

# Palestinian shot in back says Israelis abused him for hours

Author:

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HEBRON, West Bank: A young Palestinian man who was shot in the back by Israeli forces in an incident caught on video last year says the footage shows just a small part of what was a horrifying day for him. Speaking to The Associated Press after the video emerged last week, Karam Qawasmi said he was run over by a military jeep, then beaten for several hours before troops released him, only to shoot him in the back with a painful sponge-tipped bullet as he walked away. He said Israeli investigators have never contacted him.

"I died several times that day," he said in an interview at his home in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. "They tortured me in a way that I felt they are killing me. And when they shot me, I felt it's my end. I closed my eyes and prayed."

Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 Mideast War and has kept it under military occupation for over 50 years. While the Palestinian Authority has limited autonomy in parts of the territory, Israel wields overall security control.

The incident occurred a year and a half ago, but only came to public attention last week, when Israel's Channel 13 TV broadcast a leaked video of the shooting, allegedly carried out by a member of the Israeli paramilitary border police unit.

In the video, a woman is heard screaming at a young Palestinian man to "get out of here" as he slowly walks away with his hands in the air. A male voice tells him to lower his hands as the woman again shouts at him. Some 20 seconds later, a shot is heard as the man crumples to the ground, screaming in pain.

The shooter is not seen in the video, which appears to have been taken by a member of the security force.

Qawasmi, 22, said that he was the man in the video, saying his troubles began early on the morning of May 25, 2018.



Palestinian Karam Qawasmi looks at a video, which appears to have been taken by a member of the security forces, showing when he was shot in the back by Israeli forces in an incident last year. (AP)

He said he had recently completed his accounting studies at a technical college. With few jobs available in the West Bank, he set out from his home in Hebron to the West Bank town of Azayim, outside of Jerusalem, in hopes of finding work at a gas station.

After a meeting at the station, he was walking back toward a checkpoint when he says a military jeep pulled up and struck him, tossing him several meters. Border police officers jumped out of the vehicle and grabbed him, he said. "They took me into the jeep. They handcuffed me and drove me to a nearby tunnel and started beating me up," he said. "They twisted my arms, hit me

with their hands, boots, and guns all over my body.”

He said he was carrying a small bag with work clothes, but Qawasmi, who does not speak much Hebrew, says he thinks the forces suspected he was armed with a knife.

“I recognized some words, like ‘knife,’” he said. “I thought they are going to kill me and leave a knife next to my body.” He said a crowd of policemen beat him up, as one officer recorded it on a mobile phone.

One female officer was especially aggressive. “She twisted my arms to my back and made me kneel in a very painful way,” he said. Another female officer stood and watched, he said.

After more than three hours, Karam said the forces gave him his ID card and ordered him to leave.

“I walked, and when I looked back I saw three soldiers pointing their guns at me,” he said. “I was terrified. I walked slowly, and my heart was beating quickly. One shot me, I was hit in the back. I fell down and thought I’m dying. I stared praying and closed my eyes.”

A soldier rushed to him and told him to leave. “I stood up terrified and walked. I kept walking for more than an hour,” he said.

Israeli forces often use sponge-tipped bullets to disperse crowds. The bullets are meant to not be lethal, though they are fired at high velocity and can be extremely painful.

Qawasmi said he eventually made it to a nearby Palestinian village where he changed his clothes and continued back to Hebron. “I went to the hospital for a checkup. There were bruises everywhere. The rubber bullet hit the end of the spine,” he said.

He said he recovered at home for a month and suffered nightmares and physical pain for many months afterward. He showed off what he said was the white Adidas T-shirt he wore that day, with a hole in the back where the bullet hit him.



Palestinian Karam Qawasmi holds up the shirt he was wearing when he was shot, in the garden of his house, in the West Bank city of Hebron. (AP)

Since the video was broadcast, Qawasmi has become a bit of a local celebrity. During the interview, he took a call from an Israeli lawyer offering to represent him. Several people approached him at a restaurant, some jokingly asking how much money he now expects from a legal settlement.

Israel’s Justice Ministry said last week that it has completed an investigation into the case and will soon announce a final decision on whether to indict officers who were at the scene, including a woman who is believed to have fired the bullet.

Israeli police said the woman was immediately removed from duty after the force became aware of the incident. They said other officers who were at the scene were reassigned.

“This is a case that does not characterize in any way whatsoever the behavior or operations of the Border Police,” a statement said.

Qawasmi said he did not file a complaint against the security forces, believing it would make no difference.

Palestinians and Israeli human rights groups accuse Israeli security forces of routinely covering up abuses and carrying out half-hearted investigations.

Qawasmi, for instance, said Israeli investigators have never asked to question him. Justice officials did not respond to a query as to why Qawasmi has not been interviewed.

In 2016, the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem stopped working with the Israeli military on such investigations, accusing it of whitewashing the cases.

Amit Gilutz, spokesman for the group, said it is common for alleged victims not be interviewed, and rarely are forces seriously punished.

“The only exceptional aspect of this incident is that it was filmed and published,” he said.



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## [How Jordan reclaimed two fertile](#)

# enclaves from Israel

Tue, 2019-11-12 00:53

AMMAN: Few Jordanians had expected it to happen, so when the Royal Jordanian Army raised the national flag over the twin enclaves of Al-Baqoura and Al-Ghamr on Sunday, the mood across the country was a mix of delight and satisfaction.

On Monday, Jordanian TV showed King Abdullah II, in military uniform, touring Al-Baqoura, accompanied by Crown Prince Hussein and the army's chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Yousef Huneiti.

The events this week mark the end of a controversial 25-year-old lease agreement that came as a part of the 1994 Jordan-Israel peace treaty. In 1950, Israel took the 6,000 dunams (1,482.63 acres) that make up Al-Baqoura, including an 820 dunam plot that the British Mandate government had given to Pinhas Rottenberg, a Zionist leader, in 1926 to build an electricity-generating company using the waters of the Jordan and Yarmouk Rivers.

During the 1967 war, Israel captured a further 4,000 dunams of land in Al-Ghamr, south of the Dead Sea. The plots in both Al-Baqoura and Al-Ghamr are rich in water supplies from natural aquifers located in Jordanian territory. Jamal Jeet, an attorney and spokesman for the unified Jordanian Hirk (movement), knew more than a year ago that strong public support was needed if Amman intended to refuse to renew the lease agreement.

Annex 1b and 1c of the Jordan-Israel peace treaty allowed Israeli farmers to continue farming those tracts without paying any fees or taxes to Jordan. But Jeet was aware that the same section permitted the abrogation of the lease agreement, provided one side gave the other a year's notice.

"I knew that the land was Jordanian and that we needed to cancel the 25-year-old lease," Jeet said. As he told members of the Jordanian Bar Association: "We need(ed) to do something unorthodox."

"I wanted advice from the association's head, Mazen Rosheidat, about an idea I had," he told Arab News.

"We didn't want to issue a statement and make a symbolic act of protest. I wanted a legal notice to be issued and delivered at every courthouse in Jordan."

Rosheidat not only welcomed the idea but suggested that it be brought under the auspices of the bar association. Two committees were formed – one to draft the text of the legal petition, and the other to help distribute it.

"Once the legal documents were ready, we made sure that a lawyer would take the lawsuit to the local courthouse and deposit it with the court clerk," he said.

The document called on the government to issue a one-year notice – before November 2018 – for a formal end to the lease arrangement.

Jeet also made sure that activists throughout Jordan took part in a campaign in tandem with the legal process.

A mural was placed at the Jordanian Professional Association's headquarters in Amman and hundreds of lawyers, doctors and engineers signed the document calling on the government of Omar Razzaz to issue the warning.

The campaign could not have occurred at more politically opportune moment.

Ties between Jordan and Israel had cooled due to a number of decisions by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, including the withdrawal of support for a two-state solution, a refusal to stop Jewish hardliners from praying at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, and the sidelining of Jordan as the administration of US President Donald Trump worked on a new Middle East peace plan.

## **FASTFACTS**

- Al-Baqoura is 6,000 dunams of fertile, aquifer-rich land east of Jordan River.
- Al-Ghamr is a 4 kilometer-wide, aquifer-rich area of land along Jordanian border, within Aqaba governorate.
- Israel occupied Al-Baqoura in 1950 and 4,000 additional dunams of land in Al-Ghamr, south of the Dead Sea, in 1967.
- Jordan and Israel signed Wadi Araba Peace Treaty in 1994.
- Jordan announced in October 2018 it would not renew the 25-year lease.
- The lease officially expired on Nov. 10, 2019.

The relationship had deteriorated so much that Abdullah had stopped taking phone calls from Netanyahu, after the Israeli leader was seen greeting an Israeli security guard who had shot two Jordanians and returned home after Amman, respecting his diplomatic immunity, handed him over. The guard did not face any legal action upon his return.

For Jeet, the very first sign that the association's campaign had been successful came when the king issued a short tweet on the issue on October 18 last year. "Al-Baqoura and Al-Ghamr have been on the top of our priorities and our decision is to end the annexes in the peace treaty in light of what is good for Jordan and Jordanians," it said.

That post kicked off a series of legal steps, culminating in the official decision to allow the Al-Baqoura and Al-Ghamr lease agreements to expire. The Jordanian government's decision was not strongly contested by Israel, which had been preoccupied with two election campaigns and a corruption scandal embroiling Netanyahu.

For Kamel Abu Jaber, a former Jordanian foreign minister, the significance of the return of Al-Baqoura and Al-Ghamr cannot be overstated.

"This is very important not only to Jordan but to the Arab and Islamic worlds," he told Arab News. "It shows that the peace treaty, with all its problems, produced the return of the land.

"Jordan is able to put pressure on Israel as a result of Article 9 of the treaty with Israel."

For his part, Adnan Abu Odeh, who served as an advisor to both Abdullah and the late King Hussein, and as Jordan's permanent representative at the UN until 1992, says the return of two enclaves will encourage Jordanians.

"It is important because it encourages Jordanians to keep pushing for their

rights and their interests, and (because) the government responded positively to public demands," he told Arab News.

Abu Odeh pointed out that in recent months Jordan had confronted Israel using legal means, such as its move to recall its ambassador, an action that prompted Israel to release two Jordanians.

"I hope that this will bring about further change in Israel's (behavior) in terms of what is happening in Jerusalem," Abu Odeh said.

Jordanians who had gathered near Al-Ghamr on Monday were permitted by the Jordanian army to visit the reclaimed tracts of agricultural land. Al-Baqoura remains a closed military area.

Jeet told Arab News he was cautiously optimistic but keeping his emotions in check. "We plan to hold a major rally to celebrate the return of Jordanian land," he said, adding that he was disappointed a planned press conference by the foreign ministry at the Al-Ghamr site was moved to Amman.

He said what also worried him was a statement by a ministry source that Amman had assented to a one-time visit by Israeli farmers to harvest what was planted before the end of the lease.

Ayman Safadi, Jordan's foreign minister, said on Monday that Israel had given the names of four non-Israelis who would be harvesting the land.

He said the press conference was moved to Amman because the original site in Al-Ghamr lacked the requisite technical facilities.

Ofer Zalzburg, a senior analyst for the International Crisis Group, told Arab News that Jordan has come out a winner in the latest negotiations.

"Amman's decision to terminate the state-to-state arrangement and allow only a one-time, six-month extension should come as no surprise," he told Arab News.

"Time will tell whether Israeli farmers who own land inside Jordan would be able to arrive at a new technical access arrangement to continue farming their lands while residing in Israel.

"Such a private arrangement may be possible only if it excludes the Israeli government and is devised exclusively within the bounds of Jordanian law."





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How Jordan reclaimed two fertile enclaves from Israel  
Jordan's king visits border area after end of lease deal with Israel

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## [Bombings kill 6 civilians in main Kurdish city in Syria](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

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Mon, 2019-11-11 15:16

QAMISHLI, Syria: Three simultaneous bombings killed at least six civilians in the Kurdish-majority city of Qamishli in northeastern Syria on Monday, a Kurdish security source and a Britain-based monitor said.

There was no immediate claim for the bombings, but they occurred shortly after the Daesh group said it was responsible for the killing the same day of a priest from the same city.

In Qamishli, an AFP correspondent saw charred cars and smoke rise from the site of the blasts.

Firefighters tried to put out the flames caused by the explosions, as rescue workers carried away the victims.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor, which relies on sources inside Syria, said two car bombs and an explosives-rigged motorcycle blew up in a market and near a school in the city.

More than 20 people were wounded in the simultaneous attacks, said the Britain-based monitor said.

The blasts come after Daesh claimed to have killed an Armenian Catholic priest from Qamishli.

The Observatory said the priest and his father were killed by gunfire as they made their way to the eastern province of Deir Ezzor to inspect the restoration of a church there.

Kurdish fighters have led the US-backed battle against Daesh in Syria, expelling the extremists from the last scrap of their proto-state in March. But the jihadists have continued to claim deadly attacks in northeastern and eastern Syria ever since.

In July, IS said it was responsible for a massive truck bomb that killed at least 44 people in Qamishli.

A Turkish cross-border attack against Kurdish fighters on Oct. 9 heightened fears that Daesh fighters could break out in mass from Kurdish jails.

But a fragile Turkish-Russian cease-fire deal has more or less halted that offensive, and seen Kurdish forces withdraw from areas along the Turkish border, except Qamishli.



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Daesh claims responsibility for deadly car bomb in Syrian Kurdish town  
Qamishli  
British backer of Syrian White Helmets found dead in Turkey

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## [Experts analyze 'Deal of the Century' at Abu Dhabi strategic forum](#)

Author:

Mon, 2019-11-11 22:54

ABU DHABI: On the second day of the Abu Dhabi Strategic Debate, experts on foreign-policy and security issues took part in an exhaustive discussion on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

As panelists in a session entitled "The Deal of the Century: Rewriting the Rules of the Regional Game," they discussed the US role in the Israeli-Palestinian issue in the context of President Donald Trump's promise during

his 2016 election campaign to broker a deal that caters to the demands of both sides.

David Makovsky, Ziegler distinguished fellow and director of the project on Arab-Israel relations at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said that for a solution to work, it “needs to give dignity to both parties.”

Referring to the phrase “The deal of the Century,” Makovsky said that it was not coined by the US or the Trump administration, and was in effect first used at a press conference in the Middle East.

While the deal’s political components remain a mystery, Makovsky said the economic elements consisted of “raising around \$50 billion from affluent countries in the region, in the form of loans, grants and investments.”

According to him, “most of it will be spent in Palestine, some in Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon, to support infrastructure and business projects.”

However, the economic elements remain “a part of a package of five core issues” known as the “final status,” said Makovsky.

They include “borders, Jerusalem, refugees, and mutual recognition of the other state,” he added, pointing out that the issues had not yet been fleshed out.

“They are waiting for a new government in Israel but this late in the cycle of the first administration, with US elections coming up in 2020, they will put out a vision and not a plan.”

He said a vision would lay out US ideas in 60 to 70 pages, with the presumption that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas would reject it.

“At the minimum, it is a historic reference point,” said Makovsky, who went on to express his disagreement with the “all or nothing” approach taken by the Trump administration with regard to Middle Eastern issues.

“If you say yes on the five issues, you get 178 economic projects. My fear is in the Middle East, when it is all or nothing, it is nothing.”

As part of the same panel discussion, Dr. Shibley Telhami of the University of Maryland said previous US administrations, including that of President Barack Obama, had failed to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict simply because “the issue has become less strategically important” to the US.

“Never has a US president since the end of the Cold War made the (Israeli-Palestinian issue) a top priority,” he said.





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Protesters storm Bahraini embassy in Baghdad in protest against US 'deal of the century'  
Media blitz as Palestinians oppose 'Deal of the Century'

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## [‘Sister protests’: Lebanon, Iraq look to each other](#)

Author:

Hashem Osseiran in Beirut and Maya Gebeily in Baghdad | AFP

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Mon, 2019-11-11 16:15

BEIRUT: A Lebanese flag flutters in the protest-hit Iraqi capital. More than 900 kilometers (500 miles) away, a revolutionary Iraqi chant rings out from a bustling protest square in Beirut.

“Don’t trust the rumors, they’re a group of thieves,” sings a group of Lebanese musicians in Iraqi dialect, referring to political leaders they deem incompetent and corrupt.

“The identity is Lebanese,” they continue, reworking the chant by Iraqi

preacher Ali Yusef Al-Karbalai, made popular during the street movement there.

Such recent shows of solidarity have become a common feature of protest squares in the two countries, where corruption, unemployment and appalling public services have fueled unprecedented street movements demanding the ouster of an entire political class.

They serve to “shed light on similarities between the two movements and boost morale,” said Farah Qadour, a Lebanese oud musician.

“The two streets are observing and learning from each other,” said the 26-year-old who is part of the group that adopted Al-Karbalai’s chant.

In Lebanon’s southern city of Nabatiyeh, hundreds brandishing Lebanese flags chanted: “From Iraq to Beirut, one revolution that never dies.”

And in the northern city of Tripoli, dubbed the “bride” of Lebanon’s protest movement, a man standing on a podium waved a wooden pole bearing the flags of the two countries.

“From Lebanon to Iraq, our pain is one, our right is one, and victory is near,” read a sign raised during another protest, outside Beirut’s state-run electricity company.

In Tahrir Square, the beating heart of Baghdad’s month-old protest movement, demonstrators are selling Lebanese flags alongside Iraqi ones.

They have hung some on the abandoned Turkish restaurant, turned by Iraqi demonstrators into a protest control tower.

Banners reading “from Beirut to Baghdad, one revolution against the corrupt” could be seen throughout.

Lebanon and Iraq are ranked among the most corrupt countries in the region by anti-graft watchdog Transparency International, with Iraq listed as the 12th most corrupt in the world.

Public debt levels in both countries are relatively high, with the rate in Lebanon exceeding 150 percent of gross domestic product (GDP).

“What’s happening on the streets in Iraq and Lebanon, they’re sister protests,” said Samah, a 28-year-old Lebanese demonstrator.

“They’re the result of an accumulation” of years of problems.

One video that went viral on social media networks showed a masked Iraqi protester dressed in military fatigues demanding the resignation of Lebanese Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil, one of the main targets of protesters in the small Mediterranean country.

In a video released online, a group of young Iraqi men had filmed themselves singing, “Lebanon, we’re with you!”

The two movements also seem to be adopting similar protest strategies.

In both countries, rows of parked vehicles have blocked traffic along main thoroughfares in recent weeks.

University-aged demonstrators wearing medical masks or eye goggles have occupied bridges and flyovers, refusing to believe pledges of reform from both governments.

The big difference is that in Iraq, the demonstrations have turned deadly, with more than 300 people, mostly protesters but also including security forces, killed since the movement started October 1.

Lebanon’s street movement, which started on October 17, has been largely incident-free despite scuffles with security forces and counter-demonstrators rallying in support of established parties.

The two movements, however, are united in their anger about the kind of

political system that prioritizes power-sharing between sects over good governance.

The consecutive governments born out of this system have been prone to deadlock and have failed to meet popular demands for better living conditions.

“We are united by a sense of patriotic duty in confronting this sectarian political system,” said Obeida, a 29-year-old protester from Tripoli. He said he had high hopes for Iraqi protesters because the sectarian power-sharing system there is relatively new, having emerged after the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003.

“In Lebanon, it’s more entrenched,” he said of the arrangement that ended the country’s 1975-1990 civil war.

On a Beirut waterfront, dotted with luxury restaurants and cafes, a 70-year-old Iraqi man who has been living in Lebanon for five years looked on as demonstrators laid out picnic blankets on the grass.

With a Lebanese flag wrapped around his neck, Fawzi said the protests looked different but reminded him of those back home.

“The goal is one,” he said.



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