



Hamas sends boys to their deaths in the "great return march:" the case of Saadi Abu Salah, 16, who died in an attempt to cut through the security fence on May 14, 2018

May 27, 2018

Overview

On May 14, 2018, at the height of the riots held during the "great return march," **Hamas affiliate Saadi Abu Salah, 16, was killed.** His father and uncle, affiliated with Hamas, had been imprisoned in Israel. Despite his young age **Hamas sent him to the front lines near the border fence, where Hamas operatives played a dominant role in the riots** (manifested by the large number of Hamas fatalities). At the fence a group of boys, Saadi Abu Salah among them, **used wire cutters to cut through the border fence in preparation for penetrating into Israeli territory, putting their lives at risk** (they belonged to a group calling itself "the tire and fence-cutting unit"). Saadi Abu Salah's funeral was attended by Hamas members and operatives of its military wing, and his body was wrapped in a Hamas flag for burial. Hamas held a memorial service where a video produced about him was shown. **Hamas' objective was to glorify Saadi Abu Salah and turn him into a role model for other boys Hamas uses for its own purposes.**



Saadi Abu Salah a short time before his death, with the group of boys cutting the security fence in the northern Gaza Strip during the riots and the attempts to penetrate Israel, May 14, 2018 (Hamas' media committee in Beit Hanoun, May 14, 2018)

The video produced by Hamas to glorify Saadi Abu Salah

- ▶ On the evening of May 16, 2018, Hamas held a memorial service for the "**heroic shaheed**" **Saadi Abu Salah**. The ceremony was held near his parents' house in Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip. The general public was invited to attend. During the ceremony a professionally-produced, 14-minute Hamas video was shown. Its objective was to show Saadi Abu Salah's courage, glorify him and turn him into a role model. His father and uncle, both released prisoners, wore green Hamas scarves (Hamas' media committee in Beit Hanoun, May 17, 2018).
- ▶ The video, with a sound track of martial music, shows Saadi Abu Salah **burning tires, throwing stones, sabotaging the border security fence and clashing with IDF soldiers** (see pictures below). A masked operative from the so-called "**tire and fence-cutting unit**" reads a death notice for Saadi Abu Salah, saying **he excelled at burning tires and cutting through the border fence**. His father says **his son always talked about his desire to be a shaheed and even prayed to Allah to grant his wish**. Behind the father is a picture Saadi Abu Salah with **senior Hamas figure Fathi Hamad** (Shehab Facebook page, May 16, 2018).

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Scenes from the video Hamas produced commemorating Saadi Abu Salah



Right: Sayid Abu Salah (center), Saadi's father, at the memorial service organized by Hamas, wearing a green Hamas scarf Left: As'ad Abu Salah (second from left), Saadi's uncle and a released prisoner, at the service (Hamas' media unit in Beit Hanoun, May 17, 2018)

Pictures documenting Saadi Abu Salah's activities during the "return marches"



Right: Saadi Abu Salah with a group of boys sabotaging the security fence in the northern Gaza Strip. Left: Operatives of the "tire and fence-cutting unit" eulogize Saadi Abu Salah who, they say, excelled at burning tires and cutting through the fence (Shehab Facebook page, May 16, 2018)



Saadi Abu Salah throws stones at IDF forces near the border fence in the northern Gaza Strip (Shehab Facebook page, May 16, 2018)



Right: In the video Saadi Abu Salah's father says his son always talked about his desire to become a shaheed. Behind him is the death notice issued by Hamas. Left: Father and son (right) with senior Hamas figure Fathi Hamad, apparently at one of the recent "return marches" (Shehab Facebook page, May 16, 2018)



Right: The body of Saadi Abu Salah wrapped in a Hamas flag for burial (Shehab Facebook page, May 16, 2018). Left: Armed terrorist operatives (in all probability from Hamas) at the funeral of Saadi Abu Salah in Beit Hanoun. Second from the right is Saadi's father (Facebook page of Sayid Abu Salah, May 23, 2018)

Saadi Abu Salah's father and uncle, two released prisoners

- ▶ The family of Saadi Abu Salah lives in Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip, part of the Abu Amscha clan. On March 16, 2008, five members of the clan were detained during an IDF activity in Beit Hanoun, among them Saadi's father and uncle. The father was released on September 18, 2014, **after having served a term of six years in the Nafha prison** in the south of Israel (alresala.net, date, 2018).
- ▶ **As'ad Abu Salah (Abu Fahmi)**, Saadi's uncle, was imprisoned in Israel and released as part of the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal in 2011. Two of his sons are currently imprisoned in Israel. At the beginning of May 2018, As'ad Abu Salah held a hunger strike to protest the Palestinian Authority's (PA) decision to stop the prisoners' payments to three members of his family, two of them his children and one a nephew. He said in an interview that the PA had stopped the payments in May 2017 to 270 Hamas-affiliated prisoners released in the Gilad Shalit deal (alresala.net, May 5, 2018).



As'ad Abu Salah, uncle of Saadi Abu Salah, during a hunger strike held to protest the PA's decision to stop payments to prisoners, two of them his children and one a nephew (alresala.net on YouTube, May 5, 2018)

► **As'ad Abu Salah issued a statement thanking Hamas and its military wing for attending his nephew's funeral.** He also issued a picture of him participating in the "great return march" in the northern Gaza Strip (Twitter account of Abu Fahmi Abu Salah, May 16, 2018). On May 18, 2018, he posted a picture to his Twitter account of himself standing next to a poster issued by Hamas commemorating Saadi Abu Salah (Twitter account of Abu Fahmi Abu Salah, May 16, 2018).



Right: Saadi Abu Salah's uncle thanks Hamas and its military wing for attending his nephew's funeral (Twitter account of Abu Fahmi Abu Salah, May 16, 2018). Left: A picture the uncle posted to his Twitter account of himself standing next to a poster issued by Hamas commemorating Saadi Abu Salah (Twitter account of Abu Fahmi Abu Salah, May 16, 2018)