2 Palestinians caught trying to enter Israel with pipe bomb

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Security forces arrested two West Bank Palestinians who tried to enter Israel with a pipe bomb Thursday night.

A statement from police said the “suspicious” vehicle carrying the Palestinians was stopped at the Ein Yael checkpoint in southern Jerusalem.

A search of the vehicle yielded the homemade explosive device, a knife, and tens of thousands of shekels in cash and checks, it said.

An army sapper was called to the scene to defuse the pipe bomb.

The suspects were detained for questioning.

Meanwhile, in northern Jerusalem, shots were fired Thursday night at an Israeli military outpost near the West Bank settlement of Beit El. A number of houses were damaged by the gunfire, but there were no reports of injuries.

Both incidents come amid heightened tensions along the Gaza border, where thousands of Palestinians have gathered in recent weeks to attend the weekly Hamas-organized protests against Israel.

Earlier on Thursday, a Hamas drone expert who was gunned down in Malaysia last week was buried in Gaza, sparking Israeli fears the assassination of Fadi Mohammad al-Batsh, which Hamas has blamed on Israel, would fuel violence at the demonstration.

During the weekly demonstrations, 35 protesters, including two journalists, have been killed by Israeli live fire, according to Hamas figures.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said 21 of those wounded by Israeli fire in the protests have since had to undergo amputations due to their wounds. It said 17 lost legs and four lost fingers or parts of their upper limbs.

Rights groups, the United Nations and the European Union have all criticized Israel’s use of live fire against unarmed protesters.

Israel says it is defending its border and accuses Hamas of using the demonstrations as cover to plan and carry out attacks.