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A Courageous Palestinian Has Died, Shrouded in Stones

Jonathan Pollak

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Mustafa Tamimi threw stones. Unapologetically and sometimes fearlessly. Not on that day alone, but nearly every Friday. He also concealed his face. Not for fear of the prison cell, which he had already come to know intimately, but in order to preserve his freedom, so he could continue to throw stones and resist the theft of his land. He continued to do this until the moment of his death.

According to British newspaper The Daily Telegraph, in response to the reports about the shooting of Tamimi, the spokesman of the GOC Southern Command wondered on his Twitter account: “What was Mustafa thinking running after a moving jeep while throwing stones #fail.” Thus, simply and mockingly, the spokesman explained why Tamimi was to blame for his own death.

Mustafa Tamimi, from the village of Nabi Saleh — son to Ikhlas and Abd al-Razak, brother to Saddam and Ziad, to the twins Oudai and Louai and sister Ola — was shot in the head at close range on Friday. Hours later, at 9:21 on Saturday morning, he died of his wounds. A gas grenade was fired at him from an armored mili-

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tary Jeep at a distance of only a few meters. It was not out of fear that the person who did fire the shot hit him. He poked the barrel of the rifle through the door of the armored vehicle and fired with clear intent. The shooter is a soldier. His identity remains unknown and perhaps it will always remain unknown. Maybe this is for the best. Identifying him and punishing him would only serve to whitewash the crimes of the entire system. As if the indifferent Israeli civilian, the sergeant, the company commander, the battalion commander, the brigade commander, the division commander, the defense minister and the prime minister had no part in the shooting.

The army spokesman was right. Mustafa died because he threw stones; he died because he dared to speak a truth, with his hands, in a place where the truth is forbidden. Any discussion of the manner of the shooting, its legality and the orders on opening fire, infers that the landlord is forbidden to expel the trespasser. Indeed, the trespasser is allowed to shoot the landlord.

Mustafa's body is lying lifeless because he had the courage to throw stones on the 24th anniversary of the first intifada, which begot the Palestinian children of the stones. His brother Oudai is imprisoned at Ofer Prison and was not allowed to attend the funeral, because he too dared to throw stones. And his sister was not allowed to be at his bedside in his final moments, even though she is not suspected of having thrown stones, but because she is a Palestinian.

Mustafa was a brave man killed because he threw stones and refused to be afraid of a soldier bearing arms, sitting safely in the military jeep covered in armor. On the day Mustafa died, the frozen silence roaming the valley was only slightly less chilling than the shrilling sound of his mother's laments which fell upon it occasionally.

Thousands of stone-throwers followed him at his funeral. He was lowered into his grave and stones covered his body. Soldiers stood at the entrance to his village. Even the anguish and solitude

of separation was intolerable for the army, who set their soldiers and arms to shower mourners with teargas as they went down to village lands following the funeral. While the soldier who shot Mustafa is at large, six of the demonstrators were put behind bars.

Mustafa, we walk behind your body with our heads bowed and eyes full of tears. We cherish you, because you died for throwing stones and we did not.