

# Portrait of Jordanian Resistance: Maher al-Jazi

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*They say that before embarking on the [fidai operation](#) (“fidai” is someone who engages in guerrilla warfare and other forms of resistance) at the highly militarized Allenby (King Hussein) crossing between Jordan and the West Bank during which Maher al-Jazi succeeded in shooting and killing three Israeli security personnel, he had not disclosed his plan to anyone. But people here in Jordan and everywhere else in the Middle East are so thirsty to visualize his preparatory moves that some have circulated on social media a fake handwritten letter in his name imagining what he might have said.*

The note being circulated is in the tradition of other authentic notes penned by Palestinian martyrs over the years (the term “martyr” describes anyone who dies in any manner as a result of the Israeli occupation). The fake note reads:

“To my dear mother and father, forgive me and bless my action for I am, God willing, a martyr. Do not mention me [in death] but mention what I stand for; mention my protest [against injustice and oppression] to motivate and inspire the children of the Arab nation and the children of Jordan [*al-Nashama*] to adopt my resistance.”

This message may not be authentic, but it certainly expresses true Arab values. Being good to one’s parents and gaining their approval is one of the most important duties or obligations in Islam. The term “Nashama” is a cherished nickname of Jordanians embodying the spirit of bravery, nobility and valor in Arab tradition.

Were such thoughts on Maher al-Jazi’s mind as he prepared to leave his home and children on Sept 8, 2024, resolved to give the ultimate sacrifice for a noble cause? He had, reportedly, mentioned to his wife that all his debts were paid and hugged his children in a markedly fervent manner that day, instructing his 14-year-old son Qader to be the “man of the house” in his absence.

Did Maher al-Jazi’s heroic act receive the blessing of his parents? His parents, whom I travelled to Maan to meet on September 10, were proudly receiving condolences from Jordanians and non-Jordanians alike, many of whom, like me, had come a long way to pay their respects, to “bless the womb that carried him.”



Poster says, "The entirety of al-Na'imat tribe offer their condolences to al-Huwaitat. May God receive your martyr Maher al-Jazi and grant him a high place in paradise." (Image: Rima Najjar)

They received us graciously, letting the large poster on the side of the road as you enter al-Husseinieh town on the outskirts of Ma'an to speak for them. The poster shows Thiab Hussein al-Awdat al-Jazi (Abu Sami), Maher's father, with the image of his martyred son behind him and the legend: "My son's blood is not any more precious than the blood of Palestinians."

While I was there in the women's section of the wake, Juliet Awwad, recognized as one of the most famous Jordanian drama actresses, arrived, causing a stir and eloquently expressing her solidarity. She posed with the young daughters of the martyr who were drawn to her warm demeanor and comforting embrace.



Juliet Awwad, recognized as one of the most famous Jordanian drama actresses, with Maher al-Jazi's children (Image: Rima Najjar)

Has Maher al-Jazi inspired and motivated others to take up his stand? Palestinian writer and member of the executive body of the Alternative Path Movement Khaled Barakat had this to

say:

“The operation of al-Karameh that Martyr Maher al-Jazi carried out is an embodiment of the Jordanian and Arab popular will and an expression of the Arab youth’s yearning to participate in the battle of Al-Aqsa Flood and support the Palestinian resistance. This operation is not only against the occupation; it is also a blow to normalization projects, at the heart of which were the Wadi Araba Treaty, Oslo Accords, Camp David and other such capitulation agreements. al-Jazi’s heroic operation gives the resistance in Palestine and the region great revolutionary and moral energy.”

One such young revolutionary in the making is Maher al-Jazi’s son, ninth-grader Qader who shyly pointed to the inverted red triangle badge on his shirt, a symbol of resistance against Israeli occupation. It is now widely used by young people inspired by action video clips that the Palestinian resistance publishes showing bobbing inverted red triangles to mark their targets.

Qader understands that he is the son of a man who, in the words of Juliet Awwad, “succeeded in telling Arab rulers and armies that one individual, one human being, can make a big difference to all of us.” He understands that the Israelis had made so-called “peace” treaties with three Arab countries that turned out to be perfidious. He has watched on the media the horror inflicted by Israel on Gaza’s children; he understands and is proud of the fact that his father has been embraced by the resistance as a martyr of the nation. Qader, who is now “the man of the house”, receives, along with his extended family and Bedouin tribe (the Huwaitat), the salutations and affirmations of the resistance blocs. Following are a few examples of such affirmations collected from Arabic media:

Hashem Safi al-Din, chairman of Hezbollah’s Executive Council: “The operation of the Jordanian hero martyr Maher al-Jazi is evidence that the resistance, as it exists in Palestine, its spirit exists in Jordan and in our Arab world, that it is inherent in the people of our nation ... salutations to his family and clan who are receiving well-wishers.”

Abu Obaida, spokesperson for the Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas: “The pistol the Jordanian hero Maher al-Jazi used was more effective than massive armies and a stacked military arsenal.”

Islamic Jihad: “We bet on the likes of the martyr Maher al-Jazi to deliver the message of the Arab and Muslim peoples to the American administration and the entity [meaning Israel].”

The Yemeni Armed Forces: “We praise the fidai operation of the martyr Mujahid Maher al-Jazi who decided, in the appropriate manner, to render victorious the blood of the martyrs shed in Gaza.”

Image: Maher al-Jazi’s son, ninth-grader Qader, wearing the inverted red triangle badge on his shirt, a symbol of resistance (Image: Rima Najjar)



Qader knows his father did not shoot “civilians;” he shot armed civilian security personnel who are an integral part of the overall security framework that includes the border police and Israeli army. They oversee stringent and humiliating procedures meted out to Palestinian/Jordanian travelers lucky enough to obtain entry permits to their own homes.

There is no doubt that Qader, like every school child in Jordan, has now learned lessons in history that the normalization with Israel in the past decades had actively obscured from schoolbooks.

The crossing over the river Jordan where Maher al-Jazi’s operation took place is officially called the Allenby Bridge (and on the Jordanian side, the King Hussein Bridge). It was built in 1918 by the British over the remnants of an Ottoman bridge and named after a British general, Edmund Allenby, who, along with Arab forces fighting with T.E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) and Prince Faisal, captured Jerusalem from the Ottoman Empire. Ironically, considering what Israel is doing in Jerusalem today, upon capturing Jerusalem, Allenby emphasized the protection of the city’s religious sites and the importance of maintaining peace and order there. In exchange for Arab support against the Ottomans, the British promised Arabs national independence. However, these promises did not materialize in Palestine, and the whole world is witnessing today, in heightened anger and frustration, the enormity and devastating effects of that original colonial deception and betrayal.

I am recalling the history of the bridge to highlight another fact of history, the indomitable spirit of Palestinian resistance. The Allenby Bridge is informally known as the Al-Karameh Bridge (جسر الكرامة) due to its proximity to “Al-Karameh” town in Jordan, the site of the Battle of Karameh of 1968. This battle was a major confrontation between Israeli forces and Palestinian fighters, along with the Jordanian army, and it became a symbol of Palestinian resistance (aptly, the word “Karameh” means “dignity” in Arabic).

The battle of al-Karameh is the first time Palestinian and Jordanian fighters successfully engaged the Israeli army in a confrontation. Despite the heavy losses, the battle is seen as a symbolic victory, because it demonstrates the resilience and determination of the fighters who stood up to the Israeli military that had just achieved a quick and decisive victory in the so-called Six-Day War. Following the battle, there was a significant increase in the number of young Palestinians joining the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and its guerrilla



wings. This battle marked a turning point in the Palestinian national movement, leading to greater organization and military capability. It mirrors in a minor way the Palestinian resistance in Gaza and the West Bank today.

What the operation on al-Karameh Bridge by a truck driver of the al-Jazi clan of the Bedouin Huwaitat tribe illustrates is the strong culture of resistance that continues to exist among the Jordanian population, despite the crown's normalization diplomacy with Israel.

The Palestinian cause is deeply ingrained in Habes Ali Hussein al-Jazi (Abu Tawfiq), cousin of Maher al-Jazi and spokesman for the clan, and in Maher's younger brother Shadi Thiab Hussein al-Jazi, with whom I conversed on my visit. Abu Tawfiq told me he had named his twin daughters "Palestinian فلسطينيه" and "Jordanian أردنيه," viewing their twin identities and bond through the lens of solidarity with Palestinians. The Israeli violence against Palestinians resonates deeply with him, and with his uncle, Maher's father, on a personal level.

Image: Habes Ali Hussein al-Jazi (Abu Tawfiq), cousin of Maher al-Jazi and spokesman for the al-Jazi clan (Image: Rima Najjar)



The Huwaitat tribe is one of the prominent Bedouin tribes in Jordan with a rich history and considerable influence in Jordanian society. The tribe inhabits areas of present-day southern Jordan, the Sinai Peninsula, the Naqab, and northwestern Saudi Arabia. They have several branches, including the Ibn Jazi, the Abu Tayi, the Anjaddat, and the Sulaymanniyin.

The Huwaitatis have a strong presence in the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF), just as they did in the Arab Legion, the most effective Arab force during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war that evolved into the JAF. The tribe's leaders are respected figures and play a crucial role in local and national politics. The Huwaitat tribe has also been involved in recent disputes in Saudi Arabia, where members of the tribe have resisted forced displacement due to the NEOM mega-city project. Many members of the tribe have faced arrests and lengthy prison sentences for resisting eviction there.

It's interesting to note here that a leader of the Abu Tayi clan (a branch of the Huwaitat tribe as mentioned above), was a key ally of T.E. Lawrence and Prince Faisal. The Ibn Jazi branch, on the other hand, remained loyal to the Ottoman Empire. Perhaps even then, the al-Jazis knew something about devious British ways that others didn't.

September 10, the day I visited the al-Jazi clan, was parliamentary election day for the House of Representatives (*Majlis al-Nuwwab*) in the National Assembly (Senate members are appointed by the king). The poll took place at the military school Maher al-Jazi attended as a child before being drafted into the army. The turnout there was high (59% in Maan as opposed to the national average of 32.25%) with children and youth milling about outside the compound of the school excitedly in a festive mood.

This was an important election for the Huwaitat tribe and their allies in the south of Jordan who backed the Islamist party (aka the Islamic Brotherhood), as it was the most active on the street in support of the Palestinians and organized anti-Israel marches, most of which called for the cancellation of the 1994 peace agreement with Israel.

The al-Jazi clan is looking for strong representation in the government to have, among other things, a significant influence on foreign policy and to give teeth to their demand that Israel release Maher al-Jazi's body. They are also seeking information about Hussein al-Nuaimat and Musleh al-Huwaitat, the two Jordanian truck drivers who continue to be detained by the Israeli occupation in connection with the operation.

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**اطلقوا سراح ابنائنا  
من سجون الإحتلال  
حسين النعيمات  
ومصلح الحويطات**

**Release our sons form the  
prison of occupation  
Hussain Naimat  
Musleh Houitat**



Poster calls for the release of Hussein Nuaimat and Musleh Huwaitat: "Release our sons."

At present, despite the gains the Islamic Brotherhood has made in this election, the party may not have a significant impact on foreign policy files and Jordanian orientations in general, because that requires, according to analysts, a stronger government.

In Jordan, the executive authority is vested in the king, and political parties often have limited influence. Elections are held for the House of Representatives every four years, but the king can dissolve the parliament and call for early elections.

In the name of streamlining the Jordanian government and making it more efficient and less



partisan, the 2021 constitutional amendments centralized the decision-making power in the hands of the king, allowing him to appoint the head of the army, judiciary, intelligence service, and gendarmerie without the need for recommendations from the prime minister or relevant ministers. This centralization undermines the principles of a parliamentary monarchy and reduces the accountability of the government to the people.

Given King Abdullah II's heightened sense of solidarity with Palestinians and awareness of increased pressure on the Jordanian government to take a more assertive stance in support of Palestinian rights, this election marks a significant shift in political engagement and opposition discourse in Jordan. Consolidation of authority in the king can either stabilize governance or fuel demands for democratic reforms. It looks like the situation in Jordan is heading towards the latter proposition.

While the culture of resistance in Jordan is distinct from that in Palestine, it shares common themes of seeking justice, political reform, and solidarity with oppressed groups. Resistance is a natural response to oppression and injustice.

The Jordanian government cannot continue to criminalize resistance, as it has been doing, contrary to the law and the constitution of the Armed Forces, which affirms the right of the Jordanian people to resist the occupation. Nor can it continue to go against the moral, humanitarian, Arab and Islamic duty towards the ongoing genocide in the Gaza Strip and the brutal aggression of the occupation on the West Bank. But more importantly, there is Jordan's national interest to consider. The government is aware of Benjamin Netanyahu's announced plans to annex parts of the fertile strip called the Jordan Valley and his government's desire to transfer Palestinians from the West Bank to Jordan.

Measures taken by the Jordanian government to achieve and maintain political stabilization in accordance with US and Israeli visions of hegemony in the region (i.e., in accordance with the Jordanian Prevention of Terrorism Law), have had the opposite effect and increased the will to resist among the Jordanian population. Such measures include the administrative detention in 2023 of three Jordanian citizens, Khaled al-Majdalawi, Ibrahim Jabr and Huzaifa Jabr.

These three men are charged with attempting to supply weapons to the Palestinian resistance in the occupied West Bank. According to [Shehab News](#), since 2007, the Jordanian State Security Court has incriminated about 37 people in 13 cases for carrying out an act of resistance against the Israeli occupation or supporting the resistance, including four people still serving their sentences and three who were recently referred to the State Security Court, ranging from one year of temporary hard labor to life hard labor.

In speaking about Martyr Maher al-Jazi, Jordanian actress and director Juliet Awwad, a Christian, used the metaphor of a broken rosary, likening the heroic and patriotic operation of Maher al-Jazi to the first bead that will spill out of a broken rosary to be quickly followed by all the others. A broken rosary often represents pain, sorrow and suffering and prompts reflection on faith and one's spiritual journey in life. Whatever kind of rosary King Abdullah II is holding must surely break soon.

Following, I am sharing more of the pictures I took during my visit to Maher al-Jazi's hometown on September 10, 2024:



Maher al-Jazi's children behind his home (Image: Rima Najjar)





The front of Maher al-Jazi's home and his children (Image: Rima Najjar)



Shadi Thiab Hussein al-Jazi, Maher's younger brother. Right: Qader, 14-year-old son of Maher al-Jazi (Image: Rima Najjar)

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This article was originally published on the author's [blog site](#).

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*Featured image: Poster shows Thiab Hussein al-Awdat al-Jazi (Abu Sami) with the image of his martyred son Maher behind him and the legend: "My son's blood is not any more precious than the blood of Palestinians." (Image: Rima Najjar)*

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