

Executive Council of Australian Jewry Inc.

הוועד הפועל של
יהודי אוסטרליה

The Representative Organisation of Australian Jewry

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14 March 2011

The Hon Kevin Rudd MP
Minister for Foreign Affairs
c/- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
R.G. Casey Building
John McEwen Crescent
Barton ACT 0221

Email: Kevin.Rudd.MP@aph.gov.au

Dear Minister

Re: Murder of Israeli family in Itamar

On behalf of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, the peak national body of the Australian Jewish community, I write to thank you and the Australian government most sincerely for issuing a prompt, public condemnation of the shocking stabbing murders of an Israeli mother, father and three of their children late on Friday night, 11 March 2011, in Itamar, south-east of Nablus.

According to media reports, the killings occurred shortly after 10 p.m., when one or two attackers jumped the fence that surrounds Itamar and crawled through an open window into the home of Ruth and Udi Fogel, aged 35 and 36, respectively. The attackers went from room to room, stabbing the parents, a three-month-old girl, Hadas, and two boys, Elad, aged four, and Yoav, 11, while they slept in their beds. The children also had their throats slashed.

Mercifully, two other children – aged two and eight – were in a side room but were not attacked. They were either spared or over-looked. The Fogels' other daughter, 12-year old Tamar, arrived home at midnight after a youth outing and discovered the ghastly scene with a neighbour. She is now staying with her grand-parents.

Ambulance workers arriving at the scene shortly after midnight described the “incomprehensible horror” of what they saw. A grisly trail of toys and blood led paramedics to the first three bodies: the mother, father and their infant daughter. In the next room, medics reported that they found the body of Yoav. In the last bedroom, they found Elad with knife wounds and a faint pulse fighting for his life. They worked frantically, but unsuccessfully, to resuscitate the toddler.

A faction of Fatah's al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade has claimed responsibility for the murders. Hamas described the attack as a "heroic operation" while sweets and candies were handed out in Gaza in celebration. The semi-official Iranian news service also praised the attack. Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad promptly condemned the attack, but President Abbas waited all of Saturday before issuing a tepid "condemnation" and "rejection" of "violence".

Without knowing the identity of the murderer or murderers or their motives, those who have sought to justify or down-play the murders have attributed them to the settlements issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The BBC which has a well-staffed bureau in Jerusalem with the same access as other media outlets, gave the story only minor coverage and presented it as a story about settlements and chose not to publish any photos or specific details of the terror incident.

The implied dehumanising characterisation of a three month old toddler, a four year old infant and an eleven year old child, sleeping in their beds at home, as "settlers" has plumbed new depths of mendacity, even by the discredited standards of Palestinian terrorists and their apologists. This shocking incident underlines the urgency with which the international community must renew its demand to the Palestinian Authority (PA) for a complete cessation of incitement of hatred and violence against Jews and Israelis in the PA-controlled media and in other public contexts.

You may recall that in the 2003 "Road Map", the Palestinians were required "at the outset of Phase 1" to first comply with the following: "*All official Palestinian institutions end incitement against Israel.*" This commitment, a pre-condition of Israel's performance of its obligations during the course of Phase 1, has never been honoured by the PA.

For example, the day before the Itamar murders, the advisor to President Mahmoud Abbas and under-secretary of the Fatah Revolutionary Council, Sabri Saidam, delivered a speech calling on Palestinians to stop fighting among themselves and urging them instead to "turn their weapons towards the main enemy [Israel]". The perpetrator or perpetrators of the Itamar murders seem to have given effect to these words with chilling literalness.

The lionization of Palestinian terrorists who have murdered or attempted to murder Israeli civilians is a common form of incitement in the PA-controlled media. During the week of the Itamar stabbings, the PA newspaper advertised a football tournament named after the first female suicide bomber, Wafa Idris. (*Al-Hayat Al-Jadida*, March 6, 2011, p. 1).

A Palestinian Authority video TV tribute to "Martyrs" three weeks ago included the terrorist who killed three Israelis in a 2002 terror attack in the same town, Itamar, in which Friday's murders were carried out. ("Martyrs (*Shahids*) of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine in Nablus. The Palestinian National Resistance Brigades." [PA TV (Fatah), several times daily Feb. 21-24, 2011]).

These are only three examples of the relentless public incitement of hatred and violence by PA officials or PA publications against Jews and Israelis. Similar instances occur

virtually daily. I ask that at every opportunity you call upon the PA to cease this incitement.

I commend you and the Australian government for your long standing friendship with Israel and for your firm and principled condemnation of these latest heinous murders of Israeli civilians.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Danny Lamm". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'D'.

Dr Danny Lamm
President