

# Israel and the Occupied Territories and the Palestinian Authority

## Killing the Future: Children in the Line of Fire

On 9 August 2001, a suicide attack was carried out in the **Sbarro Pizzeria**, at a busy intersection in the heart of West Jerusalem. A man walked into the pizzeria during a crowded lunch hour and detonated a powerful bomb packed with nails, killing 14 civilians, including seven children, and injuring more than 100. Both the groups *Islamic Jihad* and *Hamas* claimed responsibility for the attack.

Pictures of the victims of the Sbarro Pizzeria suicide bombing are displayed by relatives outside the reopened pizzeria. A group from the families of the victims staged a demonstration to commemorate the dead. © AFP

The attack killed: 16-year-old **Michal Raziel** and her 15-year-old long-term friend **Malka Roth**; the two girls had stopped for lunch at the pizzeria on their way to Talpiot, to take part in activities of the youth movement of which they were both members. Five members of the Schijveschuurder family, from Neria, were killed in the attack and two others were injured: Tzira and Mordechai Schijveschuurder were killed along with their daughters **Ra'aya and Hemda** (ages 14 and two), and their four-year-old son **Avraham Yitzhak**; two other daughters were injured. The family had come to spend the day in Jerusalem, to relax from the tension of the frequent shootings near their home in Neria settlement in the West Bank. Eight-year-old **Tamara Shimashvili** from Jerusalem was killed with her mother, Lily. **Yocheved Shoshan**, aged 10, had gone with her mother and her sisters, Rachel and Michal, to have lunch at the pizzeria. They were seated on the second floor, but Yocheved and Michal had gone back downstairs, where the explosion occurred, to order another slice of pizza. Yocheved was killed instantly in the explosion and Michal was seriously wounded.

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**Riham al-Ward**, a 10-year-old schoolgirl, was killed on 18 October 2001 when her school, the al-Ibrahimiya school in Jenin (a city in the West Bank) was shelled during an Israeli attack and incursion into the city. The tanks started shelling just as children were arriving at the school; the director gathered the children in the yard into a ground-floor classroom. One girl was hit in the doorway of the room and Riham, who turned to help her, was hit in the heart and died before reaching hospital. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) were initially reported as claiming that there were armed Palestinians operating from the area and were later reported as admitting that they had made a mistake in shelling the school.

Riham al-Ward, age 10  
© Private

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**Khalil Ibrahim al-Mughrabi** was playing soccer and flying kites with his friends in a large open space near the border fence at Rafah, on 7 July 2001, when he was killed by a high-velocity bullet in the head. He was just 11 years old. His two friends, Ibrahim Kamel Abu Sussain, age 10, and 13-year-old Suleiman Turki Abu Rijal, were also shot and both sustained serious injuries. The shots came from an Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) post about 800 metres away and according to witnesses there were no disturbances or clashes in the area at that time. The IDF claimed that there had been rioting and throwing of fragmentation grenades in the area, but confidential IDF records showed that this was untrue.

Khalil al-Mughrabi © Private

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**Muhammad Ibrahim Hajaj, Ahmed Suleiman Abu Tayah and Ibrahim Reziq Omar**, all 14 years of age, were shot dead and several other children were wounded on 1 November 2000 by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in the Gaza Strip, in a place which over the past two years has been a regular demonstration site for children who gather to throw stones at IDF tanks and/or at the IDF tower. Muhammad Ibrahim Hajaj was shot in the neck and Ahmed Suleiman Abu Tayah and Ibrahim Reziq Omar were shot in the head and chest. All three died immediately. Several other children were wounded, including two 10-year-olds who were shot in the abdomen and in the right shoulder. According to eyewitnesses and to medical records, the children were fired on with live ammunition from a distance of about 150 metres.

Ahmed Abu Tayah © Private

Ibrahim Omar © Private

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The scene after the Gaza bombing © AI

the attack and died on 15 August.

Just before midnight on 22 July 2002, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) dropped a one-ton bomb on a densely populated neighbourhood of Gaza city. Nine children, most of them under the age of 10, were amongst the 17 killed. Dina Matar was just two months old and Ayman Matar 18 months. Muhammad Ra=ed Matar was three, Diana Ra=ed Matar five, Subhi Mahmud al-Hweiti four, Muhammad Mahmud al-Hweiti six, >Ala= Muhammad Matar 10, Iman Salah Shehada 15 years old. Maryam Matar, 17 years old, was seriously injured in

More than 70 other people were wounded. Leading Hamas activist Salah Shehada, who was among those killed, was accused by the Israeli authorities of organizing attacks against Israelis. Given the location of the target, in a densely populated residential area, and the method of attack chosen, the authorities must have known that civilians, including children, would be killed. The following day Israel’s Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, called the attack “one of the most successful operations”.

>Ala= Muhammad Matar, 10 years old © Private

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On 1 June 2001 a suicide bomber blew himself up among a group of young people waiting to enter the “Dolphinarium” night club in Tel Aviv, killing 21 people, 20 of them civilians, where 12 were aged under 18. About 120 others were wounded.

The *‘Izz al-Din al-Qassam* Brigades, the armed wing of the Palestinian Islamist group *Hamas*, claimed responsibility for the attack. By choosing to target such a place, the entrance to a discothèque on a Friday night, the attacker meant to kill and harm as many civilians as possible and must have anticipated that many children would be among the victims.

Yelena and Yulia Nelimov, two sisters killed in the Dolphinarium bombing, were laid to rest  
© 2001 Reuters/Havakuk Levinson

Most of the victims who were killed in the attack had immigrated to Israel in recent years from the former Soviet Union. They were: **Raisa Namirovsky** (15), from Netanya and her neighbour and friend **Maria Tagilchev** (14 years), outside whose school a car bomb had exploded two days earlier; **Yevgenia KerenDorfman**, (15 years), who sustained serious brain damage in the explosion and died after 18 days; **Katherine Kastanada Talker** (15 years) a student from Ramat Gan; 16-year-old **Yulia Nelimov**, whose 18-year-old sister Yelena was also killed; **Irina Nepomneschi**, a 16-year-old business administration student from Bat Yam; **Anya Kazachkov** and her friend **Mariana Medvedenko**, both aged 16; **Marina Berkovski** from Tel Aviv, who went to the nightclub to celebrate her 17th birthday; and 16-year-old **Aleksei Lupalu**, who had immigrated from Ukraine just six months earlier.

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On 27 April 2002, three armed men attacked residents of Adora, an Israeli settlement in the West Bank. In the bedroom of one house a gunman killed five-year old **Danielle Shefi** as she hid under a bed, and wounded her mother Shiri, her brothers Uriel, aged four and Eliad, aged two. Elsewhere in the settlement, they also killed three adults. The *Izz-al-Din al-Qassam* Brigades (the military wing of *Hamas*) claimed responsibility for what it described as an “heroic and daring operation”.

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Danielle Shefi © AP

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**Avia Malka**, a nine-month-old baby, was killed by two Palestinians who shot and threw grenades at cars and pedestrians in Netanya, Israel, on 9 March 2002. One other person was killed and about 50 people were injured, several of them seriously. The *al-Aqsa* Martyrs Brigade claimed responsibility for the attack.

The funeral of nine-month-old Avia Malka © AFP/CORBIS

Two teenagers, 16-year-old **Shoshana Ben-Yishai** and 14-year-old **Menashe Regev** were both killed on 4 November 2001 when a gunman belonging to Islamic *Jihad* fired at a commuter bus at the French Hill junction in northern Jerusalem. Forty five people were injured in the attack.

Israel Ben-Yishai, 10, brother of Shoshana Ben-Yishai, mourns her death while sitting on her bed, in their home in the West Bank Jewish settlement of Betar Illit. © AP

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