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Opinion// The Israeli Military First Took His Legs, Then His Life

On Friday, a sharpshooter shot and killed Ibrahim Abu Thuraya, a Gazan double amputee, as he protested from his wheelchair near the Israeli border



Wheelchair-bound Palestinian demonstrator Ibrahim Abu Thuraya, who according to medics was killed later on Friday during clashes with Israeli troops near the Gaza border, December 15, 2017.

The Israeli army sharpshooter couldn't target the lower part of his victim's body — Ibrahim Abu Thuraya didn't have one. The 29-year-old, who worked washing cars and who lived in Gaza City's Shati refugee camp, lost both legs from the hips down in an

Israeli airstrike during Operation Cast Lead in 2008. He used a wheelchair to get around. On Friday the army finished the job: A sharpshooter aimed at his head and shot him dead.

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The images are horrific: Abu Thuraya in his wheelchair, pushed by friends, calling for protests against the U.S. declaration recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital; Abu Thuraya on the ground, crawling toward the fence behind which the Gaza Strip is imprisoned; Abu Thuraya waving a Palestinian flag; Abu Thuraya holding up both arms in the victory sign; Abu Thuraya carried by his friends, bleeding to death; Abu Thuraya's corpse laid out on a stretcher: The End.

The army sharpshooter couldn't aim at the lower part of his victim's body on Friday so he shot him in the head and killed him.

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It can be assumed that the soldier realized that he was shooting at a person in a wheelchair, unless he was shooting indiscriminately into the crowd of protesters.

Abu Thuraya posed no danger to anyone: How much of a danger could a double amputee in a wheelchair, imprisoned behind a fence, constitute? How much evil and insensitivity does it take in order to shoot a handicapped person in a wheelchair? Abu Thuraya was not the first, nor will he be the last, Palestinian with disabilities to be killed by soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces — the most moral soldiers in the world, or not.

The killing of the young disabled man passed almost without mention in Israel. He was one of three demonstrators killed Friday, just another humdrum day. One can easily imagine what would happen if Palestinians had killed an Israeli who used a wheelchair. What a furor would have erupted, with endless ink spilled on their cruelty and barbarism. How many arrests would have resulted, how much blood would have flowed in retaliation. But when soldiers behave barbarically, Israel is silent and shows no interest. No shock, no shame, no pity. An apology or expression of regret or remorse is the stuff of fantasy. The idea of holding those responsible for this criminal killing accountable is also delusional. Abu Thuraya was a dead man once he dared take part in his people's protest and his killing is of no interest to anyone, since he was a Palestinian.

The Gaza Strip has been closed to Israeli journalists for 11 years, so one can only imagine the life of the car-washer from Shati before his death — how he recovered from his injuries in the absence of decent rehabilitation services in the besieged Strip, with no chance of obtaining prosthetic legs; how he rumbled along in an old wheelchair, not an electric one, in the sandy alleys of his camp; how he continued washing cars despite his

disability, since there are no other choices in Shati, including for people with disabilities; and how he continued struggling with his friends, despite his disability.

No Israeli could imagine life in that cage, the biggest in the world, the one called the Gaza Strip. It is part of a never-ending mass experiment on human beings.

One should see the desperate young people who approached the fence in Friday's demonstration, armed with stones that couldn't reach anywhere, throwing them through the cracks in the bars behind which they are trapped.

These young people have no hope in their lives, even when they have two legs to walk on. Abu Thuraya had even less hope.

There is something pathetic yet dignified in the photo of him raising the Palestinian flag, given his dual confinement — in his wheelchair and in his besieged country.

The story of Abu Thuraya is an accurate reflection of the circumstances of his people. Shortly after he was photographed, his tormented life came to an end. When people cry out every week: "Netanyahu to Maasiyahu [prison]" someone should finally also start talking about The Hague.