

The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of **Global Dialogue and Democracy**. MIFTAH
المبادرة الفلسطينية لتعميق الحوار العالمي والديمقراطية



“Eilat Operation”

The Palestinian Media coverage of the Eilat Suicide Operation

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Media Monitoring Unit Team

Project Coordinator: Ruham Nimri

Media Analyst: Mansour Tahboub

Information Coordinator: Ala'a Karajh

Administrative Assistant: Nahed Abu Sneineh

Monitoring Unit: Abeer Ismail, Belal Ladadwi, Rawan Hamad.

Steering Committee:

Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, Dr. Lily Feidy, Khalil Shaheen, Atta Al- Qaymari, Imad Al-Asfar, Bisan Abu Ruqti, Juman Quneis, Nahed Abu T'eimeh, Joharah Baker, Mousa Qous

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“The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy-**MIFTAH**”



P. O. Box: 69647

Jerusalem 95908

Tel. No: Jerusalem 972 2 5851842 Ramallah 9722 2 989490

Fax: 972 2 5835184 Ramallah 972 2 2989492

E. Mail: info@miftah.org

Webpage: www.miftah.org

Introduction

This is the second publication in a special series issued by MIFTAH as part of the second phase of “Monitoring the Media Coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict” project, and which MIFTAH implements on the Palestinian side. The project is implemented in cooperation with the Center for the Protection of Democracy in Israel KESHEV which monitors and analyzes the coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the Israeli media.

The choice of the subject of this publication “Eilat Operation” comes as a reminder of a previous stage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This operation took place unexpectedly, in an area that is considered “under security closure.” Stories about this operation touched on Egypt and Jordan. The outcome and consequences were limited and so was its media coverage. However, such media coverage is worth scrutiny, since it touched on some important issues related to the style and language of the Palestinian media discourse. Hence, it constitutes a suitable model for a special and limited publication that monitors, studies and analyzes media coverage.

The media coverage of the three main newspapers, namely Al-Quds, Al-Ayyam and Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah was monitored for four days, starting January 29, 2007, the same day of the operation, and ending February 1, 2007.

The Suicide Operation

According to the official Israeli story, the operation took place on the morning of Monday January 29, 2007, as a Palestinian blew himself up inside a bakery at a commercial area in the city of Eilat, in south Israel. He was carrying a bag full of explosives, weighing eight kilograms. The explosion caused the death of three persons, including the one who carried out the bombing, and wounded seven others. The operation came after around a nine-month break, as the last Suicide Operation took place on 17 April 2006 in Tel Aviv, in which a Palestinian blew himself up, killing 11 persons. Islamic Jihad adopted that operation.

Palestinian newspapers and the Palestinian Television (Palestine Broadcasting Corporation, PBC) addressed the event in the following manner:

Al-Quds January 30, 2007

Al-Quds published a report on the lower half of the front page covering four columns entitled:

3 people killed in a bombing operation in Eilat

This was preceded by the following subheading:

Olmert and Peretz threaten of a relentless war against factions and their leaders

Three related news items came under the same topic.

Pictures of paramedics and policemen at the bombing site were published covering 4 columns on the top of p. 26 of the same issue.

اولمرت وبيريتس يتوعدان بحرب بلا هوادة على رجال المنظمات وقادتهم

مقتل ٣ اشخاص في عملية تفجيرية بايلات

نقله بسيارته وطرده منها عندما شك فيه ضابط احتياط اسرائيلي يزوي تفاصيل رحلة منفذ عملية ايلات

بيت لاهيا - معا - روى ضابط قوات الاحتياط الاسرائيلية يوسي فلتينسكي التفاصيل الكاملة للرحلة التي نقل فيها منفذ العملية التفجيرية داخل مدينة ايلات. وقال الضابط انه نقل الشاب الذي هجر نفسه في احد مساكن مدينة ايلات بعدما اقتبته بتصرفاته شب منه مفارقة السيارة.

اغلاق معبر «طابا» بين مصر واسرائيل

القسم - (ا ف ب) - أعلنت ادارة الرقابة والطائرات الاسرائيلية ان مركز طابا الحدودي بين مصر واسرائيل المغلق بعد العملية التفجيرية التي وقعت اس في مرفأ ايلات على البحر الاحمر التي اسفرت عن سقوط ثلاثة قتلى.

وقالت متحدثة باسم الادارة وكالة فرانس برس ان مركز طابا الحدودي المغلق حتى اشعار آخر بعد العملية ياسر من مسؤولي الامن.

ردود فعل دولية وعربية منددة بعملية «ايلات» التفجيرية

واشنطن - نيويورك - رويترز - ا ف ب - ادان البيت الابيض العملية التفجيرية التي وقعت في متجمع ايلات الاسرائيلي اسفرت عن سقوط ثلاثة قتلى اس وقال ان المنطقة الفلسطينية مسؤولة عن منع مثل هذه الهجمات وقال توني بنتو المتحدث باسم البيت الابيض في بيان ان الاخطار هي التحرك ضد الارهاب سيؤثر لا محالة على العلاقات بين تلك الحكومة والجمهورية الدولي ويقوض مفاوضات الفلسطينيين باقامة دولة لهم.

تل ابيب - وكالات - تضاربت الأنباء حول المكان الذي انطلق منه منفذ العملية التفجيرية في ايلات التي اسفرت صباح اس عن مقتل ثلاثة اشخاص بالإضافة الى ممتلكات واصابة سبعة آخرين بجراح.

ولقد قام النقط بتفجير نفسه داخل مخيم بالبلدية وكان يحمل حقيبة مليئة بالمتفجرات قدرت ثمنها بثمانية كيلو غرامات وهرعت الى مكان التفجير قوات الشرطة وشرعت في عمليات البحث والتحقيق وشرعت سيارات الاسعاف في نقل جثث القتلى ولجرحى الى المستشفيات وتم اغلاق جميع الطرق الرئيسية فيما توعد رئيس الوزراء الاسرائيلي بزيار دفاعه عمير بيريتس بشأن حرب بلا هوادة على رجال المنظمات الفلسطينية المسلحة وقادتهم.

وقال اولمرت امام اعضاء حزبه كلابيا في الكنيست وسنكرس هذا لحدث بكل تفاصيله وستخصص النتائج منه تمهيدا لاعطاء التوجيهات لاجهزة الامنية للتعامل مع حرب بلا هوادة ضد رجال المنظمات المسلحة ولقاداتهم.

وقال اولمرت خلال هذه الفترة الطويلة، نعنا بهجوم نسبي الا انه كان هبوطا خلافا في ما يتعلق بالعمليات التفجيرية. خلال الاسابيع الاخيرة، احملنا اعتداءات عدة في امكنته مختلفة من البلاد، ولم نعلن عنها، في وقت تم اعتقال مسلحين مع اجزائهم النافذة وهم في طريقهم الى تنفيذ عملياتهم.

بما يتبنا انفس المنظمة ارجسي التي رتك اغشية مرشحة قاد حفي في صيادي واخطي جنتي.

نصي حاجة فاطمة

تل - تافيس - يزيد من الحزن والاس بفس ال حمد عامة وال الهندي و ال عربي والقربا وهم والسياسم في الوطن والخراج وزوج الفطيدة وم كرمياتها وعموم العائلة لتقديهم الفاضلة الرجوة

الطبعة خديجة فينيس مرابي

م روعي لزوجة الحاج احمد سعيد برويش الفندي التي انتقلت الى رحمة الله تعالى مساء اس الاثني ١٦/١١/٢٠٠٧ م عن عمر يناهز ٨٤ عاما) فنته في عشرة الف عز وجل لسمال الخير والبر والتقوى، وقد شيع جثمانها لفا حرم اس في مرفأ الاخير في قرية كل في سفرة القرية تقعد الله الفطيدة بواجب رحمتها واسكنها فسيح جنات كما تم نقل الجنازة الى مرفأ الاخير في مرفأ الاخير في قرية كل لمدة ٣ ايام ابتداء من اس الاثني ١٦/١١/٢٠٠٧ م والاساء في منزل الفطيدة وبلدة ٣ ايام من كرمه.

It is noted here that the newspaper used the expression “executor of the operation” in its reports referring to the person who carried out the operation, and described the operation as “bombing” citing Israeli reactions as well as Palestinian and international comments.

Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah January 30, 2007

Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah published a 3-column report on the operation to the lower right of the front page preceded by the following subheading:

Jordan denies that the ship who executed the operation entered its territories and Egypt tightens security measures in Sinai

The report had the following headline:

Three Israelis killed in an operation in Eilat implemented by a youth from Beit Lahiya and adopted by Al-Quds and Al-Aqsa Brigades

It added the following heading below and in smaller font:

Peretz threatens with escalating attacks, Olmert threatens of a relentless war, and Washington and European capitals condemn

A personal photo of the one who executed the operation was published.

It published a 3-column report beneath the news report on the bombing entitled:
An Israeli reserve officer describes details of his joint trip with the one who carried out Eilat operation

Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah also published the following news item over 2 columns:

The President condemns all operations against civilians

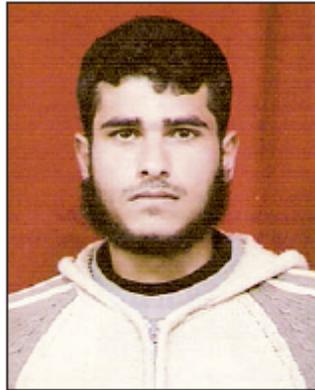
A colored sign appeared on its front page to indicate a report published on p. 9 and entitled:

Mother and wife of the executor of the operation describe the last moments preceding his sudden disappearance

الأردن ينفي دخول المنفذ الى اراضيه ومصر تعزز الاجراءات الأمنية في سيناء ثلاثة قتلى اسرائيليين في عملية بايلات نفذها شاب من بيت لاهيا وتبنتها سرايا القدس وشهداء الأقصى

بيرتس يهدد بمزيد من الهجمات وأولت يتوعد بحرب بلا هوادة وواشنطن وعواصم اوروبية تدين

أفراد في مخبز بمنجوع ايلات في اول هجوم من نوعه داخل اسرائيل منذ تسعة شهور. وقالت حركة الجهاد الاسلامي وكتائب شهداء الأقصى ان التفجير يأتي «ردا على تدنيس الأقصى المبارك» في القدس في اشارة الى عمليات التنقيب عن آثار في الاوتة الاخيرة والتي قال مسؤولون اسرائيليون انها لم تلحق أضرارا بالمسجد الأقصى. وهز الانفجار للخيز الواقع في منطقة سكنية بعيدة عن الغنادق على الشاطئ. وانتشرت أرغفة الخبز التي ما زالت موضوعة على الصواني على الرصيف للمطبخ بالدماء. وقال احد السكان ويدعى بني مازجيني لراديو اسرائيل «رايت رجلا يرتدي معطفا اسود اللون ومع حقيبته. بالنسبة لايلات حيث الاحوال الجوية حارة من المغرب رؤية شخص يسير مرتديا معطفا. قلت لنفسي لماذا يرتدي التتمة ص ١٦



الشهيد محمد السكسك

أطار تجدد مساعي احياء عملية السلام بين الاسرائيليين والفلسطينيين. وقالت الشرطة الاسرائيلية ان مهاجما فلسطينيا نفذ هجوما انتحاريا وقتل ثلاثة

غزة - ايلات - عواصم - الحياة الجديدة - وكالات - قتل ثلاثة اسرائيليين في عملية استشهد منقذها بمنجوع ايلات على البحر الاحمر امس وتبنتها «سرايا القدس» وكتائب شهداء الأقصى « خلال مؤتمر صحفي عقده في غزة واعلنتا خلاله ان منقذ العملية هو محمد فيصل السكسك (٢١ عاما) من بيت لاهيا، وانه وصل الى ايلات عن طريق الاردن، الامر الذي نفاه الاردن ودفع مصر الى تعزيز الاجراءات الأمنية في جنوب سيناء. بدورها اعلنت اسرائيل وعلى لسان وزير جيشها انها ستزيد من عملياتها الهجومية في حين توعد رئيس الوزراء الاسرائيلي يهودا اولمرت بشن «حرب بلا هوادة» على من وصفهم بـ «الارهابيين وقادتهم». وسارعت واشنطن كعادتها وعدد من الدول الأوروبية الى ادانة العملية التي جاءت قبل اربعة ايام من اجتماع اللجنة الرباعية في واشنطن والذي يأتي في

The newspaper used the expression “bombing” to describe the operation, but spoke about the “martyrdom” of its executor, writing “Martyr Mohammad Al-Siksik” underneath his photo.

Al-Ayyam Jan. 30, 2007

Al-Ayyam published a report on the bombing on the upper left side of the front page entitled:

Three Israelis killed in Eilat operation and Olmert threatens of a relentless war

It was preceded by the following introductory heading:

“martyr implementer” belongs to “Jihad”- Israel: He infiltrated Sinai coming from Gaza

The item appeared on 4 columns with photos of paramedics moving the body of one of the casualties of the blast.

Beneath the report, the following one-column news item appeared:

President condemns Eilat operation

The newspaper also published a 3-column report entitled:

Mother of Mohammad Al-Siksik: I bade him farewell on Saturday morning and am happy because he was not killed in the in-fighting

A photo of the mother holding the photo of her son, the executor of the operation, was published in the report.

In the details, the newspaper wrote: *The father of Istishhadi (Martyr) Mohammad Al-Siksik, the one who carried out the Eilat operation, said that his son had left three days ago, and he did not know his destination, indicating that he was surprised when he heard the news of the operation.*

المنفذ الشهيد ينتمي لـ 'الجهاد' - إسرائيل : تسلل من غزة عبر سيناء

مقتل ثلاثة إسرائيليين في عملية إيلات وأولمرت يتوعد بشن 'حرب بلا هوادة'



رجال الإسعاف ينقلون جثة شخص قتل في العملية التتجيرية التي وقعت في مخبز بمدينة إيلات، أمس. (الغدير)

إيلات، القدس، غزة، وكالات- قتل ثلاثة إسرائيليين في عملية تجريبية نفذها شاب من قطاع غزة في مخبز بمدينة إيلات المسماة جحشوب إسرائيل استشهد خلال الخطف، وسارعت إسرائيل لإطلاق التحقيقات بشأن حرب بلا هوادة ضد الإرهابيين وقادتهم.

وأعلنت إسرائيل القدس الجناح العسكري لحركة الجهاد الإسلامي، إن منفذ العملية هو الشاب محمد السكسك، وهو عضو في السرايا من سكان قطاع غزة، وأن كثنائب شهداء الأقصى وإسرائيل جيش المؤمنيين، وهي جماعة لم تكن معروفة من قبل، شاركتها في تنفيذ العملية.

ونشرت تساؤلات، أمس، حول كيفية وصول منفذ العملية إلى إيلات، إذ قال المتحدث باسم سرايا القدس والسلفي بابو الحمد: «إن التحضير لعملية إيلات كان سقداً».

[اللقمة من 17]

It can be observed how the newspaper described the one who carried out the operation as *martyr*, although the newspaper used the term 'bombing' to describe the operation itself on the same day. It used the word "bombing" to describe operations in which young people blow themselves up. But in this case, it used the word "martyr," and also used the word "martyr" several times on its front-page report, which was continued on p. 17.

Al-Quds January 31, 2007

Al-Quds published the following 3-column report on its front page:

Israel considers constructing a wall on borders with Egypt

It was preceded by the following subheading: *Following Eilat bombing*

The newspaper published on p.2 two small news items, one of them entitled:

One of Eilat casualties was Peruvian

The second item: *Israeli police declares maximum alert in Eilat*

The newspaper published on its Israeli Affairs page (14) a 5-column report taken from Yediot Ahronot and Ha'aretz under the following headline:

Israel will remain committed to the calm despite Eilat operation

It was preceded by the following subheading:

Peretz rejects an IDF recommendation to resume assassinations

It also published the following news item on p. 28 over 2 columns:

Chirac strongly condemns the bombing operation in Israel

Al-Ayyam February 1, 2007

On its front page, the newspaper published a 3-column report taken from Ha'aretz and entitled: *Israel plans to destroy infrastructure of Islamic Jihad while preserving calm*

Al-Quds published the same report on the same day on its front page covering 3 columns.

On the Opinion page 18 of Al-Ayyam, an article by Talal Okal was published with the following headline: *calm is fragile, so long as real causes are not addressed*

The article commended Eilat operation, as “it came to present at the practical level, a rectification of a wrong path the events have taken at the internal Palestinian level.” The author added that “the operation took place at the security-fortified city, which the Israeli security services boast to have remained away from Palestinian operations; regardless of the path that its executor Martyr Al-Siksik, and who comes from north Gaza, had taken, it was among the least criticized and least controversial operations; people actually received it with some degree of welcome and comfort.”

The author provided a lengthy analysis of what he considered to be strong messages and important dimensions, comparing it to Palestinian internal fighting. Generally speaking, he considered the operation in the interest of the Palestinian people as it sends positive, strong and important messages to Palestinians, Israelis, resistance factions and the international community.

The author is definitely free to express his opinion and to conclude and analyze the dimensions and aspects of the Suicide Operation. However, he did not address the other opinion, which criticizes, or even fully rejects Suicide Operations targeting civilians, and considers them to be detrimental, rather than beneficial, to the national Palestinian action. Although the author indicated that by saying, ‘It was among the least criticized or controversial operations among Palestinians,’ he was fully biased to the supporting point of view, as he did not mention for example that it was rejected at the international level, was widely condemned in the West and had a negative impact on the friendly Peruvian people since one of the casualties was Peruvian; the writer did not mention all that.

It is noted that the main newspapers were void of any articles that criticized the operation or objectively analyzed its outcome and consequences.

Palestine Television (PBC)

In its evening news bulletin, PBC broadcast President Abbas' condemnation of the operation as a second news item that said: "President Mahmoud Abbas denounced the bombing operation that took place this morning in Eilat. His Excellency told the press that the Palestinian Authority denounces all operations targeting civilians, while the President welcomed the Saudi Initiative." The broadcaster continued to say, "Upon his arrival in Cairo, President Abbas held a meeting with Minister Omar Suleiman, in which the grave conditions in Gaza Strip were discussed." The broadcaster continued to present news and reports; the ninth news item came as follows: "Three Israelis were killed today in a bombing of a commercial center in Eilat, south Israel. Israeli sources said that the bombing targeted a bakery in a commercial area. Al-Quds Brigades, the military wing of Islamic Jihad announced today that the executor of the operation is Mohammad Al-Siksik, from Gaza and is one of its members." The news broadcaster then continued to broadcast international news and reports.

It is noted that the operation was mentioned in two news items: the first was the President's condemnation, while the second indicated the number of people killed, its location, executor and the responsible party. It would have been more appropriate to have one comprehensive report on the operation that would include Palestinian, Israeli and international comments and reactions.

The next day, PBC did not mention any reports or news on the operation. The subject should have received more TV coverage and should have been dealt with objectively and comprehensively. It is not appropriate to give attention to President Abbas' denunciation of the operation, placing it at the beginning of the bulletin, apart from the original and crucial news item, which is the operation itself with all its details. It is also not right to ignore other Palestinian, Israeli and international reactions. Furthermore, PBC did not open discussion and analysis of the operation in any of its dialogues or interviews with experts or representatives of community groups or political organizations.

Results

First: Eilat operation came at a time of Palestinian infighting between Fateh and Hamas, hence interest was limited, at the Palestinian, Israeli, Arab and international levels; even translations of Israeli press published in Palestinian press on the topic were extremely limited and merely revolved around questioning the effectiveness of Israeli solutions to the so-called security problems, such as the Separation Wall or assassination of activists, and called for the need to reach a political solution of the conflict.

Second: The three newspapers addressed the bombing operation in a news report manner, publishing details, and most of the relevant reactions and comments. They did not conduct the necessary analysis and study, nor raise questions and discussions among Palestinians.

Third: Television coverage was absent, professionally weak and biased to the official presidential point of view. The operation did not receive the interest and follow up it deserved.

Fourth: Al-Ayyam and Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah resumed the use of the word ‘Istishhadia’ (adjective of martyr) to describe the Suicide Operation, and ‘martyr’ to describe the executor of the operation, a practice they had stopped earlier. The word may have the connotation of praise to the operation, incitement for its acceptance and encouragement for similar actions.

Recommendations

Based on the above, MIFTAH recommends the following:

- 1- Taking heed of the use of rational, realistic and professional language in the media discourse, and avoiding language that may connote incitement or praise for killing civilians
- 2- Exerting more effort to providing an independent, objective and comprehensive media discourse -particularly in television- ensuring satisfactory coverage and appropriate sequencing and follow up on issues, disseminating more accurate and comprehensive information, raising consciousness towards the opinions of others and helping to raise objective discussions on means of managing the struggle with Israel in a manner that serves the Palestinian public, rather than factional interests
- 3- Following up on such operations through analyses, opinions and investigation, not only to highlight them but also to subject them to scrutiny and criticism