



July 12, 2016

The Social Networks as a Source of Inspiration and Emulation, and a Platform for Expression of Palestinian Terrorists: The case of Muhammad Tarayrah, who murdered a 13 year-old girl in her sleep in Kiryat Arba



Top: The room in Kiryat Arba where Hallel Yaffa Ariel, a 13 year-old girl, was murdered in her sleep (Ma'an, June 30, 2016). Bottom: The Facebook notice posted by the murderer five days before the attack. The Arabic reads, "Death is a right and I demand my right" (Facebook page of Muhammad Tarayrah, June 25, 2016).

Overview

1. In the early morning hours of June 30, 2016, a Palestinian terrorist climbed over the security fence around the Givat Harsina neighborhood in Kiryat Arba. He advanced about 150 meters (about 165 yards) to a house on the outskirts of the neighborhood, **entered the bedroom Hallel Yaffa Ariel, a 13 year-old girl, and stabbed her to death in her sleep**. The Kiryat Arba rapid response squad broke into the house. The murderer stabbed one of the squad members in the face, seriously wounding him. The murderer was shot and killed.
2. The terrorist was **Muhammad Nasr Mahmoud Tarayrah**, 19, from the village of Bani Na'im in South Mt. Hebron. He dropped out of school in the ninth grade and went to work in a bakery shop in the village. He worked there for two years and then went to work in a bakery near Dura, a town west of Hebron. He was the cousin of

Yusef Walid Tarayrah from the village of Bani Na'im, who was shot to death on March 14, 2016, while carrying out a terrorist attack at the entrance to Kiryat Arba.¹



Left: Residents of Bani Na'im gather at the house of Muhammad Tarayrah before IDF forces arrive (Facebook page of QudsN, June 30, 2016). Right: The death notice issued by the Hamas movement in Hebron for the death of Muhammad Tarayrah, a "shaheed of Palestine" from the village of Bani Na'im (Facebook page of the Hamas movement in Hebron, July 1, 2016).

3. An examination of the Facebook account of Muhammad Tarayrah (which was closed a short time after the attack) indicated that in March 2016 he began writing posts about his feelings of pain and loss after his cousin's death, and hung posters in his room commemorating the cousin. He was also influenced by the death of **Majd al-Khudour**, a young Palestinian woman who carried out a vehicular attack at the entrance to Kiryat Arba on June 24, 2016.² **Five days before he murdered Hallel Yaffa Ariel he posted to his Facebook page that "Death is a right, and I demand my right."**

4. His Facebook page served Muhammad Tarayrah as **a platform for expressing his feelings and innermost thoughts**. Although he dropped out of school, he was articulate and even wrote poetry. He was very active on Facebook late at night (possibly because of his work at the bakery). For example, he answered the post of a friend at 4:37 a.m. An examination of his friend groups indicates **he was also**

¹ On March 14, 2016, two Palestinian terrorists carried out a vehicular attack at a bus stop at the entrance to Kiryat Arba. They also shot at Israelis standing nearby, wounding one soldier. The terrorists were shot and killed by an IDF force. An improvised Karl Gustav machine gun was found in the car. During the aftermath of the attack another Palestinian vehicle drove up and rammied into an IDF officer. He and another soldier were wounded. The driver of the other vehicle was also shot and killed. He was **Yusef Walid Tarayrah, a cousin of Muhammad Tarayrah**, the murderer of Hallel Yaffa Ariel.

² **Majd Khudour** was a young woman carried out a vehicular attack at a bus stop at the entrance to Kiryat Arba, wounding two Israelis. She was shot and killed.

interested in issues characteristic of young people his age, such as entertainment and clothes.

5. An examination of his Facebook page during the months before he carried out the murder shows the following:

a. **Identification with his cousin and the young woman from his village who were killed while carrying out terrorist attacks, and glorified them and their actions:** After March 2016, when his cousin **Yusef Walid Mustafa Tarayrah** was killed while carrying out a vehicular attack, the nature of his Facebook postings changed. **He began expressing feelings of pain and loss, and called his cousin "the heroic shaheed."** Relatives said he also hung posters in his room commemorating his cousin. Later on he was also influenced by the death of **Majd al-Khudour**, also from Bani Na'im, killed while carrying out a vehicular attack, whom he referred to as his "heroine sister." **He wrote poems for the two and praise for their actions**, and posted them to his Facebook page.

b. **The desire to become a shaheed and enter Palestinian history:** Beginning in March 2016, he often mentioned his **desire to sacrifice himself and become a shaheed**. More than once **he stated his intention to follow in the footsteps of his cousin and Majd al-Khudour**. On several occasions **he called on others to follow the same path in order "to enter [Palestinian] history."**

c. **Motivation and political tendencies:** His basic motivation was apparently **Palestinian nationalism**. **He was critical of Mahmoud Abbas because of his so-called "attitude" towards Jerusalem and expressed his longing for Arafat**. While Hamas rushed to issue a death notice for him, there was **no mention on his Facebook page of solidarity or affiliation with Hamas or any other terrorist organization**.

d. **There were no signs of religious piety:** His profile picture shows him with his hair cut in the style currently adopted by secular boys his age. His correspondence with Facebook friends was similar to that of others his age. He surfed entertainment and clothing on the Al-Quds University website and was interested in news sites. However, like the Palestinian terrorists who preceded him, **sometimes he used Islamist terminology** and posted Qur'an quotations to his page, especially those **relating to death, shaheeds and reaching paradise**.

6. The contents of Muhammad Tarayrah's Facebook page **had themes similar to those appearing on the pages of other young Palestinians who carried out stabbing, vehicular and shooting attacks during the past half year** (for a list of ITIC analysis of Facebook pages of terrorists, see Appendix B). **One of the main characteristics of Palestinian terrorist Facebook pages examined by the ITIC was a long period of the ripening of the idea to carry out a terrorist attack** (a process taking weeks and sometimes months), sometimes following the death of a relative or friend, or someone from the same neighborhood, village or refugee camp. **Other characteristics were the secular lifestyle of the terrorists as well as the use of Islamic themes regarding sacrifice for the sake of Allah (*shahadah*) and the rewards awaiting the shaheed in paradise; criticism of Mahmoud Abbas** but not affiliation with Hamas or the other terrorist organizations (for examples of Muhammad Tarayrah's postings to Facebook, see Appendix A).

Appendix A

Examples of Muhammad Tarayrah's Postings to Facebook

1. During the days before the murder Muhammad Tarayrah posted **several messages to Facebook indicating his intention to carry out an attack and die as a shaheed**. On June 26, 2016 he posted his last message, calling on others **to carry out actions that would allow them to enter history**:

"Saddam – a name the whole world feared. Hitler – he murdered Jews with a quarter of a moustache. Newton – he discovered gravity. Gaddafi – he made the whole world laugh. George Bush – the man every human being hates. Bin Laden – the man who destroyed the skyscrapers of America. Oprah – the woman the world loves. Che Guevara – the founder of the world's revolutions. I [Muhammad Tarayrah]– am the one who gives life a better taste. **You [the reader] – have done nothing. All you do is read!!! My brother, do something, and enter history with us."**



"My brother, do something and enter history with us."

2. After the vehicular attack carried out by Majd al-Khudour on June 24, 2016, Muhammad Tarayrah posted a large number of messages to his Facebook page. The first was a few hours after the attack, reporting **the "shaheeda" [female version of shaheed] was Majd Abdallah al-Khudour, the wife of Samir Yusuf Abdallah al-Khudour, from the village of Bani Na'im.**



The shaheeda Majd al-Khudour from Bani Na'im was the one [who carried out the vehicular attack].

3. The following day he posted a poem praising Majd al-Khudour. First he asks the pen [he is using to write] to write her name in beautiful script. He asks, "Where did you go, leaving us with pain? You left suddenly, in the blink of an eye." He says her name became a symbol and banner, and with her death the earth of the homeland put forth the aroma of musk and amber. Her name, he says, is synonymous with pride. Jerusalem, he says, is proud of her (Facebook page of Muhammad Tarayrah, June 25, 2016).



A paean praising Palestinian terrorist Majd al-Khudour.

4. About an hour after posting the poem he wrote, "**Death is a right and I demand my right.**" A few hours later he posted two additional messages glorifying the vehicular attack carried out by Majd Khudour. Both were entitled, "The heroic sister. Majd al-Khudour."

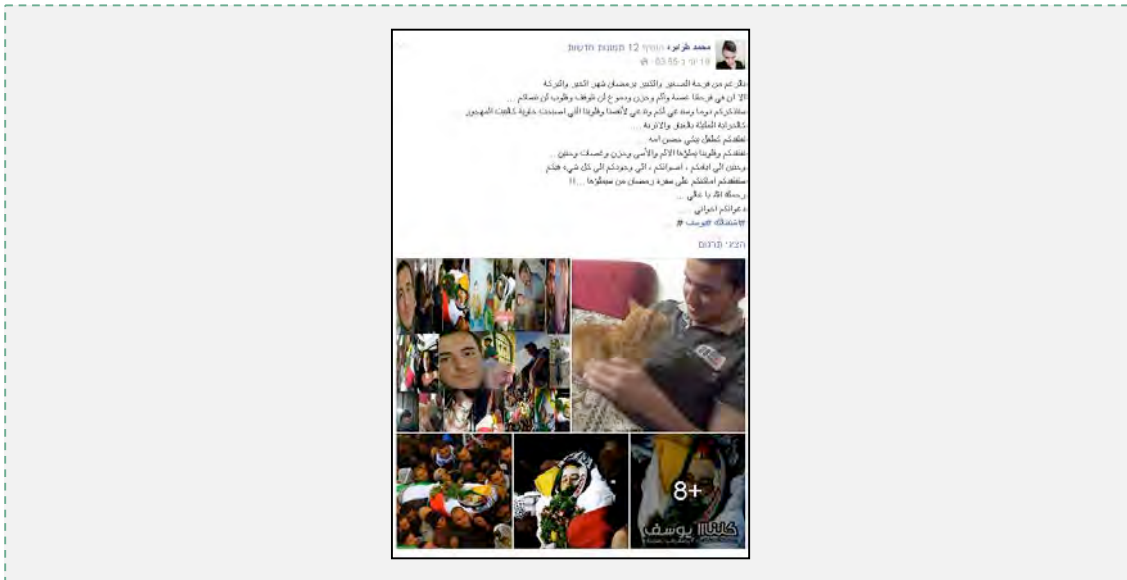


"Death is a right and I demand my right."



Postings commemorating Majd al-Khudour, "the heroic sister"

5. On June 19, 2016, in the middle of the Muslim religious month of Ramadan, Muhammad Tarayrah posted a message with pictures of the funeral of his cousin, Yusef Walid Tarayrah. He wrote that in the shadows of the joy of the month, **people should remember the shaheeds**. He asked people to pray for his cousin and said he missed him. The same day he posted a trivial notice unrelated to his cousin's death, asking his friends how electricity was generated.



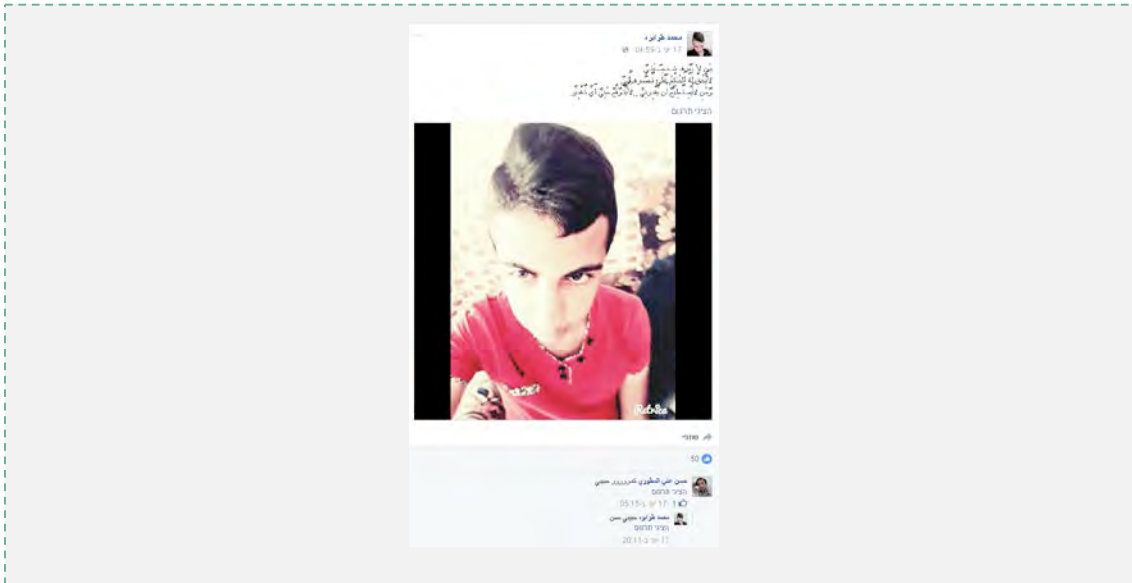
Pictures from the funeral of Muhammad Tarayrah's cousin, Yusef Walid Tarayrah, killed while carrying out a vehicular attack at the entrance to Kiryat Arba.

6. On May 22, 2016, he posted a video of the funeral of Yusef Walid Tarayrah on his Facebook page. He wrote, "May Allah have mercy on you, my dear [cousin]. Rest in paradise, with the help of Allah, shaheed and hero, Yusef Walid Tarayrah."



"Rest in paradise, with the help of Allah, shaheed and hero, Yusef Walid Tarayrah."

7. On June 17, 2016, he posted a **picture of himself wearing a red shirt and with an up-to-date haircut**. A friend responded by saying "Take a picture!" Tarayrah answered with semi-philosophical reflections, saying that a person unaware of his own personality could not control his behavior and anyone who did not respect him would not receive respect in return (Facebook page of Muhammad Tarayrah, June 17, 2016). On June 15, 2016, he wrote that "smoking endangers your health."



Muhammad Tarayrah in a red shirt with an up-to-date haircut.

8. On May 17, 2016, Muhammad Tarayrah **posted three notices and two inscriptions dealing with death**. One inscription read, **"Every soul tastes death"** and the other, **"We belong to Allah and return to him**. Oh, calm soul. Return to your sovereign [Allah]. Enter with those who worship Allah, **enter my paradise**. Eternity is Allah's" (Facebook page of Muhammad Tarayrah, May 17, 2016). The same day he posted a picture of his cousin, Yusef Walid Tarayrah, with the inscription, "Oh uncle. Pass my regards to Yusef, and to Muhammad, and to uncle Hassan. "[Allah will bring you to] rest in peace in paradise. **With the help of Allah we will meet in pleasant paradise"** (Facebook page of Muhammad Tarayrah, May 17, 2016).



Left: "We belong to Allah and return to him..." Right: "Every soul tastes death..."



[Picture] [Caption] Right: Muhammad Tarayrah's cousin Yusef Walid Tarayrah, who carried out a vehicular attack at the entrance to Kiryat Arba: "[Allah will bring you to] rest in peace in paradise. With the help of Allah we will meet in pleasant paradise..."

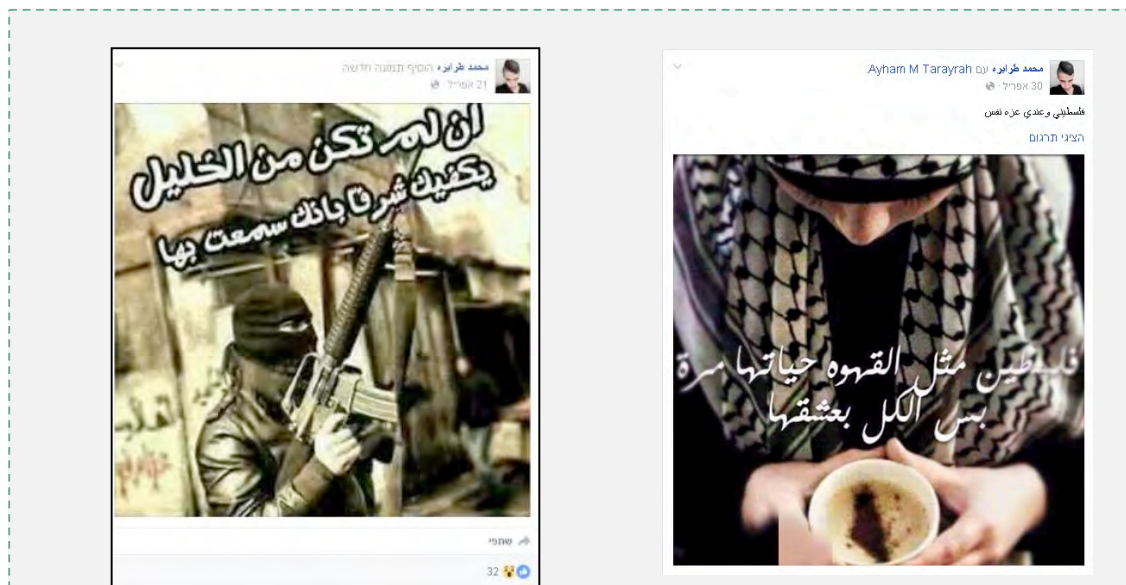
9. On May 3, 2016, a picture was posted to Facebook of a wounded man in a hospital bed with the inscription, "My dream is simple.. a hospital + a bed, and a doctor who says, we lost the patient." Tarayrah responded, "Oh Allah, that is my dream." The same day another picture was posted with an inscription reading, "Sell the world! Pay its price." Tarayrah responded, "I am sick of the world and the people in it."



Left: "Sell the world! Pay its price." Right: "... and a doctor who says, we lost the patient." Tarayrah: "Oh Allah, that is my dream."

10. On April 30, 2016, Tarayrah wrote a response to a posting with political content. The post shows a map of "Palestine" inside the foam of a cup of coffee, with the inscription, "Palestine is like coffee. Its life is bitter but everyone loves it."

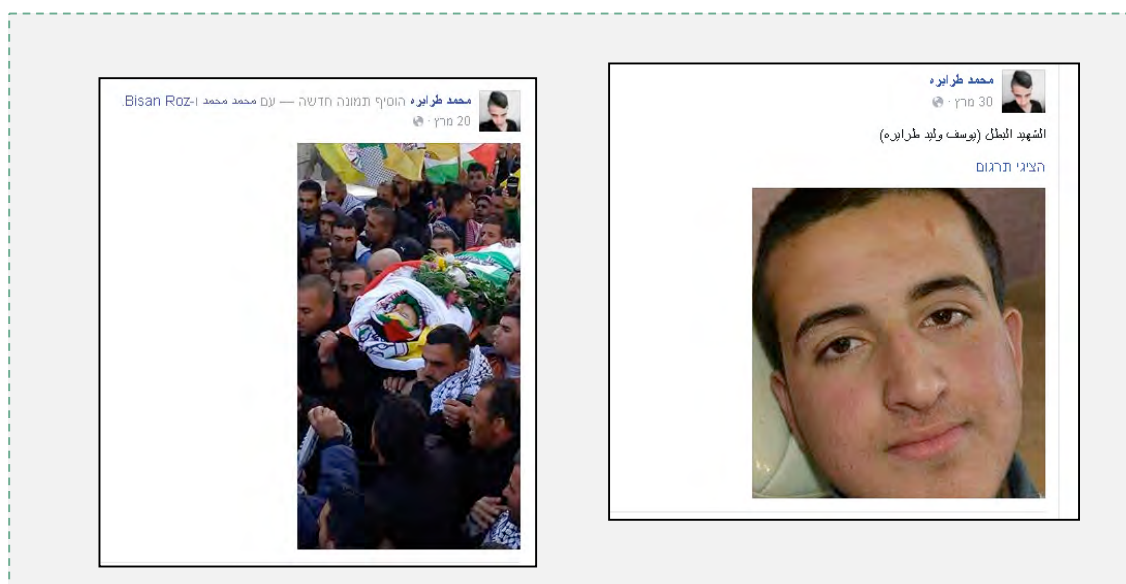
Tarayrah answered, "I am a Palestinian and I have self respect." On April 21, 2016, he posted a picture of a masked terrorist operative holding an M-16. The inscription read, "If you are not from Hebron, it is enough for people to recognize that you have self respect."



Left: "If you are not from Hebron, it is enough for people to recognize that you have self respect."
Right: "Palestine is like coffee. Its life is bitter but everyone loves it."

11. On March 28, 2016, he wrote "Anyone who does not die by the sword will die some other way. There are various ways to die. Death is death."

12. On March 30, 2016, he posted another picture of his cousin Yusef Walid Tarayrah, and added, "the heroic shaheed, Yusef Walid Tarayrah." On March 20, 2016, he posted a picture of his cousin's funeral.



Left: The funeral. Right: "The heroic shaheed, Yusef Walid Tarayrah."

13. on March 19, 2016, he posted a picture of Yusef's father, Muhammad Tarayrah, asking him not to cry for the loss of his son because his son Yusef died a shaheed.



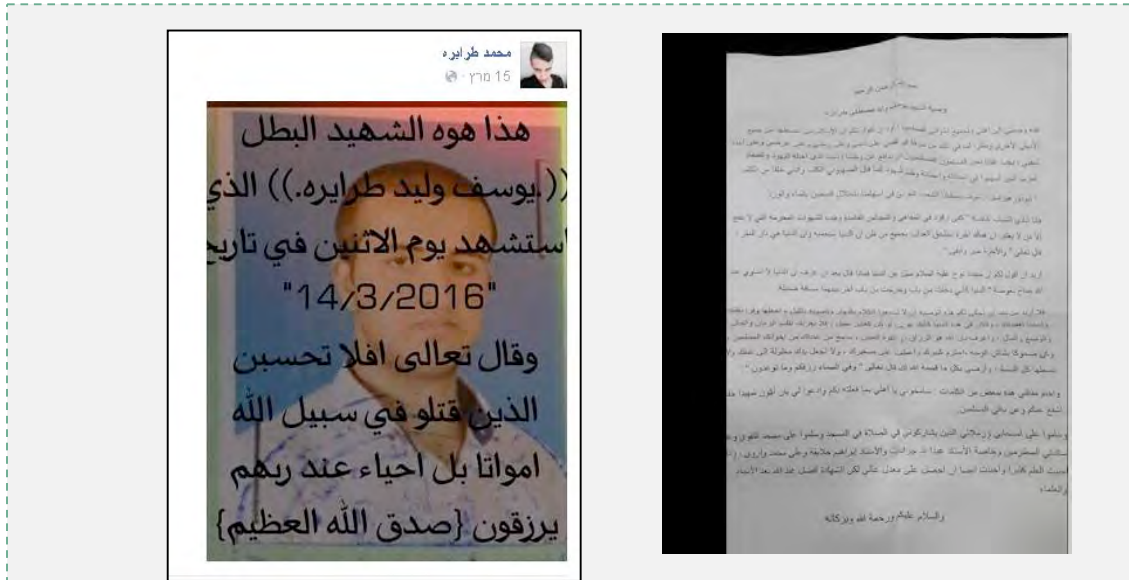
"Oh, father of a shaheed, do not cry, you know Yusef died a shaheed."

14. On March 17, 2016, he wrote, "**Yusef [Tarayrah] is not the first shaheed and not the last shaheed.** He is a son of Palestine before he is my cousin. With the help of Allah **we tread the path of *shahadah* [martyrdom for the sake of Allah].** May Allah have mercy on you, oh Yusef, **rest in peace in pleasant paradise**, with the help of Allah." He also posted a notice calling for people to mourn the death of Yusef Tarayrah.



Left: "...We belong to Allah and return to him..." Right: "...With the help of Allah we tread the path of shahadah [martyrdom for the sake of Allah]."

15. On March 15, 2016, the day after his cousin died, he posted the will his cousin wrote before he carried out the vehicular attack. He also posted a picture of his cousin with the inscription, "This is the heroic shaheed who died as a shaheed on March 14, 2016" and the famous Qur'an verse, "**And never think of those who have been killed in the cause of Allah as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision...**" (Sura 3, al-Imran, Verse 169).



Left: "And never think of those who have been killed in the cause of Allah as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision..." Right: The will left by Yusef Walid Tarayrah before he carried out the vehicular attack.

16. Before the death of his cousin Muhammad Tarayrah wrote **several posts dealing with Al-Aqsa mosque**. For example, on March 2, 2016, he wrote, "**We are Palestinians, Al-Aqsa is our mosque, liberation is our cause, the return [i.e., the return of Palestinian refugees] is our slogan, we do not give up, this is our declaration, we are the honor of our [Muslim] nation, with the joy of victory we will shed a tear and dance the debka, that, in short, is our story!**" On February 25, 2016, he posted a picture criticizing Mahmoud Abbas and his attitude towards Jerusalem. He wrote, "Jerusalem through history. Omar bin al-Khatab conquered it, Salah al-Din al-Iyubi liberated it. **Mahmoud Abbas offended its honor.**" Before that he posted a notice **expressing longing for Arafat**.



Left: "Mahmoud Abbas offended [Jerusalem's] honor." Right: "We are Palestinians, Al-Aqsa is our mosque, liberation is our cause..."



Picture of Arafat boarding a helicopter [on his way to a hospital in France], posted by Palestinian terrorist Muhammad Tarayrah. The inscription reads, "The day the helicopter flew away [i.e., Arafat died], the homeland flew away" (Facebook page of Muhammad Tarayrah, February 16, 2016).

17. Muhammad Tarayrah posted a picture of a confrontation between rioting Palestinians and Israeli security forces. The inscription reads, "We will fall as shaheeds, wounded and prisoners, but our homeland will not fall."



"We will fall as shaheeds, wounded and prisoners, but our homeland will not fall."

Appendix B

ITIC Bulletins Analyzing the Facebook Pages of Palestinian Terrorists Who Carried Out Attacks in Recent Months

1. **January 31, 2016** – 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 (<http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/20949>)
2. **February 2, 2016** – 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 (<http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/20950>)
3. **February 18, 2016** – The social networks as a source of inspiration and imitation for terrorists (<http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/20960>)
4. **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 (<http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/20966>).
5. **March 22, 2016** – The Social Networks as a Source of Inspiration and Imitation for Terrorist Attacks: Examination of Facebook pages of four terrorists who recently carried out shooting, vehicular and stabbing attacks (<http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/20978>).