

After Baby's Murder, Israeli Sniper Kills Another Palestinian Child

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A photo of Laith al-Khalidi posted on his [Facebook](#) page in December 2014.

Israel responded to the widespread revulsion over the murder of 18-month-old baby [Ali Dawabsha](#) by fatally shooting a Palestinian teenager in the occupied [West Bank](#).

Laith al-Khalidi was “killed in cold blood,” according to Fadel, his father.

Fifteen-year-old Laith was in the vicinity of the Atara military checkpoint near [Ramallah](#) when a sniper in an Israeli watchtower shot him in the back on Friday last week. Laith was accompanied by four friends at the time he was shot.

“Perhaps he went to express his outrage at the killing of Ali Dawabsha, but when soldiers shot him from the checkpoint tower, he wasn’t throwing any stones whatsoever,” said Fadel.

The details obtained by Fadel of the incident sharply contradict Israel’s spin.

Israel has exploited the fact that Palestinian youth were involved in confrontations with its soldiers in its attempts to “justify” the killing.

An unnamed military spokesperson claimed that Israeli soldiers had opened fire on Laith as a “response to immediate danger.” Those comments were [reported](#) by *The New York Times*, which called Laith “an assailant who had thrown a firebomb.”

However, evidence in many other cases has shown that such routine claims by the army should be treated with the utmost skepticism. Last month, [video evidence](#) showed that an Israeli colonel had shot dead Palestinian teenager Muhammad al-Kasbeh, in the back, as he ran away, debunking the army’s claims that occupation soldiers were in imminent danger from the youth. Video also caught Israeli soldiers [shooting dead two Palestinian youths in cold blood](#) in Beitunia in May 2014.

Just this year, Israeli human rights group B’Tselem [says](#) that it “has documented dozens of cases in the Ramallah area of the West Bank in which Palestinians were injured, some severely, by live ammunition fired by Israeli security forces.”

The group says that “the large number of persons injured and the types of injury, indicates that live ammunition was used against demonstrators even when security forces were not in mortal danger.”

The army’s depiction, moreover, does not tally with how Laith’s parents, who live in [Jalazone](#)

[refugee camp](#), remember him.

Ominous

As soon as they heard of baby Ali's murder by [Israeli settlers](#), Laith's parents had an ominous feeling. Could something happen to their own children in the clashes with Israeli soldiers that would more than likely ensue?

It was not Laith, but his elder brother, Yazan, that they were really worried about.

Despite being two years his junior, Laith — who hoped to become a lawyer — was considered the more mature and reliable sibling. For that reason, their father asked Laith to make sure that Yazan stayed away from any clashes that day.

Laith had repeatedly urged his brother to stay safe.

"My son Laith wasn't one of the kids who'd go to protests week in, week out and throw stones," said Samar, his mother.

Even before Laith's murder, the family had suffered heavily at the hands of the Israeli occupation. Fadel, now an assistant dean at [Birzeit University](#), was involved in popular resistance during the [first intifada](#). He was imprisoned for six years.

For three of those six years, he was held in [administrative detention](#), under which Israel locks up Palestinians without charge or trial.

His mother, meanwhile, had been injured in her leg after Israel attacked a protest in 1994. The protest was held in response to [that year's massacre](#) in [Hebron](#), during which the US-born settler [Baruch Goldstein](#) murdered 29 worshippers at the [Ibrahimi Mosque](#).

Although both his parents have been politically active, they were eager that no harm should come to their children. Their children were therefore discouraged from battling Israel's forces of occupation.

"I wish they were different from us," said Samar. She reacted with disbelief when she received a phone call at 5:30pm on Friday, telling her that Laith was injured.

"I initially asked, 'Laith who?'" she said. "I couldn't even contemplate the idea that they were referring to Laith, my son."

Laith had told her that he had gone to Ramallah to play billiards.

"Hoping against hope"

After he was shot, Laith was taken to Ramallah's hospital, where he underwent surgery that lasted six hours.

"We had hoped that he would somehow come through this alive," said Fadel. "I was sitting next to the room where the surgery was taking place, hoping against hope that my son would survive. Around midnight doctors took him to intensive care and five minutes later he was gone."

Samar is a nurse. As soon as she saw Laith, she could tell that his situation was critical.

“I cannot describe what I went through during those six hours,” she said.

There was a moment in their ordeal that Samar described as “ridiculous.” A doctor told Laith’s parents that if he survived the night, he would be transferred to Hadassah, an Israeli hospital in [Jerusalem](#).

“How can those who kill our sons then go on to treat them?” Samar asked. “How can we agree to this? But I was ready to do anything to save my child’s life, even if that meant sending him to an Israeli hospital. I would have done anything.”



Mourners say farewell to Laith al-Khalidi during his funeral near the West Bank city of Ramallah, 1 August. The teenager died in hospital hours after being shot by Israeli occupation forces near the Atara military checkpoint on 31 July. Shadi Hatem/APA images

Yazan, Laith’s brother, had tried to persuade him that he should join [Fatah](#). But Laith told him that his allegiance was to Palestine, not to any political party.

“Laith was everything to me,” said Yazan. “We did everything together, we shared the same room, used the same computer, played cards together, watched sports together. We fought, we laughed, we both liked Real Madrid. But Laith was better than me. If anyone had to die, it should have been me, not him.”

Crying, Yazan raised his voice to an almost piercing level. “Laith, why did you go away?” he asked.

Laith’s 7-year-old sister Lor will only stop crying when she is told that Laith would hate to see her so upset.

“They have taken our happiness”

After a moment’s calm, she broke down again when little things remind her of Laith — like the beautiful mirror and the toys he gave her on the first day of Eid.

“They [the Israelis] have snatched the smile from this girl’s face; they have taken our happiness away,” said Samar. “With Laith’s passing, I feel that a piece of me is gone.”

According to his father, Laith’s biggest dream was that the family could return to the village of Annaba. They were expelled from Annaba — located near [Ramle](#), a city in present-day Israel — during the [Nakba](#), the 1948 [ethnic cleansing](#) of Palestine.

“Laith visited his village when he was a kid and since then he always asked me, ‘when will we return home?’” said Fadel.

It is instructive that Laith’s killing was only mentioned towards the end of the aforementioned report in *The New York Times*.

Another Palestinian teenager was also killed that day. Muhammad al-Masri was [shot dead](#) by Israeli soldiers in a watchtower on Israel’s boundary with [Gaza](#).

Their deaths received just a fraction of the attention devoted to the [condemnations issued by Israeli establishment figures](#) following the murder of baby Ali.

Not for the first time, Western media have been extremely accommodating to Israeli propagandists. The crocodile tears of Israeli politicians over one child’s death are treated as if they are genuine. Yet European and American journalists have not stopped to ask why the same politicians failed to condemn the killing of other young Palestinians on the same day.

If those journalists did some serious analysis or research, they would realize that the killing of baby Ali was not an aberration. Palestinian children and teenagers are regularly killed by Israelis.

Occasionally, the killers are settlers, inculcated with the extremist ideology on which Israel was founded. More often, they are soldiers carrying out the orders of a racist state.

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