



February 28, 2016

The social networks as a source of inspiration and imitation for terrorists: the case study of two Palestinian youths who carried out a stabbing attack in a supermarket in the commercial area of Sha'ar Benyamin.



The two young Palestinians who carried out the stabbing attack. Left: Omar al-Rimawi (Facebook page of Omar al-Rimawi, January 6, 2016). Right: Iham Sabah (Facebook page of Iham Sabah, December 3, 2015).

Overview

1. On **February 18, 2016**, Two Palestinian adolescents went to a supermarket in the **Sha'ar Benyamin commercial area, north of Jerusalem**, and stabbed two Israeli customers. An armed civilian shot them. One of the customers, a 21 year-old off-duty IDF soldier, was mortally wounded and later died. Another Israeli customer was critically wounded. The two youths were critically wounded and are in Israeli hospitals (one was mistakenly reported killed in the initial report).
2. According to the initial investigation, the two walked around inside the supermarket for about 40 minutes before they carried out the attack. The Israeli customers were stabbed in two different sections of the store. A third Palestinian entered the store with the two terrorists and was held back by the security guard at the entrance. He was examined but no weapon was found in his possession.



The scene of the stabbing attack in Sha'ar Benyamin
(Facebook page of Quds, February 18, 2016).

3. The two terrorists who carried out the stabbing attack were **Iham Sabah** and **Omar Samir Taha al-Rimawi**, both 14 years old, from the village of Bituniya (west of Ramallah). The al-Rimawi family originally came from Bayt Rima (northeast of Ramallah). Iham Sabah was apparently religious and customarily went to the mosque to pray.

Reactions

The Palestinian Authority

4. On February 21, 2016, **Sultan Abu al-Einein**, a member of Fatah's Central Committee, who is also Mahmoud Abbas' advisor for international organizations, **posted a notice on his Facebook page glorifying and praising the action of the two terrorists**. He wrote, "**Iham [Sabah] and Omar [al-Rimawi], you are our leaders**." He praised them saying, chronologically they were 14 years old, but in reality each one was "tens of generations old." Within their chests, he said, "beat the hearts of [brave] men." Those hearts were angry because of the [spilled] blood of **Ahmed Manasra** (a 13 year-old Palestinian who carried out a stabbing attack in the Pisgat Ze'ev neighborhood of Jerusalem) and **Yasmin al-Zarou (al-Tamimi)** (a 14 year-old Palestinian girl from Hebron who carried out a stabbing attack at the Cave of the Patriarchs).

5. Sultan Abu al-Einein claimed the knives of Iham Sabah and Omar al-Rimawi had "rattled the chairs in the White House" and caused Secretary of State John Kerry to rush to the region to rescue Israel, America's "spoiled baby." The two Palestinians, claimed al-Einein, had tried to draw the borders of a "state of Palestine" that was "clean of the occupation and settlements." **He then praised the high professional level of the stabbing attack in the supermarket. He ended by repeating that the two were worthy of being leaders in every sense of the word.** "May your mothers be blessed, who gave

you to drink the milk of manliness and love of the homeland. Blessed be the nation to which you belong."



The Facebook page of General Sultan Abu al-Einein praising the two Palestinian terrorists who carried out the stabbing attack in Sha'ar Benyamin (February 21, 2016).

6. It was not the first time during the current terrorist campaign that Sultan Abu al-Einein unequivocally expressed support for Palestinian terrorists carrying out attacks. For example, on **October 4, 2015**, on his Facebook page he praised Palestinians who carried out terrorist attacks, calling them "the candles that light the way to the altar of freedom." On **November 5, 2015**, he expressed support for the terrorist who carried out the vehicular attack in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of Jerusalem (killing a Border Police officer and wounding 13 Israeli civilians and Border Policemen). In both instances, his Facebook postings received "likes" expressing encouragement and support for the shaheeds.

7. The postings of Sultan Abu al-Einein are part of the extensive media and political support Fatah and the Palestinian Authority (PA) give the terrorists who carry out attacks (although Sultan Abu al-Einein is particularly blatant). The support is manifested by public statements and announcements praising the shaheeds, glorifying their image in the media, and the participation of senior PA and Fatah figures at their "national" funerals [i.e., governmental funerals], and by providing their families with support.

Hamas

8. **Hamas spokesman Husam Badran** praised the two terrorists who carried out the attack. He said attacks of that sort were the "natural response" of the Palestinian people to "Israel's crimes." He called on Palestinian youth to continue carrying out attacks. He said

the courage of the "intifada youth" was what would determine the future of the Palestinian people (Hamas website, February 20, 2016).



The death notice issued by the Islamic Students movement, part of Hamas' Islamic Bloc, for the death of the two terrorists who carried out the stabbing attack in the supermarket (Facebook page of Muhammad al-Ajouli, February 19, 2016).

The Use of Facebook Pages by the Two Youths

9. **Both terrorists had Facebook pages.** The Facebook page of **Iham Sabah** was created in April 2014 but was not particularly active. However, he did occasionally respond to messages posted by Omar al-Rimawi regarding a terrorist attack. The Facebook page of **Omar al-Rimawi**, which he created in 2012 when he was **11 years old**, was more active.¹ **As of last year he posted notices supporting the shaheeds and expressing the desire to follow in their footsteps.** Such posts became more frequent in September 2015, at about the time the current terrorist campaign began.

10. **The Facebook pages of the two terrorists, especially that of Omar al-Rimawi, serve as another example of the role played by the social networks in the current terrorist campaign. They provide a platform for the thoughts and emotions of the youths who carry out terrorist attacks and are a source of influence and inspiration for them.** Their Facebook pages employ some of the same themes as the pages of terrorists who came before them, the most prominent of which was the "adoption" of the shaheed as a role model.

11. The following themes appear on the Facebook pages of the two, as well as on the pages of other terrorists who carried out attacks in the current terrorist campaign:

¹ According to Facebook's age restrictions, a person must be at least 13 years old to sign up for Facebook. Omar al-Rimawi created his in January 2012 when he was 11 years old, meaning he lied about his age.

1) **The desire to die as shaheeds:** The theme is death appears on the Facebook page of Omar al-Rimawi ("We will live like proud hawks...and we will die like proud-standing trees."). **A desire for self-sacrifice as shaheeds** appeared on the Facebook pages of other terrorists as well.

2) **Facebook friends who reinforce the desire to die:** When Omar al-Rimawi wrote he wanted to die as a shaheed **he received a great deal of encouragement from his Facebook friends (including Iham Sabah, with whom he carried out the attack). However no "friend" tried to dissuade him from the idea of sacrificing himself.** Such responses have appeared on the social networks in the past. They probably indicate that **other young Palestinians strongly identify with the shaheeds and want to copy them**, whether they are close friends of the terrorists or virtual friends who do not know them.

3) **"Adopting" Palestinian shaheeds as role models:** Omar al-Rimawi **"adopted" the shaheed Ibrahim Daoud** as his role model. Daoud was a 17 year-old from Deir Ghassaneh (near Bituniya) who was wounded in a clash with IDF forces near Ramallah and died (November 26, 2015.) Omar al-Rimawi posted several notices on his Facebook page commemorating him. He also posted a picture of himself wearing a medallion with Daoud's picture. **Omar al-Rimawi dedicated one of his posts to Palestinians murdered by Jews** (Ali Dawabsha and Muhammad Abu Khdeir). **Turning shaheeds into heroes and role models is widespread.** Other terrorists also used their Facebook pages to identify with the shaheeds killed in the current terrorist campaign and to express the desire to follow in their footsteps.

4) **The use of Islamic religious terminology:** The two terrorists expressed the desire to defend **Al-Aqsa mosque** and used **Islamic religious terminology** (Omar al-Rimawi **praised the *shahadah*** – death as a martyr for the sake of Allah). The call to defend Al-Aqsa mosque is more conspicuous on Iham Sabah's Facebook page; he was more religious and customarily went to the mosque to pray. While most of the young Palestinians who carried out attacks during the current terrorist campaign did not have religious motivation, some of them **often used Islamic religious terminology** (including the search for religious or semi-religious legitimacy for their deaths and expressing interest in the rewards shaheeds receive in paradise).

5) **Pictures and mentions of weapons:** Omar al-Rimawi posted a picture of **a rifle being prepared for firing.** Other terrorists who carried out attacks also either posted pictures or mentioned rifles and/or other weapons.

6) **The language used:** The language and ideas Omar al-Rimawi and Iham Sabah used on their Facebook pages were sometimes **inappropriate for adolescents their age**. They apparently quoted and recycled ideas and statements common on the social networks. Other young Palestinian terrorists also were found to have **recycled statements, terms and pictures commonly found on the Internet**.

7) **No mention of the PA and the various organizations:** The PA, Fatah, Hamas and other organizations **were not mentioned** by either Omar al-Rimawi or Iham Sabah. That is **characteristic of most of the Palestinians who carried out attacks in the current terrorist campaign**. It would seem to indicate the **spontaneous, popular nature of most of the terrorist attacks**, carried out without instructions or organizing from "above." It may also be an indication that the young Palestinians carrying out the attacks are **fed up with the Palestinian establishment**.

List of Previous ITIC Bulletins and Appendix

1. For the maturing of the idea of carrying out a terrorist attack as reflected on the Facebook pages of Omar al-Rimawi and Iham Sabah, see the **Appendix**.
2. For the maturing of the idea of carrying out a terrorist attack as reflected on the Facebook pages of other Palestinians who carried out attacks in the current terrorist campaign, see the following previous bulletins:
 - 1) "The social networks as a source of inspiration and imitation for terrorists: the case study of Nihad Ra'ed Waked, who, with his cousin, carried out a shooting attack targeting IDF soldiers in northern Samaria" (February 18, 2016).
 - 2) "The Shooting and Stabbing Attack at the Nablus Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem Signals an Escalation in the Complexity and Daring of the Palestinian Terrorist Campaign" (February 9, 2016).
 - 3) "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" (February 3, 2016).
 - 4) "The social networks as a source of inspiration and imitation for terrorists: the case study of Obada Abu Ras, the Palestinian terrorist who carried out the stabbing attack in Givat Ze'ev, Jerusalem" (January 31, 2016).
 - 5) "The stabbing attack in Beit Horon showed an increase in relative complexity, daring and premeditation" (January 27, 2016).

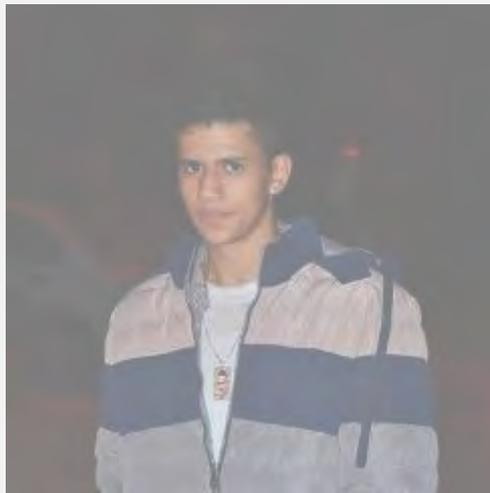
Appendix

The Idea of the Shooting Attack as It Matured on the Facebook Pages of Omar al-Rimawi and Iham Sabah

Omar Samir Taha al-Rimawi

1. **Omar al-Rimawi created his Facebook page in January 2012**, that is, **when he was 11 years old**. Between January 2012 and 2015 he dealt mainly with subjects that interest boys of his age: computer games, exams, schoolwork and pictures from his karate lessons. **During 2015 the contents of his Facebook page changed, he posted increasingly enraged messages more frequently and called for terrorist attacks, and occasionally expressed the desire to sacrifice himself.**

2. Between November 2015 and February 16, 2016 (two days before the attack) he often posted more such messages. There was an increase in the number of posts **devoted to Ibrahim Daoud**, who was wounded during a clash with IDF forces on November 26, 2016, and later died. Omar al-Rimawi's profile picture shows him wearing a medallion bearing the picture of Ibrahim Daoud. The connection between the two is unclear beyond the fact that they lived in neighboring villages (although personal acquaintance cannot be ruled out).



Ibrahim Daoud as a role model: Omar al-Rimawi wearing a medallion with Daoud's picture.

3. On **February 16, 2016**, two days before the attack, Omar al-Rimawi wrote, **"We will live like proud hawks...and we will die like proud-standing trees."** A number of his Facebook friends responded. He also dialogued with Iham Sabah, with whom he carried out the attack, who wrote **"If Allah so wishes."** Al-Rimawi answered, "If Allah

so wishes." Iham Sabah decorated the page with heart emojis and the "V for victory" sign. **Among the responses he received there was not one single attempt to dissuade him from his idea of dying.**



The posting to Facebook two days before the attack: "We will live like proud hawks...and we will die like proud-standing trees." Iham Sabah answered, "If Allah so wishes," and Omar al-Rimawi responded in kind, "If Allah so wishes."

4. Other examples from Omar al-Rimawi's Facebook page:

1) More than a year ago, on **February 5, 2015**, he posted a picture with the words, "**Consider me dead.**" Some of the responses he received from his Facebook friends read, "May Allah have mercy on you."



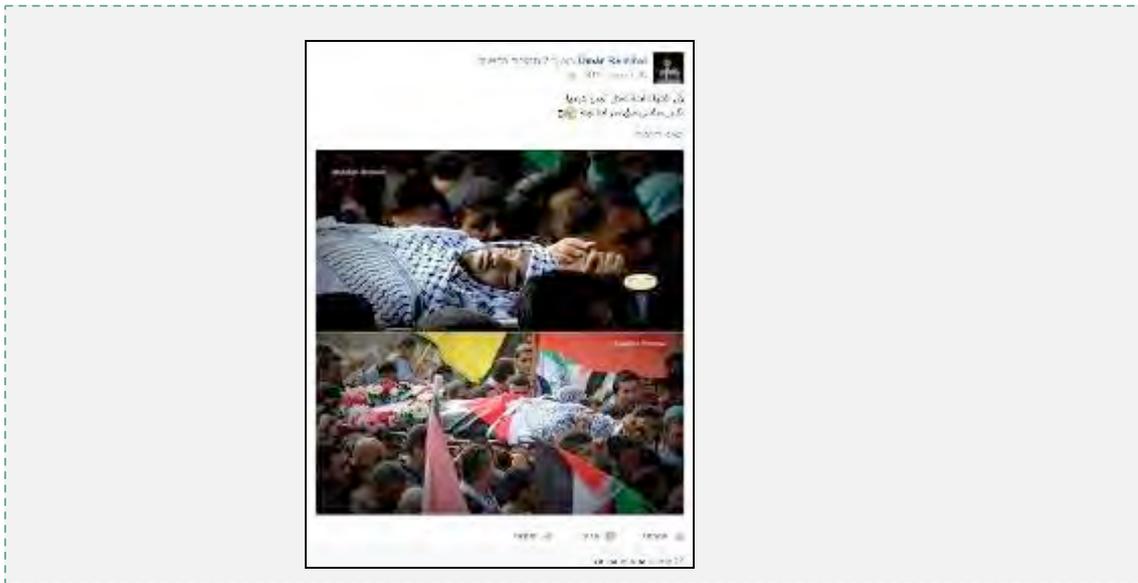
2) On **March 27, 2015**, he posted a picture of a rifle being prepared for firing. He wrote, "Simply a man...Every dog will have its day." He sent the post to three friends, **one of whom was Iham Sabah, with whom he carried out the stabbing attack.** He also wrote he was angry, and added a frowning emoji.



3) On **July 31, 2015**, immediately after the attack on the Dawabsha family, he wrote, "Shaheed of the dawn, Muhammad Abu Khdeir [murdered the previous year]...**guard your infant brother Ali Dawabsha**...your enemy is the same!...You died the death of martyrs [but it was] an appalling death."



4) On **November 26, 2016**, he posted pictures from the funeral of Ibrahim Daoud, a Palestinian terrorist mortally wounded in a clash with the Israeli security forces who died on November 26. Al-Rimawi **wrote "The *shahadah* [death as a martyr for the sake of Allah] is a woman who chooses the most handsome boy...May Allah have mercy on you..."**



5) On **November 26, 2015**, he posted a memorial video for Ibrahim Daoud. It showed the funeral held for him and clashes with the Israeli security forces.



6) The following day, **November 27, 2015**, he wrote, "**Every Friday we come closer to religion...Every Friday we love the *shahadah* more...Every Friday we love Palestine more...Every Friday we come closer to the liberation of Palestine...**"² In response Iham Sabah wrote, "Every Friday you are close to Allah...", and Omar al-Rimawi answered, "Behind you..."



7) On **December 23, 2015**, he posted a picture, apparently of Ibrahim Daoud, and wrote, "May Allah have mercy on your soul, which is dear to us...**We will follow your path.**"



² Friday is mentioned because Friday is a holy day in Islam and the day the prayers are held in the mosques. Friday is also the day Palestinians usually like to hold riots and clash with the Israeli security forces..

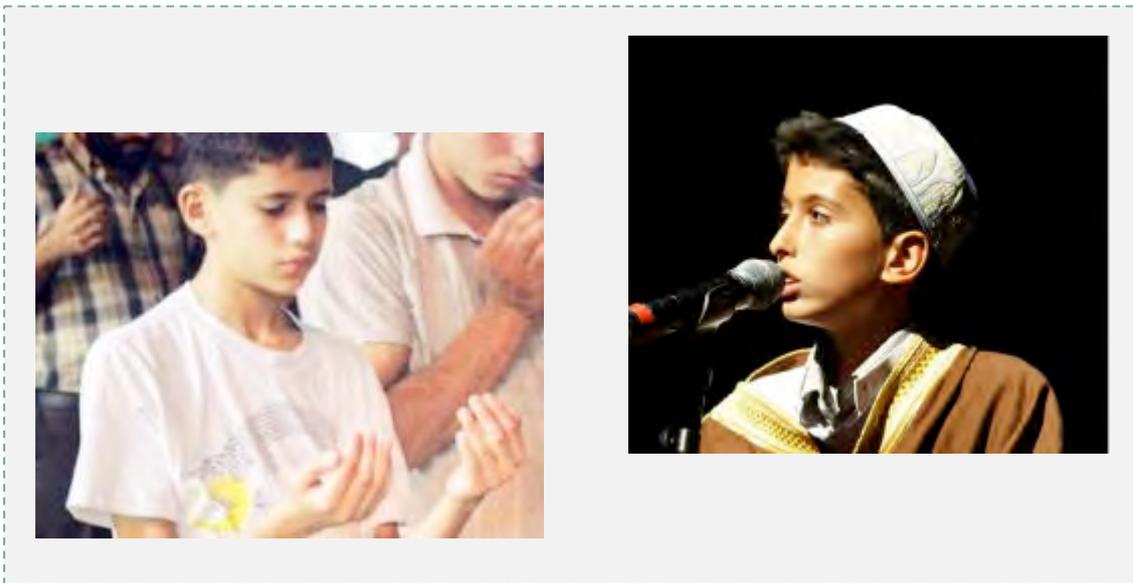
8) On **January 20, 2016**, he posted a picture and wrote, "Bayt Rima will continue as the proud fortress from with heroes come." The Arabic on the picture reads, "Bayt Rima produces heroes" (Bayt Rima is the village from which the al-Rimawi family moved to Bituniya).



9) The last message before the attack, posted two days before it, is described in Paragraph 3.

Iham Sabah

5. **Iham Sabah** created his Facebook page in April 2014. Of the two, his Facebook page was less active. There were not many posts calling for violence or supporting terrorist, except for some in September and October 2015 (when the current Palestinian terrorist campaign began) **calling for the protection of Al-Aqsa mosque**. On his Facebook page he called himself "the prince of shadow." He was religious and often went to the mosque to pray.



Left: Pictures of Iham Sabah posted to various Facebook pages after his death. Right: Iham Sabah giving a sermon at a mosque (Facebook pages of Lutfi Fuqaha, February 19, 2016, and Nahama al-Rimawi, February 20, 2016).

6. The following are some of Iham Sabah's calls for Al-Aqsa mosque to be protected:

1) On **September 13, 2015**, he posted a notice to his Facebook page calling for Palestinians to **protect Al-Aqsa mosque**. He wrote, "Throw away the Tweets and hashtags...and the Facebook revolutions!!!... [because] **Al-Aqsa is defiled every minute of every hour**...Where are you, Salah al-Din? We should weep for our situation and **help us defend our holy places**...Allah, resurrect the men of Jerusalem and their wives!!! and the youths [of Jerusalem]!!!"



2) On **September 30, 2015**, he posted a notice about Al-Aqsa mosque and wrote, "**It will not be divided**" [a slogan popular at the time, referring to the objection to divide visiting and prayer times on the Temple Mount between Muslims and Jews).



3) On **October 13, 2015**, he wrote the following: "The West Bank is on fire. The residents "inside" [i.e., Israeli Arabs] **have taken their revenge**. We are all [soldiers] in the same trench. **Al-Aqsa is our motto.**"

