

No compensation for Iraqi claiming Australian airstrike killed family

Author:

Mon, 2022-04-11 14:52

LONDON: An Iraqi man who says 35 members of his family were killed in an airstrike by the Australian Defence Force in Mosul in 2017 will not receive compensation.

The man, who lives in Iraq and remains unnamed, applied for a “grace payment” from the Australian government, requesting a settlement in the low hundreds of thousands of Australian dollars.

Such payments are awarded in cases where evidence is provided that the actions of Australian state actors cause unintended consequences.

However, the claimant’s case was rejected in December 2021 despite the person who handled the claim not being given access to an ADF file on the incident, but accepting its advice that there was not enough proof to confirm that civilians had died as a result of its actions.

The incident in question occurred as part of an ADF attack on Daesh militants in Mosul on June 13, 2017, which accidentally hit a residential building in Al-Shafaar neighborhood.

The man says 14 children were among the dead, as were nine women and two imams sheltering with them.

Evidence provided included statements by ADF personnel – including Air Marshal Mel Hupfeld, chief of joint operations – made in February 2019 that Australian planes had dropped bombs in the area that day.

Hupfeld said the strikes were called in by Iraqi forces fighting Daesh, and coalition forces only became aware of allegations that they had hit civilian targets after a report was published by independent website Airwars sometime later, making it difficult to verify the facts of the matter.

He added that the allegation was “credible,” but that estimates suggested 6-18 people had been killed.

A 2019 US Department of Defense report also said claims of a coalition airstrike hitting civilians that day were “credible,” estimating that 11 people had died.

Hupfeld said: “We do not definitively know how these people were killed, but we do know from our review of the events that our aircrew made no error in this mission. They delivered their ordinance precisely on to the designated target in accordance with their rules of engagement. All authorities for the strike were valid and lawful.

"There was no specific intelligence to indicate civilians were present at the targeted site, but given the urgent circumstances facing the Iraqi forces at the time, it was impossible to be certain.

"We're not blaming the Iraqi security forces for this event or this incident. We're very cognisant of the risk of inflicting civilian casualties in a very intense, complex war zone.

"The action in Mosul was the most ferocious air campaign that we have seen in our generation. It is an unfortunate consequence of war that these civilian casualties have occurred, and as I've said, this is not lost on us."

Lawyers acting for the Iraqi man requested an internal review of the case on March 29 and that a new delegate handle the case.

Jacinta Lewin SC said: "To the extent that there is uncertainty about the precise details of the Australian airstrikes, this is a product of (the ADF's) refusal to provide information about them.

"(Its) refusal should strengthen, rather than weaken, the conclusion that there is a real likelihood that Australian airstrikes were responsible for the deaths."



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Iraqis queue for petrol in Mosul amid shortages
Young Iraqi film students tell their own stories from Mosul

Israeli troops shoot Palestinian near Bethlehem

Author:

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Mon, 2022-04-11 07:02

JERUSALEM: Israeli forces shot and killed a Palestinian man near the city of Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry said early Monday, the latest in a growing wave of violence that has erupted during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan.

The Israeli military said it opened fire at a man throwing a firebomb at an Israeli vehicle driving on a West Bank highway late Sunday. The shooting raised to three the number of Palestinians killed in the past 24 hours, among them an unarmed woman who was shot and killed at a military checkpoint near Bethlehem.

Ramadan this year converges with major Jewish and Christian holidays.

Protests and clashes in Jerusalem during Ramadan last year boiled over into an 11-day war between Israel and Gaza militants.

Israel has stepped up its military activity in the West Bank after Palestinian assailants killed 14 Israelis in four deadly attacks inside Israel in recent weeks. At the same time, it has taken a series of steps to try to calm the situation, including granting thousands of Palestinians from the Hamas-run Gaza Strip permits to work inside Israel.

Palestinian health officials identified the man killed in the latest shooting late Sunday as 21-year-old Muhammad Ali Ahmed Ghoneim.

Earlier Sunday, Israeli forces shot and killed two Palestinian women. The Israeli army said one had stabbed and lightly wounded a policeman in the city of Hebron. The other was an unarmed woman who it said ignored warning shots and calls to stop as she approached a checkpoint near Bethlehem.

Palestinian assailants often carry out attacks at checkpoints in the West Bank. But Palestinians and human rights groups say the Israeli military often uses excessive force and in some cases has injured or killed people who were not involved in violence.

The European Union's diplomatic mission to the Palestinian territories, accused Israel of using unacceptable excessive force in fatally shooting the unarmed woman. "This incidence must be swiftly investigated and the perpetrators be brought to justice," it wrote on Twitter.

In a separate incident on Monday, the military said two Israeli citizens

arrived at a West Bank checkpoint near the city of Nablus with gunshot wounds. Israeli public broadcaster Kan reported that the two had attempted to visit Joseph's Tomb, which had been vandalized a day earlier, and were attacked by unidentified assailants.

A day earlier, a group of Palestinians set the tomb ablaze before they were dispersed by Palestinian security forces. The shrine, located on the outskirts of the northern West Bank city of Nablus, is a frequent flashpoint site. Some Jews believe it is the burial place of the biblical Joseph, while Muslims believe it is the tomb of a sheikh.

The army escorts Jewish worshipers to the site several times a year, in coordination with Palestinian security forces.



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Israel army raids West Bank town Tel Aviv gunmen hailed from Israeli forces kill Palestinian in Jenin raid

[Muslims, Christians serve iftar to Bethlehem's poor](#)

Sat, 2022-04-09 23:29

GAZA CITY: Christians in Palestine have been taking part in Ramadan initiatives to mark the Muslim holy month of fasting.

Aid projects, help with street and market decorations, and the distribution of water and dates before iftar, are among the activities they have been involved with in Bethlehem, Ramallah, and Nablus in the West Bank.

Khalil Kawa, a 41-year-old Christian, has been handing out dates and drinking water to passersby at a road junction in Nablus, a city where Muslims, Christians, and Samaritans live side-by-side.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The hospice is supervised by the Aman Charitable Society, and has been helping poor Muslims and Christians in the city for the past nine years.

- At least 40 Christian families are receiving aid from the hospice along with 1,500 Muslim families in Bethlehem.

He said: "I do not feel that I am doing something strange being a Christian and distributing dates and water to those who are fasting. I do not like to distinguish between a Muslim, a Christian, or a Samaritan. We are all Palestinians.

"In 2013, a group of my friends and I founded a youth group that we called the Nablus Tour. We are a group of photographers. We wander around the city of Nablus and take pictures, distribute sweets on the Prophet Muhammad's birthday, and decorate the city in the runup to the blessed month of Ramadan and during Eid as well. In addition, we distribute dates and water to the late fasting people.

"It is a very beautiful feeling that cannot be described, especially since people are waiting for us and ask before Ramadan if we are ready or need anything," he added.

Kawa pointed out that initially the project was funded by him and his colleagues but as the group became known it often found itself with plentiful funds and supplies thanks to contributions.

In Ramallah, a group of young people launched a Ramadan awareness campaign titled, "Forgive and shake hands in the month of love," aimed at spreading positive messages among communities.

In the predominantly Christian city of Bethlehem, in the south of the West Bank, members of the Salesian scouts and guides group have been distributing yogurt, water, and dates.

One of the scouts, Fouad Salman, said: "The residents of Bethlehem, Muslims and Christians, inherit love and coexistence from generation to generation, and the march of love must continue."

The 37-year-old added that he felt proud of belonging to Palestine and Bethlehem and had taken part in voluntary work since being a child, including renewing carpets in mosques.





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Palestinians feeling the pinch as prices soarHard-hit Gaza eateries pray for 'holy month of mercy'

[GCC secretary general meets with US, UN envoys to Yemen](#)

Author:

Sun, 2022-04-10 18:40

LONDON: The Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Dr. Nayef Al-Hajraf has stressed the bloc's support to international efforts aimed at dealing with the stranded Safer oil tanker and the importance of speeding up these endeavors.

During a meeting with UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen David Gressly and the US Special Envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking, he also reaffirmed the continuous support to alleviate the suffering of Yemeni people.

pic.twitter.com/cIrxLUNB7A

– U.S. State Dept – Near Eastern Affairs (@StateDept_NEA) [April 10, 2022](#)

Their discussions covered efforts of the humanitarian organizations in Yemen and the means required to enhance joint coordination to support regional and international efforts in conjunction with the UN-brokered cease-fire, which came into force on April 2.

The meeting also reviewed Gressly's plan to deal with Safer oil tanker, so as to avoid an imminent environmental and economic catastrophe if the issue is not addressed as quickly as possible.



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GCC foreign ministers back 'roadmap for peace' in Yemen, optimistic of Lebanon 'breakthrough' GCC foreign ministers hold meeting to discuss regional and international developments

[Palestinians vandalize West Bank shrine as tensions soar](#)

Author:

By TIA GOLDENBERG | AP

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Sun, 2022-04-10 07:23

TEL AVIV: Palestinians set fire to a West Bank shrine revered by Jews as Israeli forces operated in the occupied territory following a spate of recent Palestinian attacks in Israel, the Israeli military said Sunday. The developments come as tensions between Israelis and Palestinians have escalated during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which this year converges

with major Jewish and Christian holidays. Protests and tensions around the holiday last year boiled over into the 11-day Gaza war.

Military spokesman Brig. Gen. Ran Kochav told Israeli Army Radio that some 100 Palestinians marched toward the site late Saturday, rioted and set it ablaze before they were dispersed by Palestinian security forces. Images on social media showed parts of the tomb inside the shrine smashed and charred. Joseph's Tomb in the West Bank city of Nablus is a flashpoint prayer site. Some Jews believe the biblical Joseph is buried in the tomb, while Muslims say a sheikh is buried there. The army escorts Jewish worshippers to the site several times a year, in coordination with Palestinian security forces. The incident drew condemnation from Israel's defense minister, Benny Gantz. "The vandalism of Joseph's Tomb is a grave event and a serious violation of freedom of worship in one of the holiest places for every Jew," he tweeted. The vandalism comes as Israeli forces continue to operate in Jenin and the surrounding area, home to two of the attackers who staged deadly attacks against Israelis in recent weeks.

A raid on the hometown of one of the assailants on Saturday sparked a gunbattle in the occupied West Bank that left at least one Palestinian militant dead.

Military spokesman Kochav said forces in the West Bank were making arrests, gathering intelligence and preparing the homes of the attackers for demolition. "We will reach anyone who dares to harm Israeli citizens," he told Army Radio.

A military statement said a "violent riot" broke out as forces were operating in the village of Yabad, home to one of the attackers. It said forces "neutralized" one Palestinian who threw an explosive at them. It was unclear what his condition was.

Jenin is considered a stronghold of Palestinian militants. Israeli forces often come under fire when operating in the area. Even the Palestinian Authority, which administers parts of the occupied West Bank and coordinates with Israel on security matters, appears to have little control.

While Israel has eased some restrictions on Palestinians during Ramadan, on Saturday Israel tightened them on Jenin and its residents, imposing a partial lockdown on all residents aside from laborers working in Israel.

Four attacks in recent weeks have killed more than a dozen people in one of the deadliest bursts of violence against Israelis in years.



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