

# Israel defies International Law by Holding Bodies of Slain Palestinians, Executed in Cold Blood

By [Middle East Monitor](#)

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*As part of its collective punishment policy against the Palestinian people, Israel has refused to deliver the bodies of 38 Palestinians killed in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem.*

Since the beginning of what some are calling a new Palestinian Intifada (uprising), Israel has held the bodies of 48 slain Palestinians, 38 of which remain at the Abu Kabir Forensic Institute morgue in Israel.

Maisa al-Khateeb is the mother of 17-year-old slain Palestinian Mustafa Al-Khateeb, who was executed in cold blood by the Israeli army near the El-Isbat (Lions) Gate in East Jerusalem last month.

She told *Anadolu Agency* that she has not been able to see her son since he was killed.

"My heart is bleeding everyday when I realise that I am warm and my love Mustafa is cold inside a morgue," Maisa said. "This fact wrenches my heart."

"I want the body of my son to be returned so I can bury him with dignity," she said, with tears flowing down her face. "I want to hug and kiss my baby, who was stolen from me by the human monsters."

The Palestinian National Committee for Retrieving Bodies of Martyrs said Israeli authorities are refusing to hand over the bodies under the pretext that their families will hold funerals for them, which will serve as a catalyst for "Palestinian violence."

"Israel is using a humanitarian issue for political gains and that reflects the racism of the Israeli occupation amid the silence of the international community," Salem Khalleh, the group's coordinator, said. "The world has to pressure Israel to adhere to international human rights laws and the Geneva Convention, which obliges contracting states to respect war victims and to ensure they are honourably interred by family members."

According to official Palestinian figures, Israel is still holding the bodies of 325 Palestinians and Arabs killed during several wars, in addition to the 38 bodies of Palestinians killed in recent weeks.

The dead are buried in two Israeli facilities, each known as the Cemetery of Numbers. The first, located in the Galilee area in northern Israel, holds 243 bodies. The second facility in the Jordan valley holds 92 bodies.

The Israeli government considers the cemeteries closed military areas and prevents Palestinian and Arab families from accessing them.

The Israeli cabinet last month approved Likud-Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan's proposal to refuse to return the bodies of Palestinians killed by the Israeli army.

The Palestinian families realise that Israel may want to use the bodies of their loved ones in future negotiations in exchange of the bodies of two Israeli soldiers held by Hamas since the last Gaza war.

Mahmoud Ellian, father of 22-year-old Baha Ellian, who was killed last month, told *Anadolu Agency* that the "Israeli occupation is mistaken in thinking that it can blackmail us by using this card."

"All the families of detained slain Palestinians are in agreement to sacrifice the corpses of their loved ones if the price is the freedom of Palestinian prisoners," Ellian said. "We will fight and win our battle against the racist Israeli occupation and we will retrieve the bodies of our sons."

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