

Palestine: How the Western media took Fatah's lies at face value

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Global Research, January 15, 2008

[Palestinian Information Center](#) 14 January 2008

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#)

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In their coverage of the June 2006 bloody showdown between Fatah and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, which ended with the ousting of Fatah forces by Hamas which subsequently took control over the Gaza Strip, the vast bulk of the Western media took a decidedly pro-Fatah line.

News media such as the Associated Press (AP), CNN, New York Times, and to a lesser extent Reuters and the BBC readily parroted Fatah's rumors and disinformation that Hamas' militiamen committed war crimes such as tossing two persons off the roof tops of two Gaza buildings. Stories as such assumed a life of their own and were tendentiously highlighted and repeated numerous times, ostensibly in order to vilify Hamas.

Even the manifestly mendacious claims that Hamas carried out a "coup" against "Palestinian legitimacy" (Mahmoud Abbas and his Fatah aides) was shamelessly repeated and continue to be repeated despite the fact that the Hamas government was democratically-elected by the vast majority of Palestinians who gave it a mandate to restore the rule of law and put an end to chaos and lawlessness.

Indeed, even today, Western news media continues to refer to the events of June, 2006, as a "coup", ignoring the plots Gaza's former strongman Muhammed Dahlan was hatching, in a brazen collusion with the Americans and Israel, to undermine and eventually bring down the democratically-elected government led by Hamas.

On Friday, 11 January, a documentary report prepared and aired by the London-based al-Hewar Arabic Television suggests that the bulk of Western media coverage of the so-called "Hamas' coup" against Fatah was pure propaganda.

The report, screened for the first time, featured interviews with Fatah and Hamas leaders, ordinary witnesses as well as an Egyptian journalist who had been covering the Gaza Strip and the clashes between Fatah and Hamas for the Egyptian Daily newspaper al-Ahram.

The 30-minute documentary revealed that Hamas had never planned to carry out a coup against Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas as Fatah alleges, and that the snow-ball effect of the showdown between the two antagonists left Hamas no choice but to wage a decisive battle in self-defense.

Tawfiq Abu Khousa was a high-ranking Fatah leader in the Gaza Strip and directly answerable to Muhammed Dahlan, who had received large sums of money and several

shipments of arms from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), via an American general based in Israel named Keith Dayton. Dayton himself was answerable to Elliot Abrams, a Jewish neocon who had suggested on several occasions that the US' ultimate goal was to destroy Hamas by igniting a civil war among Palestinians, especially between Fatah and Hamas.

"Yes, we murdered, we killed people according to their identity, political and factional identity. There were orders to kill bearded men," Abu Khousa was featured as saying.

Abu Khousa also admitted that it was Fatah militiamen, not Hamas' fighters, that Hussam Abu Geinas, a Fatah activist, was murdered and thrown off the rooftop of a multi-story building by.

"Our young men killed (tossed him off the tower building) because he grew a bird, then we found out that he was a Fatah man, actually the head of a Fatah local chapter."

Hamas did report at the time that Abu Geinas was killed by Fatah militiamen, but its narratives were largely ignored or not sufficiently taken seriously by most Western news agencies, especially AP.

Abu Khousa also admitted that Fatah men abducted and killed in cold blood Sheikh Nahed al-Nimr, saying that "it was one incident of many that occurred."

Relating to the gruesome killing of two journalists who were working for the Falastin daily newspaper, Suleiman Al-Ashi and Muhammed Abdo, Abu Khousa claimed that the two were not journalists but "reconnaissance spies" for Hamas' military wing, the Izzidin al Kassam Brigades.

Ashraf Abu al Haul, a veteran Egyptian journalist and al-Ahram correspondent who has been covering the Gaza Strip and Palestinian affair in general for many years contradicted Abu Khousa's claims regarding the murdered journalists.

"That was the most hideous criminal act during these events, it was a landmark event, given the fact that the two were murdered in cold blood."

Abu al-Haul also denied that Hamas was responsible for the killing of Baha' Abu Jarad, a Fatah leader, arguing that "meticulous investigations" showed that he was killed in the context of a clan feud, not by Hamas, as alleged by Fatah.

The documentary report also featured the testimony of Fawwaz al-Hetto, a member of the Presidential Guard known as Force-17, who was in the company of Muhammed Swerki who, too, was tossed off a high-rise building.

Al-Hetto said the following: "he mistakenly entered one the high towers as we were providing food (for Fatah fighters). Then was detained by Hamas fighters.

"Then the Force-17 began bombarding the building, and the armed men who were detaining us left to repulse the attack. And around the afternoon prayer, he asked to go to the bathroom. However, he went at the rooftop and fell off the building. Then the Hamas' fighters informed me of his death, telling me that they had intended to free both of us. Then I was freed."

Al-Hetto didn't say if Swerki fell off on his own or was killed by fighters. Hamas had said that Swerki, who worked as a chief at Mhamoud Abbas' Al-Muntada (Presidential Headquarters), tried to escape and fell to his death. Hamas also said that Fatah fettered his legs and handcuffed his hands to give the impression that Hamas threw him off the building.

The documentary film also raised important questions regarding the way the PA security headquarters were vacated and how PA security leaders abandoned their men as they fled. The documentary also left unanswered the question of whether Fatah and the PA deliberately abandoned Gaza in order to "get Hamas bugged down there."

At the end, two former Hamas security officers testified that when Hamas fighters arrived at the security headquarters they found empty buildings which forced Hamas to take control of these headquarters in order to protect them from ransacking.

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