

Palestinian hailed a hero for foiling terror attempt

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BEIRUT: A Palestinian shot in the head while trying to foil a deadly terror attack in Lebanon has been hailed a hero.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is to grant courageous 33-year-old Saber Murad a top bravery award after he tackled a gunman who opened fire during Eid celebrations in the Lebanese city of Tripoli on Monday.

And there have been calls for Murad, who is recovering in hospital from bullet wounds to his head and back, to be given Lebanese citizenship for his heroic actions.

Selfless dad Murad attempted to stop suicide bomber Abdulrahman Mabsout by positioning his car in the terrorist's path. The "lone wolf" shooter killed two soldiers and two security officers during his rampage.

The Palestine News and Information Agency (WAFA) said Abbas later described Murad as a "young Palestinian hero" and praised his courage in "preventing an explosion that could have killed many innocent people in the city."

Announcing that he would be granting Murad a medal of courage, the president also instructed Palestinian Ambassador to Lebanon Ashraf Dabbour to "take care of him, oversee his treatment and provide him with all that he and his family need in return for his courage and act of heroism."

Speaking from his hospital bed Murad, a Palestinian-Australian born to a Lebanese mother and who lives in Lebanon, said he did not remember much about the attack. He recalled seeing the terrorist firing shots and tried to stop him by moving toward him in his car. Seconds later Mabsout turned his gun on Murad.

Tripoli MP Faisal Karami has reportedly stepped forward to pay for Murad's hospital treatment. Like many Palestinians born to Lebanese mothers, Murad is denied Lebanese citizenship and the medical coverage that goes with it.

Former Lebanese President Michel Suleiman said Murad should be granted Lebanese nationality "for stopping the lone wolf terrorist attack in Tripoli and suffering severe injuries as a result."

The children of Lebanese women married to foreigners are deprived of Lebanese citizenship and all the rights associated with it and are treated like refugees with no right to own property or take certain jobs.

HIGHLIGHT

Murad's courage in tackling the terrorist has made him a hero. He tried to stop the terrorist, who was attacking the Lebanese security forces, and received his share of the bullets fired from Mabsout's machine gun. He was wounded in the head.

Murad's father said his son loved the Lebanese army and had its insignia glued to the front of his car.

Lebanese Interior Minister Raya Al-Hassan reviewed the Tripoli attack during an extraordinary meeting of the Central Security Council. A captain and a soldier in the Lebanese army, as well as a sergeant and gendarme from the internal security forces, were killed in the raid.

She also briefed the meeting on the results of preliminary investigations into the attack which had revealed that "the terrorist Mabsout, 27, left his house on a motorcycle carrying six grenades and a machine gun."

Mabsout left Lebanon for Turkey at the beginning of 2016 and then went to Idlib to continue his Shariah courses before returning to Turkey where he was arrested and deported to Lebanon. A military court sentenced him to a year in prison for criminal acts committed outside Lebanese territory.

Al-Hassan said Mabsout had shouted takfiri statements against the army and security forces during his attack.



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Egypt's clerics, intellectuals clash over wife-beating fatwa

Sun, 2019-06-09 01:43

CAIRO: Egyptian society is witnessing an escalated battle of words between clerics and intellectuals because of the statement of the grand sheikh of Al-Azhar, Imam Ahmad Al-Tayeb, in which he authorized husbands to beat their wives.

The sheikh recently rolled back his fatwa and called out to criminalize such acts.

The sheikh of Al-Azhar explained the words "and hit them" in verse 34 of the chapter "The Women," in one of the television programs that were broadcast during the month of Ramadan. He confirmed that the interpretation of the verse indicates the possibility of hitting the wife (wrong-doer) gently.

A few days ago, he said in a statement issued by Alzhar institute: "The beating of the wife has become one of the things that causes her psychological harm and reflects negatively on the family. The intellectual of Makkah, Ibn Atta, was among the first who refused to hit (his wife) and did not consider it contrary to what was stated in the Holy Qur'an.

"We have no objection at Al-Azhar to opening the debate in this matter between scientists. I hope to live to see legislation in our Arab and Islamic world criminalize beatings."

Some thinkers believe the statement was a retreat from the sheikh's explanation in the televised episode.

"The great imam often supported the rights of women and called for normal and fair relations between men and women."

Ahmed Al-Sawy, editor-in-chief, Al-Azhar newspaper

Criticism was expressed by many researchers on the issue of beating women. One of these was Islam Bahiri, a researcher in the of Islamic heritage, who opposed the views of Sheikh Al-Azhar in a lengthy study titled "Islam does not know the beating of wives."

Islam Bahiri said in his study that there is nothing in Islam that allows the wife's beating for discipline and that the early researchers interpreted the "nashuz" word in the Holy Qur'an without looking at the unity of the subject or the context or even the hadith of the Prophet (PBUH).

The Prophet stressed that "nashuz" is the opposite of "chastity," not disobedience to the husband, as the interpreters thought.

Bahiri stressed that the problem lies in understanding the verse: "Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what Allah would have them guard. As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (And last) beat them (lightly); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them Means (of annoyance)."

He added that the verse is not related with the word "beating" and has nothing to do with the disobedience of the husband's command.

Different opinions

The controversy heated up when researcher and Egyptian parliamentary MP Mohammed Abu Hamed said in a statement that "the opinion of Sheikh Al-Azhar on the permissibility of beating the husband is his main ideology and the speech is recorded in audio and video."

Ahmed Al-Sawy, the editor-in-chief of Al-Azhar's official newspaper Al-Azhar, said in a special statement that "the great imam often supported the rights of women and called for normal and fair relations between men and women."

Dr. Saadiya Younis, a researcher at Al-Azhar, told Arab News that the beating that was permitted by the sheikh of Al-Azhar is only deterrence by the husband, not intimidation.

"The purpose is maintaining the guardianship of the man and making the woman conscious of her wrongdoing."

She said that beating was a misinterpretation of the words that the Prophet (peace be upon him) hit with a "toothpick," and that it is known that beating with "Sewak (tooth brush)" does not result in any physical pain or physical malformations.

She said that it has the role of keeping the family from collapsing and preventing family bonds from weakening, as would happen if the wife is allowed to disobey.

Fatwa House

The Egyptian Fatwa House addressed the issue in a special email that was seen by Arab News. Here is its response:

"The scholars unanimously agreed that beating is not intended to harm the wife or to insult her. Rather, it is permissible in some cases, and not obligatory, and in some situations where such behavior is not an insult to the wife or a harm to her, but simply to show the husband's dissatisfaction and anger at her leaving her duties."

A slight blow from the perspective of disappointment and not to leave an impact, and that is by “Sewak (toothpick) and toothbrush” and anything that is not a tool for hitting.”



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[Families of disappeared Syrians refuse to give up hope](#)

Sun, 2019-06-09 00:17

DUBAI: It has been 2,168 days since Wafa Moustafa's father was snatched from his home in Damascus by suspected regime henchmen.

Despite a desperate hunt for answers, 57-year-old Ali Moustafa's whereabouts

remain unknown.

Moustafa is one of the estimated 100,000 Syrian citizens missing since the start of the uprising against the regime of Bashar Al-Assad in 2011.

Seized off the streets or hauled from their homes, most have disappeared into a maze of secret prisons inside the country.

These Syrians – many of them ordinary people denied a chance to prove their innocence – are victims of enforced disappearance, the act of snatching someone away from their families against their will.

Moustafa's daughter Wafa, then a student, fled from the Syrian capital with her mother 10 days after her father went missing. "All I know is that he was arrested on July 2, 2013, in our family home in Damascus, " she told Arab News.

"We have not been told why he was arrested or where he is today.

"All we know is what our neighbors told my mother – that government forces raided our house, wrecked the furniture, tore up my father's clothes and documents and arrested him. Since then, we have had no information."



Ali Moustafa with his family in happier times before fighting broke out in Syria. He has been missing since being taken from his home in July, 2013.
(Supplied photo)

International human rights law lists disappearances at the hands of the state as “enforced” or “forced disappearances.” The Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court defines the practice as a crime against humanity.

The state refuses to acknowledge the fate of these individuals, who are either held in overcrowded prisons or killed. Meanwhile, their loved ones remain desperate for information, but are often too fearful to approach the regime.

Anwar Al-Bunni, head of the Syrian Center for Legal Studies and Research, said enforced disappearance is the “strongest weapon” in the hands of the Syrian regime.

“So far there are more than 100,000 detainees forcibly disappeared by the regime documented by name,” he told Arab News.

“The real figures suggest there are more than 150,000 detainees disappeared by the state, but we have indications that half have been killed in detention centers.”

Hannah Grigg, a program officer at Syria Justice and Accountability Center, said that while Syrians have been victims of abductions by different sides since 2011, the regime is responsible for most enforced disappearances.

Aside from the psychological toll, forced disappearances have a knock-on effect on entire families.

“Having a missing loved one is emotionally devastating,” she said. “But it can also be a serious financial challenge.”

IN NUMBERS

- 95,056 – Syrians missing since 2011
- 4,837 – Female victims of forced disappearance
- 1,546 – Child victims of forced disappearance
- 81,652 – Disappearances blamed on Syrian regime
- 8,349 – Disappearances blamed on Daesh
- 1,645 – Disappearances blamed on Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham
- 1,887 – Disappearances blamed on ‘armed opposition’ groups
- 1,523 – Disappearances blamed on Kurdish-led ‘self-management forces’

(Source: Syrian Network for Human Rights, 2018)

In Syria, most of the disappeared are men, many of whom are the family’s sole breadwinner, Grigg said. “Family members are not able to access their loved one’s financial assets, even when the person has been absent for many years.

“While some may be able to request their loved one’s status to be updated to “deceased,” or apply for a divorce, such decisions are difficult and not always socially acceptable,” she said.

During Argentina’s “Dirty War” between 1974 and 1983, when about 30,000 people disappeared, a new legal status, “absence due to enforced disappearance,” was established.

“A similar status in Syria would allow families to access the resources they need while still seeking out the truth about their loved ones,” Grigg said.

A report by the Syrian Network for Human Rights in 2018 said 95,056 people, including 1,546 children and 4,837 women, were victims of forced disappearance between March 2011 and August 2018. During the same period, 13,608 detainees died of torture, the report said.

In July last year, the Syrian government confirmed the deaths of at least 161 people whose whereabouts had been unknown since 2011.

“Seemingly in response to pressure on the issue, last summer the government began to update the civil registry records of many former detainees, recording them as dead of natural causes,” Grigg said.

“Such action is not an acceptable way to close the issue. Families have a right to know what happened to their loved ones.”

Grigg has urged the international community to intervene.

“The UN Special Envoy for Syria needs to prioritize the issue of missing persons in negotiations,” she said. “The release of political detainees, as well as access by international monitors to all detention facilities, must be included in any potential agreement.”

Many organizations have worked to document disappearances in Syria, but it is difficult to provide an accurate number of those missing, Grigg said.

“Issuing incorrect numbers or lists of names of those suspected of being detained could put people at risk, either by leaving out detained, at-risk victims or by undercutting the validity of the work through inflated numbers.”

Families for Freedom, a charity supporting relatives of the disappeared in Syria, said arriving at an accurate figure is almost impossible since many families, fearful of repercussions, have failed to register the names of their loved ones with human rights groups.

However, Wafa Moustafa, who is also a member of Families for Freedom, refuses to stay silent about her family’s situation.

“We have tried everything to get information. We have spent money on lawyers,” she told Arab News. “We have paid money to people who have connections with the regime. But these are merchants of war.”

Wafa recalls the family’s horror when her mother returned to their home in Damascus for the first time since leaving the city to find her husband still missing.

Acting on advice, they began to make plans to leave the country.

“In Syria, when the regime arrests a father or a husband, the next thing they do is arrest the wife or the children to pressure the detainee into making confessions.”

When they left for Turkey in 2013, Wafa and her family hoped that Ali Moustafa would be released and they would be able to return to Damascus

within days.

Six years later, based in Berlin, she refuses to give up hope.

“Our main goal is to find our loved ones and all detainees in Syria,” she said. “We will not give up until we have the answers.”



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Syria flare-up leaves 83 fighters dead 'No more joy in Eid' for Syrians displaced for the holiday once again

[Terrorists exploit security loopholes](#)

to unleash carnage, say experts

Fri, 2019-06-07 23:14

CAIRO: What are the reasons behind terrorists often choosing periods of religious festivals and events to carry out attacks on Egyptians? Arab News asked experts on Islamic political groups and security issues for their opinions.

Alaa Azmi, a journalist and specialist in armed groups, said that terrorists often tried to exploit lax security during holiday and religious festival seasons to strike.

Armed groups in Sinai affiliated to Daesh had a history of attacking holy places and religious events, said Azmi, an example being in 2012 when the terror group formerly known as Ansar Beit Al-Maqdis killed 16 members of the Egyptian army during Ramadan.

Maj. Gen. Mohammed Al-Ghabari, former director of the National Defense College and a security expert at the Nasser Military Academy, said terror groups looked for security loopholes or took advantage of tensions in areas where they had already carried out attacks.

He told Arab News that attacks in the seasons were aimed at sending messages to the world about poor security in Egypt, which were often swiftly followed by retaliatory Egyptian military operations.

The most prominent of these were deadly blasts at Coptic churches in Tanta and Alexandria during Easter celebrations in April 2017, resulting in the deaths of more than 40 worshippers.

Egyptian societies expert, Dr. Magda Mostafa, said that "spoiling the joy of Egyptians is the main reason that drives the terrorists to launch their terrorist operations during holidays and events."

She added that the armed organizations wanted to create a rift among members of Egyptian society. "They aim to drive anger on citizens to accuse the government of failing to protect them, and this is certainly not true."

Eight Egyptian police officers were killed on Wednesday in a militant attack on a checkpoint in the northern Sinai peninsula. The attack took place near the city of El-Arish as locals celebrated Eid Al-Fitr.

The death of Capt. Omar Al-Qadi during the ambush saw hundreds of villagers gather outside his house to offer their condolences.

A relative of the family, Hajj Mahmoud Outa, said news of the terror attack had shocked the whole community, and he described Al-Qadi as a man of high morals, dignity and humility.

"Terrorists always target us on holidays. They want to turn our lives into hell, but we will stop them, and we will fight until we are victorious," he

said.



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Thirty men sentenced for Egyptian church attack plot
Egyptian explosives expert killed defusing bomb in Cairo

[Lebanese move may render 35,000 Syrian refugees homeless](#)

Fri, 2019-06-07 23:10

BEIRUT: More than 35,000 Syrian refugees face being left homeless following a demand by Lebanese authorities for them to demolish makeshift walls and ceilings built inside their tents.

Civil groups say the Lebanese army has ordered refugees to rip down the structures by Monday.

A Syrian civil engineer, Aref Mohammed Satouf, who has been helping carry out the demolition work at the giant Aرسال camp about 125 km northeast of Beirut, described the situation as "ridiculous."

"My family and I fled Syria with the outbreak of the conflict there and took refuge in a tent like thousands of other refugees who live in Aarsal," he said.

"We used plastic sheeting to protect ourselves from the harsh weather in winter, but it was difficult. So, people built concrete floors and walls to allow them to stay without getting buried under the snow. We also built walls inside the tent to separate the sitting area from the bathroom."

Satouf added: "The Lebanese government gave its decision to demolish the walls, and we do not mind at all, but the instructions we have received are inconsistent."

Lebanon's Higher Defense Council, headed by President Michel Aoun, issued its ruling during a meeting in April attended by the prime minister, interior and defense ministers, and security leaders.

Aarsal Mayor Basil Hujairi, said: "The demolition decision includes more than 2,500 tents with stone walls built inside as well as ceilings."

He said walls with a height of 2.5 meters had to be knocked down or reduced to only 1 meter. "People have started to abide by the decision, and demolitions are being carried out, but people are also facing difficulty and confusion.

"For example, there is currently heavy rain even though it is summer. The region has harsh weather during winter, with temperatures dropping to between 6 and 12 below zero, and during summer there are floods caused by melting snow on the eastern mountain range. Also, the snow in Aarsal piles up half a meter high every year," added Hujairi.

Lebanon fears that building work inside tents could represent the start of resettlement or permanent residence of Syrian refugees in the country on similar lines to Palestinians.

But 430 civil associations and activists have described the thinking as "illogical because the situation is different. Palestinians have lost their land and become occupied by another entity, while Syrians have not lost their passports and their government is welcoming them.

"It is also unrealistic to consider the cessation of war in some areas in Syria a sufficient and legitimate justification for the return of refugees."

SPEEDREAD

Clashes between Syrian refugees and Christians in Deir El-Ahmar, a town in the Bekaa, saw a camp set on fire after refugees fled after claiming they had received threats.

In a memorandum signed by the civil associations, they noted their "fear of

pressure on Syrian refugees to force them to return to Syria, and this is contrary to Lebanon's international obligations."

The communication pointed to "the lack of an infrastructure and health structures in Syria, reprisals, demographic changes, changes in the protecting environment, the existence of nongovernment militias that are not under the control of the central government in Syria, and the absence of a solution for the compulsory army service, dissidents and deserters."

The associations, which work with Syrian refugees, said that about 7,000 tents at camps in Arsal, the Bekaa and in northern Lebanon had stone walls and were inhabited by thousands of refugees, most of them registered with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

They believed that "the decision to remove the stone walls and tin and zinc ceilings means leaving more than 35,000 Syrian refugees homeless and without alternatives, noting that most of these refugees are from Syrian areas that suffer very poor security and economic conditions."

Arsal alone houses 65,000 Syrian refugees, 45,000 of whom benefit from UNHCR assistance.

Hujairi said: "What is the difference if a wall's height is 2 meters or 1 meter? And how can a wooden ceiling or plastic sheeting be acceptable, but not other types of ceilings?"

Meanwhile clashes between Syrian refugees and Christians in Deir El-Ahmar, a town in the Bekaa, saw a camp set on fire after refugees fled after claiming they had received threats.

Hujairi said refugee authorities were trying to track down around 1,500 people who had left the camp.

Lebanese MP Marwan Hamadeh, said: "Because of the ethnic and sectarian incitement practiced by some authorities, Lebanon may lose the image it has built during the past years as a country that hosted refugees and treated them humanely.

"Now, after the vague decisions of the so-called Higher Defense Council, which has not been vested with procedural powers that only belong to the Cabinet, some local bodies and extremists, especially those associated with the authority, are inciting against camps and refugees and turning each incident into a reprisal.

"This means demonizing every foreigner, increasing tension inside Lebanon and destroying Lebanon's reputation among Arab countries and the international community at a time when we seek the necessary aid and investment to revive our economy."

Refugee Satouf added: "The people in the camps are lost. There is no clear information, it is all inconsistent. The Lebanese army informed us that we must reduce the walls' height to 1 meter, the municipality provides different instructions, and the UNHCR gives other information.

“What about the shared walls separating the tents? If we demolish one wall, two or more attached tents will be destroyed. The army has allowed us to keep a wall that separates tents, as well as one to separate bathrooms, but it refused to allow a wall to separate shower and bathing areas.”

Satouf pointed out that families do not receive wood and sheeting to complete pitching the tent until they are sure these will not get demolished, which might take several days during which time families remain homeless while waiting for wooden pillars to hold the sheeting.



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Syrian refugees wade through their worst Lebanese winter