



## The Palestinian Authority has accused Israel of killing a soccer player, actually a Hamas terrorist operative who clashed with the IDF in Nablus

December 26, 2022

### Overview

- ▶ On the night of December 21, 2022, about one thousand Israeli worshippers entered the precinct of the Tomb of Joseph in Nablus,<sup>1</sup> secured by IDF forces. Several dozen armed Palestinians rioted, throwing IEDs at the forces and shooting at them. The soldiers returned fire (IDF Twitter account, December 22, 2022).
- ▶ The Palestinian media reported the death of **Ahmed 'Atef Mustafa Daraghmeh, 23 years old, from Tubas**, who was wounded by IDF fire. The report noted he was a soccer player who had played with Thaqafi Tulkarm (Wafa, December 22, 2022). The inter-organizational coordinating committee in the Tubas district declared a general strike following his death (Wafa, December 22, 2022).
- ▶ **Daraghmeh was a Hamas operative who went to Nablus from Tubas, apparently with the express purpose of clashing with IDF soldiers. Hamas issued a mourning notice for him, claiming him as belonging to its ranks.** His body was wrapped in a Hamas flag for burial. The Palestinian Authority (PA), on the other hand, noted only that he was a soccer player. Senior PA figures rushed to condemn Israel for killing him, another "victim of the Israel's premeditated, targeted killings of journalists, athletes or any other Palestinian who dares to stand up to it." Senior figures in the PA called on the international community, including FIFA, to condemn and punish Israel. **Needless to say, no one in the PA mentioned that he was a Hamas operative who deliberately went to Nablus to clash with Israeli security forces.**

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<sup>1</sup> The Tomb of Joseph is a shrine located in the southeastern part of Nablus. According to Jewish tradition, it is the final resting place of Joseph, son of Jacob and is considered one of the tombs of the righteous of Judaism. According to the Oslo Accords of 1995, after the Palestinians recognized the Jewish nature of the Tomb and its importance for the Jews, it was determined that the shrine would be an enclave under Israeli security control as part of Area A, which is under full Palestinian control. Visits are conducted exclusively with IDF authorization and accompanying IDF security. Often, especially recently, Palestinians have rioted and clashed with Israeli security forces when Jewish worshippers go there to pray.

## Ahmed Daraghmeh

► **Ahmed 'Atef Mustafa Daraghmeh, 23 years old**, from Tubas, is the brother of security prisoner Adhem Daraghmeh, who has been incarcerated in Israel since 2021, and the son of 'Atef Daraghmeh, who was incarcerated in Israel for 12 years (Facebook page of the PA commission for prisoners and released prisoners, December 20, 2022). According to several accounts, he wanted to become a shaheed and went from Tubas to Nablus to clash with IDF forces at the Tomb of Joseph (Masrawy website, December 23, 2022).

► The Hamas movement issued a mourning notice for the death of its "jihad fighter," who was an operative in its ranks and killed in a clash when Israeli security forces entered eastern Nablus (Hamas website, December 22, 2022). Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, and his deputy, Saleh al-'Arouri, telephoned Ahmed Daraghmeh's father to offer their condolences (Palinfo, December 25, 2022). A funeral was held for him in Tubas; his body was wrapped in a Hamas flag for burial. During the funeral Hamas flags were waved and slogans were chanted praising Muhammad Deif, who heads Hamas' military-terrorist wing (al-Risalah, December 22, 2022).



**Right: The Hamas mourning notice for Ahmed Daraghmeh (Paldf Twitter account, December 22, 2022). Left: Daraghmeh's body wrapped in a Hamas flag (Jmedia Twitter account, December 22, 2022).**

► The Hamas-affiliated Shehab website posted a video entitled "**The confrontational [soccer] forward Ahmed Daraghmeh. The player who combined soccer and the rifle [sic].**" According to the video, during the day he played soccer and at night clashed [with IDF soldiers] in the streets and alleys, and was killed after he took his weapon

**and ammunition and went to the confrontation line between Nablus and Jenin.** The video continued, stating that he had been preceded by dozens of "confronters" who had no military background, the most recent of whom was Dr. Abdallah Abu al-Teen,<sup>2</sup> and the most prominent of whom were Ahmed Yassin and two doctors, Aziz Rantisi and Ibrahim al-Maqadmeh (Shehab, December 22, 2022).



**Pictures from the video: a soccer player by day and a terrorist by night (Shehab, December 22, 2022).**

► **The** Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) also issued a mourning notice, praising the fighters of the Jenin Battalion of the Jerusalem Brigades [the PIJ's military-terrorist wing] and the other "resistance" fighters [terrorist operatives] for preventing the [Israeli] security forces from entering the Palestinian towns and cities. It also praised their promise to Israel ("the occupying entity") that continuing their "crimes of murder and terrorism" would not give them security at the cost of Palestinian blood [sic]. Israel, according to the notice, could not avoid the response of the "resistance" [Palestinian anti-Israeli terrorism] and the bullets of the jihad fighters (PIJ website, December 22, 2022). The PIJ-affiliated Filastin al-Yawm noted that Ahmed Daraghmeh was a "shaheed and hero" who was shot to death by Israel, and that he belonged to a professional soccer club (Filastin al-Yawm, December 22, 2022).

## Ahmed Daraghmeh's Facebook page

► Ahmed Daraghmeh had an active Facebook page; his user name was Ahmed Abu Siaj. He was religious, and in addition to soccer he dealt extensively with the issue of the shaheeds and Palestinian prisoners, and hinted at his desire to become a shaheed. At the top of his

<sup>2</sup> A doctor who was a prominent member of the ministry of health in Ramallah, a member of the Fatah leadership in Jenin and **a commander in the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, Fatah's military-terrorist wing.**

page he wrote, "Wipe away your tears. I will not find rest in your hot tears, this is my path, and if you believe in my love, carry my weapon [sic]." The same words apparently inspired other Hamas terrorist operatives, who used them as a "last will and testament." For example:

- ◆ Ali Ibrahim 'Ashour, an Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades terrorist from Khan Yunis. Along with Amjad Fiyad, he carried out a suicide bombing attack in Gush Katif in the Gaza Strip on December 12, 2001 (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades website).
- ◆ Kamal Abdallah al-Awna, an Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades terrorist from the village of Jaba. He was killed along with Khaled Issa, a Jerusalem Brigades operative, on June 26, 2003, in Baqa al-Gharbia while en route to carrying out a terrorist attack in Israel (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades website).
- ◆ Amjad Hussein al-Fayid, an Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades terrorist from the Jenin refugee camp, who was killed on April 7, 2002 during Operation Defensive Shield (Hurria News, April 7, 2022).

▶ According to Ahmed Daraghmeh's Facebook page, he had BA in education from al-Quds Open University. **He dedicated his degree to the Palestinian shaheeds and prisoners, especially his brother, Adhem, who was incarcerated in Israel and whom he greatly admired.** He often posted short videos of soccer matches, praising Allah and expressing admiration and esteem for the "heroic shaheeds." In March 2020 he posted a video about returning to Islam, purifying himself and abandoning sin. In January 2020 he posted a video of the prayer of the Saudi Arabian sheikh, Yasser al-Dasouri, an imam who gave sermons at the al-Haram Mosque in Mecca. On December 18, 2022, a few days before his death, he changed his profile picture to one of men lifting what is possibly a dead body (Facebook page of Ahmed Abu Siaj).



The profile picture on the Facebook page of Ahmed Daraghmeh (Ahmed Abu Siaj), December 22, 2022)

## PA Reactions to His Death

- ▶ The Palestinian media, like the Palestinian leadership, stressed Daraghmeh's career as a Thaqafi Tulkarm soccer player. The PA rushed to condemn Israel for killing him without mentioning his parallel career as a Hamas terrorist organization or the fact that he was killed while clashing with Israeli security forces.
- ▶ **PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh** condemned the "crime" and called on FIFA for condemnation and punishment for the "criminals" (Wafa, December 22, 2022). He also posted his respect and admiration for the "shaheed Ahmed Daraghmeh" to his Facebook page and offered condolences to the family. He claimed the killing was another link in the chain of Israel's "crimes" against anyone who was Palestinian. He also posted a picture of Daraghmeh wearing his soccer uniform (Muhammad Shtayyeh's Facebook page, December 22, 2022).



**Ahmed Daraghmeh on Muhammad Shtayyeh's Facebook page, December 22, 2022.**

► **Jibril al-Rajoub, chairman of the Palestinian Olympic Committee and of the Palestinian Football [Soccer] Association**, issued a mourning notice for Daraghmeh, claiming "the criminal hand of the occupation found him while he was assaulting the occupation army in the city of Nablus." He wrote, "the crime against the Palestinian athlete and [soccer] player was another in the ongoing series of crimes against the Palestinians in general and Palestinian sport and athletes in particular, and violated all international and humanitarian conventions and laws, and the regulations of sports as well." According to al-Rajoub, it proved that Israel ("the occupation") and its extremist government did not obey international and humanitarian laws or conventions, certain they could evade any punishment that would deter them, as if they were above the law. He said the Committee condemned the "terrible crime" and called on FIFA and all the relevant international and regional institutions to align themselves with the rules of soccer and human rights laws, and punish Israel in a way that would deter it and its relevant institutions (Jibril al-Rajoub's Facebook page, December 22, 2022).

► The Palestinian Football [Soccer] Association issued a press release in English and Spanish claiming that while the world "still basks in the festivities of a splendid World Cup 2022-Qatar, and prepares...to welcome a new year 2023, Palestinian Football was grieved...by the assassination [sic] of one of its top footballers, Ahmed A'tef Daraghmeh, the 23-Years old [sic] scorer of Thakafi Tulkarem, who was shot by Israeli soldiers during the Israeli Occupation's incursion of the city of Nablus [sic]...Ahmed is yet another victim in the series of targeted killings, deliberately carried out by the Israeli Occupation against journalists, Sportsmen [sic] and every other Palestinian who dares to stand up against the brutality of the Occupation and its systematic cleansing of our people...[we] demand the international football associations to take [sic] a closer look into the racist policies and

practices of the Israeli occupation and its constant violations of the international sport [sic] regulations, and hold it responsible for depriving Palestinian footballers from the enshrined [sic] right to develop and practice Sport [sic]" (Facebook page of the Palestinian Football Association, December 22, 2022).

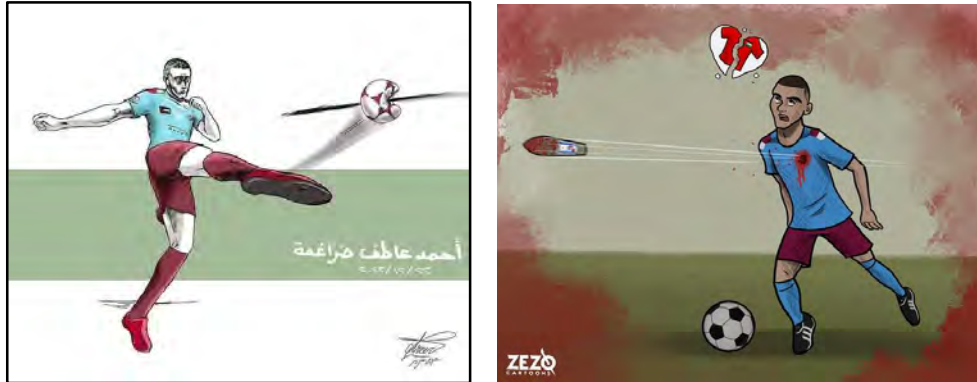


**Right: Ahmed Daraghmeah's Palestinian Football Association membership card. It has his ID number, date of birth, the name of his team, Thakafi Tulkarm, and his jersey number: 77 (Jibril al-Rajoub's Facebook page, December 22, 2022). Left: The English version of the Palestinian Football Association's press release (Facebook page of the Palestinian Football Association, December 22, 2022).**

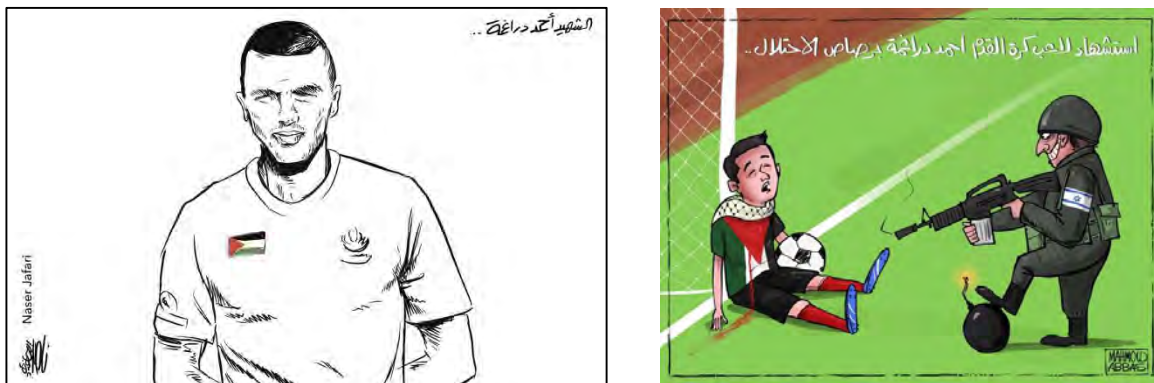
► **Abd al-Salam Haniyeh, deputy secretary general of the High Council for Youth and Sports** (deputy to Jibril al-Rajoub), condemned the "crime" against the star player of the Thakafi Tulkarm club. He claimed "the terrible crime" was a deliberate execution and targeted killing of a forward of a club in the professional soccer league in the PA territories. He added that the "crime" was another in the series of "crimes" committed by the Israeli security forces ("the occupation") every day against Palestinian sports, and it reflected the "policy of deliberate killing" of Palestinian athletes, detentions, the destruction of stadiums and infrastructure, and attacks on sports clubs and facilities. He called on FIFA and the international community to take responsibility for stopping Israel's [alleged] ongoing aggression against Palestinian athletes. He claimed it was a scandal for anyone who claimed to be humane while not lifting a finger. He called on all sports organizations

worldwide to prosecute Israel for its "crimes against Palestinian athletes," because evading punishment meant the "criminal would freely continue his aggression" (PalPress website, December 22, 2022).

► The Palestinian media published several cartoons condemning the killing of Ahmed Daraghme as a soccer player **without mentioning he was also a Hamas operative**.



Right: Shehab Twitter account, December 23, 2022. Left: Palestinian TV Facebook page, December 22, 2022).



Right: Palinfo Twitter account, December 22, 2022. Left: al-Quds, December 23, 2022).