

What kind of country throws a teen out of an IDF jeep?

Without money, a phone or identity papers, Fadel Tamimi's 14-year-old son was thrown out of an Israeli army jeep, in the dead of night, 15 kilometers away from home, after being interrogated.

By [Gideon Levy](#) and [Alex Levac](#) | May 1, 2014 | 4:22 PM



If a man falls from a plane in the middle of the night

God alone can raise him ...

God bends over him, lifts up his head

And gazes at him.

In God's eyes the man is a small child.

– “The End of the Fall,” by Dahlia Ravikovitch (translation by Chana Bloch)

And if a boy falls out of a jeep in the middle of the night?

Mohammed Tamimi, 14 years old, was thrown out of an Israel Defense Forces jeep late one night about three weeks ago, some 15 kilometers from his home. He did not have a cell-phone or money or identifying papers. A few hours earlier he had been detained by soldiers on suspicion of

throwing stones on the road near his village, Deir Nidham, hard by the settlement of Halamish, north of Ramallah.

The soldiers took him to the police station in Sha'ar Binyamin, an industrial park outside Jerusalem. After being interrogated and released, the teenager was taken in an IDF jeep and thrown out of it in the middle of nowhere, in the dark of night, to meet his fate.

Iron stairs lead to Tamimi's house, which we visited this past Monday, a rundown structure whose construction was never completed; the walls are plastered but unpainted, and neglect is rampant. His father, Fadel, is the village imam.

On April 9, after school, Mohammed went out to the family's small olive grove together with their flock of sheep. At around 2 P.M., three IDF jeeps showed up. The soldiers had come to take him into custody. What for? the boy asked. "For throwing stones," the soldiers said.

Tamimi denied doing the accusation. The soldiers told him to show them his hands. They judged them to be "dirty." But, Fadel wonders now, "he sat on the ground, so would his hands be clean? White? Would he have washed them with soap?"

The youth was taken to a nearby army base and then to the Sha'ar Binyamin police station, where he was questioned. His interrogators suspected he was the son of a different Fadel Tamimi, a relative from the nearby village of Nabi Saleh, which is known for its prolonged and determined struggle against the occupation.

They phoned Fadel from Nabi Saleh, who told them that Mohammed was not his son. In the meantime, the teenager's worried father, together with Fadel's brother Ahmed, went to the army base where he had first been taken, to find out what had happened. The soldiers at the entrance chased them off with threats and vulgar language, rifles at the ready.

"What do we care about your son? Get out of here!" they shouted at him, according to Fadel. He says he had never before been subjected to the kind of abuse he suffered at the entrance to the base. He returned home feeling humiliated, and with his concern mounting.

At about 9 P.M., a police officer who identified himself as Roni called Fadel and told him his son was in police custody and that he should come and get him. Fadel, who has no car, explained that he had no way to get there at such a late hour. The policeman promised that his son would be brought to the Nabi Saleh junction, not far from Deir Nidham.

Fadel then walked to the junction with Ahmed. They waited for about two hours, but in vain.

At around 11 P.M., a resident of a distant village, Abu Ayn, phoned Fadel and asked whether he was Mohammed's father. "I was driving on the road and found your son," the man said. How did you find him? "He was walking on the road, alone in the dark."

It turned out that the soldiers had released Mohammed at Bir Zeit junction, some 15 kilometers from home.

“They threw him out like a bag of garbage,” Fadel says now. “A child without a phone, without money, without papers, who doesn’t know where he is. If you’re thrown out of a jeep in the middle of the night, you don’t know where you are. If that man hadn’t found him, he would have gone on walking on the road the whole night. But to where? What kind of soldiers are these? What kind of police?”

The passerby from Abu Ayn who picked the frightened teenager up later drove him home.

“He was scared,” Fadel explains. “Naturally, he was scared. I asked him whether he had been given anything to eat, and he said he was given a small cookie. Something to drink? No.”

Mohammed later revealed that his interrogators suggested that he swear on the Koran that he hadn’t thrown stones, and Tamimi agreed. They warned him about the consequences of swearing falsely on the Koran. “Do you know what happens to someone who lies in an oath?” But the youth was determined to swear on the holy book. The interrogators then dropped the idea and decided to release him.

A spokesman for the Shai (Samaria and Judea) police district said, in response to a query from Haaretz, that the police were not aware of such an incident having taken place.

No comment had been received from the IDF Spokesman by press time.

During our visit to Deir Nidham, we meet Mohammed in the village’s new school – a slim lad with a knapsack on his back. He is reluctant to talk about his experiences on that day and night.

Fadel: “Everywhere in the world, governments look after children until the age of 18. You arrest a kid and throw him onto the road in the middle of the night? If you’re a good person and you’ve arrested him, at least bring him back. At least take him to the nearest junction. If [the police officer] had at least told me that he couldn’t bring him back. They take our boy – and for what? For throwing a stone? The children think it’s a soccer game. And then the army enters every night and arrests children.

“The soldiers cause chaos in the village, entering every day and every night,” the father continues. “There are a lot of villages here, and I don’t know who throws stones. Kids. There’s a son-of-a-bitch soldier who gives them a bullet and there’s a good soldier who gives them a candy. But they’re children. What kind of country are you?”

Stirring a furor

The detention of Palestinian children has been stirring up a furor even in the countries friendliest to Israel, such as Australia and Holland. A report, issued in February 2013 by the United Nations children’s agency UNICEF, found that in the preceding decade Israel had taken no fewer than 7,000 Palestinian children into custody, about 700 every year. The report described the treatment of Palestinian children in the Israeli military detention system as “cruel, inhuman and degrading.”

About two weeks ago, a report written by a committee of Dutch experts who visited Israel recently and examined the subject was submitted to the country's parliament in The Hague. The group was headed by Prof. Jaap Doek, a jurist who served as chairman of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child; the members included legal figures, education experts and psychiatrists.

The government of Israel did not cooperate with the group: Foreign Ministry staff refused to meet with them, on the (rather strange) grounds that they should instead be in contact with UNICEF. Their report found that "the treatment of Palestinian children accused of committing crimes by the Israeli military authorities represents a serious, systemic and systematic violation and disregard of the rights of these children."

Moreover, the delegation's report calls on the government of the Netherlands to urge the Israeli authorities to adopt its recommendations and take the steps necessary to ensure the rights of Palestinian youngsters.

An even greater furor erupted a few weeks ago in Australia, a country that can be considered to be particularly friendly toward Israel, after broadcast of the excellent documentary "Stone Cold Justice," about the detention of Palestinian children in the West Bank. The film was made by John Lyons, the Middle East correspondent of the newspaper The Australian, and was aired on February 10 as part of "Four Corners," the investigative program of the ABC network in Australia.

A cautionary note appears at the outset of the show: "This program contains scenes that may concern some viewers." I have watched the 45-minute film twice; it does indeed contain harsh and very disturbing scenes.

"A new generation of hatred in the making," the program's moderator says as he introduces "Stone Cold Justice." He continues: "Imagine in a major Australian city or in any other civilized society, regular late-night raids on family homes by heavily armed soldiers to take away children in blindfolds and handcuffs for interrogation. Imagine a military prison where the inmates include children as young as 12, in shackles. Such is the distortion of life ... after more than 40 years of military occupation."

The film shows nighttime arrests; Israeli soldiers and police throwing tear-gas grenades at children who have done nothing, on the way home from school; youngsters of 5 and 6 years old being taken into custody; deliberations of less than a minute in military courts about remanding children in custody; and girls from settlements kicking Palestinian children without any provocation, as soldiers look on from the side.

There were millions of television viewers as well as over 70,000 YouTube views of a program broadcast in a country that is one Israel's avowed friends. At the end of the show, the moderator announced: "Next week on 'Four Corners': Inside the secret state of North Korea."