth [from Jit] approached, [the settlers] fired at them at point-blank range, killing one and wounding another. They weren't afraid."

The residents of Jit were unmoved by the condemnations among Israel's right-wing leaders, and are skeptical that the prosecutors will be brought to justice. "Netanyahu is all talk, he won't do anything," Leila Rashid said as she sat with the victim's mother. "Look what they're doing to the Palestinians in Gaza, and no one in the world is doing anything. [The Israeli authorities] want to get us out of here. They won't arrest anyone."

"We need actions, not words," said Ibrahim Sidda, 55, whose home was also attacked during the pogrom. "The army says they're against this violence — so do something. Here in [Area C](#) we are under Israel's jurisdiction and security responsibility. Let them come and protect us. Stop the settlers. We didn't come to them; they came here."

For Iman Sidda, the mother of Rashid, "everyone is a liar, they won't do anything," she said in response to Israeli politicians' condemnations. "Whoever shot him ran away. The settlers are protected by the army all the time. He was not only my son, but also a friend — and now he is gone."

Oren Ziv

P.S.

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<https://www.972mag.com/jit-settler-pogrom/>

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A version of this article was first published in Hebrew on Local Call. Read it [here](#).

• Our team has been devastated by the horrific events of this latest war - the atrocities committed by Hamas in Israel and the massive retaliatory Israeli attacks on Gaza. Our hearts are with all the people and communities facing violence.

We are in an extraordinarily dangerous era in Israel-Palestine. The bloodshed unleashed by these events has reached extreme levels of brutality and threatens to engulf the entire region. Hamas' murderous assault in southern Israel has devastated and shocked the country to its core. Israel's retaliatory bombing of Gaza is wreaking destruction on the already besieged strip and killing a ballooning number of civilians. Emboldened settlers in the West Bank, backed by the army, are seizing the opportunity to escalate their attacks on Palestinians.

This escalation has a very clear context, one that +972 has spent the past 13 years covering: Israeli society's growing racism and militarism, the entrenched occupation, and an increasingly normalized siege on Gaza.

We are well positioned to cover this perilous moment - but we need your help to do it. This terrible period will challenge the humanity of all of those working for a better future in this land. Palestinians and Israelis are already organizing and strategizing to put up the fight of their lives.

Can we count on your [support](#)? +972 Magazine is the leading media voice of this movement, a desperately needed platform where Palestinian and Israeli journalists and activists can report on and analyze what is happening, guided by humanism, equality, and justice. Join us.

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