



A ceremony sponsored by Mahmoud Abbas was held to honor terrorists holding Israeli citizenship who were imprisoned for murdering an IDF soldier

January 17, 2018



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Overview

► On January 14, 2018, two events were held that clearly manifested the support the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Fatah give terrorists (from all the organizations) imprisoned in Israeli jails:

- ◆ **A ceremony was held in Ramallah honoring Karim Yunes and Maher Yunes**, two terrorists with Israeli origins who are serving long prison terms for the murder of an Israeli soldier. One of them, Karim Yunes, is the longest-imprisoned terrorist in Israel, who in May 2017 was appointed to Fatah's Central Committee. **The ceremony was attended by senior Fatah and PA figures. Mahmoud Abbas was represented by Mahmoud al-'Alul, a member of Fatah's Central Committee**, who also gave a speech in Abbas' name. All the speakers praised the two prisoners, whom they called "symbols and examples of the Palestinian struggle and **a source of pride for all Palestinians.**"
- ◆ That evening Mahmoud Abbas gave a speech at the PLO's Central Council conference. He noted that **the PA would not be prepared to agree to the American demand that salaries stop being paid to the families of Palestinian prisoners and shaheeds.**

The PA and Fatah routinely support the Palestinian terrorists imprisoned in Israel, **considering them national heroes and not terrorists or criminals. Their support is given to all the organizations, including those who murdered women and children.** In practical terms, **generous financial aid is given to the families of prisoners and shaheeds and to prisoners and released prisoners.** That is behind Mahmoud Abbas' strong refusal to accept the American demand, reiterated in his opening speech at the PLO's Central Council conference. In addition, the PA gives them moral support by holding ceremonies to honor them and by naming institutions, streets and city squares for them.

Ceremony honoring two terrorists

► On January 14, 2018, the PA Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs, with the participation of the office of the governor of the Ramallah-al-Bireh district and the Palestinian Prisoners' Club, held **a ceremony in Ramallah to honor Karim Yunes and Maher Yunes. The ceremony was sponsored by Mahmoud Abbas and held to mark the beginning of the 36th year of their imprisonment. Mahmoud al-'Alul, deputy chairman of the Fatah movement, represented Mahmoud Abbas at the ceremony.** Also present were **Jamal Muheisen, Rawhi Fattouh, Hajj Ismail Jaber, Abbas Zaki and Dalal Salameh**, members of Fatah's Central Committee; **Issa Qaraqe, chairman of the PA Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs; Laila Ghannam, governor of the Ramallah-al-Bireh district; and Qadoura Fares, chairman of the Palestinian Prisoners' Club.**

Karim Yunes and Maher Yunes are cousins from the village of 'Ara (central Israel) **who hold Israeli citizenship.** Following instructions from a relative named Sami Yunes from the village of 'Arara, they murdered Sergeant Avraham Bromberg in November 1980, while giving him a ride from his army base in the Golan Heights to his home in Zichron Yaakov. The three were detained in January 1983. A military court sentenced them to death but later reduced the sentence to life imprisonment. In 2012 the sentences was further reduced to forty years. Sami Yunes was sentenced to life imprisonment and released in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal. **In May 2017 Fatah's Revolutionary Council appointed "veteran prisoner" Karim Yunes to Fatah's Central Committee.**



Right: Senior Fatah figure Mahmoud al-'Alul speaks in the name of Mahmoud Abbas, the sponsor of the ceremony honoring the Palestinian terrorists (Wafa, January 4, 2018). Left: The sign hung behind the speaker's podium. The Arabic reads, "Under the sponsorship of his honor chairman Mahmoud Abbas [in red]. Renewing the commitment and loyalty to the veteran prisoners Karim Yunes and Maher Yunes as they enter their 36th year in the jail of the Israeli occupation" (Facebook page of Dr. Laila Ghannam, January 14, 2018).

► During the ceremony 36 candles were lit, one for each year of imprisonment. Mahmoud al-'Alul, who gave a speech in the name of Mahmoud Abbas, Laila Ghannam, Issa Qaraqe, Qadoura Fares and other speakers all noted that "**Karim Yunes and Maher Yunes are symbols and examples of the Palestinian struggle and a source of pride for all Palestinians.**" Laila Ghannam said that **everyone had to support them and their relatives until their release** (Wafa and the website of the PA Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs, January 14, 2018).

Pictures from the ceremony in Ramallah



Qadoura Fares, chairman of the Palestinian Prisoners' Club (right) and Issa Qaraqe, chairman of the PA Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs (Wafa, January 14, 2018).



Right: Participants at the event light 36 candles, one for each year of imprisonment. Left: Senior Fatah figures (Abbas Zaki, Jamal Muheisen, Mahmoud al-'Alul, Dalal Salameh) and senior PA figure Laila Ghannam honor the prisoners' families (Facebook page of Dr. Laila Ghannam, January 14, 2018).

► It was not the first time Karim Yunes and Maher Yunes, both holders of Israeli citizenship, were honored by the PA and Fatah. **In May 2017 Fatah's Revolutionary Council, the movement's ruling body, appointed Karim Yunes as a member. Abu Diak, minister of justice** in the national consensus government, said at the time that **the decision made by Fatah, headed by Mahmoud Abbas, to appoint Karim Yunes, the longest-imprisoned Palestinian, to the Revolutionary Council was a response to the Israeli campaign to "put the label of terrorism on the prisoners, shaheeds and Palestinian struggle"** (al-Hayat al-Jadeeda, May 28, 2017, quoted by PMW). **Issa Qaraqe, chairman of the PA Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs**, praised the appointment, claiming it was a declaration that the Palestinian prisoners **"are not terrorists and criminals, but rather fighters and prisoners of freedom"** (Palestinian TV, May 28, 2017, quoted by PMW).

► A few days earlier (on the eve of the visit of the American president to Israel and the PA) **two town squares were named for the murderers of Avraham Bromberg**: a square in **Jenin** was named for Karim Yunes and a square in **Tulkarm** for Maher Yunes. The ceremony in Jenin was sponsored by the governor of Jenin, the Fatah movement, and the Jenin municipality. At the ceremony **Ibrahim Ramadan, the district governor**, read a message from Mahmoud Abbas (al-Hayat al-Jadeeda, May 19, 2017). At the ceremony in Tulkarm, **Abbas Abu Bakr, the district governor**, said he thanked the Tulkarm municipality and everyone in the district for the "national act" of supporting the prisoners. He also said that **they stood side by side their fighters** (Ma'an, May 11, 2017, quoted by PMW). In addition, during a rally in support of the prisoners, the governor of the Jenin district and Issa Qaraqe, chairman of the PA Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs, announced their

intention **to name one of the main streets in Jenin after Karim Yunes** (al-Ayam, May 3, 2017, quoted by PMW).



Right: Ibrahim Ramadan, governor of the Jenin district, next to the mother of terrorist Karim Yunes at the inauguration of the "Karim Yunes square" in Jenin . They hold a sign of Karim Yunes flanked on the left by Yasser Arafat and the right by Mahmoud Abbas. The Arabic reads, "Fatah/Jenin. Detained since January 6, 1983. The square [named for] the oldest prisoner. Prisoners and hero, Karim Yunes" (bukra.net, May 18, 2017). **Left: Issam Abu Bakr, governor of the Tulkarm district, inaugurates the "Maher Yunes square" in Tulkarm** (bukra.net, May 12, 2017).

Mahmoud Abbas and the PA relate to the issue of payments to the families of prisoners and shaheeds

- ▶ On January 14, 2018, the evening of the ceremony honoring the two terrorists, **Mahmoud Abbas gave a speech at the opening session of the PLO Revolutionary Council's conference**. Relating to the Palestinian prisoners, he said the issue of the salaries paid to the families of shaheeds and prisoners was important. He stressed that **the Palestinians absolutely refused to stop the payments and would not allow anyone to harm the salaries paid to the families of shaheeds, the wounded and the prisoners**. He said, "**They are our children and we will continue paying them.**"
- ▶ The PA supports terrorists imprisoned in Israel and the families of shaheeds and the wounded, considering them **national heroes** (regardless of the reason for their incarceration). Therefore the PA provides **generous financial support** to terrorists serving jail sentences for terrorist activities, released prisoners, and the families of shaheeds and the wounded.
- ▶ According to data from the Palestinian ministry of the treasury, in 2016, the year in which the wave of popular terrorism peaked, **1.152 billion shekels** (about \$340 million) **were**

disbursed in such payments. The sum was 6.9% of the entire PA budget and 29.6% of the funds received in foreign aid. The PA anchored the payments in a series of laws and governmental decrees. In May 2014 the PA transferred the payments from the ministry of prisoners' affairs to **the PLO's bureau of prisoners' affairs**. The objective of the transfer was to reduce the pressure exerted on the PA for transparency of its expenses and to mislead the donor countries that complained their aid funds were being used to fund terrorism.¹

► The issue of the payments to families was raised a number of times in **diplomatic contacts between the PA and the United States after the election of Donald Trump**. Initially the Americans thought the Palestinian leadership had changed its policies and intended to stop the payments for terrorists serving sentences for murder or violence. However, the Americans quickly became aware that they had been mistaken, and that Mahmoud Abbas and the PA strongly opposed stopping the payments (reiterated in Mahmoud Abbas' speech during the opening session of the PLO's Revolutionary Council).²

¹ From a study by Brigadier General (Ret.) Yossi Kuperwasser, "Incentivizing Terrorism: Palestinian Authority Allocations to Terrorists and Their Families," published by the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2017.

² For further information, see the June 26, 2017 bulletin, "During diplomatic contacts with the Americans, the Palestinian Authority rejected demands to stop financial support for terrorist prisoners and the families of shaheeds."