

# Israeli airstrike kills wife and baby son of Hamas leader

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In an action that can only be described as a terrorist murder, Israeli warplanes killed the wife and baby son of Hamas military commander Mohammed Deif, in a targeted air strike Tuesday night.

A Hamas spokesman confirmed the deaths of Widad Deif, 28 years old, and her baby son Ali, eight months, along with a third victim whose body was pulled from the rubble of the home in Gaza City. Palestinian sources told the media that the third victim was not Mohammed Deif, who has been the target of repeated Israeli assassination attempts over the past decade. Widad's three other children by Deif were injured in the attack but reportedly survived.

Eyewitnesses to the Tuesday night attack said that Israeli F-16 warplanes, supplied by the United States, dropped five bombs, destroying a three-story building, also killing the wife and two teenage sons of the building's owner, Raba al-Dalo.

The death toll from the relentless Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip has risen to 2,028, including at least 546 children. At least 20 were killed Tuesday night in the heaviest losses in nearly ten days.

Besides the six killed in the home used by Mohammed Deif, seven members of the al-Louh family were incinerated in Deir al-Balah, including a pregnant woman. A drone-fired missile killed a three-year-old in the Zeitoun neighborhood of Gaza City, while another drone-fired missile killed two men driving in their car.

Deif is the nominal leader of the Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, although his actual operational role is uncertain, since he was crippled in an Israeli strike in 2003, which cost him an eye and a serious spinal injury.

Hamas issued a public call to attend the funeral of Deif's wife and child, and hundreds joined a procession Wednesday in the Jabaliya refugee camp.

Israeli drones hovered overhead as Widad Deif's father carried the body of his infant grandson wrapped in a white shroud.

Israeli officials hailed the "success" of the air strike on the Deif household. Yaakov Peri, science and technology minister and former head of Shin Beth, the internal security agency, said the attack "demonstrates intelligence capabilities."

"It shows that even though much has been said in the past about our inability to reach the heads of Hamas, our intelligence is indeed capable," he said in a radio interview. "I think that it is an important indicator of the fact that no military wing head or anyone who is a target for assassination is immune."

Peri's declaration of Israeli responsibility for the killing of Deif's wife and baby amounts to an admission, even a boast, that Israel is guilty of war crimes in its attacks in Gaza. Yet there was not a hint of condemnation in the American and international media coverage, and no criticism of the action by European or American political leaders.

One can only imagine the media firestorm if Hamas announced that it was targeting the wife and children of Prime Minister Netanyahu or Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon for assassination, let alone if such murders were actually committed.

B'Tselem, an Israeli human rights organization, singled out the practice of targeting wives and children and other family members of Hamas leaders as a violation of international law. The homes of Hamas leaders are routinely described as "command and control centers" in Israeli propaganda, which is repeated uncritically in the Western press.

The leader of the Hamas delegation at talks in Cairo on a ceasefire denounced the murder of Deif's wife and child as a political provocation. "This was a pretext to

target a senior member of Hamas and to withdraw the delegation, and to end the cease-fire,” said Mousa Abu Marzook. He called the attack “a war crime.”

The chief negotiator for the PLO, Saeb Erekat, told Voice of Palestine radio, “I think that the worst is still to come. Netanyahu is sabotaging every effort as he did always.”



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