

‘Unprecedented Brutality’: Family of Palestinian Mangled by Bulldozer Condemn Israel

Video of Mohammed al-Naem's body being defiled has appalled his relatives and sent shockwaves worldwide

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Belal al-Naem was appalled when he saw the footage: an Israeli bulldozer dragging, mutilating and dangling a Palestinian's corpse in the besieged Gaza Strip. Then he found out it was his brother's body.

“I lived the shock twice, first before I knew that he is my brother, and the other when I knew that was him,” he told Middle East Eye.

Belal's brother, Mohammed, was shot and killed by Israeli fire on Sunday in Abasan al-Kabira, east of Khan Younis.

The [Israeli military claimed](#) he and another Palestinian were attempting to place an explosive device on the frontier between the besieged enclave and Israel.

Then a military bulldozer, accompanied by a tank, moved in to retrieve the body, and its attempts were caught on camera.

Footage of the vehicle dragging the corpse quickly went viral.

“I could not stand the cruelty in it, there was a human being cut into pieces again and again. My heart could not stand the scene, I prayed for him and stepped away,” Belal said, describing it as “unprecedented brutality”.

“This is not a way for a human to die, and it happened while the whole world is watching,” he added.

“Our family saw this, and it will never be lost from our minds.”

‘Who will raise his son?’

Refuting Israel's claims, Mohammed's family says he was nowhere near the boundary fence and instead in an area that has long been used for peaceful protests.

His grieving mother described the 27-year-old engineer as a devoted father to his 10-month-old daughter.

“He worked any decent opportunity he got. He was always chasing a living for his family, and would please us all with his kindness and support. No day would pass without him checking in,” Mohammed’s mother Um Hussein told MEE, weeping.

“As he was leaving yesterday he was holding his son, smiling at me and waving at the door, saying he will come tomorrow to pick us up,” she added.

“Who is going to raise his son now?”

Watching the video was traumatic for his mother.

“I felt every blow on my son’s body. They were in my heart, I felt the pain as if I was him. I will never forget how Israel killed my son,” she said.

Mohammed’s family confirmed that he was a fighter with Islamic Jihad, an armed Palestinian resistance faction. His death was followed by a barrage of rockets fired from Gaza into Israel, and Israeli air strikes on Islamic Jihad targets in the enclave and Syria.

Despite his affiliation, Mohammed’s family insist his motivations for being close to the boundary were peaceful.

“He would wake up early, go to the mosque for Fajr [dawn] prayers and walk in the morning near the frontier. He loved looking over the lands he protected,” his wife Um Hamza said.

Holding their child, his wife said she could not watch the video as his family had told her how brutal it is.

“I won’t watch him being cut apart, I wish this video would disappear,” she said.

Aborted rescue

Moataz al-Najar, 23, was the first to spot Mohammed’s lifeless body, at 6am. He called some of his friends and relatives, and together they tried to retrieve him.

“I tried to get close to him to rescue him, but Israeli soldiers kept shooting randomly,” Najar told MEE.

After two hours Najar was able to get close to Mohammed, who was lying still and not breathing.

“He was dead and his face was burned, his intestines were spilling out of his body. Me and my cousin Ahmed tried to drag him away but the bulldozer assaulted us,” he recalled.

Image on the right: Moataz al-Najar recovering in hospital in Khan Yunus (MEE/Walled Mosleh)



“I yelled at the driver that the man is dead, but he kept attacking,” Najar added, lying in a hospital bed in Khan Younis.

“The bulldozer drove at us faster and faster, and there was relentless shooting. The bulldozer hit me and I felt like I’d lost my leg, then I was forced to leave everything behind and escape.”

According to Najar, the incident took place nearly 350 metres inside the Gaza Strip, and neither he nor Mohammed crossed the Israeli fence.

Israel still holds Mohammed’s corpse.

“They must return his body, I want to say goodbye to him,” Um Hamza said.

“His death is honourable, he is a martyr and protected his nation. I expected him to die someday, but not as savagely as they say.”

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Featured image: Mohammed al-Naem’s mother, Um Hussein (MEE/Walled Mosleh)

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