

Family of Tariq Khdeir denounces beating by Israeli police

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At a press conference on Monday, the family of Tariq Abu Khdeir, the 15-year-old US citizen beaten by Israeli police in Jerusalem on Friday, denounced the brutal attack and demanded Khdeir's return to his home in Tampa, Florida.

The press event was organized by the Florida Chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), which is assisting the family. CAIR issued a statement calling the beating of Tariq "a gross violation of human rights."

Tariq is the cousin of 16-year-old Muhammad Abu Khdeir, who was abducted and burned alive last Wednesday. Six Israeli extremists are currently being held for the murder. Hassan Shibly, the executive director of CAIR Florida, told the press conference that Tariq had been playing with his cousin Muhammad just one hour prior to the latter's kidnapping and murder.

Tariq was visiting his relatives in Jerusalem after a 10-year absence. He attends the Universal Academy, a private school in Tampa.

One of Tariq's aunts, Sanah Abukhdeir, told reporters at the press conference that Tariq was very excited to see his grandparents and other loved ones for the first time in years.

The Shuafat neighborhood in Jerusalem where the Khdeir family lives has recently become the site of brutal and violent attacks by some Israeli settlers, particularly following the recent killing of three Israeli youth near Hebron in the West Bank.

According to Tariq's uncle, Hamdi Swelemi, Tariq and five of his cousins were playing in the backyard of their family home at the time of the Israeli police attack and were not involved in protests over the murder of Muhammad. Tear gas discharged by Israeli police forced Tariq and the other teenagers to cover their faces and run. Israeli police proceeded to chase them down,

after which they beat and arrested the six youth.

Tariq was beaten into unconsciousness, sustaining injuries to his face and head. Two videos recorded from different angles show that the police continued to beat and kick Tariq while he was handcuffed and even after he had lost consciousness. He was subsequently arrested and incarcerated, even after a medical examiner recommended he be sent to a hospital for emergency treatment. Tariq remained in police custody from Friday at 5:00 PM until approximately 12:00 PM on Saturday.

According to Shibly, Tariq suffered several blows to the head that could result in permanent brain damage if he does not receive adequate medical care in a timely fashion. However, the Israeli government has placed Tariq under house arrest for ten days, refusing to allow the youth's parents to bring him back to the United States, where he can receive the care he needs. According to CAIR, Tariq is being detained despite the fact that no charges have been brought against him.

According to all of the speakers at the press conference, Tariq was released from jail only because he is an American citizen and the attack was caught on video, sparking outrage around the world. Tariq's cousins, who are not American citizens, remain in police custody and are being kept without medical attention despite the fact that they received broken limbs from the police attack.

The Khdeir family also denounced the American government, which has done nothing to bring Tariq home to safety.

"What would you do if your government did nothing, even after four days?" Sanah asked the room, through her tears. "It's really hard to see him receive blows like that to his head. He is our baby."

Tariq's uncle, Hamdi, told reporters that Tariq had no

political reasons to go to Palestine and refuses to even watch the news because it frightens him.

“He’s a normal Tampa kid,” Hamdi said. “He is quiet and humble. He never bullies anyone. He’s not violent. Everyone in our community knows this. He is beloved by his whole school.”

Hamdi told reporters that the Israeli police are “tactically advanced.” He continued: “They know exactly who did this. We have to show them that nobody should be above the law. In civilized countries, the police should serve and protect, not do the opposite.”

When asked whether they felt hopeful that justice would be served, Hamdi said, “Let me tell you something. I lived there for 23 years. Something like this happened once before. An Israeli policeman decided he wanted to try out his AK on another handcuffed child. He shot him. Guess what happened to him. Nothing. Nothing ever happens to these soldiers.”

Tariq is expected to return to the United States sometime in the middle of July. His parents report that he is still suffering from headaches as a result of his severe concussions. He was also given stitches before he was placed on house arrest due to severe injuries to his face.



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