

Another ‘Palestinian Gandhi’ Ignored by U.S. Media

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In recent years, corporate media [pundits](#) like Tom Friedman and Nicholas Kristof have expressed deep concern over what they claim is a lack of peaceful elements within the Palestinian resistance to the 44-year Israeli occupation. Where is the “[Palestinian Gandhi](#)” who could inspire the violent Arab masses to lay down their weapons and pursue a more virtuous path to freedom (FAIR Blog, [2/17/12](#))?

Either the many examples of Palestinians successfully using nonviolent direct action to confront their occupiers have gone unnoticed or are being deliberately ignored in mainstream reports. Another amazing victory for peaceful resistance occurred last Tuesday, when Palestinian professional soccer player Mahmoud Sarsak was released from Israeli prison after a three-month hunger strike.

Sarsak had been imprisoned for three years without charge or trial, based on a claim by the Israeli security forces that he was a member of Islamic Jihad. He was subjected to “administrative detention”—imprisonment without trial—when Israeli authorities failed to produce enough evidence to formally prosecute him.

Sarsak’s release came several months after 33-year-old baker [Khader Adnan](#) also won his freedom after a hunger strike.

Despite the pundits’ assurances that a nonviolent Palestinian movement would attract journalists’ attention, Sarsak’s release—like Adnan’s—received little attention in U.S. corporate media. According to a search of the Nexis news database, his release was not mentioned on television. In fact the only U.S. publication that mentioned Sarsak’s release was the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (7/10/12), which gave the story a few sentences in a news brief feature in the Sports section.

And here’s how that article—based on an AP [dispatch](#)—introduced the case:

Dozens of Islamic militants fired rifles in the air today in a rousing homecoming for a member of the Palestinian national soccer team who was released by Israel after being held for three years without formal charges.

Rather than stressing the fact that Sarsak was illegally detained like so many other Palestinians, the Post-Gazette’s wire dispatch evokes an image of violent militants welcoming home one of their released comrades.

If the corporate media have truly been waiting for examples of peaceful Palestinian resistance to embrace, then why have Sarsak’s case and the many other instances of

individuals nonviolently risking their lives for national liberation been essentially ignored? From the West Bank village of Budrus to the deep recesses of Israeli jails, literally thousands of Palestinians have rejected violence as the most effective means by which to fight the apartheid structure that has divided and oppressed them for decades. But establishment media in the U.S. clearly do not find what Sarsak called the “revolution of empty stomachs” newsworthy.

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