

The Israeli Broadcast Authority Banned the “Reading Out of Names” of Children Killed in Gaza

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The Israeli Broadcast Authority and the Israeli Supreme Court knew in advance what the reaction would be to a radio advertisement reading out the names of children killed in Gaza, and that's why they banned it.

By doing so they've taken a bit of our freedom.

Muhammad Malakeh, two years old; Siraj 'Abd al-'Al, eight years old; Sarah al-'Eid, nine years old; Saher Abu Namus, four years old; Ahmad Mahdi, 15 years old.

Some facts should not be permitted to be broadcast in public. Merely hearing them is dangerous: It could cause people to have thoughts, doubts or compassion. If this danger comes to pass, what would become of us?

Safaa Malakeh, six years old; Muhammad 'Arif, 10 years old; Nidal Nawasrah, four years old; Muhammad Nawasrah, two years old; Miriam al-'Arja, 10 years old.

What sort of thoughts would enter the minds of those who hear even a few names from that forbidden list? It's difficult to estimate. As a matter of fact, it is a complete mystery as to how humans would respond upon hearing the names of foreign children, Palestinian children - more than 500 under the age of 15 - who were killed in Gaza in the past few weeks. This mystery is part of what makes us free. When that mystery is solved in advance by the government, a part of what allows the public to be free is taken away. It is no longer a mystery, it is propaganda.

Abdallah Abu Ghazal, five years old; Yasmin al-Mutawaq, four years old; Abd a-Rahman Khatab, five years old; Anas 'Alaa al-Batsh, 10 years old; Amal al-Batsh, two years old.



Image: Palestinians prepare the body of a baby in Kamal Edwan Hospital's morgue after an attack on Beit Hanoun elementary school killed at least 17 people, Jabalyia, Gaza Strip, July 24. The school was being used as a shelter by 800 people at the time (photo: Anne Paq/Activestills)

Without being able to hear for ourselves, we have no choice but to rely on the thoughts of those who appointed themselves the deciders of what we can and cannot hear: the lawyers of the Israeli Broadcast Authority (IBA), the attorney general of Israel and a few Supreme Court judges, who disqualified the broadcast of a B'Tselem radio advert [Hebrew]:

Here is the rumination of the appeals committee of the IBA: "The emphasis of the 'Palestinian children' issue alone may strengthen the Palestinian claim that Israel is responsible for their deaths, while Israel's stance is that Hamas is responsible for the death of civilians."

In other words, stating the facts creates guilt. Psychologists would perhaps call this the "return of the repressed."

When the attorney general listened to the names, thoughts entered his mind: "The advert in question voices a message and a stand, and not just mere facts - in light of its content, how it is delivered and read quietly and slowly..." That is to say, perhaps a cheerful reading of the dead children's names, in a manner that would not provoke forbidden thoughts, is, in fact, the appropriate solution?



In conclusion, Supreme Court Judge Elyakim Rubinstein says: "This is the place to clarify in a lucid voice first that, as human beings, we frown upon the death of innocents in Gaza, let alone children."

Later on the court decision follows: "Israel is aware, and must be aware, of the distress of innocents on the other side - children included... as an attorney general myself, I have dealt with that quite often."

It is interesting to listen to the "lucid" voice of a supreme court judge, the coherent and deciding voice that rules whether other tones - sober, complex, relaxing or agitating - will be heard, or not; the voice that itself admits that for years and years it has held a position devoid of repression or guilt, since it is never our fault and there must never ever be any doubt, contemplation or empathy on the matter.

Hussein Kaware', 13 years old; Basem Kaware', 10 years old; Muhammad Kaware', 13 years old; Abdallah Kaware', 12 years old; Qasem Kaware', 12 years old.

That's the reality we live in nowadays, and here is the bottom line: There is no one in Israel who will enable the reading of the names of Siraj, Nidal, Sarah or Amal. More than anything, this is an appalling and heartbreaking statement on the current state of affairs.

"And Reuben returned unto the pit; and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit; and he rent his clothes. And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?" (Genesis, 37:29)

And we, whither shall we go?

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