

Haaretz | Opinion

# Opinion | What About the Palestinian Hostages?

Friday 17 May 2024, by [LEVY Gideon](#) (Date first published: 16 May 2024).

**A Palestinian from Gaza dies in prison, yet the Israel Prison Service does not think it should report the circumstances of his death to the public because he was not a citizen of the state**

*Photo: Detainees at the Sde Teiman facility.*

Dr. Adnan Al-Bursh was the head of the orthopedic wing at Shifa Hospital in Gaza City. During the war, he had to wander from one hospital to the next, as they were all destroyed by the IDF. He has not been back to his home in Jabalya since the start of the war, and last December all trace of him disappeared. Recently, it transpired that he had died in an Israeli jail, apparently due to the torture of beatings during interrogation.

The last people to see him were other doctors and detainees who have been released. They told Haaretz correspondents Jack Khoury and Bar Peleg that they had barely recognized him. "It was clear he had been through hell, torture, humiliation, and sleep deprivation. He wasn't the person we knew; he was a shadow of himself." ([Haaretz, May 12.](#))

A photo of him published after his death showed an elegant man. A photo from during the war showed his hospital gown covered in blood. He had a wife, Jasmine, and they had six children. He studied medicine in Romania and did a residency in the United Kingdom. The rapper Tamer Nafar wrote a beautiful lament for him. (Haaretz, May 6.)

A doctor, a hospital ward director, was beaten and tortured to death in an Israeli jail. That did not set off alarms here. Nearly all his physician colleagues, including heads of the medical establishment and those who take part in the horrific [torture ongoing at Sde Teiman base](#) and in Israeli prisons, did not say a word. A department director was beaten to death.

So what? After all, almost 500 doctors and medical staffers have been killed in the war and their fate failed to arouse any attention. So why should [Al-Bursh](#)'s death attract any attention? Because he was a department director? No war crime committed by Israel in Gaza has aroused any feelings here in Israel, with the exception of the joy felt by the bloodthirsty right-wing.

On top of the doctor's death came another heinous act: the response of the authorities. The Shin Bet was silent as usual. Ex-Shin Bet officers are now star commentators on television, asked to show us the way, to give us their opinion, but the Shin Bet never talks about those it has interrogated and tortured. The IDF shirked responsibility; the doctor was only "processed" at an army detention facility, and was immediately transferred to the Shin Bet interrogation facility in Kishon, and from there to Ofer Prison, which is under the charge of the Israel Prison Service. The IPS response was pure audacity: "The service does not address the circumstances of the deaths of detainees who are

not Israeli citizens.”

A man dies in prison, yet the Israel Prison Service does not think it should report the circumstances of his death to the public because he was not a citizen of the state. In other words, the lives of those who are not citizens have no value in Israeli prisons. We should remember this when an [Israeli is arrested in Cyprus for rape](#), or in Peru for drugs, and we are outraged by the conditions of his detention. We remember this even more poignantly when we complain to the world, and rightly so, about the fate of our hostages.



*Dr. Adnan Al-Bursh, who was the head of orthopedics at Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City*

How can people identify with the pain felt by Israelis over the fate of the hostages, when these same Israelis turn out to be cold-hearted and indifferent to the fate of the other side’s hostages?

Why isn’t there a single banner in Tel Aviv’s “[Hostage Square](#)” calling for an investigation into the killing of the doctor from Gaza? Is his blood less red than the blood of the Israeli hostages who died? Why should the whole world take an interest and work only for our hostages, and not for the Palestinian hostages, whose conditions of imprisonment and whose deaths in Israeli prisons should horrify everyone?

**Gideon Levy**

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**P.S.**

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