UN Mideast envoy ‘horrified’ by killing of Palestinian stabber who wounded officer

December 3, 2022

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The Times of Israel

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/un-mideast-envoy-horrified-by-killing-of-palestinian-stabber-who-wounded-officer/>

The United Nations envoy to the Middle East on Saturday said he was ‘horrified’ by the killing of a Palestinian stabber who security forces said wounded an Israeli police officer in the West Bank.

On Friday afternoon, Ammar Mifleh tried to enter a vehicle of an Israeli couple in the town of Huwara, near Nablus, Border Police said. While trying to break through the locked door, one of the occupants — an off-duty IDF officer — shot and wounded Mifleh with his handgun.

Mifleh then ran at a nearby Border Police officer and stabbed him in the face, lightly injuring him.

Graphic [footage](https://twitter.com/KhJacki/status/1598681701672259585) posted to social media showed another Border Police officer trying to apprehend Mifleh after the stabbing, as two other Palestinians were trying to pull him free.

The second officer managed to pull Mifleh away from them in a headlock, but he then briefly freed himself from his grasp and appeared to try and grab the officer’s automatic weapon. The officer then allowed the weapon to fall to the ground as he pulled a handgun from a holster and fired four times point-blank, killing Mifleh.

‘Horrified by today’s killing of a Palestinian man, Ammar Mifleh, during a scuffle with an Israeli soldier near Huwara in the o[ccupied] West Bank,’ UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland said on Twitter.

‘My heartfelt condolences to his bereaved family. Such incidents must be fully & promptly investigated, & those responsible held accountable,’ he added.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Emmanuel Nahshon slammed Wennesland’s statement, calling it a ‘total distortion of reality.’

‘This incident is a terror attack, in which an Israeli policeman was stabbed in his face and the life of another police officer was threatened and consequently he shot his assailant,’ Nahshon said on Twitter.

‘This is NOT a ‘scuffle’-this is a terror attack!’ he added.

Prime Minister Yair Lapid backed the officer who was filmed shooting the stabber dead.

‘Any attempt to distort reality and tell false stories to the world is simply a disgrace,’ Lapid said on Twitter. ‘Our security forces will continue to act determinedly against terror wherever it raises its head.’

He also wished a speedy recovery to another border guard wounded in the incident.

Defense Minister Benny Gantz also said he ‘strongly condemned’ Wennesland’s remarks.

‘I want to praise the police officer who neutralized a terrorist yesterday. I strongly condemn the attempts to present the event in a false and manipulative manner, and the statement of the UN envoy to the Middle East against the [officer], who acted with determination and professionalism,’ Gantz said on Twitter.

Huwara mayor Moein Dmeidy and others on Saturday cited second-hand accounts that there had been an altercation between Mifleh and an Israeli motorist after a car accident, but Associated Press journalists were unable to find witnesses to the events that led up to the shooting.

Dmeidy said the officer had no justification to kill Mifleh after he had already overpowered him. Mifleh was ‘killed in cold blood,’ said the mayor, who arrived at the scene moments after the shooting.

Dmeidy said a Palestinian ambulance arrived minutes after the shooting, but that security forces prevented the medics from administering aid. Dmeidy said Israel has not handed over Mifleh’s body for burial.

Border Police said that the officer with stab wounds was subsequently evacuated for medical treatment, as was the officer who subdued the attacker.

Images of the officer who killed the stabber were posted to social media on Saturday, some including threats against him.

The officer himself said it could have been a ‘more significant attack’ had the attacker managed to grab his gun.

‘During a struggle with the terrorist I understand that if he succeeds in stealing my rifle, there will be a more significant attack here. I manage to pull out my handgun and I shoot the terrorist until he is neutralized,’ he said in a video published by police.

Extreme-right MK Itamar Ben Gvir, who is set to become a minister in charge of the police, said he spoke to the officer who killed the attacker on Saturday, and praised him for his actions.

Huwara is a frequent flashpoint with a highway running through the town being a main route for settlers traveling in the northern West Bank.

Mifleh was the ninth Palestinian killed in West Bank violence in less than four days.

Two Palestinian terror group members were killed in heavy clashes with Israeli troops that broke out during a pre-dawn Thursday arrest raid near the northern West Bank’s Jenin refugee camp. Another Palestinian was killed in clashes with Israeli troops in the northern West Bank town of Yabed on Wednesday afternoon. Four Palestinians were killed in clashes with the IDF throughout the West Bank on Tuesday and another Palestinian was killed after carrying out a car-ramming attack that seriously wounded a soldier that same day.

Tensions have been high in the West Bank over the past year, with the IDF launching a major anti-terror offensive mostly focused on the northern West Bank to deal with a series of Palestinian attacks that have left 31 people in Israel and the West Bank dead since the start of the year.

The operation has netted more than 2,500 arrests in near-nightly raids, but has also left more than 150 Palestinians dead, many of them — but not all — while carrying out attacks or during clashes with security forces.