

A Palestinian Teen Was Standing on the Street With His Scooter When Israeli Troops Shot Him Dead

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A boy stands on a Tul Karm street watching as Israeli troops move toward the city's refugee camp. Soldiers fire shots from hundreds of meters away and one of their bullets slams into the boy's chest. Qais Nasrallah was 14 at his death



Qais Nasrallah's brother, Leith, outside their home. A mourning poster for Qais is on the wall. Credit: Alex Levac

Here's where Qais stood, and here lies his scooter - an old Bird electric model that his father bought him a year ago for 400 shekels (about \$115), making him the envy of all the kids in the neighborhood. Now all that remains is an improvised monument with a photo of the deceased on this traffic island, opposite the Mega supermarket and the Mega-Land amusement park, near the center of Tul Karm in the northern West Bank. The road around the island, leading out of the city in the direction of the village of Shuweika, is normally busy and crowded, but it was virtually deserted last Monday when we stopped there to reconstruct the circumstances in which 14-year-old Qais Nasrallah was killed. On Sunday, the Israel Defense Forces had once again raided the two local refugee camps, Tul Karm and Nur Shams. People are afraid to be out on the streets, even if they're a few kilometers away from the sites of clashes between the army and armed militants. That was also the case on April 19, a Friday, when soldiers killed Qais.

As we stood on the traffic island this week, with Abdulkarim Sadi, a field researcher for the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem, an electric scooter suddenly approached us. The rider, a young man in a military-style windbreaker and jeans, was 19-year-old Leith, Qais' eldest sibling - there are also three sisters - who had been given his dead brother's scooter. Leith placed the scooter on the spot where his brother was shot; momentarily, it became part of the memorial. The signs around the traffic circle nearby are all covered with photographs of Qais. A sculpture of butterflies stands across the way.

The dead boy's home is about 100 meters from where he was killed. Sadi estimates that the shot that

killed Qais was fired from a distance of 320 meters. At that range, there was no way the kid with the scooter could have posed a threat of any kind to the soldiers. But these are days of war in Gaza, and troops in the West Bank also apparently like to shoot and kill indiscriminately, like their buddies in the Strip.



Qais Nasrallah's brother, Leith, and mother, Samah, this week. The father, Fathi, wasn't home because he was trapped by an army siege of the Tul Karm camp. An orderly and a paramedic, he goes out to offer help to the wounded when the IDF invades the city or its camps. Credit: Alex Levac

We wanted to meet Qais' bereaved father, Fathi Nasrallah, but he wasn't home on Monday. Since the previous evening, he had been trapped by an army siege of the Tul Karm camp. Fathi, 44, is an orderly in the city's Thabet Thabet Government Hospital and also a Red Crescent volunteer paramedic. Whenever the IDF invades the city or its camps - and recently that has been happening with greater frequency and intensity - Fathi goes out to offer help to the wounded. Last Sunday evening was no exception; he managed to get into the camp but was stuck there after a closure was imposed on it and was unable to leave.

We head for the family's home. The ancient eucalyptus trees outside evoke a pleasant natural setting, but in the ditch along the road, which was once perhaps a stream, a stench rises from the grayish sewage that cascades down from the city of Nablus. The family lives not far from the sewage canal, though the view from Leith and Qais' room is of a green field of zucchini plants. On the occasion of our visit, the family had placed mourning posters on Qais' bed.

On Thursday, April 18, the IDF carried out a particularly lethal operation in the Nur Shams camp, which brought about the death of 14 inhabitants, some of them armed. One victim, a man in his 60s with a heart ailment, Nimr Grafi, died in the raid after the army prevented his evacuation to a hospital. His body lay in his family's home for two days before they were able to bury it. When the IDF is around, no one is allowed to leave their house.



The late teen's bedroom. He dreamed of being a mechanic, his mother says; everyone loved him. Credit: Alex Levac

Late in the afternoon on the next day, Qais asked his mother if he could go out for some air and to see what was happening, from a distance, in the refugee camps. His mother, Samah, 40, tried to dissuade him, she told us this week, clad in black, but Qais promised he would stay near home and far from the clashes - and he was as good as his word.

He left the house a few minutes before 6 P.M. Leith had gone out earlier. Qais rode his scooter; he went everywhere with it. There aren't many electric scooters in Tul Karm. He stood on the traffic island and watched as Israeli forces moved along the road toward the refugee camp from Moshav Nitzanei Oz, in Israel proper, about 300 meters away. Around him were a few dozen other locals, also watching what was going on.

"Don't stand here, it's dangerous, they'll shoot you like they did Qais," Leith, the grieving brother, told us bitterly this week.

As Leith stood on that Friday a few dozens meters away from his brother, a bulldozer and an army jeep progressed across an intersection on the road leading into the camp. On the other side of the intersection, according to Sadi, the field researcher, shots were heard that were apparently aimed at the military vehicles. In response, soldiers in the bulldozer, or the jeep, aimed their fire for some reason at the spot where the boy with the scooter was standing. According to Sadi's investigation, no shots were fired at the troops from this direction.



Palestinian flags and memorial posters bearing photos of Qais Nasrallah, who was shot to death on a traffic island in Tul Karm last month. Credit: Alex Levac

Qais was shot sometime after 7 P.M. His father was doing his shift in the hospital, his mother was home. Leith heard that someone had been wounded not far from him, but only discovered that it was his brother when he drew closer. He called their father, who waited, appalled, at the hospital for his son to be brought in. Qais was apparently dead on arrival; resuscitation efforts were made, but in vain. According to the hospital's medical report, Qais was shot in the left side of his chest and the bullet exited through his back.

Today his mother and the others in the family wear a pendant with a photo of the dead boy. Samah talks about her son without tears: He was in eighth grade at the city's Hamdallah School. He had dreamed of becoming a garage mechanic, she says; everyone loved him.

The IDF Spokesperson's Unit this week provided this comment: "The IDF does not shoot deliberately at noncombatant civilians. During the entry of forces to Nur a-Shams from the direction of Tul Karm, armed militants from Tul Karm opened fire massively at our forces, who responded with gunfire. Afterward the death of the youth Qais Nasrallah was reported. The circumstances of the case are being clarified."

Sheets with Nike logos cover the beds in the boys' bedroom. The zucchini plants are in bloom outside. Everything seems so tranquil.

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P.S.

- Haaretz. May 11, 2024:

<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/twilight-zone/2024-05-11/ty-article-magazine/.highlight/a-palestinian-teen-was-standing-on-the-street-when-israeli-troops-shot-him-dead/0000018f-6483-d3cc-a3ff-ee9b74ab0000>