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Merciless Israeli mobs are hunting Palestinians

by Rania Khalek

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Right-wing Israelis rioting in Jerusalem earlier this month.

All eyes are on Gaza, where the death toll from Israel's merciless bombing campaign has topped 1,000.

But back in Jerusalem, where sixteen-year-old Muhammad Abu Khudair was burned alive by Jewish vigilantes in a "revenge killing" incited by Israeli politicians early this month, right-wing lynch mobs continue to roam the streets in search of Arabs to attack.

Their most recent victims are twenty-year-old Palestinians Amir Shwiki and Samer Mahfouz from the Beit Hannina neighborhood in occupied East Jerusalem. The pair were severely beaten into unconsciousness on Friday night by Israeli youths armed with iron bars and baseball bats.

Mahfouz told the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* that he and Shwiki were on their way to the light rail when they were stopped by "a man [coming] from the direction of Neve Yaakov," an illegal Jewish-only Israeli settlement in occupied East Jerusalem.

"He said give me a cigarette. I told him I don't have any, and he heard [from my accent] I'm Arab and went away, coming back with his friends, maybe twelve people. They had sticks and iron bars and they hit us over the head," Mahfouz recounted.

Haaretz added, "According to the victims, police officers that arrived at the scene did not call an ambulance, and they were instead evacuated by passersby to receive medical treatment at a Beit Khanina [sic] clinic. They were later rushed to Hadassah University Hospital, Ein Karem in serious condition."

Though investigators believe the beating to be racially motivated, no one has been arrested.

Police complicity



Amir Shwiki and Samer Mahfouz were hospitalized after being beaten by Israeli settlers Friday.

Israeli police have a pattern of ignoring hate crimes against Palestinians, as was the case immediately following the reported kidnapping of Muhammad Abu Khudair. Police did not immediately respond when his family called to report that he had been kidnapped and they actively thwarted efforts to locate those who murdered him by spreading false rumors that Abu Khudair was murdered by his family in an “honor killing” over his sexuality.

Police also neglected to respond when Abu Khudair’s murderers tried to kidnap ten-year-old Mousa Zalum from the same East Jerusalem neighborhood two days earlier.

When police aren’t busy ignoring Jewish vigilante violence against Palestinians, they are actively participating in it.

On Thursday night last week, police teamed up with a Jewish mob assaulting two Palestinian men while they were delivering bread to grocery markets on Jaffa Street in West Jerusalem from their van.

The men — identified by Ma’an News Agency as twenty-year-old Amir Mazin Abu Eisha and Laith Ubeidat (age not specified) — were encircled and beaten with empty bottles by a mob of some twenty to thirty Israelis, according to their attorney, Khaldun Nijim.

Rather than assist the men as they were being attacked, Nijim told Ma’an, “The Israeli police stopped them in their van and pointed guns at them.”

Nijim added: “After they drove away a few meters, the police shot at them. They then stopped and were assaulted again.”

After barring an ambulance from transferring Abu Eisha, who sustained head and ear injuries, to the hospital for medical treatment, police detained the two Palestinian men at the Russian Compound police station close to the scene and charged them with “having a knife and obstructing the work of police,” according to Nijim.

Abu Eisha and Ubeidat were eventually released on bail but are currently under ten days of house arrest. Meanwhile, several of the mob participants filed complaints against their victims, accusing the men of trying to assault them with a knife.

Racist activism on the rise

The same Ma’an article notes that in Jerusalem, “Jaffa street has been covered with flyers warning Arabs not to ‘touch’ Jewish women in recent weeks, as part of a right-wing Jewish campaign to prevent mixing among Jews and Arabs.”

The fliers were probably designed and distributed by Lehava, a fanatical anti-miscegenation group whose sister organization, Hemla, receives state funding to “rescue” Jewish women from romantic relationships with Arab men.

Leanne Gale, an anti-racist activist living in Jerusalem, recently reported on her blog that Lehava has been holding nightly gatherings in West Jerusalem's Zion Square and littering all of Jerusalem with stickers and fliers in Arabic that state, among other things, "Do not even think about a Jewish woman."

Other catchphrases adorned on Lehava T-shirts and stickers include "Jews love Jews" and "The women of Israel for the nation of Israel," according to Gale.

Fascist mobs from Haifa to Tel Aviv

Violent mobs of anti-Arab fascists aren't isolated to Jerusalem.

Last week in Haifa, the Arab deputy mayor and his son were brutally beaten by a mob of Jewish supremacists chanting "death to Arabs" and "death to leftists" in response to a rally against the Gaza onslaught. Police did nothing to stop the assault.

Similar fascist demonstrators have surfaced in supposedly liberal Tel Aviv as well, verbally and physically attacking Palestinians and leftists protesting the war on Gaza.

Israeli blogger Elizabeth Tsurkov, who has been regularly attending and live-tweeting the racist attacks against anti-war demonstrators in recent weeks, heard a new racist chant mocking the more than two hundred children slaughtered by Israel's merciless bombing campaign in Gaza: "Tomorrow there's no school in Gaza, they don't have any children left."