

## The Arab Citizens of the State of Israel

v.

The State of Israel

### Indictment

Today, 21 January 2001, I, Muhammad Zidan, the Chairman of the High Follow-up Committee for the Arab Citizens in Israel, present to the official Commission of Inquiry, chaired by Justice Theodore Or, an indictment against the State of Israel, on behalf of one million Arab citizens of Israel, including the families of the thirteen deceased who were killed by security forces' gunfire on the days of 1 October, 2 October, 3 October, and 8 October 2000. The indictment is as follows:

1. In response to the Israeli government's policy of oppression towards the Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories and in response to Ariel Sharon's entrance into al-Haram al-Sharif compound on 28 September 2000 and in response to the massacring of Palestinians in al-Haram al-Sharif on 29 September 2000, the High Follow-up Committee for the Arab Citizens decided on 30 September 2000 to call a general strike for 1 October 2000 in all Arab towns in Israel.
2. The Arab citizens of Israel answered the call. They observed a general strike and demonstrated in protest of the policy directed against their people. However, we did not know that the Israeli police had already developed and practiced a plan for oppressing Arab citizens, who would express their legitimate identification with the just struggle of their people. The police arrived at Arab towns equipped with the most lethal weapons. On 1 October 2000, two Arab citizens were killed in Umm al-Fahem and Jatt in the Triangle. News of the killings spread throughout the country, and the next day, Arab citizens participated in mass demonstrations against police practices. However, the police continued to show no restraint, and dispersed the demonstrations by opening fire with live ammunition against citizens. On the days of 2 October and 3 October, the security forces killed an additional nine Arab citizens. On the

evening of Yom Kippur, there was a pogrom against the Arab residents of Nazareth, who were attacked by Jewish residents of Natserat Illit. Not only did the police fail to prevent the attack, but they also assisted the attackers, opening fire with live ammunition against the victims and killing two Arab citizens: 'Omar A'kkawi and Wissam Yazbak. I witnessed the killing of Wissam Yazbak, who was shot as he stood with his back turned to the police and the residents of Natserat Illit, trying to help me and other leaders calm the people. He was shot in the back of his head.

3. During the events on 1 October, I tried several times to contact Ministers Shlomo Ben Ami, Matan Vilnai, Yossi Beilin and Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, in order to urge them to prevent the police from entering Arab towns, and to stop them from using live ammunition against Arab citizens. However, I did not get an answer.
4. On 2 October at 7:13 a.m., during an interview on Reshet Bet with journalist Aryeh Golan, the Prime Minister said, among other things, "I, yesterday, in a meeting that continued until after midnight in my home, instructed the Minister of Internal Security and the Israeli Police, who, by the way, deserve great compliments for the self control that they exhibited during the demonstrations, but I told them, you've got a green light to do whatever is necessary."
5. On 3 October, in a meeting with the Prime Minister and other ministers, we were promised that the orders the police were following would be changed and that new orders would be conveyed to them. According to the new orders, the police would be prohibited from using live ammunition against Arab citizens. However, about two hours after this meeting, as I was returning to my village, Kufr Manda in the north, people from the village informed me that the police were presently shooting at citizens with live ammunition, and that Ramez Bushnaq had been fatally shot.
6. In addition to killing 13 Arab citizens, the Israeli police failed to protect the lives of Arab citizens and their property from pogroms,

which were conducted by Jewish citizens during the first week of October throughout the country. Pogroms against Arab citizens occurred in Tabbariya, Akka, Carmiel, Afula, Hadera, Yaffa, Tel Aviv, Bat Yam, Or-'Akiva and Nesher, among other places.

7. The Prime Minister of Israel did not consider the events mentioned above as important enough to warrant a Commission of Inquiry, as required by the Commissions of Inquiry Law. Only after he was put under considerable public pressure did he agree to appoint an official Commission of Inquiry. However, in announcing the establishment of this Commission, the Israeli Government expanded the mandate to include investigation into the conduct of citizens. We therefore consider the mandate to be legally suspect, and to publicly undermine the importance of the events perpetrated against the national minority in Israel. For this reason, we oppose it. We consider it the legal and public duty of the official Commission of Inquiry to investigate the circumstances of the killings of Arab citizens of Israel, and to investigate operational as well as ministerial responsibility.
  
8. It is the legitimate right of Arab citizens to protest and to demonstrate, and it is the duty of Israeli Police to protect their safety in order to enable them to enjoy this right. However, the Israeli Police and the security forces opened fire with no justification whatsoever, actions that even contradicted their own internal Open-Fire regulations. The outcome was the killing of 13 Arab citizens of Israel and the injuring of 1,000.
  
9. On the basis of the above:
  - i. We indict the government which gave orders to the Israeli police forces to brutally oppress Arab citizens;
  - ii. We indict the government officials who failed to do anything to stop the brutality of the Israeli police force and the aggression against Arab citizens of Israel;
  - iii. We indict the Israeli police, in particular the Commanders of the

## Indictment

Northern District, as responsible for killing:

Muhammad Jabareen, Umm al-Fahem  
Rami Ghara, Jatt (Triangle)  
Ahmed Jabareen, Umm al-Fahem  
'Ala' Nassar, Arrabe  
Asil 'Asleh, Arrabe  
'Imad Ghanaym, Sakhnin  
Walid Abu Saleh, Sakhnin  
Iyad Lawabny, Nazareth  
Musleh Abu Jared, Dir el-Balah, Gaza (killed in Umm al-Fahem)  
Ramez Bushnaq, Kufr Manda  
Muhammad Khamayseh, Kufr Kanna  
'Omar A'kkawi, Nazareth  
Wissam Yazbak, Nazareth

We will present testimonies of the killings to the official Commission of Inquiry, as well as evidence and substantial material that prove the assertions of this indictment. However, whatever the conclusions of the official Commission of Inquiry may be, we are certain that those accused in this indictment are responsible for killing 13 Arab citizens of Israel.

Muhammad Zidan, Chairperson  
The High Follow-up Committee for the Arab Citizens in Israel  
21 January 2001



# Statement of the Committee of the Martyrs' Families

Read by **Mahmoud Yazbak**

21 January 2001

I do not want to speak about anything except the Martyrs. They are our sons, and each one of them is an entire world in which there were dreams, anger, happiness, hopes and accomplishments. We lost them in an unexpected moment. It is very difficult to describe the loss in a press conference, but their memory will always be with us. Our reason for coming from the north today is simply to submit the evidence of the killings of our sons. Whatever the conclusions of the Commission of Inquiry, our sons will never be returned to us. We know who is responsible for our sons' deaths.

To some among my people, "al-Shaheed" (the martyr) is a symbol. He is a symbol of the everyman. He is a symbol for each of us who could have been him. "al-Shaheed" died because of his nationality. Thus, he is me, you and us. However, beyond the symbolic value, each Shaheed has a name.

Muhammad Jabareen, 24, Umm al-Fahem  
Rami Ghara, 21, Jatt (Triangle)  
Ahmed Jabareen, 18, Umm al-Fahem  
'Ala' Nassar, 18, Arrabe  
Asil 'Asleh, 18, Arrabe  
'Imad Ghanaym, 25, Sakhnin  
Walid Abu Saleh, 21, Sakhnin  
Iyad Lawabny, 26, Nazareth  
Musleh Abu Jared, 14, Dir el-Balah, Gaza (killed in Umm al-Fahem)  
Ramez Bushnaq, 24, Kufr Manda  
Muhammad Khamayseh, 19, Kufr Kanna  
'Omar A'kkawi, 42, Nazareth  
Wissam Yazbak, 25, Nazareth

I have read their names because after their killings, they were treated only as numbers. We are not talking about numbers. We are talking about families' dreams which were cut short.

---

**Mahmoud Yazbak** was the Spokesperson of the Committee of the Martyrs' Families, and is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Middle East History, Haifa University

