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The social networks as a source of inspiration and imitation for terrorists: the case study of Amjad Jaser Sukari, the Palestinian policeman who carried out a shooting attack near Beit El.

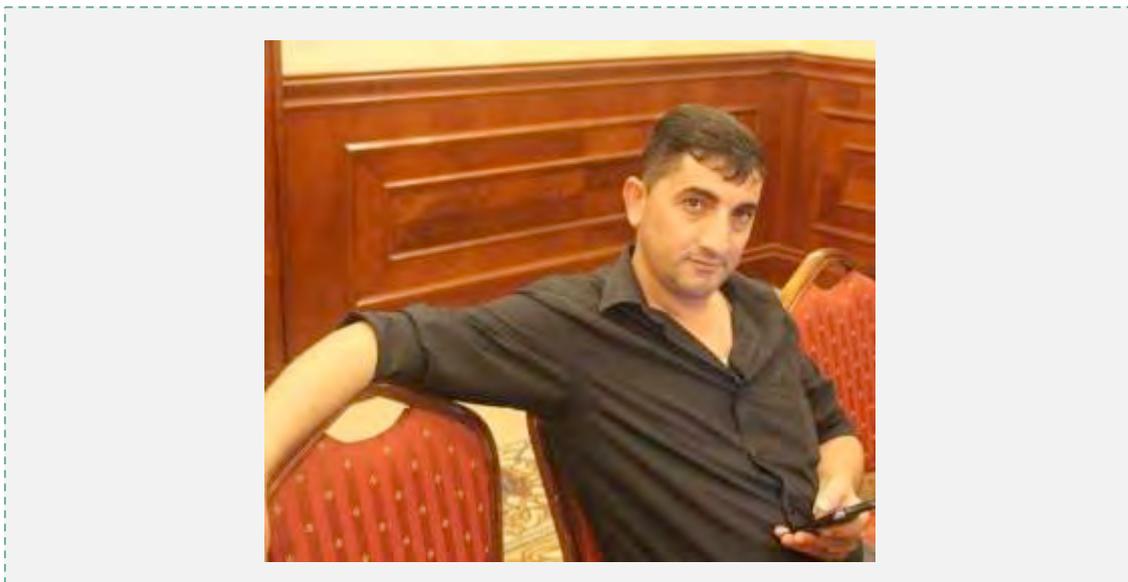


The death notice issued by Fatah in the Nablus district for Amjad Jaser Sukari, who "carried out the heroic action of Beit El" (Facebook page of Fatah in Nablus, January 31, 2016).

Overview

1. On **January 31, 2016**, a shooting attack was carried out at an IDF roadblock near **Beit El** north of near Ramallah, which is used exclusively by senior Palestinian Authority (PA) figures (sometimes called the "VIP roadblock"). The terrorist drove to the roadblock. When he was stopped and asked for his ID card, he took out a gun and shot at the soldiers. **Three IDF soldiers were wounded, one seriously**. The soldiers stationed at the roadblock returned fire and killed him.
2. The terrorist was **Amjad Jaser Sukari** (Abu Omar), 34, father of four, from the village of **Jammaa'in**, southwest of Nablus. He was a bodyguard for **Ahmed Hanoun, the Palestinian attorney general in Ramallah**, and a staff sergeant in the Palestinian police. As a policeman he had a registered gun and could pass through the roadblock without arousing suspicion. **Amjad Jaser Sukari did not conform to the profile of most of the terrorists who have carried out attacks during the current Palestinian**

terrorist campaign. He was relatively older, married and a father, and served in the PA police force.



Amjad Jaser Sukari (Abu Omar), from his Facebook page, November 21, 2015.

3. It was the second time during the current terrorist campaign that a terrorist attack was carried out by an operative of the Palestinian security forces. The first time was on December 3, 2015, when a Palestinian opened fire at the Hizma roadblock (north of Jerusalem) and wounded two Israelis; he was shot and killed. He was **Mazen Hassan Areiba (Abu Ziyad), who was an officer in Palestinian general intelligence.** Both attacks were **shooting attacks, easy for operatives of the Palestinian security forces to carry out because of their access to weapons and permits to carry them.** However, the Palestinian security forces **continue security coordination with Israel and the involvement of their operatives in the current terrorist campaign has so far been exceptional.**

Responses to the Attack

4. After the attack, **Hamas in the Nablus district issued a death notice for "[the man who] carried out the heroic action of Beit El."** Hamas and Islamic groups in Judea and Samaria issued **notices glorifying the "rebel policeman."** At the funeral held for him, **Amjad Jaser Sukari's body was wrapped in the Palestinian and Fatah flags, and Mahmoud al-'Alul, a senior Fatah figure in Judea and Samaria, eulogized him.**¹ However so far the Palestinian police have not issued a formal death notice for

¹ **Mahmoud al-'Alul** said the Fatah movement was proud of "the shaheed Sukari" as it was proud of all the shaheeds. He said, "the occupation does not leave us any choice but to fight against it...The blood of shaheeds is not lost" (Quds Press, February 1, 2016).

Amjad Jaser Sukari (a death notice was apparently published by the Hamas-controlled police in the Gaza Strip to embarrass the PA).



Left: Notice issued by Hamas praising the Amjad Jaser Sukari (Hamas, January 31, 2016). Right: The death notice issued by Fatah in the Nablus district for Amjad Jaser Sukari, "[the man who] carried out the heroic action of Beit El" (Facebook page of Fatah in Nablus, January 31, 2016).

5. Hamas and other terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip **praised the attack and exploited it to denounce the PA for its security collaboration with Israel.** Fathi Hamad, former minister of the interior in the Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip, said the attack was a message to the other operatives of the Palestinian security forces to follow in Amjad Jaser Sukari's footsteps (Dunia al-Watan, January 31, 2016). Husam Badran, a Hamas spokesman, said that the participation of the Palestinian security forces in the intifada was an expression of "the will of the people," and called on all the operatives of the security forces to turn their weapons against Israel (Dunia al-Watan, January 31, 2016). The **Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)** also praised the attack (Paltoday, January 31, 2016). A spokesman for **Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades** [in the Gaza Strip] said that the attack was proof of the nationalist sentiments of the [PA] security forces and their refusal to accept security collaboration with Israel (Alresala.net, January 31, 2016).



Left: the notice issued by Hamas in Nablus reading, "#rebel_policeman...good and Allah are within you...the shaheed policeman...who carried out the shooting action against the Zionist soldiers... (Facebook page of Hamas in Nablus, January 31, 2016) Right: A death notice issued by the Palestinian police force for Amjad Jaser Sukari. It was apparently posted by the Palestinian police in the Gaza Strip (Facebook page of Paldf, January 31, 2016).²

Amjad Jaser Sukari's Use of His Facebook Page

6. In the case of Amjad Jaser Sukari, as in previous cases, his **Facebook page served as a platform for posting messages and expressing his thoughts and feelings**. The most prominent theme during the months before the attack was **the increasing number of expressions of his desire to die and join the shaheeds who found their deaths in the struggle against the "Israeli occupation."** His two last posts, which he wrote about two hours before the attack, **clearly expressed his desire to sacrifice himself**. He began saying he wanted to die **before the outbreak of the current terrorist campaign**, but with **increasing frequency during the weeks before the attack** (Facebook page of Amjad Jaser Sukari, beginning on July 24, 2015).³

7. **The theme of the struggle against the Israeli "occupation"** appeared on Amjad Jaser Sukari's Facebook page. As opposed to the terrorists who preceded him, he did not praise or mention any previous Palestinian shaheed as a role model. He used **both Islamic and secular terminology**. The differences between his Facebook postings and those of previous Palestinian terrorists are possibly the result of his role in the Palestinian security forces and his relatively advanced age.

² The Facebook page of the Palestinian police in Judea and Samaria did not mention Amjad Jaser Sukari's death. It has so far not issued a death notice as it usually does for its policemen or their relatives who die.

³ Although he frequently expressed a wish to die, **we have found no indication that his Facebook friends tried to stop him or gave him negative feedback** (he had 18 permanent friends on his Facebook page).

Appendix

The Idea for the Shooting Attack as It Matured on Amjad Jaser Sukari's Facebook Page

1. The Facebook page of Amjad Jaser Sukari again illustrates the role of Facebook (and the other social networks) as a platform for the thoughts, feelings and intentions of Palestinians who carry out terrorist attacks. The following are examples of Amjad Jaser Sukari's Facebook posts during the months before the attack (in reverse chronological order):

1) **At 1100 hours on January 31, 2016**, two hours before the attack near Beit El, Amjad Jaser Sukari posted two notices, one after the other. In the first he wrote, **"May you have a morning of victory, with the aid of Allah..."** adding the *shahadah* (there is no god but Allah and Mohammad is his messenger"). In the second he wrote, "In this land [i.e., "Palestine"] there are things worth living for. **Unfortunately I don't see anything worth living for as long as the occupation strangles us and kills our brothers and sisters.** Allah, have mercy on our martyrs, heal our wounds and release our prisoners. **You** [i.e., the shaheeds] are those who **came first and we, Allah willing, follow in your footsteps.**"⁴

⁴ The first three words, "in this land," are the title of a well-known poem about the Palestinian homeland written by **Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish**. The end the post was taken from a *hadith* (the Muslim oral tradition) as having been said by the Prophet Muhammad while speaking to the dead in a cemetery. **The combination of secular and religious motifs is intended to magnify the emotional effect of the Facebook post.**



The two notices Amjad Jaser Sukari posted to his Facebook page two hours before he carried out the attack (Facebook page of Amjad Jaser Sukari, January 31, 2016). According to the Arab48 website, the picture is a selfie he added to his last post on his way to the attack.

2) On the night of **January 30, 2016**, he posted a notice reading, "Every day we hear of a death. **(Forgive me) I may be next.**" Above that he added, "Allah in heaven knows more than anyone who is next, and where!!!..." "Oh Allah, **put me to death with the *shahadah***, There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger. **Forgive me.**" In response, Facebook users who read the notice assured him Allah would forgive him.



The notice Amjad Jaser Sukari posted to Facebook on January 30, 2016: "(Forgive me) I may be next;" "Oh Allah, let me die..." (Facebook page of Amjad Jaser Sukari, January 30, 2016).

3) On **January 13, 2016**, he posted a (low-quality) video which he claimed showed Israeli soldiers hitting Palestinian children. He asked that the video be reposted. [ITIC note: The video does not seem authentic. There is doubt as to whether the soldiers are Israelis.] He wrote, "I leave the accounting to Allah, who

is the best defender. **Allah takes revenge on the treacherous leaders and Arab spies. They are all pigs."**



The video posted by Amjad Jaser Sukari, which he claims shows Israeli soldiers hitting Palestinian children.

4) On **December 12, 2015**, he wrote, "Oh, lord of the universe, **I desire to go away from everything**, I do not want to cry, I do not want to complain, I do not want to laugh...**I want only to disappear...**"



Amjad Jaser Sukari's December 12, 2015 post to Facebook.

5) On **December 2, 2015**, he posted a notice of a broken heart. Under it he wrote, "**The condition of my heart: dead.**"

6) On **July 24, 2015**, before the outbreak of the current terrorist campaign, he expressed the desire to die, writing, "**Oh death, take me**" (Facebook page of Amjad Jaser Sukari, July 24, 2015).



"Oh death, take me" (Facebook page of Amjad Jaser Sukari, July 24, 2015).