



March 2, 2015

Who Is a Terrorist and Who Is a Journalist? Hamas Operative Abdallah Mortaja, Killed in Operation Protective Edge, as a Case Study.



Is he a journalist? Abdallah Fadel Mortaja, Hamas terrorist operative in the Shejaiya battalion of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, who also carried out propaganda missions. Hamas claims he was a "journalist" and included him on the list of journalists killed in Operation Protective Edge.

Overview

1. About a week after the end of Operation Protective Edge the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate issued a list of 17 names, allegedly of journalists who had been killed in the operation. The list was published by the PA's Wafa News Agency, which received it from the Hamas-controlled Gaza office of the ministry of information.¹ **The ITIC examined the list and found that about half (eight) were affiliated with Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ).**²
2. One of the names on the list of "journalists" was **Abdallah Fadel Mortaja**, represented by the Palestinians as a journalist, with **no mention made of his role as a military-terrorist operative** (See Appendix B). However, the ITIC discovered that

¹ The official name, as it appears on its website, is the "Palestinian national authority ministry of information government information office" [in the Gaza Strip].

² For further information see the February 12, 2015 bulletin "Examination of the Names of 17 Journalists and Media Personnel Whom the Palestinians Claim Were Killed in Operation Protective Edge."

he was an operative in the Shejaiya battalion of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing, where he also carried out propaganda missions.

3. On February 17, 2015, a year and a half after his death, Hamas' satellite channel, Al-Aqsa TV, broadcast a program in his memory. The program did not ignore "the information activities of the al-Qassam shaheed," **but stressed his military role**. The program showed him wearing an Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades uniform and operating various types of weapons. Sections of the will he recorded before his death were also broadcast (See Appendix A).

4. The case of Abdallah Mortaja raises the question, in principle, of the status of military-terrorist operatives who also deal with propaganda in the battle for hearts and minds (regarded as particularly important by the terrorist organizations). Hamas and the PIJ, like ISIS and Hezbollah, employ terrorist operatives to carry out propaganda missions, and in several instances they are integral parts of military-terrorist units. However, **Hamas and other Palestinian organizations went one step further and are now trying to represent terrorist operatives who fulfill propaganda roles as legitimate journalists** who enjoy professional immunity. That is evident from Abdallah Mortaja and other terrorist operatives who were killed in Operation Protective Edge whose names appear on the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate list. In addition, not only are the Palestinians trying to claim immunity for their military-terrorist operatives, they are also trying to defame Israel by claiming it deliberately killed those "journalists" and prevented them from doing their jobs.

Appendix A

Al-Aqsa TV Memorial for Abdallah Mortaja (Based in part on a YouTube video from October 30, 2014)

1. On February 17, 2015 (and rerun the following day) Hamas' Al-Aqsa TV broadcast a program in memory of the shaheed Abdallah Mortaja (aka Abu Omar). It integrated videos and statements from family members. Some of the videos showed him wearing an Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades uniform. Scenes from the will he read on camera before his death showed him armed with a rifle and wearing a green Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades headband. There were also scenes of him broadcasting from the field as a Hamas Al-Aqsa TV correspondent.
2. According to the program, he was married and had four children. His father said Abdallah was born in the UAE in 1988, arriving in the Gaza Strip 1990. He went to the Islamic Al-Awqaf Institute Gaza Strip, and then studied sharia (Islamic religious law) at Al-Azhar in Gaza City and the Islamic University, and was an outstanding student. His brother said Abdallah often preached jihad. A friend said he was one of the founders of Hamas' ministry of information office in the Shejaiya neighborhood of eastern Gaza City. A masked Hamas terrorist operative said he remembered him using communications equipment in the middle of the night to encourage operatives deployed on the ground.

Pictures of Abdallah Mortaja, the "Journalist," from the Al-Aqsa TV Program



Abdallah Mortaja firing a heavy machine gun.



Abdallah Mortaja, wearing civilian clothing, firing a rifle.



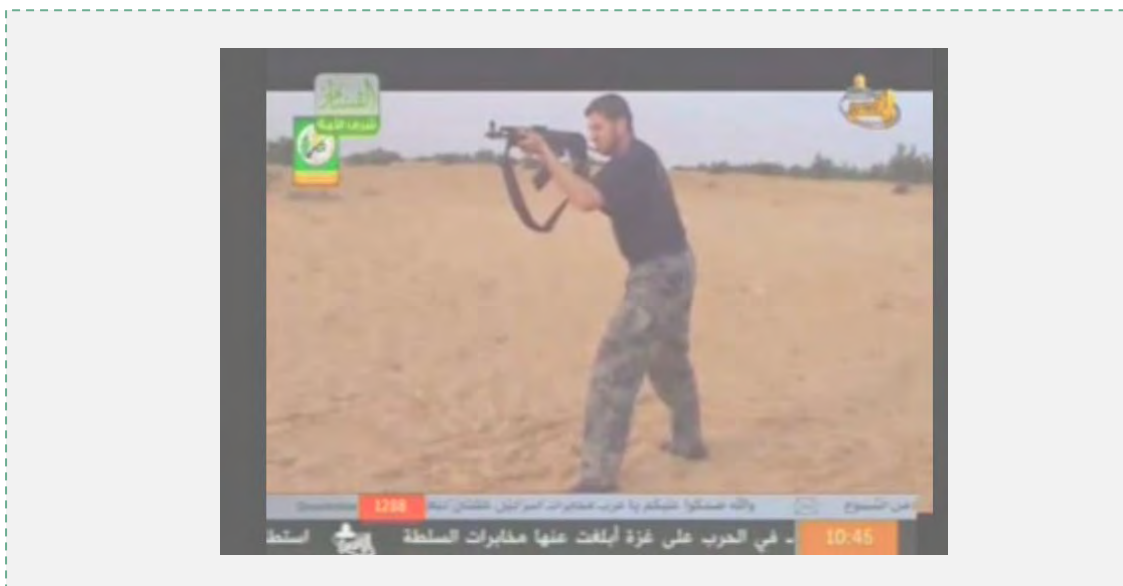
Abdallah Mortaja, armed with a rifle, wearing a green Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades headband



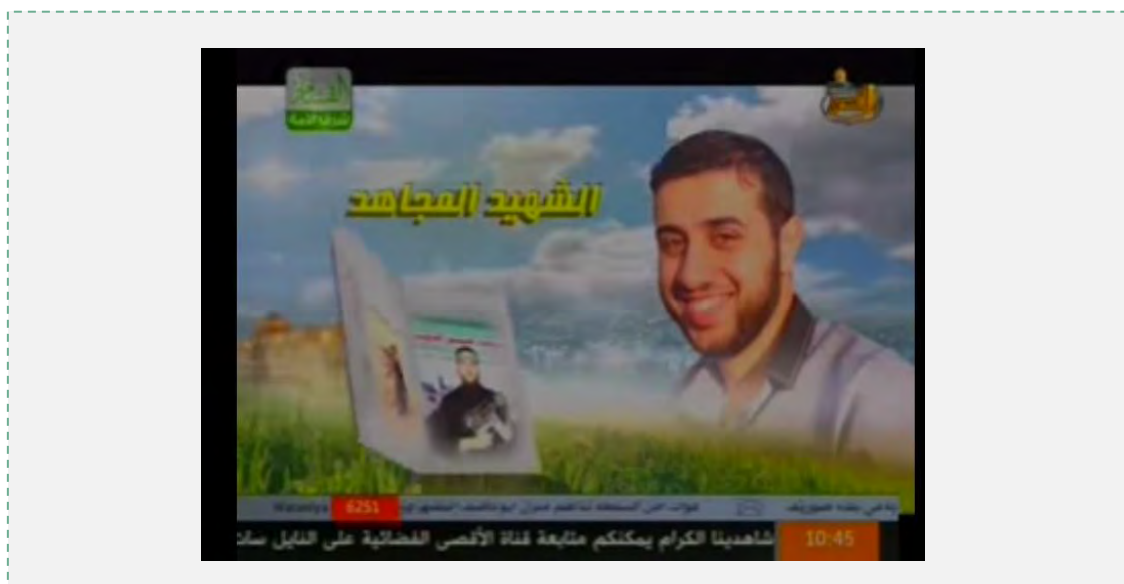
Abdallah Mortaja wearing a uniform and firing a rifle.



Abdallah Mortaja, armed with a rifle, reads his will. Behind him is the logo and its inscription, "Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades."



Abdallah Mortaja in military uniform at rifle practice.



Photomontage commemorating Abdallah Mortaja, "the shaheed, the jihad fighter." The picture at the left shows him armed with a rifle and wearing an Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades headband.



Abdallah Mortaja in civilian clothing on a propaganda mission, broadcasting from the field and from the studio.

Appendix B

Portrait of Abdallah Mortaja, from the Document Issued by the Hamas-Controlled Gaza Office of the Ministry of Information

Overview

1. The list of 17 journalists and media personnel killed in Operation Protective Edge and short biographies were also issued by **the Gaza office of the ministry of information**. Published in Arabic and English, it was called "Heroes of Truth." The same office also issued a poster with pictures of the 17 journalists. The document was written by a public relations team headed by **Ihab al-Ghussin**, who was formerly **spokesman for the interior ministry in the de-facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip** (and today deputy minister of information, head of the Gaza office of the ministry of information and head of **Al-Ra'i**, a **Hamas newspaper published in Gaza**). The Gaza office of the ministry of information **served the de-facto Hamas administration and continues to function, even after the establishment of the Palestinian national consensus government in June 2014**.



The title page of the Gaza office of the ministry of information's misleading, inaccurate publication about the 17 journalists killed in Operation Protective Edge.

"Heroes of Truth" Biography of Abdallah Fadel Mortaja, "Journalist" (No mention is made of his military-terrorist activities)

عبد الله فضل مرتجى Abdallah Fadel Mortaja



تاريخ الميلاد

Date of birth

1988 / 6 / 19

تاريخ الاستشهاد

Date of death

2014 / 8 / 25



العمل

work

صحفي

Journalist



Abdallah Fadel Mortaja, born on 19th June 1988, killed on 25th August 2014. He worked as a journalist in the Palestinian Zakat institution.

He studied Sharia and Law in Omma University, married and a father of four children, Omar 4, twins Abdurrahman and Nada 2, and Dana 1 year. Abdullah worked at many media companies, the latest was the Palestinian Zakat institution. During the recent Israeli offensive against Gaza, Abdallah was dedicated to his work for the last moment. He insisted to cover the latest news along with other journalists. On 25th August 2014, he left home after kissing his mother's forehead, asking her to pray for him, few hours later, he was announced dead in an Israeli airstrike.

With tearful eyes, his mother recounted her latest moments with Abdullah saying, " When I saw him leaving, I felt that he would not return back, that moment, I could not hold my tears, when he saw my tears, he begged me to stop crying then he left home " .

About his work, his colleague Ibrahim said: " I was shocked by the news of his death, he was like a close brother to me, we were consulting in everything, especially the work issues, he was a trustworthy man with good manners ."