

Illinois landlord murders Palestinian-American child: The product of US imperialism's propaganda campaign

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A six-year-old Palestinian-American boy was murdered Saturday in the Chicago suburbs by an elderly man, obviously deranged but acting in response to the anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian propaganda that has saturated the US media. The barbaric attack is a demonstration in action of the impact of the unprecedented campaign in support of genocide against the people of Gaza being waged by the US government, the Democratic and Republican parties, and the corporate media.

The murder was carried out in the most savage fashion. Joseph Czuba, a landlord in Plainfield Township, in Will County, 40 miles southwest of Chicago, attacked the boy and his 32-year-old mother in the ground floor apartment they were renting from him. He lived in the upstairs flat.

After an argument at the door of the flat, in which the mother, Hanaan Shahin, expressed her desire for peace in the Middle East, Czuba began screaming curses against Muslims as he forced his way in, wielding a 12-inch military-style knife, while the mother called 911.

Czuba stabbed the boy, Wadea Al-Fayoume, 26 times and his mother a dozen times. Ms. Shahin survived her serious wounds by fleeing into the bathroom, but her son tragically did not. Ms. Shahin remains in serious condition at a local hospital. When police arrived in response to the 911 call, Czuba was sitting on the ground in front of the house.

In a text to her husband from the intensive care unit in the hospital, Ms. Shahin said the landlord “knocked on their door, and when she opened it, he tried to choke her and proceeded to attack her with a knife, yelling, ‘you Muslims must die.’”

Wadea's family buried him Monday, according to Muslim (and Jewish) custom requiring burial as soon as possible after death. Because of her wounds, his mother could not attend. Before the ceremony, Wadea's uncle, Yousef Hannon, spoke at a news conference, declaring, “We are not animals, we are humans. We want people to see us as humans, to feel us as humans, to deal with us as humans,

because this is what we are.”

Hannon was clearly referring to the statements of Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, who called the population of Gaza “human animals” to justify the policy of shutting off the supply of food, water and electricity to the tiny territory, where 2.2 million Palestinians live under Israeli saturation bombing and imminent threat of invasion.

Hannon emigrated from the West Bank in 1999 and has worked as a school teacher in the area, which has a large Palestinian population. His brother, Wadea's father, emigrated in 2011 and his mother in 2014. Wadea was born in 2017 and was an American citizen.

Ahmed Rehab, executive director of the Chicago chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), told the press conference, “This is a heavy day that we hoped would never come. As they say, the smallest coffins are the heaviest.”

Speaking of Wadea, he continued, “He was a six-year-old boy, he loved everything,” Rehab said of the child, based on his father's description. “He loved everybody, he loved his toys, he loved anything with a ball, basketball, soccer, he loved to color, he loved to swing around, he loved his parents, he loved his family and his friends, he loved life, and he was looking forward to a long, healthy, prosperous life.”

“He has no clue about these larger issues happening in the world, but he was made to pay for it,” Rehab said. The national CAIR wrote on X (Twitter), “The Islamophobic rhetoric and anti-Palestinian racism being spread by politicians, media outlets, and social media platforms must stop.”

The Will County Sheriff's Office said in a statement on Sunday that “detectives were able to determine that both victims in this brutal attack were targeted by the suspect due to them being Muslim and the ongoing Middle Eastern conflict involving Hamas and the Israelis.”

In the wake of this killing, there were the usual professions

of horror and outrage by the US capitalist politicians who have been spreading the pro-Israel propaganda depicting the Palestinians as devils in human face. Illinois's billionaire governor, J. B. Pritzker, called the murder "nothing short of evil," an empty label that covers up the real causes of the attack, which lie not in Czuba's psyche, but in the society that produced and directed him.

The White House issued a few paragraphs claiming that President Biden and his wife Jill were "shocked and sickened" by the news. "This horrific act of hate has no place in America, and stands against our fundamental values," the US president claimed.

Last week, Biden gave a speech in which he described the actions of the Palestinians who broke through the gates of the open-air prison they inhabit as "pure, unadulterated evil." In using this dehumanizing language to describe the Palestinians, Biden echoed the language of Gallant and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

In his speech, Biden gave Israel carte blanche for its attacks on the civilian population of Gaza, declaring, "Like every nation in the world, Israel has the right to respond—and indeed has a duty to respond—to these vicious attacks." Already, Israel has killed over 2,000 Palestinians in the present conflict. With all food, water and energy cut off, and with a full invasion likely, the death toll will only soar.

In an interview on "60 Minutes" over the weekend, Biden said that Hamas' October 7 raid "is as consequential as the Holocaust." Between 1939 and 1945, the Nazis' "Final Solution" exterminated six million Jews, approximately 40 percent of the total world Jewish population at the time.

The Hamas raid of October 7, which resulted in approximately 1,000 Israeli deaths, was the action of oppressed people who had broken out of an open air prison camp. To compare this to the Holocaust is a grotesque anti-Palestinian slander that cannot but encourage the type of violent actions that took place in Illinois.

Two US aircraft carriers are being stationed in the eastern Mediterranean, preparing, not for conflict with Hamas, which has no ships or planes, but for war with Hezbollah in Lebanon, with Syria or with Iran. In such wars, the casualties could be in the millions, including tens if not hundreds of thousands of children.

In the US, the media and politicians in both parties have encouraged a campaign smearing opponents of Israel's genocide against Palestinians as antisemitic. Students and student groups have been targeted on college campuses, with individual identities released.

US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the FBI have targeted Palestinians and mosques for questioning, with reports that individuals have been held days without being able to contact a lawyer.

The murder of Wadea Al-Fayoume is only the most terrible of a whole series of fascistic attacks sparked by the Israeli war against the Palestinian people. Thousands of death threats have been phoned in or sent over the internet to Muslim organizations, mosques and individual Arab-Americans.

In the Detroit area, home to the largest Arab-American population in the US, a Farmington Hills man was arrested after he asked online for anyone who wanted to "go to Dearborn & hunt Palestinians." Dearborn, a large Detroit suburb with a huge Ford auto plant, has a Muslim majority and an Arab-American mayor and police chief. In New York City, a bus rider wearing a turban and a mask to protect himself from COVID was attacked by someone who tried to remove his turban by force.

These are not just random incidents, but rather the product of a deliberate campaign directed from the highest levels of the national-security apparatus to whip up anti-Muslim bigotry and mobilize it in support of a US military intervention in the Middle East that has no popular support.

The US entry into World War II led to the internment of more than 125,000 Japanese Americans, whose democratic rights under the US Constitution were trampled by executive order of the Roosevelt administration. With even greater force, the war policies of the Democratic Biden administration—backed by Republican warhawks in the House and Senate—require the demonization first of Russians, now of Palestinians. Similar campaigns against Chinese nationals and Chinese companies like TikTok indicate the ultimate target of American imperialism.

The working class must oppose all such efforts to undermine popular opposition to war and to split the working class along the lines of religion, race and nationality. Workers in the US and throughout the world must demand an immediate end to the assault on Gaza and oppose the anti-Palestinian and chauvinist campaign that is being used to justify it.



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