## West Bank Palestinians 'exhausted' by omnipresent Israeli surveillance

Hebron, Palestinian Territo-

**Rotating camer**as planted on a rooftop terrace "follow our every move", said Hebron resident Umm Nasser, protesting intensified Israeli surveillance of her occupied West Bank city since the start of the Gaza war.

"Psychologically, I'm exhausted," admitted the 55-yearold Palestinian woman

She lives above the Abu al-Rish checkpoint, the site of frequent violence at the heart of historical Hebron.

It is one of numerous sentry boxes manned by Israeli forces separating Palestinian streets the old town, which hosts a disputed holy site. Known to Muslims as the Ibrahimi mosque and to Jews as the Cave of the

Dozens of heavily armed Issisted by security cameras.

Umm Nasser said that surveillance enhanced by artificial intelligence tools has become "especially difficult during the war" between Israel and Palestinian group Hamas in the Gaza To Umm Nasser, the use of

technology is stifling.

"We've tried putting pieces of wood or fabric over the cameras to maintain our privacy, but every time, the army removes them," she said.

"One day, soldiers took our identity cards and told us they were going to use them for a facial recognition system."

She said she hadn't heard about it since.



since 1967.

**'Automated** 

of Palestinians, which are then

raeli army's "frictionless occu-

pation strategy", said Sophia

Goodfriend, a doctoral student

specialising in artificial intelli-

The app "relies on automated

surveillance technology, often

based on artificial intelligence

and designed to reduce interac-

tion" between soldiers and Pal-

estinians, Goodfriend told AFP.

has been deployed at Israeli checkpoints in Hebron since

at least 2022, according to an

investigation by human rights

group Amnesty International.

Soldiers know "before I ap-

proach the checkpoint that I'm

'red' in the system. It means

I'm 'a threat'," said Hebron

activist Issa Amro, lament-

miliation".

ing yet "another layer of hu-

He said residents had their

photos taken without their consent, and they do not know how

Another system, "Red Wolf"

gence and human rights.

checked against a database.

surveillance'

Shai Cohen, a 23-yearold Israeli settler, said the surveillance cameras scattered all over the city "very (much) help

Israel describes itself as a "start-up nation" and takes pride from Jewish settler enclaves in in its leading cyber industry and cutting-edge surveillance and weapons technology.

us" to feel safe.

Facial recognition technology -- highly regulated in civil-Patriarchs, it is revered by both ian settings -- is used by Israeli forces along with a range of advanced tools in the Palestinian raeli soldiers guard the site, as- territories they have occupied



**Facial recognition** technology -- highly regulated in civilian settings -- is used by Israeli forces along with a range of advanced tools in the Palestinian territories they have occupied since 1967.

that it collects.

The army in late 2022 con-"Blue Wolf", for example, is an app soldiers use on their mobile phone. They take face pictures

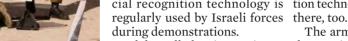
Once matched, the system indicates whether the person pho-Asked by AFP about the system tographed is wanted for arrest. and the "Wolf" software, the Israeli military did not com-This system is part of the Is-

firmed it was testing a surveil- October 7, when Hamas mili- agency Wafa reported "smart" lance system with riot control tants breached the Gaza border cameras had been installed at tools, developed by a private firm, Smart Shooter.

can fire shots which, according tack to the army, are not lethal.

Israel uses their images and data lier and for which I had been gates allegedly equipped with

The remote-controlled system



during demonstrations. of data appeared on the tablet"

trol over the lives of Palestinians

who are further "dehumanised"

"The very purpose and es-

asked to use a pseudonym be-

"Our behaviour and move-

cause of security concerns.

ments are scrutinised."

Breaking the Silence.

used by the soldiers. that occurred several years ear- south for safety, passing through cleared by the courts," he said.

Tensions have soared since and attacked southern Israel, triggering a devastating war.

Hamas fighters began their at-

by targeting remote-controlled The automated tools make for surveillance and defence sys-"more and more efficient" con- tems on the border.

The unprecedented attack resulted in more than 1,160 deaths in the process, according to in Israel, mostly of civilians, ac-Israeli anti-occupation group cording to an AFP tally based on official data.

Israel retaliated with a massence of the system is to create sive military offensive that has anxiety and fear," said Adel, a killed more than 27,500 peorights defender living in Israe- ple in the besieged Gaza Strip, li-annexed east Jerusalem who also mostly civilians, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry.

Footage and media reports from Gaza have raised concerns In east Jerusalem, he said, fa- over the use of facial recognicial recognition technology is tion technology by Israeli forces

The army said that as part of Adel recalled an inspection at the war it was conducting "sea checkpoint when "many pages curity and intelligence opera-

Online videos from mid-No-"They mentioned an arrest vember showed Gazans, fleeing surveillance tech.

And official Palestinian news Gaza City's Al-Shifa hospital during a raid by Israeli troops.



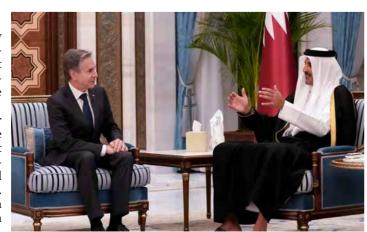
## Blinken in Qatar on tour to seek 'enduring end' to Gaza war

**Palestinian Territories** 

S Secretary of State Antony Us Secretary of State
Blinken visited Qatar yesterdav on his latest Middle East crisis tour, seeking a new ceasefire and "an enduring end" to the Israel-Hamas war.

The US top envoy was later bound for Israel, hoping to shore up support for a truce deal that was hashed out in Paris in January but has not yet been signed off on by either Hamas or Israel.

Heavy strikes and fighting in Gaza killed at least 107 people in 24 hours, said the health ministry in the Hamas-ruled territory that has been under almost four months of bombardment.



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (L) meets with Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani at Lusail Palace, in Doha

million Palestinians crowded as the battlefront draws ever storm Rafah?" he asked. Fears grew for more than a into the far southern Rafah area closer in Israel's campaign to

eradicate Hamas over the Octo- al tour since the bloodiest ever forced displacement of Palestinber 7 attack.

right up to the last Hamas bas- in Riyadh. tion, which is Rafah", on the Egyptian border.

32, who has been displaced Hamas," said State Depart- of Khan Yunis, the hometown multiple times and now lives ment spokesperson Matthew of Hamas's Gaza chief, Yahya in Rafah with his wife and four Miller. children, charged that "the goal the only area that the occupation has not yet destroyed".

"Where will we go if they to Palestinians in Gaza".

Israeli Defence Minister Yoav met Egyptian President Abdel to establishing a Palestinian state Gallant warned on Monday that Fattah al-Sisi in Cairo, a day after that provides peace and securithe military "will reach places he held talks with Saudi Crown ty for Israelis and Palestinians where we have not yet fought... Prince Mohammed bin Salman alike", Miller said.

ongoing efforts to secure the gaged in heavy combat centred Palestinian Raed al-Bardani, release of all hostages held by on Gaza's main southern city

The US envoy also "expressed reduced to rubble. is to destroy Rafah because it is appreciation for Egypt's leadership role in facilitating the deliv-terminding the October 7 attack, ery of humanitarian assistance which resulted in the deaths of

Blinken -- on his fifth region- Washington's "rejection of any based on official figures.

Gaza war broke out -- earlier ians from Gaza and commitment

Israeli troops, with air and Blinken and Sisi "discussed naval support, have been en-Sinwar, much of which has been

Israel accuses Sinwar of masabout 1,160 people, mostly civil-And Blinken emphasised ians, according to an AFP tally