

No Coverage, No Accountability - Palestinian Child's Brutal Death At Hands Of Israeli Soldiers

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On Friday 9 September, dozens of Palestinians demonstrated next to the Gaza Strip's border fence near the Al-Bureij refugee camp, protesting Israel's ongoing occupation and its various crimes.

Here is how *Reuters* [reported](#) what happened next: "An 18-year-old Palestinian was killed during a rock-throwing protest near the Gaza-Israel border on Friday and a Palestinian health official said Israeli soldiers shot him, but the Israeli army said troops were not responsible."

At the time, a Gaza health ministry spokesperson said that Abdel-Rahman Al-Dabbagh (who was actually just 15-years-old) was killed "by an Israeli bullet to the head." The Israeli military, however, claimed that forces only used "tear gas" to disperse "dozens of rioters."

The army statement added: "Following a preliminary review, the Israel Defence Forces did not conduct the reported shooting."



So who killed Abdel-Rahman Al-Dabbagh? And how was he killed? Almost four weeks have now passed since the teenager's death. Thanks to the work of Palestinian, Israeli and international human rights workers, a clearer - and highly disturbing - picture has now emerged of how he was killed.

The following account is based on information published by Defence for Children International-Palestine ([DCIP](#)), [B'Tselem](#), [Al-Haq](#) and Palestinian Centre for Human Rights ([PCHR](#)).

The demonstration that particular Friday began in the early afternoon, and continued for some hours. None of those participating (some 60-100 protesters) were armed. The protest took place east of Al-Bureij camp, where Abdel-Rahman was a resident.

During the afternoon, Palestinian youth threw stones and a few unexploded tear gas canisters fired by Israeli forces on previous occasions. Protesters, Abdel-Rahman included, also cut the barbed wire that lies ten metres from the border fence and ran back and forth as Israeli soldiers repelled them.

Meanwhile, Israeli soldiers positioned by military jeeps or on dirt mounds attacked the

protesters with tear gas canisters, stun grenades, flare bombs and live ammunition.

Shortly before he was hit, just after 7pm, Abdel-Rahman asked one of his friends to take a picture of him. He was around 15-20 metres from the fence. The boy was making a “V” sign when one of the soldiers came forward, knelt down and fired a flare cartridge directly at him.

The flare bomb ignited on impact and Abdel-Rahman fell down, his head on fire. Israeli soldiers initially prevented his friends from approaching, including by firing warning shots.



A screenshot from video footage shows Abdel-Rahman, 15, lying on the ground with flames and smoke rising from his head. (Photo: DCIP)

Abdel-Rahman was struck in the forehead above his left eye with an illumination flare cartridge. “There was blood on his hands and chest, and coming out from above his left eye. There was a big, black hole above his eye”, described an eyewitness.

After the flare had burned out, Abdel-Rahman was carried to an ambulance, but paramedics could not resuscitate him. He was pronounced dead upon arrival at hospital.

The impact of the flare grenade, fired directly at his head from a short distance, fractured his skull leading to haemorrhaging in the brain in addition to external burns. An x-ray image showed the flare punctured and lodged in Abdel-Rahman’s skull above his left eyebrow.

The flare in question was a 40mm M583A1 White Star Parachute Illumination Cartridge, which is fired from an under-barrel grenade launcher rifle attachment. It is produced by US-based munitions company Chemring Ordnance, a subsidiary of the UK-based Chemring Group.



The flare bomb that the soldier fired at al-Dabbagh (Photo: Khaled al-‘Azayzeh, B’Tselem)

The flare, which weighs 0.22kg, is intended to illuminate an area of 200 meters in diameter or to mark a military target on the ground and burns for around 40 seconds. It is categorically not designed to be used in “crowd control” situations.

Israeli forces have repeatedly used brutal violence against unarmed protesters in the Gaza Strip in the last year; a week after the killing of Abdel-Rahman, soldiers shot a 17-year-old

Palestinian in the leg with live ammunition during protests in the same area – he may never walk again.

More than 20 Palestinians have been [killed](#) in such Gaza border protests since 1 October 2015, and there are no Israeli military investigations into any of these deaths. According to DCIP official [Ayed Eqtaish](#), Israeli forces “routinely misuse ‘less-lethal’ weapons and projectiles to directly target Palestinian children, killing and injuring them with impunity.”

The shocking killing of Abdel-Rahman highlights both the lack of Western media coverage when it comes to the Palestinian victims of Israeli forces’ violence, and the parallel absence of accountability for grave violations of international law and human rights by the Israeli army and its political leaders.

No coverage and no accountability means that the killing and maiming of Palestinians – including children – will only continue.

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