



Fatah and the Palestinian Authority adopt the three terrorists killed in Nablus

February 15, 2022

Overview

▶ On February 8, 2022, during an Israeli security force activity in Nablus three Palestinian terrorists were killed. They were members of the **al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades (Fatah's military terrorist wing)** and responsible for a recent series of shooting attacks targeting IDF forces and Israeli civilians, and were planning more. A large quantity of weapons were found in their vehicle (Israeli media, February 8, 2022). The Palestinian media reported the three were Ashraf al-Mabslat, Adhem Mabrouk and Muhammad al-Dakheil, all operatives in the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades.



Right: The scene of the targeted killing (Paltoday, February 8, 2022). Left: The mourning notice issued by the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades for the three terrorists (Ma'an, February 8, 2022).

▶ The al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades was established in **October 2000** during the first days of the second intifada as an umbrella organization for Fatah terrorist networks. There is proof the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades were funded by the Palestinian Authority's (PA) security forces (a large quantity of documents attesting to the funding were found during Operation Defensive Shield, March 29, 2002).

▶ The killing of the three entailed a complex Israeli security force operation in the heart of Nablus in broad daylight and led to a wave of reactions from the Palestinian terrorist organizations in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip. **Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)** and other organizations declared a general mobilization and called for revenge. In a

demonstration held by armed terrorists in Nablus, **al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades operatives** also called for a general mobilization and called on the PA to withdraw from the Oslo Accords, claiming they were what had made the killings possible (al-Aqsa, February 10, 2022)

In addition to calls for revenge there was strong criticism of the PA and claims that the security coordination between Israel and the PA was what had led to the deaths of the three operatives. There were even claims the activity was the outcome of the meetings held by Mahmoud Abbas and Hussein al-Sheikh with the Israeli defense minister and foreign minister.

▶ The reactions of Fatah and senior PA figures were exceptional in both scope and content, who mourned the dead terrorists and declared them heroes of the Palestinian people. Particularly strong were the statements and accusations voiced in the mourning tent erected in Nablus by **Mahmoud Abba, PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh, and other senior figures**. Many senior PA and Fatah figures, including Mahmoud Abbas, posted pictures of the three terrorists to their social media accounts. Fatah claimed the three as movement activists. The Fatah secretary in Nablus declared a day of mourning for the city and encouraged Fatah operatives to confront the Israeli security forces. Apparently their reactions reflected the rage at the attack on Fatah operatives, who are regarded as heroes by the Palestinians, especially since their deaths at the hands of Israel embarrassed the PA, carried out in the heart of the city in broad daylight, and also reflected concern over another attack on the PA's status in the wake of criticism of its coordination with Israel.

▶ In many instances, when Palestinian terrorists are killed by the Israeli security forces while carrying out an attack or during Israeli counterterrorism activities, senior PA figures and the Palestinian media accuse Israel of "executing" innocent Palestinians and call on the international community and institutions to investigate. In most cases the Palestinians' denials continue even after the circumstances and terrorists motives for the attacks have been made clear. They sometimes also falsely claim the terrorists died in other circumstances, such as traffic accidents in the case of a vehicular ramming attacks.

PA and Fatah Reactions

▶ Immediately after the deaths of the three were reported the PA's foreign ministry issued a formal announcement condemning the incident and calling on the international community, the UN secretary general and the International Criminal Court to take responsible

and begin an investigation of the [alleged] "crimes of the occupation" (PA foreign ministry, February 8, 2022).

► Fatah immediately issued a formal notice mourning the deaths of "three heroes, the commanders Muhammad al-Dakheil, Adhem Mabrouk and Ashraf al-Mabslat (Fatah Twitter account, February 9, 2022).



Formal mourning notice issued by Fatah in Nablus (Fatah Twitter account, February 9, 2022).

► A funeral was held for the three in Nablus, where Fatah flags were prominent. Hamas flags were also present, but were removed by the PA security forces.



Fatah flags waved at the funeral (Fatah Twitter account, February 9, 2022).

► **Mahmoud Abbas** posted to his Facebook page that Nablus was undergoing difficult days following the deaths of "brothers" Adhem, Muhammad and Ashraf. He offered his condolences to everyone, the families of the shaheeds and the Palestinian people. He called the attack "a deliberate crime of killing" carried out by Israel ("the oppressive Zionist occupation") against the Palestinians and stressed that the killing of the three would not be

passed over in silence. He also claimed they had been suffering for 73 years but would not agree to suffer any longer and would pay Israeli back with interest (Mahmoud Abbas' Facebook page, February 10, 2022). His Facebook page post was read to the mourning tent in Nablus by means of a telephone call to **Mahmoud Aloul, a member of Fatah' Central Committee and Mahmoud Abbas' deputy**, who was there at the time (Mahmoud Aloul's Facebook page, February 10, 2022).



Right: Mahmoud Abbas' post to the Facebook page, February 10, 2022. Left: Mahmoud Aloul broadcasts condolences from Mahmoud Abbas to the mourning tent in Nablus in real time (Mahmoud Aloul's Facebook page, February 10, 2022).

► **PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh** arrived at the joint mourning tent erected in Nablus accompanied by **Ibrahim Ramadan, governor of the Nablus district**. Along with his picture taken in the tent, he posted that he "blessed the souls of the shaheeds and their families and offered condolences on their deaths to the entire Palestinian people." He also said that as long as the occupation continued there would be victims [sic] (Muhammad Shtayyeh's Facebook page, February 11, 2022).



Muhammad Shtayyeh (second from left) accompanied by the governor of the Nablus district (left) at the mourning tent (Muhammad Shtayyeh's Facebook page, February 11, 2022).

- ▶ Mahmoud Aloul posted a notice to his Facebook page with the caption, "Palestine says goodbye to its sons, the three shaheeds, heroes of Nablus" (Mahmoud Aloul's Facebook page, February 9, 2022).



Notice from Mahmoud Aloul's Facebook page. The Arabic reads, "Palestine says goodbye to its sons, the three shaheeds, heroes of Nablus" (Mahmoud Aloul's Facebook page, February 9, 2022).

- ▶ **Hussein al-Sheikh, chairman of the authority of civilian affairs**, related to the event on his Twitter account, claiming that the "terrible crime of killing [the three Palestinians]" in Nablus would have enormous consequence both on the ground and at the political level. He said they were asking the international community "for the thousandth time" to protect the

Palestinian people from "Israel's violence and crimes [sic]" (Hussein al-Sheikh's Twitter account, February 9, 2022).

► **Muhammad Hamdan, Fatah secretary in Nablus**, declared a day of mourning in Nablus and said instructions had been issued to all Fatah operatives in Nablus to escalate confrontations with IDF forces (Facebook page of Fatah in Nablus, February 8, 2022). Interviewed by Watan TV, Hamdan said that in coordination with the "Palestinian organizations" in Nablus, confrontations with IDF forces would be escalated at the main friction points (Watan, February 9, 2022).



Full commercial strike in Nablus declared by Fatah as a sign of mourning. The sign attached to the shutter reads, "There is nothing more precious than the blood of the shaheeds" (Shehab Twitter account, February 9, 2022).

► **Muneir al-Jaghob, in charge of Fatah's bureau mobilization and organization information unit**, issued a mourning notice that included pictures of the three terrorists with the caption, "The heroic shaheeds of Nablus." He condemned Israel's "reprehensible action," which used a public vehicle in broad daylight to kill them in the center of Nablus, a location which was supposed to be safe for Palestinian civilians. He also said Israel should know that "crime and terrorism" would not make them give up the "struggle" (Muneir al-Jaghob's Twitter account, February 8, 2022).



Mourning notice and pictures of the three terrorists on Muneir al-Jaghob's Twitter account. The Fatah logo is also present. Left: The Arabic reads, "The heroic shaheeds of Nablus" (Muneir al-Jaghob's Twitter account, February 8, 2022).