

Political Assassination? Israel above Suspicion: Was the Death of Palestinian Ambassador Jamal al Jamal an Accident?

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In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

Jamal al Jamal, a career diplomat, had been named as the Palestinian ambassador to the Czech Republic in October 2013. It was not an easy mission. Since the Czech Republic had joined the western block countries, it had become a strong supporter of Israel; the Czech President Milos Zeman had even called for the Czech embassy to be moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Al Jamal had requested that the President rescind his call for the illegal move.

On January 1st, 2014, the al Jamal family was just moving into a new residence and a new office. According to Reuters, "Al-Jamal's residence was part of a new complex including a yet-to-be-opened Palestinian Embassy." [1] There was an explosion: Jamal al Jamal had suffered grievous injuries to his head, hands and stomach. He was taken to a military hospital where he soon succumbed to his injuries.

The reaction of the pro-Israeli Czech government was disappointing: they blamed the victim. Andor Sandor, the former head of Czech military intelligence who was often quoted, blustered: "I think the Palestinian administration should explain many questions related to the explosion." He dismissed the possibilities that the usual terror suspects — Hamas and countries supporting the Palestinian cause — would have been involved. Israel was above suspicion, he claimed — apparently with a straight face — because such a killing would damage the "peace process." (The "accident" happened on the eve of a meeting between John Kerry and Netanyahu.)

The Czech government immediately claimed that al Jamal had carelessly blown himself up with Palestinian explosives when opening an embassy safe. They were outraged at the unregistered firearms and explosives that they found at the embassy; some suggested charging the Palestinian embassy for breaching the Convention of Vienna for the illegal material. There was no "terrorism"; the death was considered a case of negligence and possession of illegal armaments. Al Jamas's daughter Rana did not believe that there had been any "accident"; she suspected that the safe had been tampered with during the move.

Palestinian embassy staff pointed out that the safe was new and did not contain any explosives; experts noted that even booby-trapped safes are unlikely to be lethal. PLO officials claimed that the firearms and explosives had been given to the embassy by officials of the much friendlier Communist Czechoslovakia and had not been brought into the country illegally.

In April 2014, the story changed dramatically. According to the new story, someone had placed the plastic explosive Semtex into a book — two, actually — that al Jamal had

opened. Police claimed that the Semtex was “at least” 30 years old, so someone had to have placed it in the book decades before. The police hadn’t actually confirmed that it was Semtex, but they were sure that “it” was 30 years old. The “books”, they then admitted, were actually boxes of Semtex disguised to look like books. [2] According to the Czechs, there was still no suspicion of foul play; it was still an “accident.”

The cavalier responses of the Czech government to the death of the Palestinian ambassador indicates a disturbing indifference to the tragedy. Had a Czechoslovakian government donated the “books” to a previous consulate? Or were they maliciously planted during the embassy move? An investigation should determine the origin of the disguised Semtex “books” and how they arrived at the embassy.

Given the vulnerability of Palestinian leaders and the history of their elimination by Israel, the deaths of prominent Palestinians should be assumed to be suspicious until proven otherwise.

Notes

[1] Palestinian ambassador to Czech Republic killed by book with hidden explosive. Circa. April 8, 2014 at: <http://cir.ca/news/palestinian-ambassador-killed-in-prague>

[2] Czech News Agency. Palestinian diplomat killed by Semtex from 1970s. April 8, 2014. Prague Post at: <http://www.praguepost.com/the-big-story/38227-palestinian-diplomat-killed-by-semtex-from-1970s>

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