



## Hamas handles boys for sabotaging the security fence as part of the “return marches:” The case of Yasser Abu al-Naja

July 10, 2018

### Overview

During the “return march” on June 29, 2018, a group of boys tried to sabotage the barbed wire fence east of Khan Younes, near the security fence, probably in preparation for an attempt to break into Israeli territory. One of the group members, Yasser Abu al-Naja, a boy aged 13 (or 14), was killed during the attempt to sabotage the barbed wire fence. The dead boy is **the son of Amjad Abu al-Naja, senior operative in Hamas’s military wing in Khan Younes**, and a member of a clan which produced Hamas and Fatah terrorist operatives. **Hamas’s senior officials, including Yahya Sinwar, Hamas’s leader in the Gaza Strip**, attended Yasser Abu al-Naja’s funeral.



**The youth Yasser Abu al-Naja (top left, in blue shirt), killed during an attempt to sabotage the barbed wire fence as part of the incidents of the “return march” (June 29, 2018). Bottom left: Abu Wadi’a al-Qassas, “commander of the tire and fence cutting unit” in Khan Younes (Facebook page of Abu Wadi’a al-Qassas, July 2, 2018)**



**Photo of Yasser Abu al-Naja, uploaded to his mother’s Facebook page after his death. The photo was taken from a blog called “Abu Ali’s Blog” (Facebook page of Samah Abu al-Naja, Umm Yasser, July 2, 2018)**

- On May 14, 2018, at the peak of the “return march” riots, **the boy Saadi Fahmi Abu Salah (16) was killed in similar circumstances.** There are similarities between the two: both were part of a group of boys who tried to sabotage the border fence in preparation for breaking into Israeli territory; both were sons of Hamas operatives; both belonged to a clan which produced terrorist operatives; and they both were glorified by Hamas after their death.<sup>1</sup>



**Saadi Abu Salah a short while before his death (marked with an arrow), cutting, along with a group of boys, the security fence in the northern Gaza Strip during the riots and attempts to break into Israel on May 14, 2018 (Hamas’s Information Committee in Beit Hanoun, May 14, 2018)**

<sup>1</sup> See two Information Bulletins by the ITIC, one from June 4, 2018: “Inclusion of minors in military activity against the IDF: Saadi Abu Salah, a 16-year-old boy who died when he was sent by Hamas to cut the border fence, belonged to the clan in Beit Hanoun whose members were involved in intensive terrorist activity, some of them as minors (Update to previous publication by the ITIC);” and an Information Bulletin from May 27, 2018: “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.”

Both these cases **are examples of Hamas’s modus operandi of handling youths from clans affiliated with it for military missions at the front line of the “marches,” near the fence. Handling the boys for these missions puts their lives at risk.** After their death, the boys’ funerals are attended by senior Hamas leaders, and their names are glorified by Hamas in the media. **The death of these youths serves as a propaganda weapon in the hands of Hamas against Israel,** which is accused of “killing children in cold blood.” This propaganda reverberates in Western countries and finds its expression in demonstrations and anti-Israel rhetoric.

- ▶ For highlights on Yasser Abu al-Naja and his family, **see Appendix.**

## Appendix

### Yasser Abu al-Naja – highlights

Yasser Abu al-Naja is a boy from the Maan area in Khan Younes, who was killed by the IDF east of Khan Younes on June 29, 2018, during one of the “return marches.” He was shot while he was trying **to sabotage the barbed wire near the border fence**, apparently, in preparation for an attempt to penetrate into Israeli territory. His activity near the barbed wire fence was conducted together with a group of youngsters headed by **Abu Wadi’a al-Qassas, “commander of the tire and fence cutting unit” in Khan Younes**. According to the spokesman for the Palestinian Health Ministry, Yasser Abu al-Naja was 13 or 14 years old when he died. According to his family, he was 11 years old and was supposed to celebrate his birthday on September 12 (PALDF forum; AFP, June 30, 2018).



**Yasser Abu al-Naja (left, in blue shirt). To his right is Abu Wadi’a al-Qassas, “commander of the tire and fence cutting” in Khan Younes (Facebook page of Abu Wadi’a al-Qassas, July 2, 2018)**

► After his death, Yasser Abu al-Naja’s mother said that he had used to take part in the “return march” activities every week, **“in the first rows,” i.e., near the fence** (SAFA, June 30, 2018; PALINFO, July 1, 2018). Yasser Abu al-Naja was **named after Yasser al-Ghalban, commander in the Hamas’s military wing in Khan Younes**, killed in June 2006 in clashes between Hamas and Fatah in the Gaza Strip. His father is **Amjad Abu al-Naja (Abu Hanifa), senior commander in Hamas’s military wing in Khan Younes** (AFP, June 30, 2018). **His two uncles from his father’s side were killed in confrontations with the IDF** (official Facebook page of the Abu al-Naja family, June 29, 2018).

## Hamas leadership attends Yasser Abu al-Naja’s funeral

► **Hamas’s leadership in the Gaza Strip**, headed by **Ismail Haniya, Yahya Sinwar and Khalil al-Hayya**, attended the funeral of **Yasser Abu al-Naja**. Fatah senior official **Ibrahim Abu al-Naja** (who belongs to the same clan) also attended the funeral. **Khalil al-Hayya** said during the ceremony that Abu al-Naja **“was killed in cold blood and by official decision” of the Israeli government, which ordered to kill all the participants of the “return march,”** even children (Hamas movement’s website, June 30, 2018; Al-Hayat, July 1, 2018).



The Hamas leadership at Abu al-Naja’s funeral. Top right: Amjad Abu al-Naja (the father of the dead boy) with Ismail Haniya. Bottom (left to right): Ismail Haniya, Amjad Abu al-Naja and Yahya Sinwar carrying the body (Hamas movement’s website, June 30, 2018)

## Amjad Abu al-Naja (Abu Hanifa), the father of the dead boy

► **Yasser Abu al-Naja’s father is Amjad Abu al-Naja (Abu Hanifa), who is about 50 years old, senior operative of the Hamas’s military wing in Khan Younes** (AFP, June 30, 2018). He was declared wanted by the Israeli security services since the first intifada (PALDF forum, September 20, 2006). **He commanded the Hamas’s military wing in Khan Younes during the second intifada.** His house was demolished by the IDF several times (Anatolia News Agency, June 30, 2018).



**Left: Amjad Abu al-Naja (Facebook page of Umm Yasser, mother of Yasser Abu al-Naja, Samah Abu al-Naja, July 4, 2018). Right: Ruins of Amjad Abu al-Naja’s house after it had been attacked during Operation Cast Lead (Facebook page of journalist Muthanna al-Najjar, July 10, 2014)**

- In October 2008, Hamas’s military wing announced that it had foiled **an attempt on the life of Amjad Abu al-Naja**, one of the wing commanders in Khan Younes, by what it had described as the “fifth column” in the Gaza Strip. This was done after an IED planted in front of his house in the Maan area had been uncovered. The IED was supposed to be detonated by remote control when he went out to pray. In addition, his house was shot at. The report noted that Abu al-Naja escaped several IDF attempts to kill him, and that it was the third attempt from which he escaped (website of the Hamas military wing, October 22, 2008). According to Hamas’s PALDF forum, **during that time, Abu al-Naja was commander of the Maan Battalion in Hamas’s military wing’s Khan Younes Brigade** (PALDF forum, October 21, 2008).

### **Other terrorist operatives from the Abu al-Naja clan in the Khan Younes area**

- **Bassel Moussa Abu al-Naja (Abu Anas) was a field commander in Hamas’s military wing.** On October 17, 2014, Hamas’s military wing announced that **he was killed during Operation Cast Lead** in battle with an IDF paratrooper force in the area of Al-Fakhari, east Khan Younes (July 23, 2014). His body is reportedly held by Israel (website of the Al-Agha family, October 18, 2014; Facebook page of the Abu Jizr clan, October 18, 2014; PALINFO, July 1, 2018).



**Bassel Abu al-Naja (post in a Facebook group which is dedicated to the memory of Bassel Abu al-Naja, June 19, 2015)**

► **Haytham Moussa Abu al-Naja (Abu al-Saed): one of the commanders of the Fatah military wing/Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in Khan Younes.** At the beginning of the first intifada, he joined the Fatah youth movement in Khan Younes, and in 1990 he entered the Fatah military wing. He was detained in 1993 and imprisoned in Israeli jail for an attempt to kill an IDF patrol commander during clashes. He was released in 1998. After his release, he joined “Force 17.” During the intifada, he was promoted in the ranks of the military wing to the position of commander of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in Khan Younes. He was killed in an IDF attack in Khan Younes in October 2002 (website of “Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades – Nidal al-‘Amoudi Battalion,” October 8, 2016). A Fatah branch in west Khan Younes is named after him.



**Haytham Abu al-Naja, field commander in the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades (official Facebook page of Abu al-Naja family, June 19, 2011)**