

Emotions stir in Jerusalem as HBO's 'Our Boys' hits local airwaves

Author:

Tue, 2019-08-20 21:45

JERUSALEM: A new HBO series on the killing of a Palestinian youth after three Israeli teens were murdered in a deadly summer five years ago is stirring up painful memories for bereaved families on both sides of the conflict.

"Our Boys," which premiered in Israel and the US last week, centers on Mohammed Abu Khdeir, a 16-year-old Palestinian who was abducted near his East Jerusalem home and burned to death by three Israelis, two of them also teenagers, in July 2014.

"I wish I could reach into the screen and grab hold of my son," Abu Khdeir's mother, Suha, told Reuters, her voice breaking, soon after watching the first two episodes of the series, a co-production of HBO and Israel's Keshet International and produced by Movie Plus.

"The show brought me right back to the pain, to the day he was kidnapped," she said.

Prosecutors said Abu Khdeir's convicted killers were avenging the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teens – Naftali Frankel, Gilad Sha'er and Eyal Yifrach – in the occupied West Bank two weeks earlier by members of Hamas.

The deaths of the four youths spiraled into a seven-week war between Israel and Hamas, which rules the Gaza Strip.

HBO's 10-episode dramatization dissects Israel's internal investigation into the three ultra-Orthodox Jews eventually convicted of Abu Khdeir's murder and the frantic initial days after his parents learned of his disappearance and death.

The Hebrew- and Arabic-language series was written, directed and produced by two Jewish Israelis and an Arab Israeli, who mix documentary footage with live production to delve into the micro details they say drive the conflict.

"We live in an extremely nuanced world where wars erupt because of tiny things," co-director Joseph Cedar, 50, said in an interview alongside collaborators Hagai Levi and Tawfik Abu Wael. "We tried to peel back the layers of this hate crime," he said.

But some bereaved Israeli families have said the show largely glosses over the murder of the three Israeli teens, who are referenced throughout the series but not included as characters.

Two Hamas suspects in the murders were killed in a 2014 shootout and in 2015 an Israeli court sentenced a third Hamas member to three life terms for the teens' abduction and murder.

Levi said the creators felt they had portrayed the context of Abu Khdeir's killing. "But the crime is the story," he said.



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[Yemen coalition strikes Houthi military targets in Sanaa](#)

Mon, 2019-08-19 23:35

JEDDAH: The coalition in Yemen launched an attack on Monday on Houthi military targets in Sanaa.

The coalition advised civilians to stay away from the targeted areas, state TV said.

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Mon, 2019-08-19 23:32

RAMALLAH: The US Embassy in Jerusalem on Monday was forced to postpone a conference it organized in the West Bank city of Ramallah after Palestinian officials and factions called for a boycott and threatened to organize protests.

The Palestinians cut all ties with the US after it recognized disputed Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in 2017, and view the Trump administration as unfairly biased following a series of actions seen as hostile to their aspirations for an independent state.

The embassy had organized a conference this week to bring together alumni of

US educational and cultural programs, including dozens of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip who received permission from Israel to attend.

The territory has been under an Israeli-Egyptian blockade since Hamas seized power there in 2007.

The Palestinian leadership viewed the conference as an attempt to circumvent its boycott of the US administration.

"We are aware of recent statements regarding a planned event for alumni of US educational and cultural programs," the US Embassy said. "In order to avoid the Palestinian participants being put in a difficult situation, we have decided to postpone the event for now."

It said this and other events "are designed to create opportunities for exchange and dialogue between Americans and Palestinians at the grassroots level."

"This event in particular is intended to give alumni of all ages and backgrounds from Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza an opportunity to network with each other and to engage in leadership and capacity building activities," it said.

Israel captured east Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza in the 1967 Middle East War, territories the Palestinians want for their future state. The Trump administration is at work on a long-awaited peace plan, but has not endorsed a two-state solution to the conflict. The Palestinians have already dismissed the plan, saying it is certain to be slanted toward Israel.

Representatives of several Palestinian factions held a press conference Monday at the hotel where the meeting was to have taken place.

Spokesman Isam Baker told The Associated Press that the Palestine Liberation Organization, an umbrella group, had reached out to the hotel management and the invitees asking them to boycott the meeting.

"Most of the invitees and the hotel administration agreed with us that the invitation has political implications and it is not innocent," he said.

"The US administration, which has cut off all aid to our people, shut down our office in Washington and placed huge pressure on our leadership to accept a pro-Israel political plan will not do any good for our people," he said.

"Therefore, we are boycotting any activities it organizes."

The US cut more than \$200 million in development aid to the Palestinians last year, gutting several long-running programs .

A statement released Sunday by the "national and Islamic forces of the Ramallah governorate" said they were determined to thwart the conference, calling it an attempt to "break the will of the Palestinian people." It said they planned to organize a "mass popular event to prevent this activity by all available means," calling for a sit-in and marches.

The youth wing of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah party also called for a boycott. It vowed to "exercise all forms of legal and popular pressure to express rejection of this conference being held on occupied Palestinian land."

It also called for an "apology" from the hotel.



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Palestine says US ambassador helps Israel to annex part of West Bank

[Jordan's MPs call for action to defend Al-Aqsa](#)

Mon, 2019-08-19 23:15

AMMAN: Jordan's parliament wants to scrap the country's peace treaty with Israel, expel the Israeli ambassador, recall Jordan's envoy to Tel Aviv and halt all normalization with Israel.

Members held an emergency session on Monday to urge the government to take a

tough line with Israel, amid tension over Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem.

The Jordanian foreign ministry summoned Israeli ambassador Amir Weissbrod on Sunday to voice its “condemnation and rejection of Israeli violations” at Al-Aqsa, where Israeli security forces attacked tens of thousands of Palestinian worshippers last week.

Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi told MPs the Israelis had been given a “stern” warning. The accepted status of Al-Aqsa is that anyone may visit but only Muslims may pray there. However, there are growing demands for change by extreme right-wing Jewish nationalists.

Palestinians in Jerusalem welcomed Jordan’s stance, said Khaleel Assali, a member of the Islamic Waqf Council which administers Al-Aqsa. “They see Jordan as the last line of defense for Al-Aqsa,” he told Arab News.

Wasfi Kailani, executive director of the Hashemite Fund for the restoration of Al-Aqsa, said some Israeli government officials had become the problem. “In the past, we were told that there were only a few radicals pushing for the right to prayer at Al-Aqsa,” he said.

“Now we see 100 rabbis signing a petition calling for that, and senior government officials are insisting on the need to change the status quo.”



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Jordan criticizes Israel over Al-Aqsa Mosque changes14 injured in Israeli attack on Al-Aqsa worshippers

[Egypt court hands out 6 death sentences on terror charges](#)

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Mon, 2019-08-19 15:45

CAIRO: An Egyptian court has sentenced six people to death on terror charges for carrying out attacks that killed at least three people, including a policeman, on the outskirts of the capital.

Giza criminal court on Monday also sentenced 41 defendants, including 28 in absentia, to life in prison on similar charges, including possession of weapons and explosives. Another seven defendants received 15 years, and one got three years. The court acquitted 14 others.

The verdict can be appealed.

The charges stem from two different attacks in 2013 and 2015 in the town of Kerdasa, located near the famed Giza Pyramids.

Kerdasa had been a hotbed of Islamist support for ex-President Muhammad Mursi, who was ousted by the military in June 2013 after massive protests against his rule.



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