

“There are no vices more dangerous than those which simulate virtue.”

Desiderius Erasmus

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Mahdawi image in cover photograph: Joey Palumbo / Vermont Public

Introduction

By much of the media and many of his fellow activists, Mohsen Mahdawi is presented almost unquestioningly as a Palestinian peace activist. An advocate for dialogue and reconciliation. A man who, despite growing up surrounded by conflict, chose coexistence over violence.

We went looking at the historical record.

What we found was impossible to reconcile with that image of Mahdawi. Across years of statements, social media posts, photographs, videos and interviews lies a political history that has largely escaped public scrutiny. It includes repeated expressions of admiration and support for terrorists, terrorist organisations, armed violence and those who carried it out. Nor does that record simply disappear with the passage of time. Mahdawi's open association with "armed resistance" continued to surface throughout 2023–2026.

There is another part of the story. As Mahdawi built his public identity as a peace activist, troubling elements of his past were repeatedly obscured or recast. Armed fighters and members of terrorist organisations were presented by him simply as innocent Palestinian victims. Terrorist connections within his own family were omitted from the stories he told about them. And important elements of the personal history he has presented to American audiences simply do not correlate with the contemporary historical record.

This report also raises a wider question: how was so much of this missed? Mahdawi entered the United States despite an extensive pre-2014 record of openly praising terrorist organisations, terrorists and political violence - raising the obvious question of whether any of this material was identified or considered during the visa application process. In 2015, police reported disturbing comments involving guns and Jews to the FBI, yet no apparent action followed. And as his public profile grew, journalists, politicians, institutions and activist organisations repeatedly promoted the image of Mahdawi as a peace activist - without apparently asking whether the biography and political identity they were presenting to the public could survive even the most basic scrutiny of the substantial historical record.

This report does not ask the reader to take our characterisation of Mahdawi on trust. Instead, we have reconstructed his record chronologically, placing his words and actions in their historical and political context wherever possible.

The evidence is extensive.

Here it is, in chronological order.

Methodology

This report is the product of extensive open-source investigative research conducted across English, Arabic and other relevant sources. Research included conventional and advanced search techniques, archival searches, social media research, examination of contemporary reporting and publications, and detailed contextual searches designed to test, corroborate and better understand individual statements, events and claims identified during the investigation.

Particular attention was paid to Arabic-language material. Arabic sources were translated using multiple independent translation tools and, where the precise meaning of a passage was significant to the analysis, translations were cross-checked across several systems and with native Arabic speakers. Searches were also conducted directly in Arabic, using alternative spellings, names, phrases and terminology where appropriate.

The research also draws upon material posted by Mohsen Mahdawi on Facebook under privacy settings that restricted some posts to Facebook friends. Some of the material documented in this report does not therefore appear to have been previously publicly available. The original URLs are listed in the footnotes, and screenshots have been saved and archived, but most readers will find that they are unable to access the material directly themselves.

Statements and social media posts were not assessed in isolation. Wherever possible, they were examined in their original chronological, political and conversational context. References to individuals, organisations, events and terminology were independently researched in order to establish what Mahdawi was referring to at the time and to avoid attributing significance to a statement solely on the basis of a literal or decontextualised translation.

The resulting timeline distinguishes, where relevant, between primary-source material, contemporaneous reporting, subsequent accounts and the authors' analysis. Factual claims were independently corroborated wherever possible. Where the available evidence does not permit a definitive conclusion, the report makes that limitation clear.

A Living Document

This report is published as Version 1 (V1) of a living document: an attempt to assemble the fullest possible record from the evidence currently available. It will be updated as new information and materials emerge. Anyone with additional evidence, corrections or information that may help complete the story is invited to contact either of the authors.

From Birth to 2002

1990

September 12: Mohsen Mahdawi born.¹

1997

Approximate: Mahdawi's mother leaves Al-Fara'a Camp:²

1998

Approximate: Mahdawi's younger brother passes away.³

2000 or 2001

Unspecified: Mahdawi claims that, when he was 10, his best friend Hameida was shot dead. Mahdawi has repeatedly told this story, recounting a version of it at almost every event, and it helped establish his legitimacy when speaking about the conflict. The death also provides the setting for his uncle Thaer's inspirational "education first" speech, which Mahdawi claims took place at his friend's graveside.⁴

Fact check: No child was killed at the camp in 2000 / 2001.⁵ Only a single child was killed at the camp throughout the entire Second Intifada - and that child was not shot. This formative event, as he described it, never happened.

This is not just an issue of childhood memory. Mahdawi's versions did not just introduce conflicting details - but rested on an impossible timeline. As the inconsistency became publicly visible, Mahdawi subsequently corrected his age, only for the correction to create a further chronological impossibility. The report returns to these claims in more detail later.⁶

2001

September 12: Uncle Thaer's death, Mahdawi's 11th birthday. Thaer Mahdawi was an officer in the Palestinian Preventive Security Service in Tubas. He was killed at Tamoun during the Second Intifada, alongside two other Palestinian security officers, Tawfiq Jaber Abu Sharar and Shaher Bani Odeh.⁷

Twenty-four years later, Thaer's son commemorated the three men as having died together in what he explicitly described as a **"heroic battle"** (*emphasis added by authors*):⁸

¹ Mohsen Mahdawi, 'The Palestinian Experience.' March 12 2024. [YouTube video](#)

² [The Valley News article](#) two-part article December 27/28 2020

³ *ibid.*

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ B'Tselem [Fatalities Database](#)

⁶ This report page 81

⁷ Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, [Weekly Report](#) September 12 2001

⁸ Eyad Mahdawi, [Facebook post, September 12 2025](#). Screenshot and archived copy held by authors.

“Friday, September 12, 2025, marks the twenty-fourth anniversary of the passing of my beloved father, the heroic martyr Thaer Mahdawi (Abu Iyad), and his heroic brothers Tawfiq Jaber Abu Sharar and Shaher Bani Odeh, **who were martyred in a heroic battle on the land of Tamoun.** Glory and eternity to them and to all the martyrs of Palestine.”

Thaer's son's description of his father's death as occurring in a “battle” is consistent with the official Palestinian commemoration of the incident. In 2014, a memorial was unveiled at Tamoun to Thaer Mahdawi and the two other Palestinian security officers killed with him. The Fatah National Relations Commission's account of the ceremony explicitly commemorated the men as the “martyrs of this battle” and stated that they had “confronted the occupation soldiers” as Israeli forces attempted to enter Tamoun. A separate report of the memorial described the incident still more explicitly as an “armed clash and Israeli bombardment.”⁹



⁹ Fatah National Relations Commission, ‘[Unveiling Of The Tamoun Memorial](#)’, April 16 2014

The Death of Muhammad Ahmad Mubaraq Ishteivi

2002

June 29: Muhammad Ahmad Mubaraq Ishteivi is the only child killed at Al-Fara'a Camp during the Second Intifada. He was a 14-year-old resident of the camp, which is in the Tubas District, about 10 miles north-east of Nablus.¹⁰

Media reports at the time show that Ishteivi did not die in the centre of the camp near the houses and did not get killed by a bullet. Ishteivi was at the edge of the camp, where children had gathered and were confronting two Israeli military jeeps that had approached the camp. Ishteivi died after he inhaled gas from a gas canister that either hit him or exploded near him.

“At about 14:00, two Israeli military jeeps ‘moved into Al-Fara’a refugee camp.’ Children gathered and threw stones toward the two jeeps; soldiers immediately fired tear-gas canisters. Mohammed Ishteivi was struck in the chest and his body was found about an hour later ‘on an agricultural road leading to the refugee camp.’”¹¹

Context: This occurred during Operation Determined Path, following a wave of deadly suicide bombings in June 2002. Israeli forces were operating in nearby Tubas, a significant Hamas stronghold. Contemporary reporting of the incident describes two military jeeps near the camp’s entrance; it does not describe tanks, foot soldiers or a major ground incursion into Al-Fara’a Camp.¹²

We also found a 2011 account concerning the death which drew upon information supplied by Yaser Abu Keshek, who was head of the Popular Services Committee for Al-Fara’a Camp at the time of Ishteivi’s death.¹³ The Popular Services Committee is effectively the camp’s representative body and its main interface with the outside world. Abu Keshek said Ishteivi’s death had caused trouble in the camp:

“The camp residents have not forgotten the story of the martyr Muhammad Ahmad Mubarak, who died due to the negligence of the agency’s clinic in the camp. At the time, there were large protests by the residents against this negligence that claimed the life of an innocent child.”

The 2011 account states that the Popular Services Committee provided the author with copies of correspondence between the committee and UNRWA from both before and after Ishteivi’s death.

¹⁰ B’Tselem [Fatalities Database](#)

¹¹ Palestinian Centre for Human Rights [Weekly Report](#) July 4 2002

¹² BBC News [‘Israel Pulls Out of Ramallah’](#), June 13 2002

¹³ Maan News [‘Preparations For Elections’](#) June 18 2011

This presented an immediate problem for Mahdawi's version of events, which places him at the scene, near his home, playing basketball, encountering foot soldiers, seeing a tank, witnessing the shooting and then holding his best friend's blood-soaked body.¹⁴

To understand exactly what happened we reached out to Abu Keshek and had an email exchange with him on August 18 2026. We asked if he remembered the event, and to confirm other details. He responded quickly (*emphasis added by authors*):¹⁵

"Hi, Mr. David,

Thank you for your message and your interest.

At the time, I was the head of the Popular Services Committee for Al-Fara'a Camp; any correspondence regarding this matter can be verified with the camp committee.

Regarding the child martyr: his name is correct in both instances, as "Mubarak" is his grandfather's name and "Ishteivi" is the family name.

I recall the incident well. The child was taken to the UNRWA clinic after being wounded by the occupation army. The family accused the UNRWA clinic of negligence in treating the child and, in reaction, attacked the clinic's premises - an action that prompted UNRWA to close the clinic and suspend services.

However, I contacted the head of the health program at UNRWA at this time, Dr. Omia Khammash. I told him—as I recall—that the camp's children should not be deprived of health services simply because of the immediate reaction of an affected family. He responded promptly and restored health services for the camp's residents.

Respectfully

yaser abu keshek ”ياسر ابو كشك“

The documented circumstances of Ishteivi's death cannot be reconciled with Mahdawi's account. The location of the confrontation, the contemporary description of what happened, and the testimony of the man who headed the camp's Popular Services Committee at the time are incompatible with Mahdawi's description of being near his home playing basketball, encountering Israeli foot soldiers, witnessing his best friend being shot, and then holding the boy's blood-soaked body.

¹⁴ Tara Brach [Podcast With Mohsen Mahdawi](#) March 19 2026

¹⁵ Email received from the former head of the Popular Service Committee for Al-Fara'a Camp on August 18 2026

Before Birzeit University

2002 or 2003

Between September 12 2002 and September 11 2003: During this period when Mahdawi was 12, he repeatedly described an incident in which he collected the remains of Palestinians killed in an Israeli strike (*emphasis added by authors*):

“Seeing people, body parts just torn apart all over the place and skin sticking on walls where I had to peel it with my little hands when I was 12 years old, to put their bodies in plastic bags.”¹⁶

“At 12, **an Israeli raid killed several people**, I collected their remains with my hands, scraped skin from the walls, and gathered fingers from the ground to place them in plastic bags.”¹⁷

“When I was 12 years old, I witnessed a strike that shattered seven people into pieces. **And I went to the location, age 12, a kid, holding a plastic bag in my hand** and collecting their body parts in my little hands”¹⁸

“Mahdawi had recalled how he had collected the ‘body parts’ of seven Palestinians killed in his camp in the middle of the night.”¹⁹

Fact check: No corresponding incident appears in the recorded fatalities at Al-Fara’a Camp. Indeed, across the entire Second Intifada, only one person is recorded as being killed by Israeli forces inside Al-Fara’a Camp: Muhammad Ahmad Mubaraq Ishteivi in 2002.²⁰

Mahdawi appears to be recalling elements of a real local incident and placing himself at the centre of the story. As this report will document, this apparent tendency to insert himself into identifiable events recurs throughout his autobiographical accounts. In July 2001, when Mahdawi was ten (not twelve), an explosion occurred at around 2 a.m. at a vehicle-parts garage in an industrial area outside a nearby village. It appears to have been a bomb-making accident, and several of those killed were members of Kata’ib al-Awda, an armed Fatah formation. Mahdawi’s account would therefore require a 10-year-old boy to have left the refugee camp in the middle of the night, made his way to an off-camp industrial

¹⁶ Mother Jones [‘Mohsen Mahdawi Fought ICE’](#) June 25 2025

¹⁷ The New Arab [“Trump Administration is Trying to Imprison Me”](#) February 26 2026

¹⁸ Insight Medication Centre, [interview with Mahdawi](#), January 13 2026

¹⁹ Al Jazeera, [‘U.S. Detains Palestinian Activist’](#) April 15 2025

²⁰ B’Tselem [Fatalities Database](#)

site, and helped collect the fragmented remains of militants killed at a suspected bomb-making facility.^{21 22}

2003

August 28: Mahdawi's uncle, Yousef Abdul Latif Khader Mahdawi, 21, from Shuweika near Tulkarm, is arrested. A member of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, he is subsequently sentenced to life imprisonment. Israeli court records identify him as having recruited the suicide bomber and helped plan the March 30 2003 London Café bombing in Netanya.^{23 24}

2004

November 7: Mahdawi's cousin Amin Abu Kamel was killed during the Second Intifada. He was the subject of a targeted strike.²⁵ In an Instagram post, Mahdawi claimed these lives were taken by "Israeli violence," without mentioning Abu Kamel's involvement in the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades. Abu Kamel was an active member of the group, and a 2010 witness account places him travelling in a car alongside Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorists when he was killed.²⁶

December 25: Mahdawi's cousin Thaer Abu Kamel (brother of Amin) was killed during the Second Intifada. Abu Kamel was wanted by the Israeli forces and refused to surrender.²⁷

In an Instagram post Mahdawi claimed these lives were taken by "Israeli violence", without mentioning Abu Kamel's involvement in the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades. Abu Kamel was a senior leader of the group.²⁸

There is additional evidence of Thaer Abu Kamel's affiliation which also displays the high standing of the family within the armed factions of Fatah. From a 2007 account published on *Palestine Remembered*, it emerges Moustafa Barghouti mourned with the family:²⁹

"The Fatah leadership in Jenin committed shameful acts, including preventing Dr. Mustafa Barghouti from attending the mourning ceremony for the martyr Thaer Abu Kamel, a member of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, just before the elections, under the pretext that his presence at the mourning house meant electioneering.

²¹ Al Bawaba [‘Palestinians Mourn the Martyrs’](#) July 30 2001

²² Israel MFA [‘Involvement of PA in Terrorism’](#) May 6 2002

²³ Newspaper cutting from Birmingham News, 'Suicide bomber Injures 30' March 31 2003

²⁴ An Najah University News, [Prisoner Youssef Mahdawi](#), 28 August 2017

²⁵ B'Tselem [Fatalities Database](#)

²⁶ Al Haq [‘Sworn Statement’](#) December 23 2010

²⁷ Shireen [Martyrs List](#)

²⁸ UNISPAL [Record of Events](#) December 2004

²⁹ Palestine Remembered [‘Fares Farouk’ Hurtful Crimes’](#) November 13 2007

This angered Thayer's family, prompting them to invite Barghouti to their private home.” At the time, Barghouti was running for President of the Palestinian Authority.³⁰

This is a Facebook post from an account titled “*Jenin Camp Will Not Surrender*.” It commemorates Thayer and Amin Abu Kamel alongside other militants and depicts the men armed.³¹



To remove any doubt over identification, the two men can be matched to photographs subsequently posted to Instagram by Mahdawi himself in October 2024:³²



³⁰ Al Jazeera ‘[Abbas Rival Strikes Confident Note](#)’ December 25 2004

³¹ Facebook post, “[Jenin Camp Will Not Surrender](#)” May 7 2016

³² Mahdawi, Instagram post October 2024 [archived](#)

2005 or 2006

Unspecified: Mahdawi says he escaped bullets “numerous times” and also says he was shot in the leg when he was fifteen.³³ Members of Mahdawi’s family were actively engaged in terrorist activity, so it is always possible Mahdawi was sometimes in the vicinity of violent action. But this still does not explain his descriptions of activity inside the camp. Al-Fara’a Camp was a relatively remote and comparatively quiet camp during the Second Intifada. B’Tselem’s fatalities database records just one person killed by Israeli forces inside Al-Fara’a Camp during the entire five-year conflict: 14-year-old Muhammad Ahmad Mubaraq Ishteivi in June 2002. Three other Palestinians were killed near the camp in November 2001, but they were senior Hamas operatives travelling past the camp in a taxi who were deliberately targeted in an Israeli helicopter strike.^{34 35 36}

Even after the Second Intifada, fatalities remained remarkably infrequent. Between 2006 and 2022, B’Tselem records only five people killed by Israeli forces inside Al-Fara’a Camp.³⁷

Al-Fara’a Camp has since changed considerably and become far more militant. This distinction matters; Mahdawi repeatedly describes his childhood as if he grew up in the post-October 2023 Al-Fara’a of today - a camp characterised by armed militants and frequent Israeli incursions. But that was not the Al-Fara’a in which he grew up. Whatever the involvement of individual camp residents in militant activity elsewhere, the historical record does not support Mahdawi’s portrayal of the Al-Fara’a Camp of his childhood as a place in which shootings, Israeli incursions and lethal confrontations were a routine feature of life.

A 2002 incident illustrates the contrast particularly well. Three Hamas members fled to Al-Fara’a and hid there. Israeli forces entered the camp and arrested them without encountering any resistance.³⁸ In some years, such as 2001 and 2004, and despite intense searches through historical archives, no significant violent activity in the camp was located.

This is particularly significant for the period in which Mahdawi was 15 and claims he was shot (September 12 2005 - September 11 2006). Despite extensive searches, no significant violent incident inside the camp was located during this period.

In the two recorded incidents in which children from the camp were shot, we are given names, ages and details of both the circumstances and the injuries inflicted.

February 3 2005: Rami Issam Jawad, 13, was shot in the hand. Media reports state that Israeli forces had positioned themselves at the “entrance to the camp,” suggesting this was not an incursion, and members of the camp had gone to the edge of the camp to confront them.³⁹

³³ Columbia Spectator ‘[Hundreds of Pro-Palestinian Students Walk Out](#)’ November 10 2023

³⁴ B’Tselem [Fatalities Database](#)

³⁵ Israel Government ‘[Israeli Forces Operate Against Terrorist Mastermind](#)’ November 23 2001

³⁶ Guardian ‘[Israel Kills Hamas leader](#)’ November 24 2001

³⁷ B’Tselem [Fatalities Database](#)

³⁸ Al Jazeera ‘[A Martyr in Gaza and Arrest of Four in West Bank](#)’ September 3 2002

³⁹ Wafa News Agency, [Situation Updates](#), February 3 2005

September 26 2006: 14-year-old Munir Muhammad Abd al-Fattah was shot. This event also took place at the “entrance to the camp” in “violent clashes” between youths and Israeli forces. Munir was hit on his side/flank and taken to Dr. Khalil Suleiman Hospital in Jenin. His condition was described as moderate. We are also told several other youths suffered from gas inhalation.⁴⁰

In each documented incident located during the six-year period in which a child was shot, the child was identified by name. On both occasions, the shootings occurred in the context of confrontations with Israeli troops at or near the camp entrance.

Despite extensive searches across numerous databases and contemporary news sources, no record of Mahdawi being shot was found.

⁴⁰ Pal Info News ‘[Child Injured at Al Fara Camp](#)’ September 27 2006

The Birzeit University Years

2008

Unspecified: Mahdawi granted a scholarship to study computer engineering at Birzeit University near Ramallah.⁴¹

September: Mahdawi begins studying at Birzeit University.⁴²

2010

August 10: In a Facebook exchange, a friend told Mahdawi that their patience had “exceeded all limits.” Mahdawi agreed, before concluding: “Soon, very soon, we will annihilate the Jews.” The Arabic explicitly says “the Jews,” not Israelis or Zionists.⁴³



Mohsen Mahdawi

نعم فما قلته كلام معهود
بأن صبرنا تعدى الحدود
ولكننا ننتظر رحمة الرب المعبود
ولن نكون كاصحاب الاخدود
فقريبا قريبا سنبيد اليهود

December 2: Mahdawi, at this point active on Facebook, posted about the Carmel wildfire, in which 44 people died. At the time this was the deadliest civil disaster in Israel’s history.⁴⁴ Many of those killed were Prison Service cadets whose bus was trapped by the fire while travelling to assist in the evacuation of Damon Prison; Palestinian prisoners were among those being evacuated.⁴⁵

Mahdawi responded to the disaster with delight, writing that as long as “Zionists” were burning, he had no problem with the fire and would even “be fuel for it.”⁴⁶

⁴¹ The Brown and White ‘[A student’s Journey From The West Bank To The South Side](#)’ December 5 2018

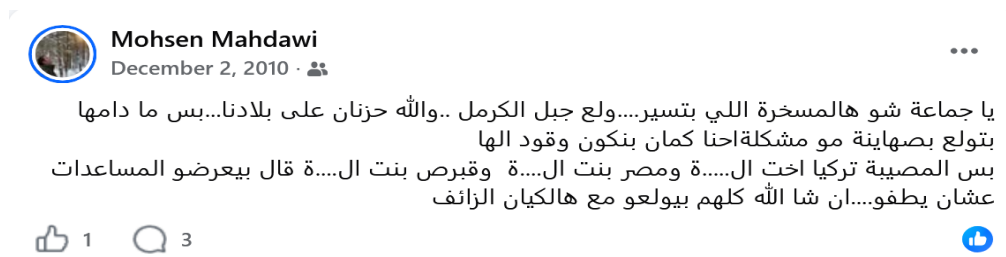
⁴² LinkedIn [Mohsen Mahdawi account](#)

⁴³ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#) August 3 2010, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

⁴⁴ Jewish Chronicle ‘[Carmel Fire Deaths](#)’ December 3 2010

⁴⁵ Times of Israel ‘[Prison Service Readies to Evacuate Inmates](#)’ November 24 2016

⁴⁶ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#) December 2 2010, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

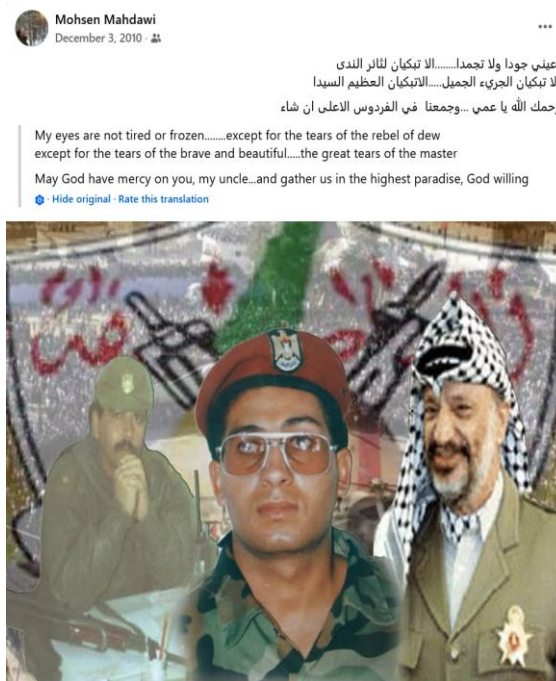


“Guys, what is this farce that’s happening... the Carmel is burning... By God, we’re saddened for our country... but as long as what’s burning in it is Zionists, there’s no problem — we’ll even be fuel for it.

“But the problem is that Turkey, the sister of the whore... and Egypt, the daughter of the whore... and Cyprus, the daughter of the whore, said they’re offering assistance to put it out...
“God willing, may they all burn along with this fake entity.”

December 3: Mahdawi often shares images of his uncle Thaer. This image is a montage with Yasser Arafat posted in 2010, with Thaer in the center.⁴⁷

The figure on the left holding the gun is Yousef Ahmed Rihan (Abu Jandal), a well-known Fatah fighter and one of the principal military commanders of the Jenin camp during the 2002 battle, in which 23 Israeli soldiers were killed.⁴⁸



⁴⁷ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#) December 3 2010, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

⁴⁸ Vision Center for Political Development, [Yousef Ahmed Rihan biography](#)

2011

January 14: Mahdawi posts a poem describing his rifle as his “beloved” and anticipating his “coming death.” (*emphasis added by authors*)⁴⁹



“My emotions, feelings and words are surging... from the heart of suffering and pain they emerge. There was a time when I believed that tenderness had become a quality I had lost... Animals have become more merciful to one another than I am to some of them. I yearn for no one but you, my beloved... who else but you, my rifle? You are the last thing I have.

I grieve for your visit... I grieve for your warm resting place... I grieve for my coming death... Our meeting draws near, my dear.”

February 22: Against the backdrop of political upheaval across the Arab world and growing Palestinian discontent with the Palestinian Authority, Mahdawi posts an attack on rulers he regards as

⁴⁹ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#), January 14 2011, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

tyrants and collaborators. He threatens that the ruler's "head will be cut off" and denounces him as a "servant of the Jews or the Americans":⁵⁰



Mohsen Mahdawi

February 22, 2011 · 🧑

...

سحقا لكل حاكم استبد... واعتقد انه اله او سلطان
سيأتي يوم وتداس تحت الاقدام... ويقطع رأسك يا خائن الاوطان
يا خادم اليهود او الامريكان... ايها الزنديق ايها السافل ايها الحيوان
عذرا عالم الحيوان... فلا وصفا يدنو من اطباع حكام عالم الانسان

"Damn every ruler who has become a tyrant... and believes himself to be a god or a sultan. A day will come when he will be trampled underfoot... and your head will be cut off, O traitor to the homeland.

O servant of the Jews or the Americans... O heretic, O lowlife, O animal.

My apologies to the animal kingdom... for no description of an animal comes close to the nature of the rulers of the human world."

August 18: Mahdawi posts to Facebook supporting attacks on civilian targets. A coordinated cross-border attack took place north of Eilat. Armed attackers opened fire on buses and civilian vehicles, used explosives and an anti-tank weapon, and engaged Israeli forces. Eight Israelis were killed, including six civilians. As Israeli forces continued to search for the surviving attackers, Mahdawi referred to them as "our mujahideen", prayed for their safe escape, and described those already killed as "our righteous martyrs."^{51 52}



Mohsen Mahdawi

August 18, 2011 · 🧑

...

ربي احم بقوتك من تبقى من مجاهديننا في ايلات... واخرجهم كما اخرجت نبيك ابراهيم من النار... وارحم شهدائنا
الابرار... برحمتك يا رب العالمين



3



2



"My Lord, by Your power protect those of our mujahideen who remain in Eilat, and bring them out as You brought Your prophet Abraham out of the fire. Have mercy on our righteous martyrs..."

⁵⁰ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#) February 21 2011 screenshot and archived copy held by authors

⁵¹ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#) August 18 2011 screenshot and archived copy held by authors

⁵² BBC News, '[Deadly Attacks Hit Israeli Vehicles](#)' August 18 2011

December 26: Mahdawi posts to Facebook. The context is the December 2011 reconciliation process between Fatah and Hamas.⁵³ In a completely public post, Mahdawi explicitly praises terrorist leaders from across the Palestinian factions.⁵⁴ Mahdawi's post salutes Ahmed Yassin, a founder and spiritual leader of Hamas, and Fathi al-Shiqaqi, a founder of Palestinian Islamic Jihad.^{55 56}



Join

كلنا واحد .. كلنا فلسطين ... كلنا بيرزيت .. نعم لوحدتنا

Nardeen Al-Tarawah · December 26, 2011 ·

شعب واحد مش شعبين رام الله وغزة وجنين

... احنا مين وانتو مين كلنا اولادك يا فلسطين....

نحيي القضية ..

وحده وحده وطنيه حتى

One people, not two, Ramallah, Gaza, and Jenin

... who are we and who are you, we are all your children, O Palestine....

One, one, a national homeland until we revive the cause.

Hide original · Rate this translation

17

7



Mohsen Mahdawi

Jenin on the line ...hahaha

14y

Like

See Original (Arabic)

Share

1



Nardeen Al-Tarawah

ولي مش عالقافيه بالاسم .. بالوحده بنخله ع القافيه

14y

Like

See translation

Share

1



Mohsen Mahdawi

akeed y5te ...bs heek btz3l nablus wel.5leel o bitl7em

14y

Like

Share

1



Nardeen Al-Tarawah

واحلى تحيه لجبال الخليل الرحمن ونابلس جبل النار ولأجراس بيت لحم واشجارها المزينه باعياد الميلاد ... ^*_

14y

Like

See translation

Share

1



Mohsen Mahdawi

وازيد على تحيتك تحية للثوار ... رجال الياسين والشقاقي وابو عمار ... وكل من سار على هالمشوار ... تحية خاصة مني لك و لاختواتنا الاحرار

14y

Like

See translation

Share

1

Mahdawi's final comment in the thread reads like this: "And I add to your salute a salute to the revolutionaries... the men of Yassin, Shiqaqi and Abu Ammar... and everyone who has followed this path... and a special salute from me to our free brothers."

⁵³ The Guardian [‘Palestinian Factions Agree Unified Government’](#) December 22 2011

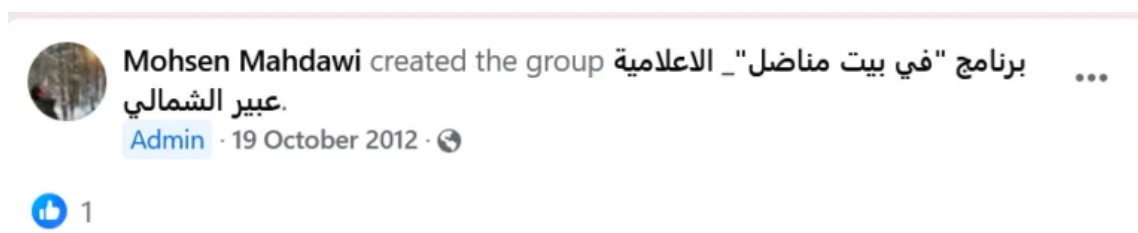
⁵⁴ Mahdawi [comment on Facebook post](#) by Nardeen al-Tarawah December 26 2011 screenshot and archived copy held by authors

⁵⁵ The Guardian [‘From the archive, Hamas Founder Sheikh Yassin Interviewed’](#) October 10 2023

⁵⁶ Britannica [Shiqaqi biography](#)

2012

October 19: Mahdawi creates a Facebook group promoting his mother's television programme 'In the House of a Fighter.'⁵⁷



The group focuses on long-term prisoners, including convicted terrorists, as well as “martyrs” and their families. The show is presented by his mother, Abeer Shamali, the same mother Mahdawi claims left the camp when he was young.⁵⁸ Mahdawi publicised the show through the group he created. This was his first post in the group:⁵⁹



“The ‘In the House of a Fighter’ programme highlights the sacrifices of our martyred heroes, prisoners, and wounded. In commemoration of our martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the homeland, and in appreciation and revival of the cause of our valiant prisoners, we were and still are the link between the darkness of prison and the sun of longing for their loved ones. We launched in 2006 and we will continue the journey until the liberation of all of Palestine.”

The show chiefly involves his mother going to the homes/families of some of the most serious terrorist prisoners, and glorifying their story. In October 2012, Mahdawi posted a video glorifying the Popular

⁵⁷ Facebook group, [‘In The House of a Fighter’](#)

⁵⁸ Abeer Shamali [Facebook post about her son Mohsen Mahdawi](#), July 3 2013

⁵⁹ Mahdawi makes first [group Facebook post](#), October 19 2012, screenshot archived copy held by authors

Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) terrorist Mahmoud Wahdan. Wahdan was serving multiple life sentences and was involved in several suicide bombings that murdered Israelis.^{60 61 62}

Mahdawi also posted a video glorifying the terrorist Ibrahim Enjas. Enjas was sentenced to 30 years for deadly terrorist activity.^{63 64 65}

There are dozens of posts like this with Mahdawi promoting the glorification of deadly terrorist prisoners, or the families of dead "martyrs." Here is an image he posted of his mother praying at the grave of Sitan al-Wali, who was a member of a ten-man terrorist cell that planted mines and explosives on the Golan Heights.⁶⁶



Supporting and glorifying those who carried out acts of violence is a persistent theme in the show promoted by this Facebook group.

⁶⁰ Mahdawi group [Facebook post](#) October 2012, screenshot archived copy held by authors

⁶¹ YouTube video, [original posting of show](#), March 19 2010

⁶² Jewish Journal '[Some of the Murderers Being Released](#)', January 29 2025

⁶³ Mohsen Mahdawi, [post in Facebook group](#), October 19 2012, screenshot and archived copy held by author

⁶⁴ YouTube [video of show, published](#) September 12 2011, screenshot archived copy held by author

⁶⁵ Commission of Detainees, '[Father of Prisoner Ibrahim Anjas](#)' March 6 2016

⁶⁶ Al Jazeera, '[Sitan al-Wali: A Prisoner From Prison to Hospital](#)' July 8 2008

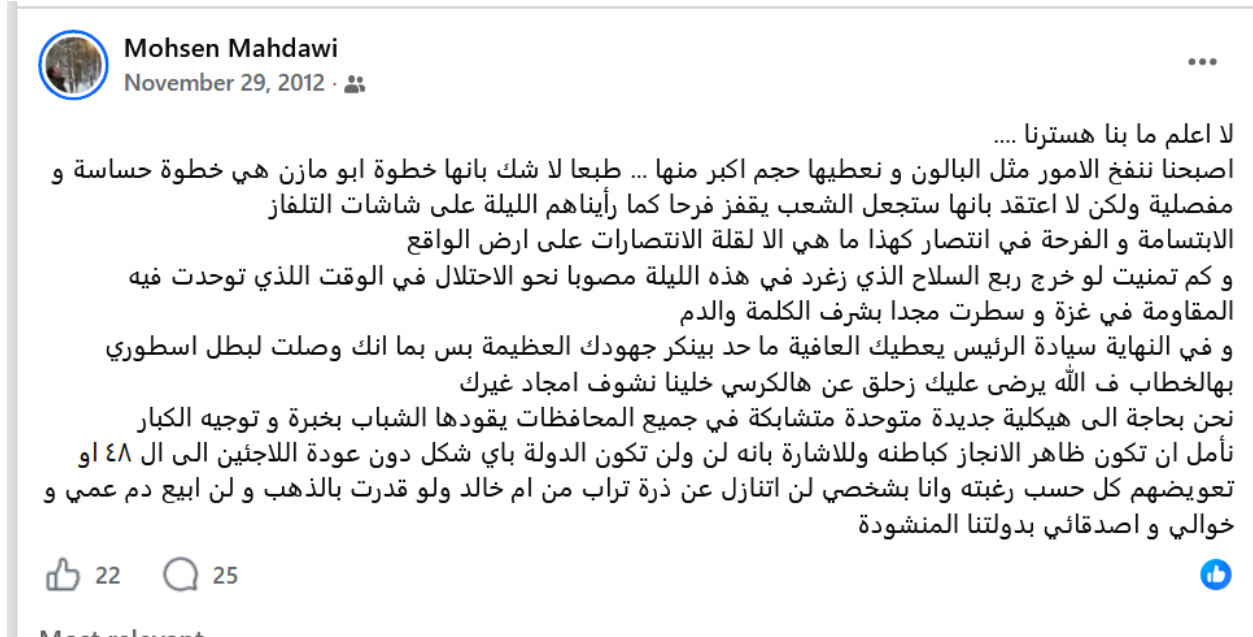
October 24: A family member posts an image to Mahdawi's page of someone holding a Kalashnikov.⁶⁷ The image is blurry, but the facial features, hairstyle and build closely resemble Mahdawi circa 2009. The photograph was posted directly to Mahdawi's Facebook timeline by his paternal cousin, Murad Mahdawi, who tagged Mahdawi in the post.⁶⁸



⁶⁷ A Kalashnikov is a Soviet-designed assault rifle of the AK family, most commonly associated with the [AK-47](#) and its derivatives

⁶⁸ Murad Mehdawi tags Mohsen Mahdawi in a [Facebook post](#), October 24 2012, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

November 29: Mahdawi calls for armed resistance across all of Palestine, targeting every inch of land “a Jewish foot has stepped upon” (*emphasis added by authors*):”⁶⁹



“I don’t know what’s got into us — we’ve become hysterical... We’ve started blowing things up like a balloon and making them seem bigger than they are. Of course, there is no doubt that Abu Mazen’s step is a sensitive and pivotal one, but I don’t believe it is something that should make the people jump for joy, as we saw them doing tonight on television.

“The smiles and happiness over a victory like this are only because there have been so few victories on the ground.

“And how I wished that even a quarter of the weapons that fired celebratory shots into the air tonight had instead been aimed at the occupation, at the time when the resistance united in Gaza and wrote a chapter of glory with the honour of words and blood.

“And finally, Mr President, may God give you strength. No one denies your tremendous efforts. But since this speech has elevated you into a legendary hero, then, for God’s sake, get out of that chair and let us see the achievements of someone else.

“We need a new structure — united and interconnected across all the governorates — led by the young, with the experience and guidance of the elders.

“We hope that this achievement is as good in reality as it appears. And let it be noted that there will never, ever be a state, in any form, without the refugees returning to the ‘48 lands or receiving compensation, each according to his own choice.

⁶⁹ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#), November 29 2012, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

“As for me personally, I will not give up a single grain of the soil of Umm Khalid, even if it were valued in gold, and I will not betray the blood of my paternal uncle, my maternal uncles and my friends for our longed-for state.”

“An armed resistance in every inch upon which a Jewish foot has stepped.”

In the responses, his friend wrote that accepting this did not surrender refugee claims to Jaffa and Haifa and that “everything from the river to the sea will be liberated, God willing”



Hadeel Alshawamreh

ان ناخذ جزء من الحق خير مت لا شيء وهذا لا يعني ان اللاجئين لا حق لهم هذه بدايه ولكن كلها من النهر للبحر ستتحر باذن الله كاملك بالعودة لقريتك تماما فلسطين ... بس اخخ وخلصنا ونشوف

13y Like See translation



And Mahdawi responded with this:⁷⁰



Mohsen Mahdawi

لن تقام لنا دولة وانا على يقين مما اقول الا ان كانت لدينا مقاومة مسلحة Hadeel Yousif استهدفت كل شبر وطأت عليه قدم يهودي وقامت ببتها في اضعف الايمان و في حال توصلنا الى دولة فلن يكون هناك حل لقضية اللاجئين حسب منظورنا وبناءا عليه رح تتفركش الامور وتنفجر من جديد دوامة المفاوضات ستستمر و لن يكون هناك حل الا بالفتح المبين لكل فلسطين

13y Like



“We will not establish a state—and I am certain of what I say—**unless we have an armed resistance that targets every inch of land a Jewish foot has stepped upon and cuts it off, at the very least.** Furthermore, even if we were to secure a state, there would be no solution to the refugee issue from our perspective; consequently, things would unravel and explode all over again. The cycle of negotiations would drag on, **and there would be no solution other than the clear, manifest conquest of all Palestine.**”

⁷⁰ Mahdawi comment on Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#), In response to Hadeel Yousif (Alshawamreh) November 29 2012, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

Meeting Meagan and Campus Activism

2013

January: Mahdawi's ex-wife Meagan Dechen says they met at Birzeit University.⁷¹

"My name is [REDACTED / Meagan], and I am Mohsen Mahdawi's ex-wife. I first met Mohsen when I was a student in an Arabic Language program at Birzeit University, in the West Bank, Palestine, January 2013. We met my first week there; he was a representative of the University's Student Council, and he helped me sort out a billing issue I was having with my tuition. Our first interaction was marked by his kindness, interest in helping others, and charisma. I was also aware from the start that he had incredible people skills; he knew everyone, and he was liked by all."

January 20: Mahdawi shares footage of a January 4 television appearance on the show *Fesh Ghillak* ("Vent Your Anger"), in which members of the public discuss political and social grievances. Speaking outside Birzeit University about Palestinian division, economic hardship and support for Palestinian prisoners, Mahdawi turns to the question of resistance, telling the audience that Palestinians have the capacity and conviction to resist, "to kill and to wound." The transcribed section below begins at timecode 4:46 (*emphasis added by authors*):^{72 73}



"So I hope that our Palestinian people will appreciate and value the sacrifices of the people who struggle, the sacrifices of these prisoners, and stand with them - even if it is only a symbolic show of support: in the street, in a march, in a protest tent."

⁷¹ Mahdawi v. Trump, Government's Joint Appendix, [Volume III](#), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, filed July 14 2025

⁷² Mohsen Mahdawi [posts video on his](#) Facebook page January 20 2013, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

⁷³ Alfastiniah TV [publishes video](#) on its YouTube channel January 14 2013

“Of course, this is assuming that we don't have the means at our disposal to resist - although every young man, and every person who thinks a little, has within him the ability, the capacity and the conviction to resist, to advance, to kill and to wound, whether on the military level, the political level, or the intellectual level.

“So we must pay attention to these prisoners and not forget the sacrifices of the martyrs. We must not forget the sacrifices of the disabled people, [unclear phrase], the people who are still confined to beds, the people in wheelchairs, the martyrs who are beneath the ground - I repeat again - and the prisoners who are still paying the price for their struggle.

“This struggle was for everyone; it was not personal. Therefore everyone must contribute and stand with them.”

March 7: Mahdawi appears on page 8 of the Birzeit magazine, There is a section in the magazine titled “Who is Your Role Model.”⁷⁴

8 «الحال» - الخميس 2013/3/7م - الموافق 25 ربيع الثاني 1434 هـ - العدد الثالث والثسعون

من هو مثلك الأعلى؟

مالك صبيح، 20 عامًا إعلام

مثلي الأعلى إعلاميًا هو الإعلامي المصري يسري فودة، فبالرغم من صغر سنه، لديه تاريخ حافل في الصحافة الاستقصائية، ويعجني برنامجه «سري الفايه» فهو يتحدث في 34 حلقة عن 34 موضوعًا وقصة مختلفة، أطمح أن أكون مثله يومًا ما، وقد كان له الأثر الأكبر في دخولي كلية الإعلام.

خلد محمد صبيح، 21 عامًا هندسة ميكاترونكيس

مثلي الأعلى خالي محمده أرى فيه إنسانًا مثاليًا، أناجدا في حياته العملية، اعتمد على نفسه في تكوين حياته ووفر لأهله حياة كريمة، وأولاده ناجحون، أتمنى أن أكون بنفس أخلاقه ورياسته.

ناركة حمدان، 16 عامًا مدرسة دورا القرع

مثلي الأعلى الإعلامي السعودي ومقدم برنامج «خوابه» أحمد الشخيري، أرى أنه من القلائد الذين ينهضون الدين الإسلامي ويوظفونه بطريقة صحيحة، أتمنى لو يقتدي به الجميع لكان مجتمعنا الآن أفضل، يمكن أن نتعلم منه شيئًا بسيطًا لكنه مؤثر في المجتمع.

شعاع محمد مرعي، 21 عامًا هندسة ميكاترونكيس

مثلي الأعلى والدي، فهو ناجح بحياته، ملتزم بالدين لكن دون تزمت، وتعجني به هذه الصفة، فهو يفعل ما يريد في حياته دون أن يعصي به نفسه بجدته وتعجب، وتعجب لأجل أولاده، ما يجعلني أقدره جدا وأجده بحياتي أكثر لأسعدو وأكون مصدر فخر له.

حنون فقيه، 22 عامًا

مثلي الأعلى سياسي هو القائد جورج حبش، لأنه شخص مناضل ووطنى، عمل طوال حياته من أجل فلسطين، لم يطمع الوصول إلى مناصب سياسية كان هدفه القضية والوطن والتحرير وأن تصل أفكاره للعالم من خلال حبه السياسي، وقد أثر في كل حياتي وتربيتي.

محسن مهدي، 22 عامًا

لا أعتقد أن هناك مثلاً أعلى لكل جوانب الحياة، لكن يمكن أن يكون لي مثل في الجانب الوطني وفي الجانب الأخلاقي، ففي الجانب الوطني، أقتدي بالشهيد ثائر المهدي الذي تربيت على يديه وزرع الوطنية في ناخلي وعلمني إياها، أما في الجانب الأخلاقي، فأنا أقتدي بالرسول محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم في حسن خلقه.

هلال عكاوي، 22 عامًا تجارة

مثلي الأعلى الشهيد إلهاء الذي كان عقل القضية الفلسطينية لم يكن يحمي الظهور كانت وطنيته صانقة، يختلف عن القادة الآخرين في فكرة الثوري الذي تخطى كل القادة فكانت أغلب القرارات تصدر من فكره الذي كان يجمع بين العسكري والسياسي، استغدت كثيرًا من قراءة كتبه التي تبدأ بها عن وضعنا الحالي.

Each year Mahdawi posts a remembrance to his uncle Thaer and promises to walk in his path. But before his arrival in the United States Mahdawi is explicitly clear in the uncle's legacy:

لا أعتقد أن هناك مثلاً أعلى لكل جوانب الحياة، لكن يمكن أن يكون لي مثل في الجانب الوطني وفي الجانب الأخلاقي. ففي الجانب الوطني، أقتدي بعلمي الشهيد ثائر المهدي، الذي تربيت على يديه وزرع الوطنية في داخلي وعلمني إياها. أما في الجانب الأخلاقي، فأنا أقتدي بالرسول محمد صلى الله عليه وسلم في حسن خلقه.

“I don't think there is a role model for every aspect of life, but I can have a role model in the national [political/patriotic] sphere and in the moral sphere. In the national sphere, I follow the example of my uncle, the martyr Thaer Mahdawi, who raised me and planted patriotism in me and taught it to me. As for the moral sphere, I follow the example of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, in his good character.”

⁷⁴ Birzeit Student Magazine “[Who is Your Role Model](#)” March 7 2013

Long before Mahdawi began presenting his uncle in the United States primarily as an inspiration for education, he described the relationship rather differently. In 2013, while still at Birzeit, Mahdawi explicitly identified Thaer Mahdawi as his role model in the “national” sphere, saying that his uncle had raised him, “planted patriotism” in him and taught it to him. The distinction Mahdawi himself makes is significant: he identifies the Prophet Muhammad as his model for morality and character, but his uncle Thaer as his model for patriotism and national identity. Thaer was a Palestinian Preventive Security officer who was killed on September 12 2001 during an armed confrontation later commemorated by Palestinian sources as a battle.

April 8: Mahdawi is tagged in an image of Fatah student activists at Birzeit University.⁷⁵



April 26: Mahdawi is identified in a news article as “coordinator of the Fatah student youth movement at Birzeit University for the northern governorates.” Amid an internal dispute within Fatah's student movement, he leads an open-ended protest. Mahdawi explains that the protest “will continue until the demands are met”.⁷⁶

September 19: Mahdawi posted an image on Facebook of himself in Akko (Acre), Israel.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Abdullah Amer posts [an image](#) of Fatah Student Youth and tags Mahdawi into the image April 8 2013

⁷⁶ Pal Times ‘[Disputes Among Fatah Youth Members at Birzeit](#)’ April 26 2013

⁷⁷ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#), September 19 2013 screenshot and archived copy held by authors

October 25: Mahdawi posted an image on Facebook in Yafo (Jaffa), Israel. His later description suggests this was a single trip and he was smuggled into Israel by his then-girlfriend Meagan Dechen.⁷⁸

The Jaffa post is explicitly political; Mahdawi describes the visit in terms of the “return,” calls the area “my land and the land of my ancestors,” and dismisses Israeli laws.



2014

January 21: Although Meagan says they met in January 2013, the first reference to Meagan on Mahdawi’s Facebook page was found in a January 2014 post, possibly after she had returned to the U.S.⁸⁰



Mohsen Mahdawi

January 21, 2014 · 🌍

waiting for you darling Meagan Dechen

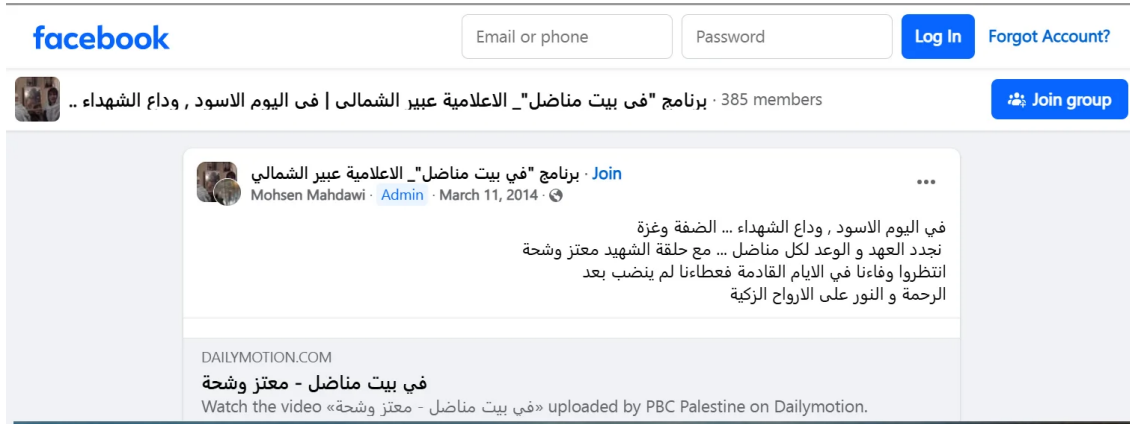
⁷⁸ RSN ‘[Mohsen Mahdawi on His ICE Detention](#)’ July 28 2025

⁷⁹ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#), October 25 2013 screenshot and archived copy held by authors

⁸⁰ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#), January 21 2014, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

Jew Hatred and Support for Terrorism

March 11 2014: In the “In the Home of a Fighter” Facebook group, Mahdawi posts a video about the martyr Mu‘tazz Washaha, which contains the infamous “Khaybar” chant:^{81 82}



في اليوم الأسود، وداع الشهداء ... الضفة وغزة
نحدد العهد والوعد لكل مناضل ... مع حلقة الشهيد معتز وشحة
انتظروا وفاءنا في الأيام القادمة فخطاونا لم ينضب بعد
الرحمة والنور على الأرواح الزكية

“On this black day, as the West Bank and Gaza bid farewell to the martyrs... We renew the pledge and the promise to every fighter/struggler... with the episode of the martyr Mu‘tazz Washaha. Wait for our loyalty in the coming days, for our giving has not yet run dry. Mercy and light upon the pure souls.”

It is unclear who Mahdawi is referencing from the West Bank. The post references deaths in Gaza - they were Islamic Jihad terrorists, and explicitly names Mu‘tazz Washaha - a PFLP terrorist.^{83 84}

The video was uploaded to Daily Motion by PBC Palestine:⁸⁵ At about 2:50 into the clip, the crowd is singing the Khaybar chant.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Mahdawi Posts in the Facebook group “In the Home of a Fighter” [with a video about the martyr Mu‘tazz Washaha](#) March 11 2014

⁸² Jerusalem Post [‘Islamic Jihad Says Israeli Air Strike Kills 3 Gaza Operatives’](#) March 11 2014

⁸³ B’Tselem [Fatalities Database](#)

⁸⁴ Al Araby [‘Washa Was Wounded, Then a Prisoner, Then a Martyr’](#) February 28 2014

⁸⁵ Daily Motion video, [Published by PCB Palestine](#), 2014

⁸⁶ David Collier ‘the Khaybar chant’ video, in [‘Vermont, Mohsen Mahdawi, and Mountains of Useful Idiots’](#) April 18 2025

The chant is “Khaybar, Khaybar, O Jews, the army of Muhammad will return” (خير خير يا يهود، جيش محمد (سوف يعود). It invokes the 628 CE Battle of Khaybar, when Muhammad’s forces defeated the Jewish communities of the Khaybar oasis. In modern usage it is an antisemitic Islamist rallying chant directed explicitly at Jews that invokes the historical massacre and threatens its repetition.⁸⁷

March 19: Mahdawi posts to Facebook referencing a shooting at Beit El - an Israeli settlement - saying “Don’t waste your bullets.” He criticises the poor planning and waste of ammunition, explicitly:⁸⁸



Mohsen Mahdawi

March 19, 2014 · 🧑

...

هههه أعجبتني عبارة نشرتها احدى البيجز
قال إطلاق نار على مستوطنة بيت أيل و إصابة احدى المنازل
بس ما قتلونا إصابة طفيفة و لا متوسطة و لا خطرة و على اي مستشفى نقلوه
يا اخوان اللي معني يعمل اشي بيخطله و انا ما بقول ما يعمل هيك بس حرام على الرصاص و المجازفة ، في
امكانية كبيرة وسهلة يعمل اشياء اكبر اذا هو معني

See translation

“Haha, I liked a quote posted on one of the pages: ‘Shooting at the Beit El settlement, with one of the houses hit.’ But they didn’t tell us whether the injury was minor, moderate or serious, or which hospital it was taken to. Brothers, if someone wants to do something, they should plan it. I’m not saying they shouldn’t do something like this, but it’s a shame to waste bullets and take the risk. There is a great/easy possibility of doing bigger things if he really means/wants to.”

Mahdawi is joking about an event that took place on March 10. There was a shooting at a house in Beit El.⁸⁹

There were no injuries. Hence the reporting that “a house was hit” - with Mahdawi asking what hospital the house was taken to.

But it is the next part that is important. Mahdawi does not condemn the shooting. Instead, he criticises its poor planning, the risk involved and the waste of ammunition. He then explicitly says that he is “not saying” such an attack should not be carried out, before suggesting that “bigger things” could be done.

⁸⁷ ADL, [The Khaybar Chant](#), July 27 2022

⁸⁸ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#), March 19 2014 screenshot and archived copy held by authors

⁸⁹ Palestine Press Agency, [‘Clashes After Shooting at Beit El’](#) March 10 2014

Heading to the United States

May 21 2014: Kyle, the brother of fiancée Meagan Dechen dies. Mahdawi mourns on a Facebook post the fact he could not go to the funeral because of visa issues:⁹⁰

June unspecified: Mahdawi was living in Ramallah at the time of making visa applications.⁹¹

June unspecified: Mahdawi fills in the United States visa application. These are some example questions provided from a 2013-era DS-160 form, which would have been used at the time:⁹²

- Have you ever served in, been a member of, or been involved with a paramilitary unit, vigilante unit, rebel group, guerrilla group, or insurgent organization?
- Do you seek to engage in terrorist activities while in the United States or have you ever engaged in terrorist activities?
- Have you ever or do you intend to provide financial assistance or other support to terrorists or terrorist organizations?
- Are you a member or representative of a terrorist organization?

June 19: Mahdawi petitions for a nonimmigrant visa with the U.S. Department of State (DOS), as a visitor for business and pleasure (B1/B2). The interview was in Jerusalem.⁹³

Mahdawi says that after being denied a permit to travel to Jerusalem for his U.S. visa interview, he had a friend construct a ladder. Before dawn, he climbed the separation barrier, cut through the wire at the top and descended the other side by rope, before taking buses to the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem and submitting his visa application. Some versions have him dodging Israeli snipers, and the ladder changes in size.^{94 95}

In one 2019 interview, he added an entire section that had him being further questioned on a bus inside Israel and facing armed officers. He claims he arrived after the consulate had closed, but they let him in anyway.⁹⁶ In his final exit journey from Israel he tells of being denied the crossing into Jordan, until he explains the meaning of love to an Israeli Border Guard and this convinces her to let him through.⁹⁷

⁹⁰ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#), May 21 2014 screenshot and archived copy held by authors

⁹¹ LU Live Episode 1: Mohsen Mehdaui [Interview](#) at Lehigh, published February 28 2019

⁹² Example [Terrorism Related Questions](#) from 2013 for DS-160 visa application

⁹³ Mahdawi v. Trump, Government's Joint Appendix, [Volume III](#), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, filed July 14 2025

⁹⁴ The Brown and White [‘A student's journey from the West Bank to the South Side’](#) December 5 2018

⁹⁵ The Valley news, [‘Upper Valley Man Shaped By His Experiences’](#), December 27 2020

⁹⁶ LU Live Episode 1: Mohsen Mehdaui [interview](#) at Lehigh, published February 28 2019

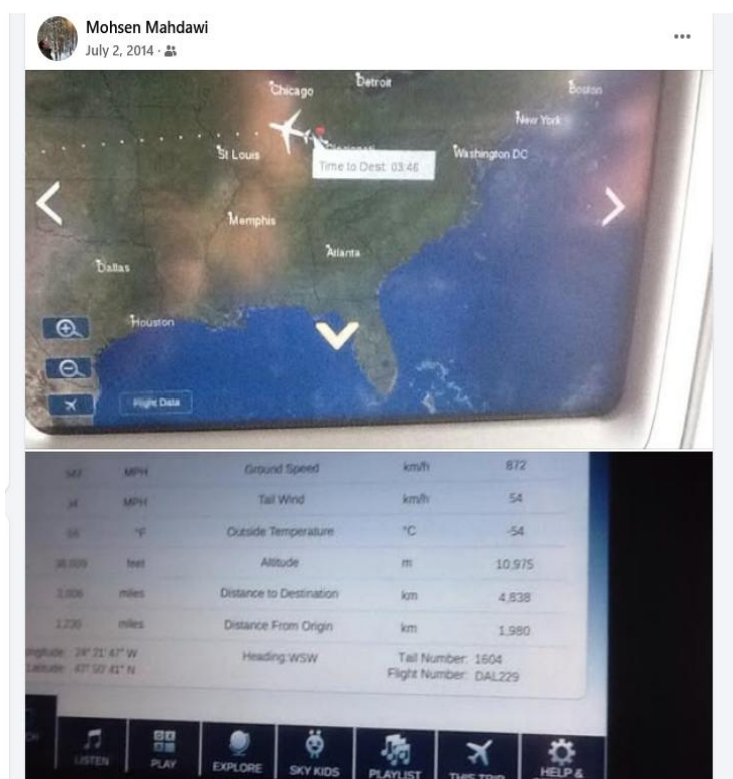
⁹⁷ LU Live Episode 1: Mohsen Mehdaui [interview](#) at Lehigh, published February 28 2019

Fact-check: There is no current way of proving whether Mahdawi did or did not enter Israel without a permit, although the scene he describes is unusually elaborate. Both authorised and unauthorised Palestinian movement were commonplace at the time. In the second quarter of 2014, Palestinian statistics recorded 109,400 West Bank Palestinians working in Israel or Israeli settlements; 57,600 had permits, but 38,000 were working without them.^{98 99} For many Palestinians working inside Israel, this necessarily involved finding ways to enter without authorisation, and contemporary reports describe numerous methods by which Palestinians routinely circumvented Israeli movement restrictions.

Against a backdrop of extensive, routine daily interaction between Palestinians and Israelis, it is striking that the encounters with Israelis that feature in Mahdawi's autobiographical accounts so often become exceptional episodes.

June 20: Mahdawi issued U.S. B1/B2 visa.¹⁰⁰

July 2: Mahdawi posts to Facebook about his flight and entry to the United States, apparently posted a day after his flight, as his recorded entry was on July 1.^{101 102}



⁹⁸ Palestinian Bureau of Statistics, [2nd Quarter Labour Statistics](#) 2014

⁹⁹ Some had Israeli identification and therefore did not need permits

¹⁰⁰ Mahdawi v. Trump, Government's Joint Appendix, [Volume III](#), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, filed July 14 2025

¹⁰¹ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#), July 2 2014, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

¹⁰² Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#), July 2 2014, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

Mahdawi in the United States

July 27 2014: Now on U.S. soil Mahdawi posts about the Gaza war, explicitly praising the armed wings of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. He also makes a reference to the choice of different forms of “resistance” while “outside the homeland” (*emphasis added by authors*):¹⁰³



Mohsen Mahdawi

July 27, 2014 · 🌍

...

في غربة الوطن يصعب الكلام على الفعل، لاسيما في ظل خيمة الشهداء التي لم تفارق الكون بعد ، حيث تابعتني في كل موطن قدم ، حتى في منامي ، كما شغلت بالي طوال دوران الارض حول محورها لليال طال فيها السهر على الأخبار المحلية و القفز بين وكالات الأنباء الفيسبوكية ، باختصار و بالرغم من كل الخسارة التي يعتصر لها الفؤاد ما بين طفل فقد بعض أطرافه او ام تلملم أشلاء أطفالها او والد لم يعرف مصير أبنائه بعد ، الا ان الفخر و الأمل اللذي زادت اشراقته مع ثبات المقاومة و استيسالها و نصرها المؤزر على غطرسة و ظلم الاحتلال ، و مرمغة انفه بالتراب و اذاقته علقم مرارته على ارض غزة ، هو الشعور الغالب على الإذعان بإرادة الخالق ، وفي كل أشكال المقاومة التي نبحث عنها في خارج الوطن نبقى أقزاما امام عظمة اسود القسام و السرايا و الكتائب و امام تضحيات إخواننا في غزة ، هنيئا لكم أظهر ارض بعد مخيم جنين ، و هنيئا لكم التاريخ و العزة .
اعتذر من كل اخواني و أحبائي عن عدم المعايدة بعيد الفطر
أقبلوا مني التعازي و دعوات النصر .
الولايات المتحدة الامريكية -فيرمانت

“In the alienation of being away from the homeland, it is difficult for words to match deeds, particularly beneath the shadow of the martyrs’ tent, which has not yet departed from this world. It followed me wherever I went, even into my dreams, and occupied my thoughts throughout the days and nights in which I stayed up late following the local news and jumping between the Facebook news agencies. In short, and despite all the losses that wrench the heart — between a child who has lost some of his limbs, a mother gathering the remains of her children, and a father who still does not know the fate of his sons — nevertheless, the predominant feeling, alongside submission to the will of the Creator, is pride and hope, **whose light has grown brighter with the steadfastness of the resistance, its fierce fighting and its resounding victory** over the occupation’s arrogance and oppression — rubbing its nose in the dirt and making it taste the bitter gall of defeat on the soil of Gaza.

“And **in all the forms of resistance that we seek outside the homeland**, we remain dwarfs before **the greatness of the lions of al-Qassam, al-Saraya and al-Kata’ib**, and before the sacrifices of our brothers in Gaza. Congratulations to you, [people of] the purest land after Jenin camp; congratulations to you on [making] history and [winning] glory.

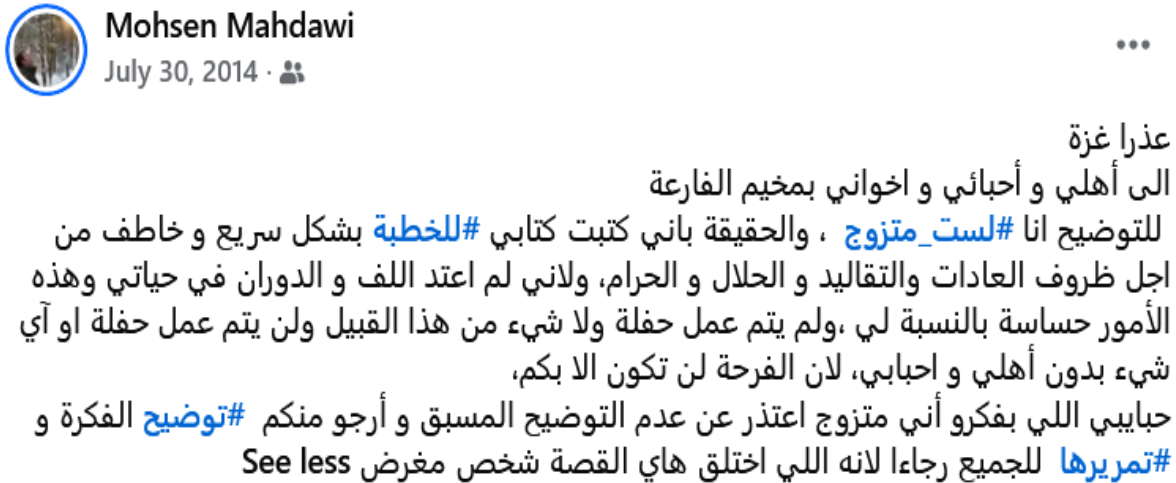
“I apologise to all my brothers and loved ones for not sending Eid al-Fitr greetings. Accept from me instead my condolences and my prayers for victory.

“United States of America - Vermont.”

¹⁰³ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#) July 27 2014, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

July - August unspecified: Within weeks of entering the U.S. Mahdawi marries Meagan Dechen.¹⁰⁴

July 30: Mahdawi posts on Facebook in Arabic sending a message to friends and family back home. Mahdawi insists that he is “not married”, while also referring to his *katb al-kitab*, which he says was done “quickly and hastily” (*emphasis added by authors*):¹⁰⁵



“Sorry, Gaza. To my family, loved ones and brothers in Al-Fara'a Camp:

“To clarify, I am **#not_married**. The truth is that I **did my katb al-kitab** for the engagement quickly and hastily, because of circumstances involving customs, traditions, halal and haram. I am not accustomed to the twists and turns in my life, and these matters are sensitive for me.

“No party was held for me, nor anything of that sort, and no party or anything else will be held without my family and loved ones, because the joy would not be complete without you.

“My loved ones who think that I am married, I apologise for not making this clear beforehand, and I ask you to **#clarify** the matter and **#pass_it_on** to everyone, please, because the person who made up this story is a malicious person.”

It is difficult to determine precisely what Mahdawi meant by the post. What is clear is that some type of contract had been signed, and there was already confusion among those back home about whether he had married.

August 3: Mahdawi sarcastically attacks Mohammed Dahlan and the anti-Hamas Palestinian/Arab political camp, accusing them of siding with Israel and treating “the resistance” as terrorism. Mahdawi argues that even if the Hamas-Fatah split was harmful, “you may dislike something while it is good for you: from the division came the birth of honour, dignity and hope” for the Palestinian people. In the

¹⁰⁴ Mahdawi v. Trump, [No. 25-1113](#), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, 21 July 2026

¹⁰⁵ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#), July 30 2014, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

context of the Gaza war, this amounts to glorification of the armed “resistance,” including Hamas, rather than merely a defence of its legitimacy (*emphasis added by authors*):¹⁰⁶



Mohsen Mahdawi

August 3, 2014 · 🧑

...

من الواجب ان أقول شكرًا محمد دحلان
شكرًا على قربك من السيسي و إقناعه بان حماس منظمة مجرمة على نهج الاخوان المسلمين و تفضيل الوقوف
بجانب اسرائيل و دعمها على أبناء الشعب الفلسطيني
شكرًا على تعزيز موقف الإمارات و الخليج العربي ضد شعب غزة
شكرًا على الحلف الاستراتيجي لإسرائيل والإجماع على ارهابية المقاومة
هذه ضريبة الحرب التي صممت بايد نجسة فلسطينية
اخيراً اريد ان أشكر على انقلاب غزة و انقسام فتح و حماس
لكن لا تكرهوا شيئاً وهو خير لكم حين كان نتاج الانقسام ميلاد شرف و عزة و امل للشعب المكسور طوال سنين
عديدة See less

“I feel obliged to say: Thank you, Mohammed Dahlan. Thank you for your closeness to Sisi and for convincing him that Hamas is a criminal organisation following the path of the Muslim Brotherhood, and for preferring to stand alongside Israel and support it against the sons of the Palestinian people.

“Thank you for strengthening the position of the UAE and the Arab Gulf against the people of Gaza. Thank you for the strategic alliance with Israel and for the consensus that the resistance is terrorist. This is the price of a war designed by filthy Palestinian hands.

“Finally, I want to thank you for the Gaza coup and the division between Fatah and Hamas.

“Perhaps you may dislike something while it is good for you: from the division came the birth of honour, dignity and hope for a people who had been broken for many years.”

September 26: Mahdawi’s wife, Meagan Dechen, files a Form I-130, Petition for Alien Relative, on his behalf. Mahdawi concurrently files a Form I-485, Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#), August 3 2014, screenshot and archived copy held by author

¹⁰⁷ Mahdawi v Trump, [No. 25-1113](#), Joint Special Appendix, Vol. II, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, filed July 14 2025

Police Arrest, Guns and FBI Investigation

2015

Unspecified: Mahdawi and his wife settle in Windsor, Vt.¹⁰⁸ Mahdawi's conditional permanent resident status was granted.¹⁰⁹ Mahdawi begins working as a bank teller in Hanover, New Hampshire, and meets David Bisno.¹¹⁰

August 18: Windsor Police are contacted by a local gun shop owner concerning Mahdawi's behavior and statements.^{111 112}

The Windsor Police report: "On 08/18/15 around 1600 hours I was on duty as a Detective for the Windsor Police Department when Chief William Sampson came into the Detective's office and told me that he had just talked to a concerned citizen who wanted to report some suspicious activity. "

Key points according to the report, including the gun shop owner's claims:

- Mahdawi sought employment at a gun shop making and modifying firearms, allegedly even offering to work without pay.
- Mahdawi claimed to have considerable firearm experience, and allegedly said he had used modified submachine guns "to kill Jews while he was in Palestine."
- Mahdawi allegedly said he had previously made guns for Hezbollah.
- Mahdawi allegedly asked to purchase a sniper rifle and a machine gun.
- The gun-shop owner also told police that Mahdawi appeared genuinely knowledgeable about firearms.
- Mahdawi allegedly photographed the exterior, interior and merchandise of the gun shop.
- At a separate museum encounter, Mahdawi allegedly expressed interest in purchasing an automatic rifle and sniper rifle.
- During that encounter, Mahdawi allegedly said: "I like to kill Jews."
- Mahdawi allegedly photographed or filmed people and vintage firearms inside the museum.
- Mahdawi was allegedly subsequently observed photographing or filming people at a supermarket checkout.

The police report was forwarded to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

¹⁰⁸ My NBC5 '[Mahdawi Came to America](#)' April 16 2025

¹⁰⁹ Mahdawi v Trump, [No. 25-1113](#), Joint Special Appendix, Vol. II, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, filed July 14 2025

¹¹⁰ The Brown and White, '[Mohsen Mahdawi Journey From Palestine to Lehigh](#)', December 5 2018

¹¹¹ David Collier, 2015 [police report](#) on Mahdawi

¹¹² Mahdawi v. Trump, Government's Joint Appendix, [Volume III](#), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, filed July 14 2025

The report makes clear that Mahdawi presented identifying documentation:

“MR [REDACTED] told me that on the second visit, the male subject said that he wished to purchase a sniper rifle and a machine gun. MR [REDACTED] told me that the male had not specified specific firearms for purchase nor had he shared his purpose or intent with these firearms. MR [REDACTED] told me that the male had provided him with his Vermont Operator's license which contained the male's photograph. MR [REDACTED] told me that he had made a photo copy of the male's operator's license and he had written the man's phone number down as documentation. MR [REDACTED] provided me with a photo copy of this information “

The photocopied licence is significant because it provides contemporaneous documentary support for the gun shop owner's identification of Mahdawi.

November 18: Mahdawi is interviewed by the FBI concerning the allegations in the Windsor Police report.^{113 114}

“...an incident in summer 2015 when a gun shop owner told Windsor, Vermont police officers that Mr. Mahdawi had visited his store twice, expressing an interest in learning more about firearms and buying a sniper rifle and an automatic weapon and that he ‘had considerable firearm experience and used to build modified 9mm submachine guns to kill Jews while he was in Palestine.’ The store owner stated that Mr. Mahdawi took photos of the store and its merchandise. The store owner gave the police the name of a fellow gun enthusiast who stated that he had a similar conversation with Mr. Mahdawi at the ‘Precision Museum’ in Windsor where the enthusiast served as a volunteer tour leader. During that conversation, Mr. Mahdawi allegedly told the gun enthusiast, ‘I like to kill Jews.’

“In his reply, Mr. Mahdawi stated that in November 2015, FBI agent Marc Emmons interviewed him concerning the allegations from July 2015. Mr. Mahdawi confirmed that he had visited the gun shop and the Precision Museum but that he had never discussed buying weapons or killing Jews. His purpose in visiting the gun shop was to learn whether he was required to register a shotgun his wife had given him as a present. There was no registration requirement for her gift. He went to the museum because it is located just a few blocks from where he lived, and he is interested in machines and previously studied engineering. Mr. Mahdawi states that the FBI agent was satisfied with his explanation and closed the investigation.”

November 18: The same day as the FBI interview, Mahdawi's wife went to Windsor Police following what the police report describes as a “non-physical argument” and asked officers to take possession of her personally owned 12-gauge Mossberg shotgun until the situation was resolved. Police took the weapon into the evidence room “to negate escalation surrounding this incident.”^{115 116}

¹¹³ Mahdawi v Trump, [No. 25-1113](#), Joint Special Appendix, Vol. II, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, filed July 14 2025

¹¹⁴ Mahdawi v. Trump, Government's Joint Special Appendix, [Volume III](#), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, filed July 14 2025

¹¹⁵ Mahdawi v. Trump, [No. 25-1113](#), U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, July 21 2026

¹¹⁶ Mahdawi v. Trump, [No. 25-1113](#), Joint Special Appendix, Vol. II, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, filed July 14 2025

The Original Pledge to Uncle Thaer

September 12 2015: Mahdawi publishes a remembrance post to his uncle on Facebook:¹¹⁷



Mohsen Mahdawi

September 12, 2015 · 🌍

...

٩١٢ من كل عام اجدد العهد كما أطوي عامي السابق على نفس النهج، عهد الشهداء محفوظ و عهد الوطن لن ينتهي، في هذا التاريخ ذكرى المقاتل الصعب ، المؤمن الواثق، المحارب العنيد ، المتسلح بالثقافة و الحب و الشجاعة ، في هذا التاريخ المشرف ليوم ميلادي ارتقى عمي ثائر من الحياة الدنيا بعد كفاح طويل بدأه منذ نعومة أظافره و أورثه لما بعده، كان شرفا لي أيضا بان أكون احدي تلاميذه ، علمني حب الوطن الذي غرس فيّ كما أشجار السنديان التي لا تكسرهما الرياح، علمني كيف أكون شرسا مدافعا عن الحق ، علمني بان لا أهاب و لا اخشى الا الله و المظلوم ، علمني كيف أتسلح بالايمان كما البندقية ، علمني اول الرصاص و اول الحب، لقيني بما لن أنسى ما حييت، و دائما كان فخورا بي تلميذا وفيا و حافظا، كما كنت ولا زلت فخورا بعمي ثائر معلما اول و عمي نضال معلما ثانيا.

عمي ثائر ان كنت على اطلاع على دنيانا من حياتك الاخرى فكم أحب ان أقول لك بأنني مشتاق لكل ما فيك، نظرتك و نفس رجولتك، عنادتك و ثقافتك، تحليلك النفسي و شجاعتك، اشتاق لك سندا و حبا و وجودا، لكن الأمل بالملقى كبير و الجمال في الحياة الاخرى اكبر، أقول لك باني على العهد و ان اختلفت الصورة، كلي لوطني و المظلومين و فقراء العالم، و لا زلت احلم بطفلي الذي سيحمل مبادئك كما اسمك ، و سنبقى نخرج الثوار للحق لا نعيد عنه.

الرحمة و النور منك و إليك ربي. See less

“Every year on 12 September, I renew the pledge, just as I close the previous year following the same path. The pledge to the martyrs is preserved, and the pledge to the homeland will never end.

“On this date falls the anniversary of the formidable fighter, the confident believer, the stubborn warrior, armed with culture, love and courage. On this honoured date of my birthday, my uncle Thaer departed this earthly life after a long struggle that he began from his earliest childhood and passed on to those who came after him.

“It was also an honour for me to be one of his students. He taught me love of the homeland, which he planted within me like oak trees that the winds cannot break. He taught me how to be fierce in defending what is right. He taught me to fear no one but God (*Author Note: the Arabic then adds ‘and the oppressed’, although the intended meaning is unclear*). He taught me how to arm myself with faith as with a rifle. He taught me the first bullets and the first love. He gave me a name that I will never forget for as long as I live, and he was always proud of me as a faithful student and one who preserved what he had taught me. Just as I was, and remain, proud of my uncle Thaer as my first teacher and my uncle Nidal as my second teacher.

“Uncle Thaer, if you are able to see our world from your other life, how I would love to tell you that I miss everything about you: your gaze and the very essence of your manhood, your stubbornness and your culture, your psychological insight and your courage. I miss you as a

¹¹⁷ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#), September 12 2015, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

source of support, love and presence. But the hope of meeting again is great, and the beauty of the next life is greater.

“I tell you that I remain faithful to the pledge, even if its form has changed. I am entirely devoted to my homeland, to the oppressed and to the poor of the world. And I still dream of my child, who will carry your principles just as he will carry your name, and we will continue to bring forth revolutionaries for what is right, never deviating from it.

“Mercy and light are from You and unto You, my Lord.”

As with the 2013 Birzeit magazine article, Mahdawi explicitly identifies Thaer as a formative influence. He describes his uncle as his “first teacher” and himself as Thaer’s “faithful student,” saying that Thaer taught him love of the homeland, how to be fierce in its defence, to arm himself with faith “as with a rifle,” and “the first bullets and the first love.”

Most significantly, Mahdawi brings that inheritance into the present (*emphasis added by authors*): “**I remain faithful to the pledge, even if its form has changed.**” He says he remains devoted to his homeland and the oppressed, and looks forward to a future child carrying both Thaer’s name and his principles: “**we will continue to bring forth revolutionaries for what is right.**”

Education is not part of the legacy Mahdawi describes in this post. In this lengthy account of what his uncle taught him and what he remains faithful to, Mahdawi makes no reference to education as part of that path. The legacy he himself identifies is one of homeland, struggle, resistance, the rifle, “the first bullets,” and the continuation of Thaer’s principles into the next generation.

Mourning an Islamic Jihad Fighter

September 22 2015: In a Facebook post Mahdawi mourns Daa Abdul Halim Talhama, a Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorist, who was killed when an explosive device he was handling detonated prematurely.^{118 119 120}



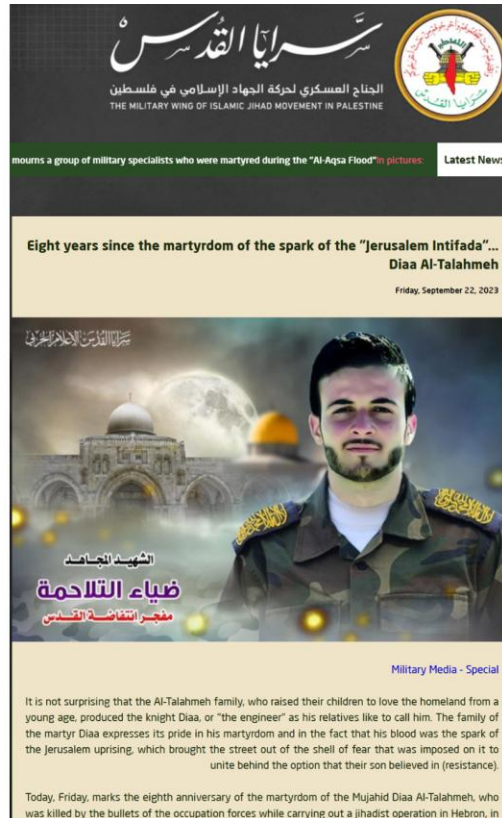
Mohsen Mahdawi

September 22, 2015 · 🌐

ضياء تلاحمة عليك الرحمة و النور أيها القمر المضيء... هنيئاً لك الشهادة
و الصبر و السلوان لكل من عرفه.

“Daa Talhama, may mercy and light be upon you, O shining moon. Congratulations to you on martyrdom, and patience and consolation to all who knew him.”

Palestinian Islamic Jihad's military wing, the Al-Quds Brigades, subsequently commemorated Talhama as one of its fighters:¹²¹



¹¹⁸ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#) September 22 2015, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

¹¹⁹ Al Araby ‘[Palestinians Hold a Funeral Procession for the Martyr Al-Talhameh](#)’ September 22 2015

¹²⁰ OCHA report, [reporting period](#) September 15-28 2015

¹²¹ Saraya, Islamic Jihad Military Wing, [memorial announcement](#), September 22 2023

Mahdawi is Given a Platform

November 11 2015: This date possibly marks Mahdawi's first public talk in the U.S. David Bisno invited him to address roughly 100 people attending an Osher Lifelong Learning class. Mahdawi apparently spoke for about 40 minutes about Al-Fara'a Camp, including an account of his childhood friend Hameida being killed.^{122 123} This is currently the earliest reference found to the death of Mahdawi's childhood friend, although the account comes from a retrospective article published in 2020. Despite numerous earlier Facebook references to formative experiences and personal losses - including the deaths of his brother and uncle - no pre-November 2015 reference to the death of this friend has yet been found.

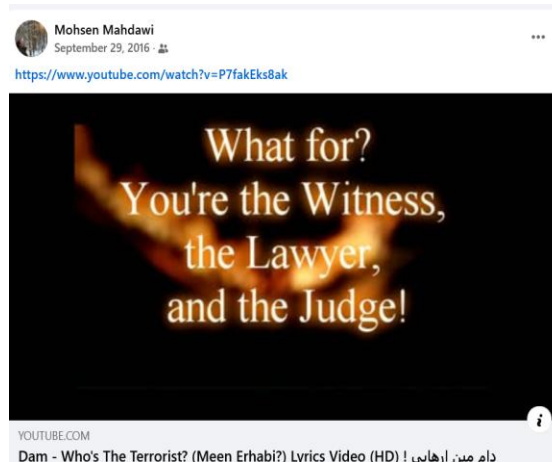
2016

January: Dan & Whit's General Store in Norwich hires Mahdawi to update its computer system.¹²⁴

Unspecified: Mahdawi applies to Dartmouth College in Hanover, NH. After his initial application is deferred, a local businessman and his partner offer to pay for SAT tutoring.¹²⁵

June 3: Mahdawi's divorce is finalised.¹²⁶ According to an *NBC5* report, Mahdawi moves in with Dan Fraser in Hartford, Vt.¹²⁷

September 29: In a Facebook post Mahdawi shares the DAM video '*Who's the Terrorist?*'.^{128 129}



¹²² The Valley News, '[Upper Valley Man Shaped By His Experiences](#)', December 27 2020

¹²³ Osher Dartmouth, '[Fall Courses 2015](#)'

¹²⁴ The Valley News, '[Upper Valley Man Shaped By His Experiences](#)', December 27 2020

¹²⁵ The Valley News, '[Upper Valley Man Shaped By His Experiences](#)', December 27 2020

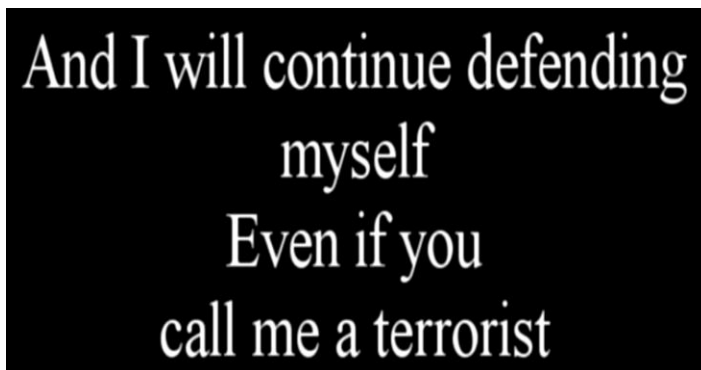
¹²⁶ *Mahdawi v. Trump*, [No. 25-1113](#), Joint Special Appendix, Vol. II, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, filed 14 July 2025

¹²⁷ My NBC5 '[Mahdawi Came to America](#)' April 16 2025

¹²⁸ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#) September 29 2016, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

¹²⁹ YouTube, DAM - [Who's The Terrorist?](#) Video Published January 27 2011

'Who's the Terrorist?' originally released in 2001 at the height of the Second Intifada, does far more than condemn Israeli policies. It brands Israelis as "Nazis," challenges the designation of violent Palestinian actors as terrorists, defends stone-throwing, and presents suicide bombings as a consequence of Israeli oppression. Violent Palestinian "resistance" is presented not as something to be rejected, but as legitimate self-defence: "And I will continue defending myself / Even if you call me a terrorist."



And I will continue defending
myself
Even if you
call me a terrorist

October: Mahdawi begins taking classes at Dartmouth College.¹³⁰ When *The Free Press* later contacted Dartmouth, the college responded that its records "indicate that no one by that name is or has been enrolled as a Dartmouth student."¹³¹ It is possible he was just "auditing classes" and attending some lessons without formal enrollment.¹³²

¹³⁰ LinkedIn, Mohsen Mahdawi's [education listing](#)

¹³¹ Free Press, ['Who is Mohsen Mahdawi'](#) May 6 2025

¹³² Vistas Lifelong Learning ['A conversation With Mohsen Mahdawi'](#) January 9 2026

Text Tunnels for Terrorists

2017

January 11: Mahdawi posts on Facebook as another “innocent” friend gets “assassinated.” Mahdawi again places himself at the centre of the story, this time telling of a peaceful, impoverished childhood friend who was killed “for no reason.” He invokes his personal knowledge of the man to vouch for his peaceful character and innocence.¹³³



The man in the image is Muhammad Subhi Mahmoud al-Salahi (محمد صبحي محمود الصالحي). al-Salahi was 33 when he died, which means Mahdawi was 6-7 years younger than his “childhood friend.”¹³⁴

Mahdawi’s post gives a detailed account of the incident. Yet there was significant information about al-Salahi and the circumstances of his death that Mahdawi did not give to his American audience.

For example, the Israeli account was radically different. The soldiers were in Al-Fara’a Camp to arrest a wanted suspect when al-Salahi ran towards them with a knife, shouting “Allahu Akbar.” According to the IDF, he attempted to stab the soldiers and was shot only after calls for him to stop had failed.¹³⁵

¹³³ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#), January 11 2017, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

¹³⁴ Shireen Martyrs website, [listing for al-Salahi](#)

¹³⁵ YNet [‘IDF Kills Terrorist That Tried to Stab Soldiers’](#) January 10 2017

Mahdawi mentions none of this. Instead, he tells his readers unequivocally that his friend was “assassinated” and killed “for no reason.”

Yet there is more here than simply two conflicting accounts of what happened when he was killed.

The chronology makes Mahdawi’s description of al-Salahi as his “childhood friend” particularly interesting. Mahdawi would have been approximately 14–17 years old during the three years al-Salahi was imprisoned. Yet when invoking that childhood friendship to assure his American audience that they knew each other and attest to his peaceful character, Mahdawi does not mention that his older friend had spent those very years in an Israeli prison for activities reportedly connected to the Second Intifada and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades.

Nor was al-Salahi’s political affiliation difficult to identify. Following his death, Fatah in Al-Fara’a Camp issued a martyr poster in his name. Beneath the Fatah insignia, the movement mourned Muhammad Subhi Mahmoud al-Salahi as “its devoted son and one of its heroes.”¹³⁶



March 8: Mahdawi portrays the death of Basel al-Araj as another friend killed by Israel as an innocent intellectual - omitting both the circumstances of his death and his involvement in armed resistance.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ X Quds Network post ‘[Commemorating Muhammad Sobhi Al-Salihi](#)’ January 10 2017

¹³⁷ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#) March 8 2017, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

**Mohsen Mahdawi**

March 8, 2017 · 2

...

Being an educated and intellectual Palestinian is a good reason for the Israelis army to kill you. My friend Basil was killed two days ago. I knew Basil through his visits to my university and our regular coffee meetings. He was one of the most educated young people I've ever met. He was full of questions and always looking for answers. I still can see Basil taking notes each time we had a discussion, a gentle smile on his face and a determination in his eyes to figure out the truth.

We will never give up our rights to live free! It's a simple message which Basil paid his life for it. **See less**

In reality, Basel al-Araj was a prominent advocate of armed resistance and was killed in a shoot-out with Israeli forces. Both Hamas and the PFLP issued statements mourning his death.¹³⁸

“Basel did not call on us to be resistance fighters. Nor did he call on us to be revolutionaries. Basel told us to be true, that is all. If you are true, you will be revolutionaries and resistance fighters.”¹³⁹

A year earlier, in April 2016, the Palestinian Authority had arrested al-Araj and two others on allegations of planning armed attacks against Israel. According to PA police, the three were found with weapons, hand grenades and camping equipment, allegedly in preparation for an attack.¹⁴⁰

In 2025, masked students from Columbia University Apartheid Divest (CUAD) occupied the university's main library, distributing flyers and renaming a reading room the “Basel Al-Araj Popular University.” CUAD, the organisation he had helped launch, was commemorating the same militant whom Mahdawi had described eight years earlier as an intellectual friend killed by Israel, without mentioning the circumstances of his death.¹⁴¹ ¹⁴² Mahdawi was in Vermont at the time and was not physically present.¹⁴³

March 10: In a Facebook post of an article entitled “What is the Nature of the Coming Intifada?” Mahdawi considered the prospects of a future Palestinian uprising or war.¹⁴⁴ He predicted heavy Palestinian losses because Israel possessed an overwhelming technological and intelligence advantage, including detailed knowledge of Palestinian geography, social networks and individual movements.

Mahdawi noted that the Palestinians possessed no equivalent intelligence about “the geography of Israel, its streets... its inhabitants and their characteristics, the nature of their work, and its social structures.”

¹³⁸ Jewish Telegraphic Agency ‘[Palestinian Man Killed in Shoot-out](#)’, March 6 2017

¹³⁹ Liberated Texts ‘[Liberation, Wonder and the Magic of the World](#)’ April 5 2021

¹⁴⁰ Mondoweiss ‘[PA Under Renewed Criticism](#)’ April 18 2016

¹⁴¹ Cuad Substack ‘[Flood Butler Library Now](#)’ May 7 2025

¹⁴² Scholars at Risk [Freedom Monitoring Project](#) April 14 2025

¹⁴³ Boston Globe ‘[Mahdawi Can Travel to New York](#)’ May 15 2025

¹⁴⁴ [Mohsen Mahdawi archived post](#) hosted by David Collier March 10 2017

Mahdawi explicitly rejected the suggestion that Palestinians should therefore give up: “Should we surrender and give in? The answer is of course no. But we must urgently recognise our mistakes and correct them.”

The article was therefore not an argument against another intifada, but an assessment of the weaknesses Mahdawi believed Palestinians needed to correct before the next confrontation.

March 29: Mahdawi speaks about his experiences growing up in the “Occupied Territories” at the Bugbee Senior Center in White River Junction, Vt.¹⁴⁵

April 9: A panel discussion is held at Woodstock Town Hall Theatre in Woodstock, Vt., following a screening of the documentary *Seeing Through the Wall: Meeting Ourselves in Palestine and Israel*. *The Valley News* reported that Mahdawi participated in the panel.¹⁴⁶

July 9: Mahdawi posts to Facebook that he is about to complete his fiftieth talk, since his first in November 2015.¹⁴⁷

November 4: At Southern New Hampshire University’s Webster Hall, Mahdawi speaks at “Palestine/Israel 1917–2017: Confronting the Realities” about his “personal journey.” The event also includes a screening of *Seeing Through the Wall: Meeting Ourselves in Palestine and Israel*, suggesting that by this point Mahdawi may have been participating in events associated with the filmmakers’ tour.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ The Valley News ‘[Woodstock Filmmaker Shows Documentary](#)’ March 31 2017

¹⁴⁶ The Valley News ‘[Woodstock Filmmaker Shows Documentary](#)’ March 31 2017

¹⁴⁷ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#), July 7 2017, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

¹⁴⁸ New England Network for Justice for Palestine, Mohsen Mahdawi [“Personal Journey”](#)

Open Threats

2018

February 6: Mahdawi posts on Facebook two messages filled with curses, accusations and talk of martyrdom.^{149 150}



The first reads: “May your sight be ruined, may your hearing be cursed, may your mouths be swallowed up, and may your hearts incur wrath, you collaborators and traitors. Repent and return to the truth, because the reckoning is inevitably coming.”

¹⁴⁹ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#) February 6 2018, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

¹⁵⁰ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#) February 6 2018, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

The second reads: “The martyr does not need prayers for mercy, an Umrah performed on his behalf, or even pictures from anyone. The martyr needs minds, writings and expertise that build upon his sacrifice. The martyr needs the journey/struggle to continue. The martyr needs you to read more and learn from the experiences of the heroes, so that you may honour their sacrifices by attaining freedom.”

Mahdawi was reacting to events back home in the Jenin area.

On this same day, the IDF tracked down the ringleader of the terrorist cell that killed Rabbi Raziel Shev on January 9 2018. The terrorist’s name was Ahmad Nassar Jarrar.¹⁵¹ He was found while armed, and killed.

The Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the Hamas military arm, issued a statement mourning Jarrar as one of its members and describing him as a “leading commander.”¹⁵²

News quickly spread that Palestinian security services had helped Israel locate the Hamas terrorist. It was against this backdrop that Mahdawi turned his anger on the Palestinian “collaborators and traitors,” warning them that “the reckoning is inevitably coming.”¹⁵³

By this point, Mahdawi had been living in America for almost four years. Yet when Israeli forces killed a Hamas/Qassam terrorist wanted for his role in the murder of a rabbi, Mahdawi’s fury was directed at the Palestinians who had allegedly helped Israel to find him.

March 4: Following a screening of *Seeing Through the Wall: Meeting Ourselves in Palestine and Israel* from the Havurah of Addison County in Middlebury, Vt., Mahdawi is presented as a special guest for the Q&A.¹⁵⁴

April 23: Mahdawi posts on Facebook that he is finishing at Dartmouth College:¹⁵⁵

June 27: U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services approves Mahdawi’s I-751 petition thus removing the conditions on his permanent residence and changing his code of admission to an IR6.¹⁵⁶

Unspecified: According to an article in *The Valley News*, Mahdawi returns to the Palestinian controlled areas for a month to see his mother.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵¹ Times of Israel, ‘[Rabbis Suspected Killer Shot Dead by Security Forces](#)’ February 6 2018

¹⁵² AA ‘[‘Hamas Armed Wing Mourns Slain Fighter](#)’ February 6 2018

¹⁵³ Alresalah News ‘[Assassination of Jarar Confirms Important of Security Coordination](#)’ February 6 2018

¹⁵⁴ Havurah Addison County, ‘[Screening Through the Wall](#)’ February 23 2018

¹⁵⁵ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#) April 23 2018, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

¹⁵⁶ Mahdawi v Trump, [No. 25-1113](#), Joint Special Appendix, Vol. II, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, filed 14 July 2025

¹⁵⁷ The Valley News, ‘[Upper Valley Man Shaped By His Experiences](#)’ December 27 2020

The Sudden Change of the Uncle Thaer Narrative

July 8 2018: Mahdawi posts to Facebook about his uncle Thaer, telling a story about his uncle that does not reconcile with either the chronology or his own earlier accounts of his uncle's legacy.¹⁵⁸



Mohsen Mahdawi

July 8, 2018 · 🧑

...

مبارك لأخي و ابن عمي ايداثاير مهداوي

ابتداءً من سن السابعة في عمري عشت في المخيم وحيدا بعيدا عن امي ، في سن الثامنة توفي اخي الصغير محمد ، في سن العاشرة بدأت الانتفاضة و استشهد صديقي المقرب حميدة مبارك ، كان ألمي و جرحي كبيران ، فقدت الامل لدرجة اني لم اكرث لنفسي بان استحم ، تراجعت من الاول على الصف الى المرتبة الثامنة ، كانت حياتي مظلمة مليئة بالوحشة ، كنت بلا أمل.

في احدى الأيام و انا جالس على القبور قريبا من قبر اخي محمد و صديقي حميدة ، مستظلا بشجرة الزيتون اللتي كانت خلف مخبز ابو قمر ، جائني عمي ثائر و حينما نظر الى عيني راني ابكي بحرقه و صمت ، بكى عمي معي و بعد حين قال لي : "اسمعني جيدا ، انا اعلم مقدار الالم اللذي بداخلك ، فقدان الام صعب ، و موت الاخ اصعب ، و الان الانتفاضة تحصد ارواح المحبين ، ارواح الأطفال امثالك " ، قال لي عمي " نحن نحيا على الامل، حينما هجرنا من اراضيها في عام ١٩٤٨ خسرت كل شيء ، المال و الارض و البيت ، و لم يبق لنا الا شيء واحد ، الا و هو العقل و الفكر " ، قال لي عمي بان الارض هي امي الان ، فإذا نمت كانت فراشي و اذا بكيت كفكت دموعي و اذا مت احتضنتني بحب الى الأبد ، و اكمل عمي " من الان فصاعدا سلاحك هو علمك و عقلك ، و أمك هي الارض ، اعمل لها و أحب أهلها و استثمر في عقلك ، و ابق الامل حيًا "

بعد اقل من سنة و في يوم ميلادي ١٢/٩/٢٠٠١ ، استشهد عمي ثائر بعدما اغتالته قوة خاصة إسرائيلية في طمون ، رصاصتان ٣٠٠ في كتفه الأيمن و رصاصة مسدس في رأسه اردته شهيدا بعد تصفيته ، رحل عمي جسدا و لم يرحل روحا ، عمي ثائر غير حياتي و أعطاني الامل ، أعطاني النور اللذي شحن طاقتي مجددا لكون اولا او ثانيا على الصف و في درجة الامتياز ، أعطاني النور لأقود جيلي و اخرج بتميز من التوجيهي لأدرس في جامعة بيرزيت و من ثم الى أمريكا ، رحل عمي و ترك خلفه قلوبا مكسوة و مجروحة ، ترك خلفه زوجة و طفلا بعمر ال ٣ شهور اسمه ايد مهداوي .

اليوم و بعد ١٧ سنة من استشهاد عمي ثائر يأتي ابنه ايد ليكون أيقونة و مثال لحلم والده و إيمانه ، ايد حطم الرقم القياسي في العائلة ليحصل معدل ٩٥,١ في التوجيهي العلمي ، ليكون الوحيد في العائلة اللذي حقق معدل علمي اعلى مني ، هذا هو الفرح و هذا هو الانتصار ، الانتصار بالامل و العطاء و الإبداع ، الانتصار بالعلم و مستقبل أفضل ينشل الأجيال من ظلم الاحتلال و فقر المخيم ، لينشل الأجيال و يحقق امال الآباء و الأجداد.

اخي و حبيبي و ابن عمي Eyad Mehdawi، هنيئا لك الفرح و هنيئا لك النصر ، مبروك ايداثاير مهداوي

See translation



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64



"When I was eight, my little brother Muhammad passed away. At ten, the Intifada broke out, and my close friend Hamida Mubarak was martyred. My pain and anguish were immense; I lost hope to the point where I no longer cared enough to even bathe. My academic standing dropped from first in the class to eighth; my life was dark and filled with desolation—I was devoid of hope. One

¹⁵⁸ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#) July 8 2018, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

day, while I was sitting among the graves—near the resting places of my brother Muhammad and my friend Hamida, shaded by the olive tree behind Abu Qamar’s bakery—my Uncle Thaer approached me. When he looked into my eyes and saw me weeping silently in deep anguish, he wept with me. After a moment, he said, ‘Listen closely. I know the depth of the pain you carry inside; losing a mother is hard, and the death of a brother is even harder. Now, the Intifada is claiming the lives of loved ones—the lives of children just like you.’ He continued, ‘We live on hope. When we were displaced from our lands in 1948, we lost everything—wealth, land, and home—yet one thing remained: our minds and our intellect.’ He told me that the land was now my mother; if I slept, it would be my bed; if I wept, it would wipe away my tears; and if I died, it would cradle me lovingly forever.’ He added, ‘From this moment on, your weapons are your knowledge and your mind, and the land is your mother. Work for her, love her people, invest in your mind, and keep hope alive.’”

The post contains many contradictions:

At this point, Mahdawi claims that his close friend Hameida Mubarak died when Mahdawi was ten - something the chronology shows cannot be true. He then describes his uncle Thaer consoling him beside Hameida’s grave, despite Thaer having died before any child in the camp was killed during the Second Intifada. The encounter, as Mahdawi describes it, therefore could not have happened.

Most strikingly, the Thaer presented here bears little resemblance to the uncle that Mahdawi described in his earlier Arabic writings. The nationalist fighter and martyr whose path of resistance Mahdawi pledged to continue has become the inspirational mentor who tells him that his “weapons” are knowledge and intellect. There is no comparable message in those earlier accounts of education replacing resistance.¹⁵⁹

By 2018, a new narrative of education, hope and non-violence was emerging around his uncle, one that would become central to the persona Mahdawi presented in the United States.

¹⁵⁹ This report: pages 26 and 38

The Story Takes Shape

August 2018: Mahdawi enrolls in Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Class of 2022, IDEAS program majoring in computer engineering.¹⁶⁰



October 13: Mahdawi gives a post-show discussion after a performance of J. T. Rogers's *Oslo* at Northern Stage, White River Junction, Vt. The Facebook advertisement reads that “Mehdawi, a third generation refugee raised in Al-Fara'a refugee camp in Palestine, shares his experience.”¹⁶¹

December 5: Lehigh University's *Brown and White* publishes the first detailed profile of Mahdawi found during this research. By this point, he had reportedly given more than 60 talks over two years. For the first time, the central elements of what would become his American origin story are laid out together: his mother leaving, the death of his younger brother, the killing of his childhood friend Hameida, his desire for revenge, and the intervention of his uncle Thaer, who supposedly redirected him towards education and hope.¹⁶²

In one passage, Mahdawi describes his reaction to Hameida's death:

“And I get crazy about revenge - stones and Molotov's weren't enough for me.”

According to the story, Thaer subsequently found Mahdawi beside Hameida's grave and told him that his mind was the only weapon he needed. “From then on,” the article says, Mahdawi committed himself to education.

There is an immediate problem with this account: the encounter could not have happened as described. Thaer was already dead by the time the supposed killing of Hameida could have occurred.

The article nevertheless shows how far Mahdawi's public story had developed. Don Foster described him as the “Mandela of Palestine,” saying that what Mahdawi wanted, like Mandela, was “peace among everyone.”

¹⁶⁰ LinkedIn, Mahdawi's [education listings](#)

¹⁶¹ Northern Stage [Facebook post](#) October 11 2018

¹⁶² The Brown and White [“A student's Journey From The West Bank To The South Side”](#) December 5 2018

That description is difficult to reconcile with Mahdawi's own social media activity during the same period. This was not simply an old militancy gradually giving way to a new message of peace.

Context: In the months and years in which Mahdawi was giving American audiences talks about peace, hope and reconciliation, his Arabic social media continued to praise militants, omit important context around terrorist violence and, on occasion, contain explicit threats. The two narratives were running in parallel.

Over the following years, Mahdawi would tell and retell his life story in interviews, speeches and profiles. Details would change, new elements would appear, and significant contradictions would emerge - both between different versions of the story and between those stories and the historical record. Rather than repeatedly interrupt the chronology to examine each discrepancy as it appears, this report documents the accounts as Mahdawi gave them. A later section will highlight the story's evolution and examine the contradictions in more detail.

2019

January 12: Mahdawi was detained and searched by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) while returning to Vermont from a two-day trip to Montreal. According to court documents, Mahdawi told officers he had travelled there to visit a woman he had met on a Caribbean cruise two weeks earlier. During a secondary inspection, officers reportedly found mushrooms, a tab that field-tested positive for LSD, and 16 unmarked capsules containing white powder, one of which field-tested positive for methamphetamine. Mahdawi was also reportedly carrying \$4,125 in cash.¹⁶³ Vermont State Police attended and issued Mahdawi a citation. The drugs were seized and transferred to State Police. Mahdawi was subsequently released.

During the incident, CBP contacted a Joint Terrorism Task Force officer, who declined interest in the case. Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) was also contacted; HSI declined to attend that day but "do have interest in the case and will obtain the information at a later date."

February 28: Mahdawi appears as the first guest on the *Lehigh Live* podcast.¹⁶⁴ Much of the interview repeats the personal transformation story already told in *The Brown and White*: the deaths of his brother and friend, his uncle's intervention, and his supposed journey from anger and hatred towards education, hope and reconciliation.

Mahdawi says explicitly: "I hated the Israelis. I hated the Jews. I wanted to revenge." He contrasts this with what he says he believes "right now," which is "I believe in love. I believe in forgiveness."

¹⁶³ Mahdawi v Trump, [No. 25-1113](#), Joint Special Appendix, Vol. II, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, filed July 14 2025

¹⁶⁴ YouTube LU Live [Episode 1](#): Mohsen Mahdawi February 28 2019

There are two notable developments. Mahdawi expands the story of his uncle's supposed intervention, now quoting Thaer as telling him: "your only weapon in this life is your education and hope is your light."

More significantly, Mahdawi gives a much fuller account of his extraordinary journey to Jerusalem for his U.S. visa interview. He claims that after Israel refused him permission to enter, a friend constructed a 40-foot ladder, which Mahdawi used to scale the separation barrier, cut through barbed wire and lower himself by rope into Jerusalem while evading Israeli soldiers.

He then adds a new episode absent from the *Brown and White* account: Israeli police stopped his bus in Jerusalem and checked passengers' identification, but failed to discover that he was there without a permit.

Mahdawi says he eventually reached the U.S. Consulate after it had closed because he was late, but was nevertheless admitted and assisted by the official who had interviewed him.

March 22: Mahdawi speaks at Lehigh University's Christchurch vigil.¹⁶⁵

Unspecified: Nadine Clopton becomes Mahdawi's girlfriend at Lehigh University.¹⁶⁶

October 4: Mahdawi appears on Lehigh students' *Legendary Podcast* alongside his then-girlfriend, Nadine Clopton.¹⁶⁷

October 22/23: Mahdawi takes part in three Lehigh events with Israeli storyteller Noa Baum, billed as "A Palestinian and an Israeli at Lunch."^{168 169 170}

November: Mahdawi begins writing for Lehigh's student newspaper, *The Brown and White*.^{171 172}

Point of Note: Mahdawi's Facebook activity becomes increasingly sparse in 2019. From 2019 through 2022, his posting rate drops significantly: in 2020, for example, only 13 posts were published across the entire year, compared with 27 in December 2017 alone. The surviving social media record for this period is therefore considerably thinner than for the preceding years.

¹⁶⁵ Lehigh News, '[Lehigh Holds Christchurch Vigil](#)' March 22 2019

¹⁶⁶ The Valley News, '[Refugee Shares Personal Story to Bridge Israeli-Palestinian divide](#)' December 27 2020

¹⁶⁷ Lehigh University, '[Legendary Podcast](#)' Mohsen Mahdawi and Nadine Compton

¹⁶⁸ The Brown and White '[Noa Baum Portrays Story](#)' October 31 2019

¹⁶⁹ Lehigh University, '[archived](#)', Student affairs updates

¹⁷⁰ The Southsider '[Inspiring Peace In The Community](#)' March 29 2020

¹⁷¹ The Brown and White, '[Mahdawi article 'Student Senate](#)' November 17 2019

¹⁷² The Brown and White, '[Mahdawi article 'Study Abroad](#)' December 23 2019

2020

Unspecified: Mahdawi's girlfriend Nadine Clopton graduates from Lehigh University.¹⁷³

Unspecified: Mahdawi leaves Lehigh University early after two years of study, despite having originally committed to graduate with the Class of 2022.¹⁷⁴

October: Mahdawi buys 21 acres of land in West Fairlee, Vt.^{175 176}

December 27: Mahdawi receives his most substantial American media exposure to date when *The Valley News* publishes a two-part profile, "Upper Valley man shaped by his experiences." The feature traces his journey from Al-Fara'a Camp to Vermont and presents the transformation narrative now central to his public persona. Friends and supporters describe him as charismatic, sincere and committed to reconciliation; one says he has an extraordinary ability to move beyond the injustice of his childhood.^{177 178}

The article also brings Mahdawi's childhood story to a much wider audience. He describes Hameida as his 13-year-old best friend, saying the two had picked up stones to throw at Israeli tanks before Hameida was shot, and again places his uncle Thaer beside him at the cemetery afterwards, teaching him that education was the way forward.

The profile marked another significant step in Mahdawi's emergence into the American mainstream. It appeared as he was preparing to transfer to Columbia University, where he had been awarded a scholarship covering approximately \$65,000 a year in tuition and fees.

¹⁷³ LinkedIn, [Nadine Clopton](#) account

¹⁷⁴ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#) July 7 2018, the Lehigh 4 year promise. Screenshot and archived copy held by authors

¹⁷⁵ Mahdawi v Trump, [No. 25-1113](#), Joint Special Appendix, Vol. II, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, filed July 14 2025

¹⁷⁶ The Valley News '[Upper Valley Man As Palestinian Refugee \(Part 1\)](#)' December 27 2020

¹⁷⁷ The Valley News '[Upper Valley Man as Palestinian Refugee \(Part 1\)](#)' December 27 2020

¹⁷⁸ The Valley News '[Upper Valley man as Palestinian Refugee \(Part 2\)](#)' December 27 2020

Losing his Brother in Struggle

2021

March 21: Mahdawi speaks at The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Upper Valley (UUCUV) in Hartland, Vt.^{179 180}

March 21: Vermonters for Justice in Palestine (VJP) organise an online discussion with *Seeing Through the Wall: Meeting Ourselves in Palestine and Israel* film director Anne Macksoud, Rabbi Dov Taylor, who is featured in the film, and Mohsen Mahdawi.¹⁸¹

May: Mahdawi campaigns alongside Wafic Faour, VJP founder, at the Nakba Day march in Burlington, Vt., calling on Ben & Jerry's to boycott Israel.^{182 183} Following a two-month campaign that Mahdawi and Faour were both credited as leading, Ben & Jerry's partially capitulated.^{184 185 186}



¹⁷⁹ Unitarian Universalist Congregation, [Mohsen Mahdawi Talk](#), March 21 2021

¹⁸⁰ YouTube UUC [Mohsen Mahdawi](#) March 21 2021

¹⁸¹ Vermonters for Justice in Palestine, '[Through The Wall](#)' discussion, with Mohsen Mahdawi March 21 2021

¹⁸² WCAX '[Burlington Rallies For Palestine](#)' May 15 2021

¹⁸³ Wafic Faour is a Vermont resident who has fabricated some of his personal family history to gain sympathy, credibility and leverage. Faour published social media posts expressing support for October 7 and mourning terrorist leaders. David Collier and Rachel Feldman, '[Wafic Faour – A False Prophet of the Boycott Campaign](#)' January 25 2026

¹⁸⁴ James Haslam [Facebook post](#) thanking Mahdawi and Wafic Faour July 19 2021

¹⁸⁵ Vermonters for Justice in Palestine [press release](#) July 21 2021

¹⁸⁶ Instagram, Mohsen Mahdawi [uploads image](#), May 19 2021

June 2: Mahdawi publishes a post on Facebook mourning his “brother in struggle” Fadi.¹⁸⁷**Mohsen Mahdawi**

June 2, 2021 · 🧑

...

This morning, I received the heavy news of loosing my brother in struggle and comrade Fadi. Fadi and I studied together at Birzeit university, were very close friends, and spent lots of time in the mountains of Palestine.

An Israeli soldier shot Fadi in the head two weeks ago during Gaza protests. The live ammunition put him in a position where recovery was impossible. Fadi was shot by the Israeli army several times before, spent near 7 years in the israeli prisons on multiple arrests, and now has left this journey.

I clearly remember his words in my head, that he will not allow the oppressor to break him and that he will resist to the last breath.

Fadi my brother, I don't know how to say it or what to tell your family. But I pledge to hold you in my heart on my journey for justice. Rest In Peace

ان العين لتدمع ، و ان القلب ليحزن ، و انا على فراقك يا فادي لمحزونون



Fadi's full name was Fadi Sadiq Musa Washaha (فادي صادق موسى وشحة), born in 1987, from Birzeit. His own brother explicitly identified him as a member of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades.¹⁸⁸

His sister later wrote a book about his life titled '*Zero Distance*'. The title refers to Washaha's progression from throwing stones to Molotov cocktails, and ultimately to his determination to obtain a firearm and confront Israelis at close range. He eventually obtained that weapon.¹⁸⁹

His first arrest was in 2004. In 2007 he was caught alongside grenades and with plans to attack Israelis.¹⁹⁰ In 2014 he was captured after shooting attacks against Israelis. There was some anger in

¹⁸⁷ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#) June 2 2021, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

¹⁸⁸ Al Araby '[Young Palestinian Died From Injuries Sustained During Clashes](#)' June 2 2021

¹⁸⁹ Diffah books '[Zero Distance](#)' August 2 2023

¹⁹⁰ Mako News '[Suspect in Shooting in Bir Zeit: Terrorist Who Was Released](#)' March 24 2014

Israel that a previously captured terrorist had been freed to attack again. According to Israeli security, Washaha admitted the attack and surrendered his rifle.¹⁹¹

He was a wanted terrorist at the time he was shot. Fatah's senior leadership spoke at his funeral and Fadi Washaha was buried with a rifle placed on his body.^{192 193 194}

This was the man Mahdawi mourned in June 2021 as his “brother in struggle and comrade” - a “close friend” with whom he said he had spent considerable time at Birzeit and in the mountains of Palestine. Mahdawi knew that Washaha had repeatedly been imprisoned; he says so himself. What he does not tell his American Facebook audience is what Washaha had been imprisoned for, his history of armed attacks, or his affiliation with the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades.



¹⁹¹ Shabak [Reports - Two Shooting Attacks Solved](#) March 24 2014

¹⁹² Facebook reel [Mousa Washasa](#) June 30 2021

¹⁹³ Abu Allsaber / Zaid Ayyad [Facebook post](#) June 29 2021

¹⁹⁴ WAFA News [‘Funeral Procession For Martyr Fadi Washah in Birzeit’](#) June 3 2021

Columbia: From Small Pond to Big Ocean

Unspecified 2021: Mahdawi writes his admissions essay for Columbia University. It has both parents leaving him alone, not just his mother. The essay also contains the story about his best friend Hameida being shot in front of him, along with the impossible conversation with his uncle Thaer.¹⁹⁵

September: Enrollment in Columbia University as an undergraduate student, roughly seven years since his arrival in America.¹⁹⁶

September 12: On the eve of beginning classes at Columbia University, Mahdawi again invokes his uncle Thaer in a Facebook post. He writes that shortly before Thaer was killed, his uncle told him: “Education is your only weapon.” The uncle whom Mahdawi’s earlier Arabic posts remembered as a militant and martyr whose path of resistance he pledged to continue has now become the formative voice behind Mahdawi’s American message of education, love, peace and reconciliation:¹⁹⁷



Mohsen Mahdawi is at Columbia University.

September 12, 2021 · New York, NY, United States · 🌐

...

As I celebrate my birthday today, I can hear my uncle Thayer’s words just before he was murdered by the Israeli army on my 11th birthday- September 12, 2001.

“Education is your only weapon, and the land is your eternal mother now”, he said to me while looking into my tearful eyes. During that time, I was suffering and felt a tremendous amount of pain as I lived without my mother, buried my only brother, and saw my best friend getting shot and killed in front of my eyes - in the refugee camp where I was born and raised.

That day, my uncle Thayer reminded me that we live on HOPE. He taught me that education and hope are intertwined, and that LOVE is the strongest power & motivation as he said “ love your eternal mother, help its people, and invest in your mind.”

Tomorrow, and 20 years after loosing my uncle, I start my first class at @columbia University @columbiags. As I start my classes, I feel grateful for my uncle’s wisdom; the power of HOPE and LOVE that brought me to this point of life; to continue my education at this impressive institution.

I’ve dedicated my life to the cause of peace and justice. I don’t believe in the ideology of an enemy. I believe that we all are related and the reason why humans cause harm to each other is because we forgot that we are all related. If there is an enemy, it would be our internal fear, our ignorance, and our sense of segregation.

I didn’t make it to Columbia University alone. What brought me to this institution are two things: the stories that I’ve lived and witnessed about humans, and the help that I received from all the humans who believed in my vision and to whom I am so grateful.

For the coming years, I will be investing in my mind while building bridges with the Jewish community in NYC. With an open mind, my quest is to find what do we have in common rather than what divides us. And my hope is to connect our stories of joy & suffering, healing & pain, love & fear. By understanding our fear and relating to our pain; it’s a way to see injustice without confusion, and to relate to each other as one instead of “the other”.

In memory of my uncle Thayer ... The hope is still alive ...

¹⁹⁵ The Vermont Standard, [Columbia admission essay](#) Mohsen Mahdawi

¹⁹⁶ LinkedIn Mohsen Mahdawi, [education listing](#)

¹⁹⁷ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#) September 12 2021, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

2022

April 15: During a wave of deadly Palestinian terror attacks in Israel, Mahdawi shares Gideon Levy's *Ha'aretz* opinion article, "A Perspective From the Palestinian Side on the Terror Attack." The terrorist Ra'ad Hazem had just murdered three innocent civilians who were sitting in a coffee shop in Tel Aviv.¹⁹⁸

Mahdawi's Facebook activity was extremely limited during this period; the article he chose to amplify was a column asking readers to view the terrorist attack from a Palestinian perspective.

It is another example of the asymmetry increasingly visible between Mahdawi's public language of empathy and reconciliation and the material he chose to amplify when Israelis were the victims of Palestinian violence.^{199 200}



¹⁹⁸ BBC News '[Israeli PM Vows No Limits After Three Killed By Palestinian Attacker](#)' April 8 2022

¹⁹⁹ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#) April 15 2022, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

²⁰⁰ Ha'aretz '[A Perspective From The Palestinian Side](#)' April 10 2022

2022 / 2023

Unspecified: Mahdawi engages with the Columbia University Buddhist Council, going on to become the group's President.^{201 202}

At this time, Mahdawi had given no public indication as to why he had abandoned his four-year commitment at Lehigh University and transferred to Columbia. Later, in a 2024 speech, Mahdawi described seeing Lehigh as a “small model” in which he could practise “bridge building”, connecting with others and “changing narratives.” But eventually, he said, Lehigh was no longer enough (*emphasis added by authors*).²⁰³

“I reached the maximum work that I can do and I said to myself I have to go. This is a good lake or pond. I am a good size fish in a lake but I want to go into an ocean. A place where it's more tense, where it's more large, where we can have a bigger impact. So I go to Columbia University for the hope of making a difference for peacemaking.”

This is an important explanation of the move. Mahdawi does not describe transferring because Columbia offered a better engineering programme, or because of an ordinary academic consideration. Mahdawi describes transferring in order to find an “ocean” where “we can have a bigger impact.”

²⁰¹ Lions Roar ‘[Buddhist Council of New York Partners With Columbia University](#)’ May 4 2023

²⁰² Columbia University Buddhist Association [Instagram post](#) April 30 2023

²⁰³ YouTube, ‘[Whose Land Is It Anyway](#)’ May 7 2024

October 7 2023

October 7: Hamas-led terrorists launch a coordinated assault on Israel, murdering approximately 1,200 people, and abducting 251 hostages. Per capita, it is one of the deadliest terrorist attacks in modern history, and the largest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust.²⁰⁴

October 7: Mahdawi cancels his planned Vermont weekend because, he later explains in *The Valley News*, Palestinian students needed him: “I needed to stay here with the people in my community. I had to find ways to give them strength.”²⁰⁵

Unspecified: Mahdawi co-founds the Palestinian Student Union (PSU), sometimes referred to as “Dar,” alongside Mahmoud Khalil. Khalil was arrested by U.S. immigration authorities in March 2025 over his role in the Columbia protests. Speaking at a Palestine 101 event at Columbia on March 7, 2024, Khalil said: “We tried armed resistance, which is again legitimate under international law, but again, Israel [says] it is terrorism.”^{206 207 208} The PSU is documented as existing by October 12, but its precise founding date - and whether it was established before or after October 7 - remains unknown.²⁰⁹ In Mahdawi's own case pleading he says it was created “in the fall,” and in an article on October 22, it is presented as having organisational structure, with Mahdawi as co-president.^{210 211}

October 9: Mahdawi helps pen a joint statement from Palestine solidarity groups at Columbia University titled “Oppression Breeds Resistance.” Issued two days after the Hamas attacks, the statement presents the violence within a framework of Palestinian resistance, asserts a Palestinian right to resist occupation, and places responsibility for the outbreak of violence and its casualties on the Israeli government.^{212 213}

Finally, we remind Columbia students that the Palestinian struggle for freedom is rooted in international law, under which occupied peoples have the right to resist the occupation of their land. If every political avenue available to Palestinians is blocked, we should not be surprised when resistance and violence break out. The international community is quick to affirm Israel's right to protect itself but does not extend this same right to Palestinians.

²⁰⁴ All-Party Parliamentary Group for UK-Israel, [7 October Parliamentary Commission Report](#), chaired by Lord Roberts of Belgravia, March 2025

²⁰⁵ The Valley News ‘[No Respite From Conflict In Upper Valley](#)’ October 22 2023

²⁰⁶ AP News, ‘[Immigration Agents Arrest Palestinian Activist](#)’ March 10 2025

²⁰⁷ NJAC, *Amicus Brief in Khalil v. Trump*, August 27 2025

²⁰⁸ X Platform, Documenting Jew Hatred on Columbia [published footage of “Palestine 101” event](#) hosted by Columbia BDS in March 2024. It should be acknowledged that [the DJHC group](#) did provide some assistance in the collection of Columbia era material

²⁰⁹ Columbia Spectator, ‘[Hundreds Of Students Gather](#)’, archived copy updated October 13 2023

²¹⁰ Mahdawi [Case Pleading](#), April 2025

²¹¹ The Valley News ‘[No Respite From Conflict In Upper Valley](#)’ October 22 2023

²¹² Columbia student solidarity groups issue statement “[Oppression Breeds Resistance](#)” October 9 2023 copy hosted on David-Collier.com

²¹³ Valley News ‘[No Respite From Conflict In Upper Valley](#)’ October 22 2023

October 12: Mahdawi helps to organise the Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) / Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) demonstration on Columbia's South Lawn. As co-president of the Palestinian Student Union, one of the groups involved in the protest, Mahdawi takes a prominent role on the day. Associated Press (AP) photographs show him alongside Mahmoud Khalil wearing the distinctive green armband used to identify protest security marshals/organisers.^{214 215 216}



AP Photo/Yuki Iwamura

Contemporary footage also shows Mahdawi, identifiable by his custom-sleeve keffiyeh, glasses, white Columbia cap and green armband, leading the student march.²¹⁷



²¹⁴ The Valley News '[No Respite From Conflict In Upper Valley](#)' October 22 2023

²¹⁵ X platform Documenting Jew Hatred on Campus [image and footage from October 12 Columbia protest](#), posted April 17 2025

²¹⁶ AP photo collection: [Mahmoud Khalil and Mohsen Mahdawi](#) AP Photo/Yuki Iwamura

²¹⁷ X platform Laudy Issa, [footage from Columbia](#) posted October 13 2023

October 12: Correspondence is sent on behalf of Dar, the PSU co-led by Mahdawi and Khalil, and Turath, the University's Arab students' association, to the Columbia administration, arguing that the violence of October 7 "did not occur in a vacuum" and accusing the University of presenting a biased and one-sided narrative. The University responded on October 13, saying that meetings are being planned with student groups to address their concerns and that "members of Turath and Dar [would] be invited to these meetings."²¹⁸

October 18: Dar and Turath email a University vice president with a series of demands. PSU holds an evening vigil on Columbia's Low Steps.²¹⁹

October 22: *The Valley News* publishes an article by Jim Kenyon on Mahdawi and the Columbia protests. Asked directly about the October 7 Hamas attack, Mahdawi does not condemn Hamas. Instead, he responds "Hamas is a product of the Israeli occupation."²²⁰ The article identifies Mahdawi as co-president of Columbia's Palestinian Student Union, one of the groups that signed the October 9 statement.²²¹

November 8: A sit-in takes place at the Columbia School of Social Work (CSSW). Messages and leaflets are sent around in the name of Collective Students of CSSW expressing "solidarity with the Palestinian national resistance." Mahdawi was filmed at the scene.^{222 223}

November 9: Mahdawi, subsequently identified by the *Columbia Spectator* as an "SJP speaker," takes a leading role in the SJP/JVP "Shut It Down for Palestine" walkout at Columbia. Addressing the crowd, he begins by retelling the impossible stories of his childhood before turning to the present and referring to "20 organizations that came into a coalition." He warns that "the university is going to shut down" and "we will get into a strike if you don't listen to our demands." A decade earlier, while a Fatah student leader at Birzeit University, Mahdawi had helped lead an open-ended protest in which he similarly declared would continue until the students' "demands are met." When a man at the Columbia protest calls for "death to the Jews," Mahdawi rejects the intervention, saying the man does not represent the protesters. He subsequently directs the crowd to assemble for a die-in. The crowd follows the direction.^{224 225 226}

November 10: Columbia administration announces that the University's chapters of SJP and JVP are suspended as official student groups for the remainder of the fall term.

²¹⁸ The Sundial Report: [The 2023-2024 Protests at Columbia University](#)

²¹⁹ The Sundial Report: [The 2023-2024 Protests at Columbia University](#)

²²⁰ The Valley News '[No Respite From Conflict In Upper Valley](#)' October 22 2023

²²¹ The Valley News '[No Respite From Conflict In Upper Valley](#)' October 22 2023

²²² Columbia Spectator, '[Students Organise Sit-in](#)' November 9 2023

²²³ Authors have archived video of Mahdawi sitting on steps at the site of the protest

²²⁴ Columbia Spectator '[Columbia's 'Activist Ivy' Legacy](#)' January 19 2024

²²⁵ YouTube upload Mohsen Mahdawi – [Palestinian Columbia Student Speech](#) November 9 2023

²²⁶ Pal Time News, '[Dispute Amongst Fatah Youth](#)' April 26 2013

November 14: Columbia University Apartheid Divest (CUAD), a coalition co-founded by Mahdawi, publicly sets out its identity, ideology and demands. The group says it had been “reactivated in October 2023” and describes Palestine as “the vanguard for our collective liberation.” Its stated mission is to achieve “a liberated Palestine” and the end of what it calls Israeli apartheid, placing the Palestinian cause within a wider revolutionary struggle against colonialism, imperialism and interconnected systems of oppression. CUAD’s own activists would later describe their movement as “auxiliary to the liberation movement in Palestine” and call for their struggle to be radicalised by “aligning with the Palestinian resistance leading the way.”^{227 228 229}

This language is particularly significant in Mahdawi’s case: his own earlier writings had explicitly celebrated martyrs, and the armed “resistance” wings of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, describing their fighters as “lions” and himself and others as dwarfed beside them.

November 15: Mahdawi speaks at a large demonstration organised by Within Our Lifetime (WOL) outside Columbia’s gates in support of the suspended SJP and JVP chapters.²³⁰ Footage shows Mahdawi addressing the crowd with a microphone on multiple occasions. Mahdawi also leads the crowd in chanting “from the river to the sea” while standing next to WOL leader Nerdeen Kiswani.²³¹ Elsewhere during the demonstration protesters chant “Globalize the Intifada” and “the State of Israel must go.”^{232 233 234}



²²⁷ Scholars at Risk [Freedom Monitoring Project](#) April 14 2025

²²⁸ Columbia Spectator, [‘New Group On Campus’](#), November 15 2023

²²⁹ D. M. et al., “Palestine Is The Vanguard For Our Liberation: Insights From The Students’ Intifada at Columbia University,” *Middle East Critique*, 2024

²³⁰ YouTube Status Coup News [‘LIVE From CEASEFIRE Protest at Columbia University After College Suspends 2 Pro-Palestine Groups’](#) November 15 2023

²³¹ Anti-Defamation League, [‘Nerdeen Kiswani and Within Our Lifetime-United for Palestine: What You Need to Know’](#)

²³² X platform Within our Lifetime, [advert for demo](#)

²³³ X platform footage of [Mahdawi at the protest](#), November 15 2023

²³⁴ Canary Mission, [Mohsen Mahdawi](#)

Mahdawi was not simply somewhere in a large crowd in which a militant slogan appeared. He was at a “Within Our Lifetime” demonstration, was one of the speakers, and leading chants while standing directly in front of WOL’s “by any means necessary” banner.



November 29: CUAD grows to more than 80 student groups. Interviewed by the *Columbia Spectator* about the coalition, Mahdawi emerges as one of its prominent spokespeople, describing its ambitions as extending far beyond Columbia: “We see what’s going to happen at Columbia will affect most other universities and colleges around the United States, and we see that we are spearheading this movement.” He promises that attempts to suppress the movement will only make it stronger and louder, adding: “We will not stop until we win this, until we change it.”

November 30: Mahdawi helps lead a CUAD protest that disrupts Columbia’s annual College Walk Tree Lighting ceremony. Video shows him at the front of the demonstration, gesturing and directing the crowd.²³⁵

²³⁵ YouTube, [footage from Tree Lighting protest](#), uploaded December 1 2023

Mahdawi's CBS *60 Minutes* Problem

December 6 2023: Mahdawi appears on CBS's *60 Minutes*. The segment marks an important moment in the evolution of his story - and the first time one of its central contradictions is exposed to a national audience.²³⁶

Giving Mahdawi a national platform, CBS introduces his account of his childhood friend Hameida by placing the death in 2002. This date does not come from Mahdawi's recorded answer; it is supplied by the programme's narration. How CBS arrived at the date is unclear. It may have emerged from background research conducted in preparation for the interview.

Mahdawi is then asked directly how old he was when his friend was killed.

His answer is immediate:

"I was ten."

The two claims cannot both be correct. Mahdawi was born in 1990. If the incident occurred in 2002, he was approximately 12, not ten.

The significance of CBS supplying the year 2002 becomes apparent when the claim is checked against the historical record. As examined in this report, the only Intifada-related child death in Al-Fara'a Camp occurred on June 29 2002.

For the first time, the historical chronology and Mahdawi's repeated claim that he was ten had appeared together - and they did not fit.

60 Minutes went out with that glaring error.

²³⁶ CBS News 'College Campus Tension' [60 Minutes transcript](#) December 6 2023

‘Civilians’ and Cousin Fighters

December 9 2023: Following an Israeli raid on Al-Fara’a Camp, Mahdawi mourned six “young men” killed there. He told his Facebook followers that five were civilians, adding that each had reportedly been “targeted and shot by a sniper.” The clear implication was that Israel had deliberately killed five innocent civilians.²³⁷



But contemporary Palestinian material tells a different story.²³⁸

One initial problem is Mahdawi mentions only six casualties, while seven people are named in the image. The odd man out is the one in the centre - Muadh Zahran. He was killed two days earlier on

²³⁷ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#) December 9 2023, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

²³⁸ Al Araby [‘Developments In The West Bank - Six Martyrs in Tubas’](#), December 9 2023

December 6 and explicitly described by the Fara'a battalion as “one of its mujahideen’ (Jihadist fighters).”²³⁹



The other six in Mahdawi’s image, who were killed on the night of December 7/8, were named as Imad Jawabreh, Thaer Shaheen, Baraa al-Amir, Amer Bassem Sobh, Maher Jawabreh, and Qasim Daraghme. Hamas’s West Bank Telegram channel subsequently mourned all six men together, describing them as “martyr heroes” killed while confronting Israeli forces.²⁴⁰

أخبار نابلس
Forwarded from الحركة الإسلامية الضفة الغربية

ولا تحسبن الذين قتلوا في سبيل الله أنهم ماتوا بل أحياء عند ربهم يرزقون

تَرْف

جبهة المقاومة الإسلامية في الضفة الغربية

الشهيد المجاهد: عامر صبح

الشهيد المجاهد: براء الأمير

الشهيد المجاهد: عماد جوايرة

الشهيد المجاهد: قاسم أبو خيزران

الشهيد المجاهد: ثائر شاهين

الشهيد المجاهد: ماهر جوايرة

الذين ارتقوا صباح يوم الجمعة 2023-12-8 خلال التصدي لقوات الاحتلال التي اقتحمت مخيم الفارعة للاجئين جنوب طوباس ضمن مواجهات معركة طوفان الأقصى

وإنه لجهاد.. نصر أو استشهاد

"ولا تحسبن الذين قتلوا في سبيل الله أمواتاً بل أحياء عند ربهم يرزقون"

تَرْف حركة المقاومة الإسلامية (حماس) الشهداء الأبرار الذين ارتقوا اليوم الجمعة خلال التصدي لقوات الاحتلال الصهيوني التي اقتحمت مخيم الفارعة للاجئين جنوب مدينة طوباس وحاصرت أحد المنازل.

وإنه لجهاد.. نصر أو استشهاد

12 5 3

8757 09:07

²³⁹ Facebook post, ‘The Fara’a Camp Battalion Mourns One Of Its Mujahideen’ December 6 2023

²⁴⁰ Telegram Hamas West bank on Telegram, [hamaswestbank1] Quds Press Agency December 8 2023

This does not mean that all six were Hamas members. Armed groups in West Bank refugee camps frequently operate across factional lines, and Hamas's statement appears to embrace the six collectively as members of the Palestinian resistance rather than identify each man's organisational affiliation.²⁴¹

As an example of this cross-factional situation, Palestinian Islamic Jihad also posted a graphic of the six fighters, listing them explicitly as members of the Al-Fara'a Battalion:²⁴² The "Al-Fara'a Battalion" had recently emerged in the Al-Fara'a Camp, part of a growing trend towards locally organised, cross-factional resistance groups seen in places such as Jenin and Nablus since 2021.²⁴³



One of the six in the image is Imad Jawabreh:



²⁴¹ IDF report briefing, [citation of Hamas West Bank](#), January 19-25 2025

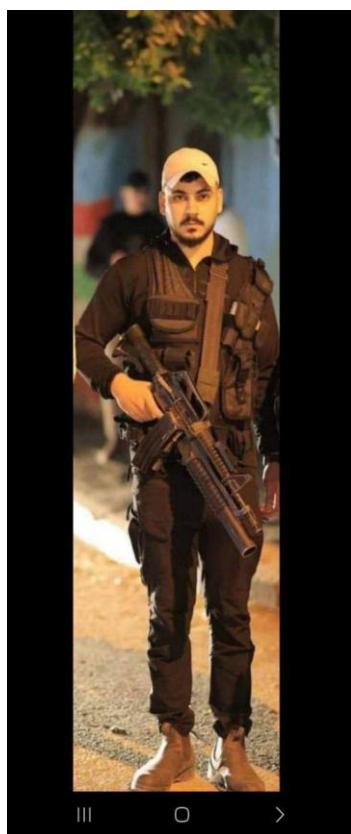
²⁴² X SDraghma account [Islamic Jihad memorial post](#) December 9 2023

²⁴³ WAFA '[Four Martyrs Shot By Occupation](#)' December 18 2023

Hamas depicted Jawabreh holding an assault rifle in its image. A photograph posted in July 2022 by a Facebook account bearing Jawabreh's name shows what appears to be the source image used in the Hamas graphic: the same clothing and pose, with Jawabreh holding the rifle.²⁴⁴

Thaer Shaheen's grave is prominently marked with the Fatah emblem, indicating an affiliation with Fatah rather than Hamas.²⁴⁵

Baraa al-Amir, is referenced by Al Jazeera as one of the leaders of the resistance in Al-Fara'a Camp while Amer Bassem Sobh is recorded has having been killed alongside al-Amir while fighting.^{246 247 248}



On December 7, another in the list, Maher Jawabrah, posted a video of himself brandishing some type of weapon, and promising he would follow in the footsteps of Muadh Zahran, the Al-Fara'a terrorist killed on December 6.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁴ Facebook Imad Jawabreh [image](#) July 18 2022, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

²⁴⁵ Facebook, Haneen Shaeheen, [Thaer's brother, in a memorial post](#) May 17 2024, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

²⁴⁶ Al Jazeera, '[Al-Far'a, A Resistance Movement That Has Troubled The Occupation](#)' December 19 2023

²⁴⁷ Telegram Nablus News, '[On The Death Of Baraa al-Amir](#)' December 8 2023

²⁴⁸ An Nahar (Lebanon), '[Six Palestinian Killed](#)' December 8 2023

²⁴⁹ Facebook, [Maher Jawabrah video](#), apparently uploaded December 7 2023, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

December 19: Mahdawi posts a story about his cousins being “assassinated.” He claims an Israeli sniper “unjustly” shot them:²⁵⁰



In reality both his cousins, Hekmat Samir Mohammad Melhem and Mohammad Samir Mohammad Melhem were armed and shooting at Israelis when they were killed.

The B’Tselem report notes this explicitly: “Shot in the head and killed along with his brother, with the two participating in a fire exchange with soldiers who had entered the camp and arrested Palestinians.”²⁵¹

These two were noted as part of the “resistance,” even by Palestinian human rights NGOs.^{252 253}

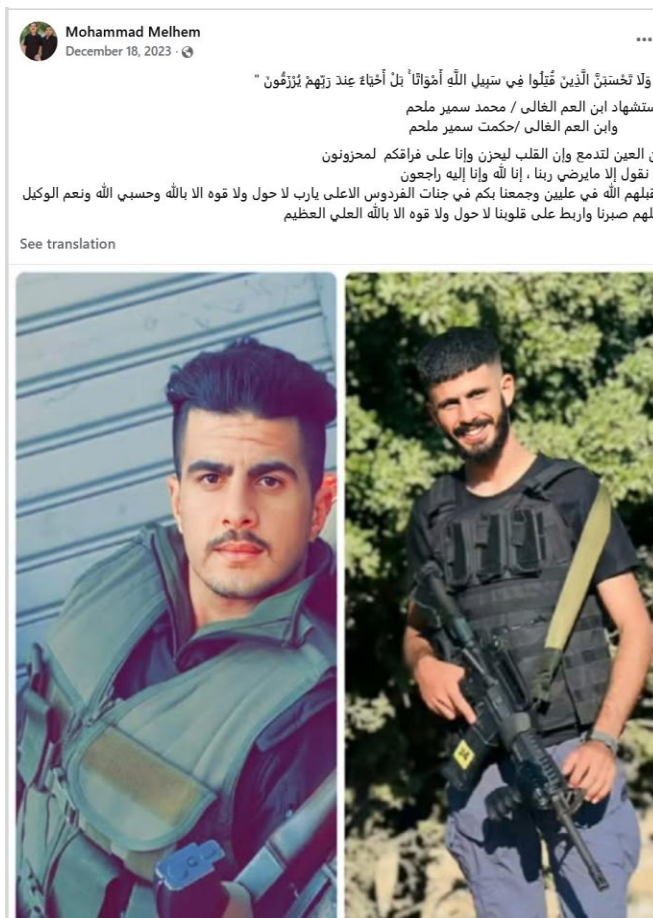
²⁵⁰ Mohsen Mahdawi [Instagram post](#) December 19 2023

²⁵¹ B’Tselem [Fatalities Database](#)

²⁵² Sanad News Agency ‘[4 Martyrs Shot By The Occupation In Al-Fara’a Camp](#)’ December 18 2023

²⁵³ PCHR statement [Condemns Killings](#) December 19 2023

Family members proudly posted images of them both with weapons.²⁵⁴



In his post about his cousins, Mahdawi references two children who were shot dead. One of them was an Islamic Jihad terrorist Yazan Mu'in al-Khatib. Arabic sources describe him as throwing explosives at the Israeli forces, which is when he was killed.^{255 256 257}

“With a backpack packed with explosives, 17-year-old Yazan al-Khatib moved through the alleys of Al-Fara'a refugee camp.”

A 17-year-old in Palestinian society is often treated as an adult, and terrorist groups recruit them to fight as such. B'Tselem explicitly records his Islamic Jihad affiliation.²⁵⁸

Nothing was found on the fourth victim's actions that night, although images of him with a weapon were uploaded by his family.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁴ Mohammad Melhem [Facebook post](#) December 18 2023, screenshot and archived copy held by authors

²⁵⁵ Al Mezan Centre [report on incident](#) December 19 2023

²⁵⁶ Al Haq [statement](#) December 19 2023

²⁵⁷ Facebook Meen Khateeb [profile](#), screenshot and archived copy held by authors

²⁵⁸ B'Tselem [Fatalities Database](#)

²⁵⁹ Facebook Rashid Aide [profile](#)

Towards the Encampments

2024

January 19: Mahdawi speaks at a “Divestment Now” rally organised by Columbia University Apartheid Divest (CUAD) and two other student groups. Protesters chant “There is only one solution: Intifada revolution,” and openly celebrate Houthi attacks on shipping. While “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” is sung in English, protesters also use the Arabic formulation “From the water to the water, Palestine is Arab.” Mahdawi tells *Columbia Spectator*: “The administration bet on us calming down and getting busy and forgetting about it ... we come stronger every time after a break.”^{260 261}

It was at this January 19 event that Mahdawi walked over to a group of counter-demonstrators who were chanting for the return of Kfir and Ariel Bibas, kidnapped at ages 9 months and 4 years old respectively, and displaying images of the Israeli hostages.^{262 263} Mahdawi raised his megaphone and activated its siren, using the noise to drown out their chants.²⁶⁴



January 24: Mahdawi speaks at a campus protest associated with CUAD, where chants included “Globalize the Intifada” and “Long live the Intifada.”²⁶⁵ Discussing threats against protesters, Mahdawi

²⁶⁰ X Platform Shai Davidai [X post](#) January 19 2024

²⁶¹ Columbia Spectator ‘[Pro-Palestinian Groups Hold Divestment Now Rally](#)’ January 19 2024

²⁶² X Platform Rachel Feldman [180 days In Captivity We Will Not Forget The Bibas Family](#) April 3 2024

²⁶³ BBC News ‘[Israel Says Forensics Show Bibas Children Killed By Captors](#)’ February 21 2025

²⁶⁴ X platform, Columbia Jewish alumni, [footage from January 19 event](#), posted April 18 2025

²⁶⁵ X platform Shai Davidai [X post](#) January 24 2024

shouts through a megaphone: “...there is nothing - NOTHING - more honorable than dying for a noble cause, for freedom, for humanity, and for justice!”²⁶⁶



February 15: Mahdawi applies for naturalization as a U.S. citizen on or about this date.²⁶⁷

February and March: Through February, the CUAD coalition Mahdawi helped establish continues to organise protests and disruptions across campus. Its rhetoric had become increasingly militant, as footage from the demonstrations make clear. At one February protest, with “RAFAH” written prominently in the snow, demonstrators sang: “We don’t want two states, we want all of it.”²⁶⁸ ²⁶⁹ By this point, the character of the movement combined maximalist territorial demands with calls for an intifada as the “only solution,” support for Houthi attacks on commercial shipping, an increasing willingness to disrupt university life and, in Mahdawi’s own words, the belief that there was “nothing more honorable than dying for a noble cause.”

March 24: CUAD promotes “Resistance 101,” an unauthorised event featuring Khaled Barakat, an activist alleged to be associated with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a U.S.-

²⁶⁶ X platform Shai Davidai [X post](#) January 24 2024

²⁶⁷ Mahdawi v Trump, [No. 25-1113](#), Joint Special Appendix, Vol. II, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, filed July 14 2025

²⁶⁸ Columbia Spectator, [‘Students Dye Snow Red’](#) February 14 2024

²⁶⁹ X platform Gill Zussman, [Footage Of chants from February 14 event](#) February 14 2024

designated terrorist organisation. At the event, Barakat refers to members of Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the PFLP as his “friends and brothers.”^{270 271}

March 30: Mahdawi purchases the Mohsen-Mahdawi.com domain name.²⁷²

April: Mahdawi would later claim that after March 2024 he stepped away from CUAD to pursue alternative “peace-building” strategies and relationships with Israelis and Jews. That claim, however, comes from a sworn declaration submitted after his April 2025 arrest and should be treated as a retrospective account rather than evidence in itself of an ideological break.^{273 274}

April 22-26: Mahdawi is photographed inside and around the Columbia University encampment.²⁷⁵



April 30: As the Columbia encampment protests dominate international headlines, *Al Jazeera* turns to Mahdawi for comment, identifying him as co-president of the Palestinian Student Union.

²⁷⁰ Columbia Spectator [Resistance 101 event with PFLP speaker](#), March 29 2024

²⁷¹ U.S. Department of the Treasury, [Fundraiser for PFLP](#) October 15 2024

²⁷² Go Daddy [‘whois’ history search](#) for domain name

²⁷³ Mohsen Mahdawi, Declaration, [Appendix Vol. II](#), *Mahdawi v. Trump*, No. 25-1113 (2d Cir. 2025).

²⁷⁴ Al Jazeera [‘The Night Columbia Turned On Pro-Palestinian Students’](#) published May 20 2024

²⁷⁵ Images taken April 22 and 26. Mohsen Mahdawi inside the Columbia encampment, 2024. Photographs supplied by anonymous sources. © Copyright holder. Used with permission. Contact authors for details.

Columbia's Jewish Student Outcasts

2023 - 2025: The impact of this escalating campus environment on Jewish and Israeli students was considerable. By April 2024, protesters were chanting for Tel Aviv to be “burnt to the ground” in the name of “justice,” while an encampment had been established on university grounds.²⁷⁶

Antisemitic intimidation became serious enough that Rabbi Elie Buechler, who led the Orthodox Union's Jewish Learning Initiative at Columbia and Barnard, advised Jewish students to leave campus “as soon as possible,” warning that neither campus Public Safety nor the New York Police Department could guarantee their safety. He advised them to remain at home until conditions had “dramatically improved.”²⁷⁷

Videos emerged of protesters inside the encampment forming a human chain to prevent Jewish students they identified as “Zionists” from “passing this point”.²⁷⁸ A report by Columbia's Task Force on Antisemitism “*Columbia University Student Experiences of Antisemitism and Recommendations for Promoting Shared Values and Inclusion*” published August 30 2024 recorded Jewish students fleeing campus amid verbal harassment, exclusion and fear for their safety.²⁷⁹

One Jewish student with a mezuzah on her dorm room door reported people banging on her door at all hours of the night and demanding that she explain Israel's actions. She eventually moved out of the dorm. Others reported “necklaces being ripped from their necks and being pinned against walls while returning to their dormitories or travelling to synagogue.” Visibly Jewish students reported being followed, stalked and subjected to threatening abuse.²⁸⁰

Some Jewish students were so concerned about their safety they set up a WhatsApp group, through which frightened students could ask others to escort them across the campus.²⁸¹ As part of a class action settlement brought against the university for its failure to protect Jewish students, the University agreed to hire a “Safe Passage Liaison” and maintain a 24/7 Public Safety escort program.²⁸²

Jewish students reported being ostracised, removed from student groups, losing friends and being left sitting alone at lunchtime.²⁸³

²⁷⁶ X Platform Open Source Intel, [X post](#) April 21 2024

²⁷⁷ The Washington Post ‘[Biden Denounces Antisemitism in College Campuses](#)’ April 22 2024

²⁷⁸ X Platform Luke Tress, [X post](#) April 22 2024

²⁷⁹ Columbia University [Task Force on Antisemitism, Report 2](#) August 30 2024

²⁸⁰ *ibid*

²⁸¹ The Mycenaean ‘[Jews on Campus at Columbia](#)’ May 28 2024

²⁸² Columbia Spectator ‘[Columbia Reaches Settlement in Class Action Suit Alleging Hostile Environment for Jewish Students](#)’ June 7 2024

²⁸³ Columbia University [Task Force on Antisemitism, Report 2](#) August 30 2024

In October 2023 the founder of *LionLez*, an “LGBTQ+ student club” on campus created a flier stating “Zionists are not invited.”²⁸⁴ Jewish students described being denied membership or forced to quit student groups that were supposed to be non-political. Others said there was a litmus test of a student’s political positions on Palestine before being able to participate in organisations. These exclusions spread. A Barnard student from a Sikh student group claims she was ousted from her role as co-president because she tried to maintain a neutral position, in an attempt to stop her group from joining CUAD.²⁸⁵

On January 23 2024, the Law School Student Senate voted against the official recognition of a proposed student group called Law Students Against Antisemitism. Of the nine student groups and clubs that requested approval that year, Law Students Against Antisemitism was the only one that was denied.²⁸⁶

The Columbia report explicitly says that although many problems predated the April encampment, “at that point, things got worse.”

Jewish students who turned up to counter-protest faced violence, with reports of Israeli flags being seized and burnt, objects being thrown at them, and students being chased and physically assaulted in the encampment, only to be met by a Within Our Lifetime protest outside the single available exit.²⁸⁷ In one incident, a demonstrator held a sign reading “Al-Qassam’s next targets,” with an arrow pointing towards a group of Jewish students:²⁸⁸



²⁸⁴ Columbia Spectator, ‘[Lion Lez President Under Fire](#)’ October 27 2023

²⁸⁵ Columbia University, [University Senate Plenary](#) September 2024

²⁸⁶ *ibid*

²⁸⁷ The Free Press, ‘[At Columbia I Am Told: ‘Go Back to Poland](#)’ April 21 2024

²⁸⁸ Image taken outside Columbia University. Photographs supplied by anonymous sources. © Copyright holder. Used with permission. Contact authors for details.

The high-profile situation on the campus turned it into a target for external disinformation campaigns. Trucks drove by with clear antisemitic and antizionist tropes, comparing then-President Joe Biden to Adolf Hitler, and saying: “Daily Reminder: Israel Steals Palestinian Organs.”^{289 290}



Among the many other examples of a hostile campus environment documented in the Columbia report, visibly observant Jewish students reported being “spat on,” another student said that she and her brother had been “chased off campus,” and an Israeli student encountered a demonstrator displaying a Hamas flag on their phone, who told her: “We will follow you to Israel and burn your family.”²⁹¹

The abuse did not just come from students. One female student who served in the IDF attended a class about the conflict, saying that the IDF was presented as an “army of murderers.” The instructor pointed at the student in front of the rest of the class and said she should be considered one of the murderers.²⁹² Bruce Robbins, a professor of English at Columbia, is a member of Columbia’s chapter of Faculty and Staff for Justice in Palestine. He brought one of his classes to the encampment as part of the course. Two of his students, who he believes were former members of the Israeli military, did not show up for that lesson.²⁹³

One student reported attending Columbia health services and overhearing two healthcare professionals discussing her, with one saying that they would not treat her because she was Israeli. She remained waiting until another member of staff attended to her.²⁹⁴

Much has been made of Mahdawi’s efforts to talk to Jews and Israelis, and presenting him as a student seeking connection and resolution.²⁹⁵ Yet there is surprisingly little public evidence showing what his encounters with ideological opponents actually consisted of.

²⁸⁹ Images taken outside Columbia University. Photographs supplied by anonymous sources. © Copyright holder. Used with permission. Contact authors for details.

²⁹⁰ ADL ‘[Blood Libel on Wheels](#)’

²⁹¹ Columbia University [Task Force on Antisemitism, Report 2](#) August 30 2024

²⁹² Times of Israel ‘[Jewish Students singled Out](#)’ December 10 2025

²⁹³ New York Times ‘[Taking Cues From Students, U.C.L.A. Faculty Members Join the Protests](#)’ May 2 2024

²⁹⁴ Columbia University [Task Force on Antisemitism, Report](#) August 30 2024

²⁹⁵ New Statesman ‘[Inside Columbia’s Campus Wars](#)’ April 13 2024

Mahdawi participated in Columbia's weekly *Peacemaking and Negotiation* course in spring 2024 under Professor Jean Krasno. There is footage of Mahdawi speaking with Elisha "Lishi" Baker, then co-chair of the Zionist student group Aryeh, in a 2024 Channel 4 documentary.²⁹⁶ The exchange took place inside a controlled classroom environment.

In a short clip Mahdawi can be seen saying the impact of the two Intifadas must be characterised by comparative death tolls, dismissing Baker's point about the violent implications of calling for "intifada" in 2023 and 2024. This point of definition is never reconciled in the documentary; when Baker suggests that the number comparison was "not an argument," Mahdawi accuses him of betraying "a trust," at which point Krasno steps in to "resume control."^{297 298}

According to the *Columbia Spectator*, the end product of Krasno's course included Mahdawi working alongside fellow student Aharon Dardik, an Israeli-American Jewish activist.²⁹⁹

"For their final projects, Dardik and Mahdawi individually proposed 'a peaceful solution for Palestine,' then coauthored a 65-page 'joint solution' incorporating their ideas. The pair presented their peace plan to other college students and professors at a week-long retreat in California with Krasno, and later at the Yale Club in Manhattan before United Nations ambassadors, representatives from Human Rights Watch, the International Crisis Group, and Columbia faculty."

Dardik was not, however, representative of the Zionist students with whom Mahdawi was publicly credited as trying to engage. Dardik was a founder and lead organiser of CU Jews for Ceasefire, a group that participated in the April 2024 encampment and other "pro-Palestinian" protests. Dardik, who had refused service in the IDF, described his organisation as fighting for the "collective liberation of Israelis and Palestinians," prioritising a ceasefire in Gaza and an end to the Israeli occupation.^{300 301}

The 60+-page proposal features prominently in later accounts as evidence of Mahdawi's ability to work across the Israeli-Palestinian divide. Mahdawi himself has invoked the plan in precisely these terms, emphasising that he developed it with "partners, Israelis, Palestinians, and Jews".^{302 303} It certainly demonstrates collaboration between a Palestinian activist and an Israeli-American Jewish student, but the documented collaboration was with a Jewish activist whose politics already overlapped substantially with the "pro-Palestinian" movement in which Mahdawi had been active.³⁰⁴ It was

²⁹⁶ Columbia Spectator '[Elisha Baker: On Bigotry In The Classroom](#)' March 19 2024

²⁹⁷ Channel 4 '[What Are The Roots Of The Campus Protest: Unreported World](#)' April 21 2024

²⁹⁸ New Statesman '[Inside Columbia's Campus Wars](#)' April 13 2024

²⁹⁹ Columbia Spectator '[Court-Martialed For Refusing To Serve In The Israeli Military](#)' June 13 2026

³⁰⁰ Moment Magazine '[From Yeshiva to Court-Martial](#)' August 26 2024

³⁰¹ Columbia Law Review [June 2025](#)

³⁰² New York Times '[He Wanted Peace in the Middle East](#)' April 16 2025

³⁰³ Boston Globe '[Mohsen Mahdawi Seeks Solace](#)' May 9 2025

³⁰⁴ PBS News, '[Mahdawi Says Release Shows Democracy Is Functioning](#)' May 9 2025

therefore evidence of cooperation, but less compelling evidence of Mahdawi's willingness or ability to bridge ideological divides.

News coverage presenting Mahdawi as someone seeking to bridge divides through his participation in Krasno's course appeared in mid-April.³⁰⁵ Within days, the encampment had been established. CU Jews for Ceasefire participated in it, while photographs obtained for this report place Mahdawi inside. This was precisely the point at which, according to Columbia's Task Force on Antisemitism, conditions for Jewish and Israeli students deteriorated further.”³⁰⁶

Following his 2025 arrest, Mahdawi's 2024 activity was increasingly portrayed as that of a bridge-builder, yet the public evidentiary record does not support this.

Mahdawi continued to characterise the Columbia protest movement in benign terms, as he said to CNN in May 2025: “The protest mainly was peaceful.” This characterisation is difficult to reconcile with the volume of harassment, intimidation and violence documented by Columbia's own investigations.^{307 308}

³⁰⁵ New Statesman ‘[Inside Columbia's Campus Wars](#)’ April 13 2024

³⁰⁶ Columbia University Senate, [The Sundial Report: The 2023–2024 Protests at Columbia University](#), Resolution Addressing Current Events, March 31 2025, pp. 290–91

³⁰⁷ CNN Laura Coates Live [transcript with Mahdawi interview](#) May 9 2025

³⁰⁸ PBS News, ‘[Mahdawi Says Release Shows Democracy Is Functioning](#)’ May 9 2025

³⁰⁹ Columbia University [Task Force on Antisemitism, Report 2](#) August 2024

The Impossible Timeline Exposed

May 7 2024: David Bisno uploads a Mohsen Mahdawi lecture from his “Whose Land Is It Anyway?” series. The event was Week 5 of the course and appears to have taken place on March 11, 2024. This talk provides the first evidence of the disruption the CBS *60 Minutes* exposure had caused to Mahdawi’s established backstory.³¹⁰

In an autobiographical speech, Mahdawi again recounts the story that had become central to his public account of his childhood: witnessing his best friend being shot dead by an Israeli soldier during the Second Intifada. He identifies the friend as “Hameida”, says that he himself was 12 and the boy 14, and makes an acknowledgement: “I mixed up the dates at some point.” The correction follows the chronological problem exposed by the CBS *60 Minutes* interview.

The acknowledgement creates a serious problem with what follows. Mahdawi continues directly into the familiar story of sitting beside his friend’s grave when his uncle Thaer came to comfort him and delivered the formative lesson that education and hope were the way forward. Yet on Mahdawi’s newly corrected chronology, this is impossible: Thaer died in 2001, before Mahdawi could have been 12. For perhaps the clearest time, the two incompatible elements of Mahdawi’s origin story appear alongside one another in the same speech.



Context: The significance becomes clearer when we return to the earliest detailed version of the story we have located. In December 2018, Mahdawi told *The Brown and White* that he was ten when Hameida Mubarak was killed.³¹¹ In that version, Mahdawi and Mubarak attempt to throw stones at an Israeli tank. Mubarak is shot, Mahdawi is rushed into a nearby house, and “after roughly a half hour” he emerges to find Mubarak’s body lying on the ground.

Following Mubarak’s burial, Mahdawi says he became consumed by thoughts of revenge. He repeatedly visited the cemetery, sitting beside the graves of Mubarak and his younger brother. It was during one of these visits that Thaer supposedly approached him, sat beside him and delivered the lesson that would transform his outlook.

³¹⁰ YouTube David Bisno channel publishes Mahdawi ‘[Palestinian Experience](#)’ talk March 12 2024

³¹¹ The Brown and White [“A Student’s Journey From The West Bank To The South Side”](#) December 5 2018

At age ten, the sequence at least appears possible: Thaer was still alive. But Mahdawi was not ten when the only known child matching this story died. Once Mahdawi corrected his age to 12, he solved one chronological problem and created another. Thaer could no longer have been there.

This matters because the encounter is not some incidental detail in Mahdawi's biography. The death of his friend, the desire for revenge that followed and Thaer's intervention at the graveside form the origin story through which Mahdawi has repeatedly explained his subsequent commitment to education, dialogue and non-violence. The 2018 article itself places the graveside encounter immediately before a section entitled "A change in perspective", and states that "from then on" Mahdawi committed himself to working hard at school.

The problems extend far beyond dates.

Earlier in this report we reconstructed the only known incident that plausibly matches Mahdawi's story. The evidence included contemporary records and testimony from the man who headed Al-Fara'a Camp's coordinating committee at the time. Mohammed had not been shot at all. He had not died at the scene, nor had the incident taken place in a residential part of the camp, but near the entrance, where confrontations with two Israeli jeeps were taking place.

There is another problem.

Mahdawi's own description of his proximity to his friend's death has changed substantially over time (*emphasis added by authors*).

In the December 2018 account, Mahdawi and Mubarak are together shortly before the shooting. The article says Mubarak is shot when soldiers encounter the boys in an alley, but Mahdawi is then rushed into a house and emerges **"after roughly a half hour"** to find Mubarak's body lying on the ground.³¹² The story becomes clearer In December 2020 when Mahdawi is interviewed by *The Valley News*, Mahdawi was not a witness to the actual shooting - although he heard it:³¹³

"The two boys picked up stones to throw at the approaching tanks. 'Before we even got close enough, an Israeli soldier came out of an alley,' Mahdawi said. **The boys raced off in different directions. 'I hear shooting over my head as I'm running through the alleys,'** Mahdawi said. A half hour later, with the tanks and soldiers having moved on, **he returned to the street, where a crowd had gathered. 'I went to find Hemida, but he was dead,'** Mahdawi said. 'An Israeli soldier had shot him in the chest.'"

In this account Mahdawi does not witness his friend being shot. He runs in a different direction, hears gunfire and returns approximately half an hour later.

³¹² The Brown and White ["A Student's Journey From The West Bank To The South Side"](#) December 5 2018

³¹³ The Valley News, ["Upper Valley Man Shaped By His Experiences"](#) December 27 2020

The story changes again. **Mahdawi moves progressively closer to the killing.** In December 2023, during the CBS *60 Minutes* interview, he states he explicitly witnessed the shooting.³¹⁴ In 2025, he describes his best friend as being “**shot and killed in front of my eyes.**”³¹⁵ By 2026, Mahdawi is describing himself as “**literally holding [his] best friend after he was shot**” while being “**saturated with the blood.**”³¹⁶

The account of Hameida Mubarak’s death in which Mahdawi runs away, hears gunfire and returns roughly half an hour later eventually becomes one in which he is holding his friend after the shooting and covered in his blood.

At the same time, the chronology of the second half of the story has collapsed. The 2018 version places Mahdawi at ten, allowing Thaer to appear subsequently at Mubarak’s grave. By March 2024, Mahdawi acknowledges that he had “**mixed up the dates**” and corrects his age to 12 - but retains the graveside encounter with Thaer. On that corrected chronology, his uncle had already been dead for years.

The simple fact remains: only one child is known to have died in Al-Fara’a Camp during the entire Second Intifada. The documented circumstances of that death do not match Mahdawi’s account. Once Mahdawi corrects his own age, the subsequent encounter with Thaer becomes chronologically impossible.

³¹⁴ CBS News ‘College Campus Tension’ [60 Minutes transcript](#) December 6 2023

³¹⁵ Democracy Now, ‘[They Want To Silence Me](#)’ May 16 2025

³¹⁶ Tara Brach, [A Conversation With Tara Brach and Mohsen Mahdawi](#) March 19 2026

More Family, More Protests

June 16 2024: Mahdawi's social media footprint is difficult to reconstruct in full. Open-source research indicates that he operated numerous accounts, some under his own name and others anonymously. A government profile compiled on Mahdawi lists sixteen separate social media accounts, although the identifying details are redacted.³¹⁷ Other relevant accounts have disappeared altogether: Meta, for example, subsequently removed CUAD's Instagram account for violations of its platform rules.³¹⁸

Nevertheless, fragments of that record survive. On June 16, a Columbia activist account published material from the Palestinian Student Union, the organisation Mahdawi co-founded and in which he held a leadership position. Beneath a photograph of demonstrators carrying a huge banner reading **"BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY,"** the Palestinian Student Union declared that it remained "steadfast" and would "continue to fight" for students advocating "Palestinian liberation."³¹⁹



August 6: Mahdawi references Walid Abu al-Kamal on Instagram as one of the cousins "taken" by "Israeli violence."³²⁰ al-Kamal was killed during an Israeli operation at Kafr Qud, west of Jenin. Israeli forces surrounded a house containing Walid and several other men; al-Kamal and Khader Abu Qatna

³¹⁷ ICE, *Mohsen Khader Mahdawi Subject Profile*, [Exhibit 235](#), filed in *Öztürk v. Hyde*, Doc. 315-15 (January 22 2026), p. 27

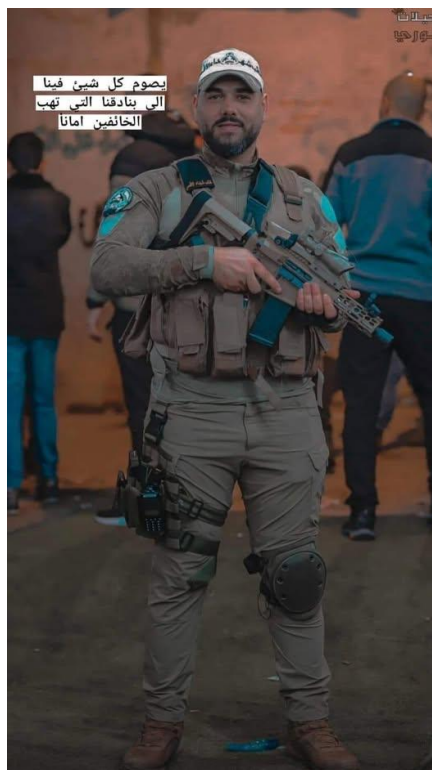
³¹⁸ Columbia Spectator, [‘Meta Bans CUAD Instagram Accounts’](#) April 8 2025

³¹⁹ Instagram, CUJAFRA, [By Any Means necessary](#), June 16 2024

³²⁰ Mohsen Mahdawi [Instagram post](#) October 3 2024

were killed, while three others were wounded and arrested. Among those wounded was al-Kamal's brother, Jihad Abu al-Kamal, the Fatah secretary in Jenin refugee camp.

Walid Abu al-Kamal belonged to a family already prominent in Mahdawi's story: he was the brother of Thaer and Amin Abu al-Kamal, both killed during the Second Intifada.³²¹ al-Kamal himself had previously been arrested by Israeli forces in 2019. Contemporary commemorative material from Jenin depicts him armed, in tactical equipment and carrying a rifle, accompanied by language invoking "our rifles."



August 8: Two days after Walid Abu al-Kamal's death Mahdawi takes a flight from JFK International Airport in New York to Athens, Greece. Mahdawi returned on August 22 from Oslo, Norway to LAX International Airport in Los Angeles. There is no indication of where Mahdawi went from Athens, but the location does suggest a trip to some destination in the Middle East.³²²

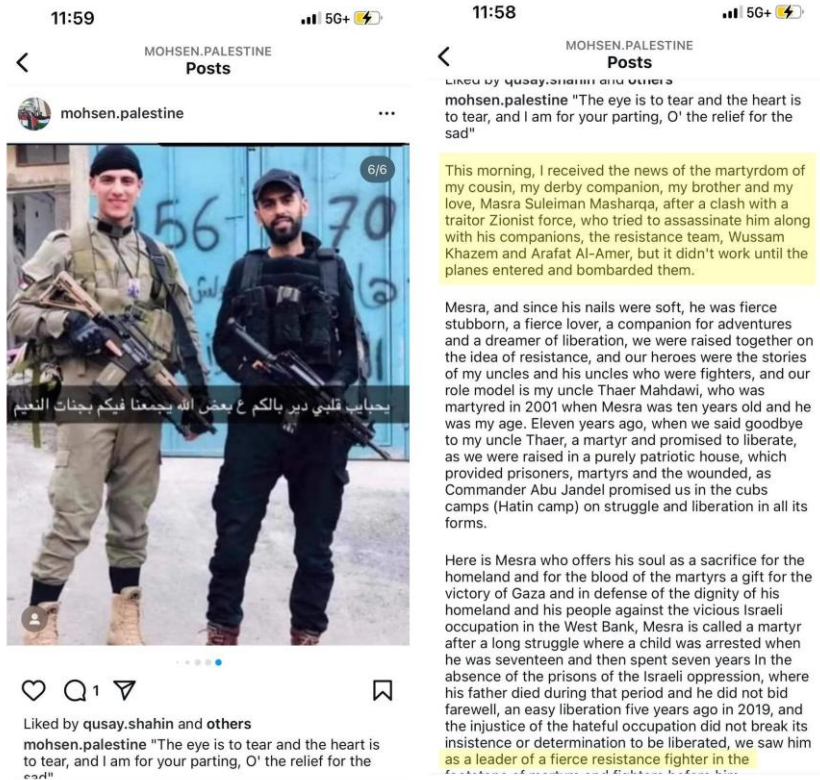
Unspecified August: In a now-deleted Instagram post Mahdawi described a cousin, Maysara Masharqa, as a "fierce resistance fighter" and "dreamer of liberation" who was killed "after a clash with a traitor Zionist force."^{323 324}

³²¹ This report page 11

³²² ICE, *Mohsen Khader Mahdawi Subject Profile*, [Exhibit 235](#), filed in *Öztürk v. Hyde*, Doc. 315-15 (January 22 2026), p. 27.

³²³ The Free Press [‘Who Is The Real Mohsen Mahdawi’](#) May 6 2024

³²⁴ X post, [Columbia Jewish & Israeli Students](#), September 4 2024 (part 1 of 4)



All three men were part of terrorist organisations (Hamas and the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades) with both Khazem and Mahdawi's cousin being described as senior figures by CNN:

"The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said Friday it killed Wissam Khazem, whom it described as the Hamas leader in the city of Jenin, in an exchange of gunfire after he was identified 'in a vehicle in the area.' The military said it had found weapons and money in the vehicle.

"Two others were also killed as they tried to flee the vehicle, according to the Israeli military, naming them as Maysara Masharqa and Arafat Amer. The IDF said both men belonged to Hamas and 'operated under the command of Khazem and took part in shooting attacks against Israeli communities.' In a statement, the Al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, acknowledged the three men's deaths and confirmed Khazem was one of its leaders in Jenin. The Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, a network of Palestinian armed groups, said Masharqa was its 'most prominent field commander[sic]' in Jenin." ³²⁵

Israeli court records show that Masharqa also confessed in 2012 to throwing improvised explosive devices and Molotov cocktails at IDF soldiers "on a large number of occasions and from a short distance," making pipe bombs, and conspiring to shoot and kill. He was sentenced to eight years in prison. ^{326 327}

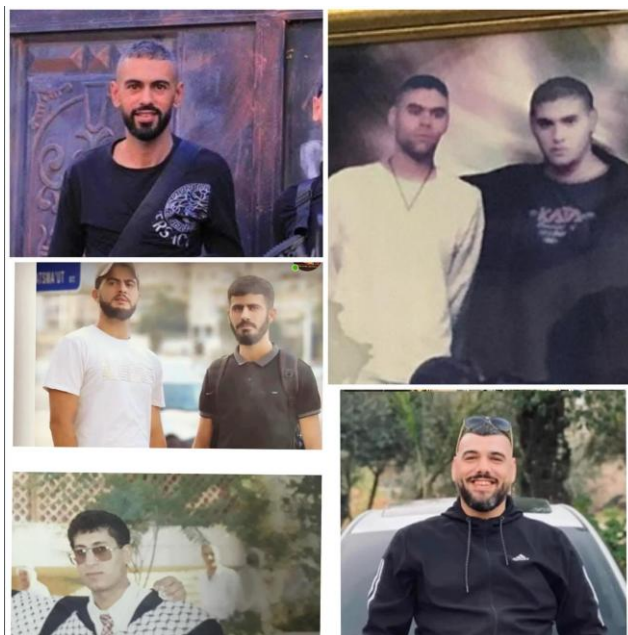
³²⁵ CNN '[Israeli Military Says It Killed Hamas Commander And Two Other Fighters](#)' August 30 2024

³²⁶ The Free Press '[Who Is The Real Mohsen Mahdawi](#)' May 6 2024

³²⁷ Military prosecution, Misra Suleiman Abd al-Rahman Masharqa, [Appeal No. 2114/12 \(Israeli court\)](#), available at Takdin

September 22: In the government's March 2025 action memorandum recommending Mahdawi's deportability, U.S. State Department official John Armstrong reported open-source material identifying Mahdawi as participating in "fall 2024 protests" at Columbia. Despite Mahdawi claiming he had taken a "step back," his social media contains posts of him at Columbia, with messages telling everyone to "keep all eyes on Columbia," along with messages such as "our fight for justice continues. Our battleground is Columbia University."^{328 329}

October 3: Mahdawi posts a family tribute on Instagram.³³⁰



Alongside their photographs, Mahdawi honoured the men by name as "martyrs," promising not to abandon their rights or those of "the martyrs of the path," and declaring that "justice is our path together towards liberation." He names them as his "uncle Thayer", and cousins "Maysarah, Hekmat, Mohammad, Ameen, Thayer, and Waleed."

Despite Mahdawi portraying them as innocent victims of Israeli aggression in his post, we found that each had been involved in violent resistance - most actively fighting Israeli soldiers when killed.

These are the names of the seven:

- Maysarah Suliman Abd a-Rahman Masharqah: Killed August 30 2024. Senior Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades operative. This report covered his death on page 85.
- Hekmat Samir Muhammad Milhem: Killed December 18 2023 during exchange of fire with Israeli soldiers. This report covered his death on page 71.
- Mohammad Samir Muhammad Milhem: Killed December 18 2023 during exchange of fire with Israeli soldiers. This report covered his death on page 71.
- Waleed Abu al-Kamal: Killed August 6 2024. Senior Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades operative.

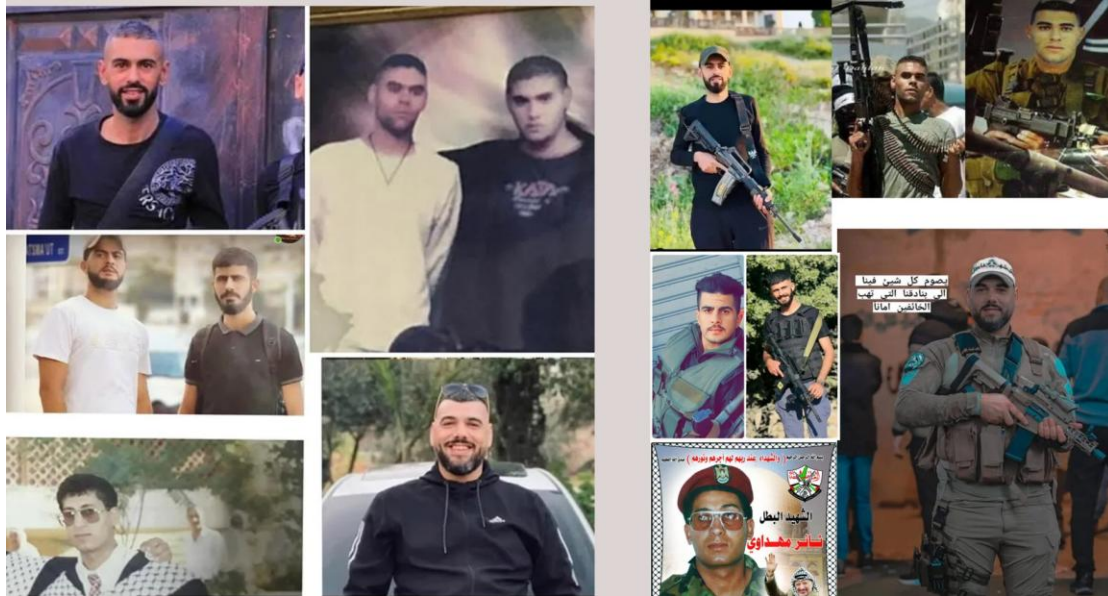
³²⁸ Mohsen Mahdawi Instagram posts [September 22](#) and [September 29](#) 2024

³²⁹ Mohsen Mahdawi [Instagram post](#) October 13 2024

³³⁰ Mohsen Mahdawi [Instagram post](#) October 3 2024

- Thaer Muhsein Madawi: Killed in “heroic battle,” September 12 2001. Palestinian security force. This report covered his death on page 6.
- Ameen Abu al-Kamal: Killed November 7 2004 during Second Intifada. Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades operative. Targeted strike. This report covered his death on page 11.
- Thayer Abu al-Kamal: Killed December 25 2004 during Second Intifada. Senior Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades operative, refused to surrender. This report covered his death on page 11.

Mahdawi presented the image on the left, along with stories about assassinations and Israeli snipers unfairly targeting them. The image on the right tells a more accurate story:



October 19: In an interview with TRT News, Mahdawi is again speaking publicly as a representative of the Columbia University protest movement. He tells the broadcaster that since October 7 he has lost four cousins in the West Bank to Israeli forces. He explicitly connects events at home to his activism at Columbia: “For me, the fight here on Columbia University is not much far from home.”³³¹

³³¹ TRT, Facebook reel [Mohsen Mahdawi](#) October 10 2024

A Spoken Smoking Gun

December 2024: The Palestinian Authority was confronting a serious erosion of its control in the northern West Bank. Jenin refugee camp in particular had become an armed stronghold in which militants affiliated with Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hamas and other factions operated beyond effective PA control.³³² In December, the PA launched Operation Protect the Homeland, seeking to reassert its authority, arrest wanted gunmen and dismantle the militants’ infrastructure. There was also an urgent security calculation: after October 7 the PA wanted to prevent Jenin becoming another militant enclave that would invite increasingly destructive Israeli military operations. The crackdown was therefore also a test of whether the PA could maintain a monopoly on armed force and govern Palestinian territory at all.

December 15: Mohsen Mahdawi posts a ten-minute video to his Facebook “friends only”. Unlike most of his other posts at the time, he does not share it on his other social-media channels. The introductory text reads: “About what the Palestinian Authority is doing in Jenin and its refugee camp — what a shame, what a disgrace.” The full video has been uploaded to YouTube.³³³ We also extracted a key section that has been translated:³³⁴



³³² Reuters, [‘Palestinian Security Forces Clash With Militants In West Bank’](#) December 14 2024

³³³ Mohsen Mahdawi [Facebook post](#) December 15 2024 [full video](#), archived copy held by authors

³³⁴ Mohsen Mahdawi Facebook post December 15 2024 [translated excerpt](#)

Mahdawi's position is unequivocal. He condemns the PA operation and describes the refugee camps as the “heart of the resistance and the heart of the struggle.” He objects to armed militants being described as “outlaws”, insisting they are “resistance fighters”, and accuses the PA of suppressing, disarming and imprisoning them so that Israel can “take the West Bank on a golden platter”. He calls instead for reconciliation with Hamas and the other Palestinian factions around a common “plan for liberation”

But the most revealing passage concerns Mahdawi's own role. Introducing himself as one of the founders of the student movement that began at Columbia and “spread around the world”, he describes the PA's actions as:

“a slap in the face of the resistance, whether armed resistance in the West Bank or Gaza, or the popular resistance that we began and are still engaged in outside the homeland.”

This is the significance of the speech. Mahdawi does not present the “popular resistance” he helped launch at Columbia as an alternative to armed struggle. **He places his own activism abroad and “armed resistance in the West Bank or Gaza” within the same Palestinian resistance.**

Nor was this conception of resistance new. Writing from Vermont during the 2014 Gaza war, Mahdawi had already spoken of different “forms of resistance” extending beyond Palestine.³³⁵ A year later, commemorating his militant uncle Thaer, he wrote that his uncle had taught him “the first bullets and the first love”, before adding: **“even if the form has changed, I am wholly for my homeland...”**³³⁶ A decade later, the December 2024 speech makes the relationship explicit: **the change in form did not mean a repudiation of armed resistance. His activism abroad is presented alongside it as another component of the wider struggle.**

That understanding is consistent with the wider record. In 2011 he saluted Hamas founder Ahmed Yassin and Palestinian Islamic Jihad founder Fathi al-Shiqaqi; in 2014 he praised the armed wings of both organisations. Thirteen years later, he again invokes Yassin and Shiqaqi while calling for Hamas and the Palestinian factions to unite around a common “plan for liberation”.

³³⁵ This report page 33

³³⁶ This report page 38

Before the Arrest

2025

January unspecified. Mahdawi posts about his uncle - calling his imprisonment ‘unjust’ - when his uncle appeared as part of an exchange with Israeli hostages:³³⁷



The uncle, Yousef Mahdawi, was sentenced to life in prison for recruiting a suicide bomber who carried out an attack in the Israeli city of Netanya at the London Cafe that injured more than 60 people.^{338 339 340} He was an Islamic Jihad terrorist.^{341 342} As part of the Palestinian “Pay for Slay” program, Mahdawi’s family was paid over 1,126,800 shekels while he was in jail.^{343 344}

Yousef Mahdawi's name appeared on the list of Palestinian prisoners to be released as part of the hostage deal that took place on January 25 2025. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad member that was serving a life sentence for recruiting a suicide bomber was being released.

³³⁷ The Free Press ‘[Who Is The Real Mohsen Mahdawi](#)’ May 6 2024

³³⁸ This report page 11

³³⁹ The Military Prosecution v. [Yusuf Abd al-Latif Khader Mahdawi](#)

³⁴⁰ The Real Price Project, Prisoner Database, [Yousef Mahdawi](#)

³⁴¹ The Free Press ‘[Who Is The Real Mohsen Mahdawi](#)’ May 6 2024

³⁴² Military Court in Samaria, [Military Prosecution v. Yousef Abd al-Latif Khader Mahdawi](#), Case No. 7577/03, Judgment (March 2 2005)

³⁴³ Palestinian Media Watch, ‘[Palestinian Terrorists Left Prison As Millionaires](#)’ January 30 2025

³⁴⁴ For information on Pay for Slay and U.S. opposition see [Taylor Force Act](#), Pub. L. No. 115-141, div. S, tit. X, §§ 1001–1004, 132 Stat. 1143–45 (2018)

Mahdawi's uncle was one of those released in exchange for four female soldiers who had been held hostage for fifteen months; forcibly taken on October 7 from the Nahal Oz base.³⁴⁵

Some of the images from the kidnapping of those women went viral, such as the footage of Naama Levy, being taken from and pushed back into a jeep by a Palestinian terrorist:



The Islamic Jihad terrorist gets his freedom in exchange for young female hostages taken by Hamas in a terrorist atrocity. Mohsen Mahdawi responds on Instagram: “Justice is inevitable.”

April 13: Mahdawi conducts an interview with CBS News reporter Lilia Luciano predicting his own detention the following day. The interview aired on April 16 2025.³⁴⁶

April 14: Mahdawi arrested by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at his final immigration interview in Colchester, Vt. Mahdawi was accompanied by Vermont State Senator Rebecca “Becca” White (D-Windsor)³⁴⁷ and Christopher “Chris” Helali³⁴⁸, then-International Secretary of the American Communist Party and High Bailiff of Orange County, Vt. U.S. Defense: “Mahdawi’s “presence or activities in the United States would have potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the United States.”³⁴⁹

³⁴⁵ David Collier ‘[The al-Shifa Hospital Convoy](#)’, December 17 2025

³⁴⁶ CBS News ‘[Exclusive interview: Columbia Student Mohsen Mahdawi Spoke To CBS News Day Before Detainment](#)’ April 16 2025

³⁴⁷ WCAX News, ‘[Columbia University Student Detained By Federal Agents in Vermont](#)’ April 14 2025

³⁴⁸ The Herald, ‘[A High Bailiff Abroad: From Russia, Helali Talks OC Role](#)’ September 25 2025

³⁴⁹ Secretary of State Washington [memorandum](#), March 15 2025

Post Arrest (2025 - 2026)

April 14 2025: Mahdawi's lawyers from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) file a petition/writ of habeas corpus the day of his arrest.³⁵⁰

April 18: Vermont Secretary of State Sarah Copeland Hanzas posts Instagram reel in support of Mahdawi, featuring April 16 CBS story.³⁵¹

April 18: "Vermont, Mohsen Mahdawi and Mountains of Useful Idiots" article published, detailing inconsistencies in Mahdawi's personal backstory and some of his family's ties to terrorist activity.³⁵²

April 21: U.S. Senator Peter Welch (D-VT) films video with Mahdawi at Northwest State Correctional Facility in St. Albans, VT.³⁵³

April 29: Vermont U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders and Congresswoman Becca Balint hold a rally outside the U.S. State Department calling for Mahdawi's release from detention.³⁵⁴

April 30: Mahdawi ordered released from detention by Vermont Judge Geoffrey Crawford. Vermont State Senator Rebecca "Becca" White celebrates on her Instagram.³⁵⁵



³⁵⁰ WPFW 89.3 FM interview, [posted to Instagram as "Ministter" podcast](#) August 15 2025

³⁵¹ YouTube and Instagram post [Vermont Secretary of State Sarah Copeland Hanzas](#) April 18 2025

³⁵² David Collier, ["Vermont, Mohsen Mahdawi and Mountains of Useful Idiots"](#) April 18, 2025, also on [Rachel Feldman](#) website

³⁵³ Columbia Spectator ["Sen. Peter Welch \(D-Vt.\) Meets With Mohsen Mahdawi, GS '25, in Vermont Facility"](#), April 22 2025

³⁵⁴ My NBC5, ["Becca Balint, Sen. Bernie Sanders Hold Rally For Release Of Mohsen Mahdawi"](#) April 30 2025

³⁵⁵ Instagram RebeccawhiteforVT, [White celebrating outside courthouse](#) April 30 2025

April 30: Vermont U.S. Senators Bernie Sanders and Peter Welch and Congresswoman Becca Balint issue a joint statement in support of Mahdawi's release.³⁵⁶

May 2: In a guest essay in the *New York Times* Mahdawi presents his case as an attack on political dissent, describing his only "crime" as "refusing to accept the slaughter of Palestinians, opposing war and promoting peace."³⁵⁷

August 15: Mahdawi appears on WPFW 89.3 FM "Ministter" podcast with ACLU attorney Nate Wessler.³⁵⁸

September: Mahdawi undertakes Master's degree in International Security and Diplomacy at Columbia University.³⁵⁹

2026

June 3: Immigration Court Judge Angela Munson orders Mahdawi deported to Jordan. Mahdawi's legal team notified the Court of their intent to appeal the order on June 10, 2026.³⁶⁰

June 18: Mahdawi says in press conference hosted by Senators Peter Welch (D-Vt.), Dick Durbin (D-IL.) and Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) and the Knight Institute that he was detained in April 2025 after saying "Yes" to the final question about upholding the United States Constitution.^{361 362 363}

July 21: Second Circuit Court of Appeals overturns Vermont Judge Geoffrey Crawford's decision to release Mahdawi from custody pending the outcome of his case.³⁶⁴ Mahdawi's legal team appeals this.

³⁵⁶ Senator Bernie Sanders, ['NEWS: Vermont Delegation Statement on Mohsen Mahdawi's Release'](#) April 30 2025

³⁵⁷ New York Times, ['Mahdawi I Was Detained for My Beliefs. Who Will Be Next?'](#) May 2 2025

³⁵⁸ WPFW 89.3 FM interview, [posted to Instagram as "Ministter" podcast](#) August 15 2025

³⁵⁹ Mohsen Mahdawi LinkedIn page, ["Education" section](#)

³⁶⁰ In re Mahdawi, Immigration Judge Order of Removal (Immig. Ct. June 3, 2026), attached to Pet'r-Appellee's Fed. R. App. P. 28(j) [Letter at 5–6, Mahdawi v. Trump, No. 25-1113 \(2d Cir. June 10, 2026\) \(Dkt. 232.1\)](#)

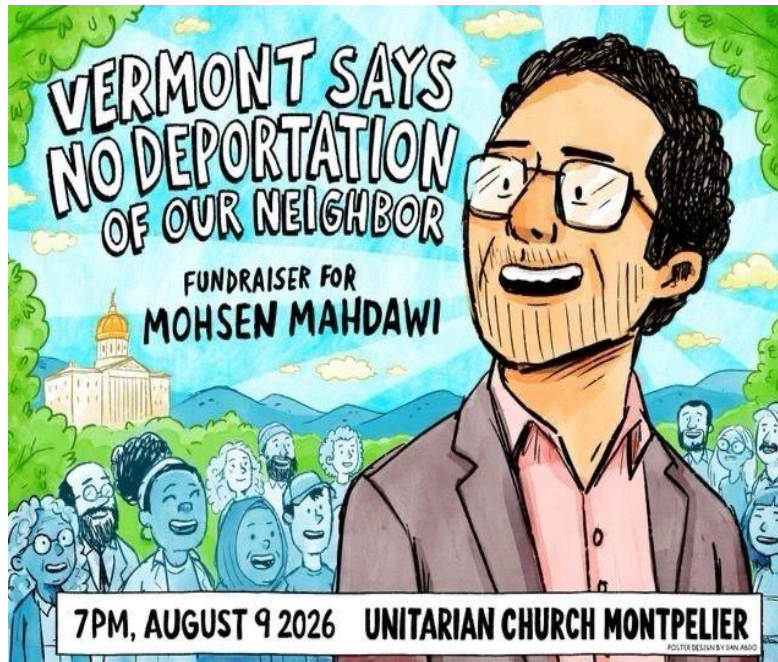
³⁶¹ Senator Peter Welch, [Facebook reel posted June 18 2026](#), captioned: "Mohsen Mahdawi was asked on his final citizenship interview whether he would be willing to protect and defend the Constitution. Within seconds of saying yes, ICE agents stormed in, arrested him, handcuffed his wrists and chained his feet, and threw him in a cell."

³⁶² Senator Peter Welch [official press release](#) "Welch, Van Hollen, Durbin, and Knight Institute Host Press Conference with Mohsen Mahdawi at U.S. Capitol on Threats to Free Speech and Immigration Law" June 17 2026

³⁶³ Knight Institute, [Instagram reel posted June 23 2026](#)

³⁶⁴ [Mahdawi v. Trump, No. 25-1113](#), slip op. at 5–6 (2d Cir. July 21, 2026)

Summary: Since Mahdawi's release from Northwest State Correctional Facility on April 30, 2025 Mahdawi has gained an international platform through outlets like *The New York Times*³⁶⁵ and *Al Jazeera*³⁶⁶. Mahdawi appeared at a press conference at the Vermont State House with legislators and statewide officials, including Vermont Treasurer Mike Pieciak, less than a month later, announcing the launch of the Vermont Immigration Legal Defense Fund³⁶⁷ which raised more than \$1 million in its first year.³⁶⁸



Mahdawi also continues to give speeches around the country,³⁶⁹ hold appearances at high-profile events with groups promoting BDS and collect money through Jewish groups like a Vermont synagogue's Social Action Committee which held a fundraiser for him at the Montpelier Unitarian Universalist Church in August 2026.³⁷⁰ Vermont's federal delegation posts videos with him, raising his profile across the state and portraying him as someone unfairly detained for peacefully promoting Palestinians.³⁷¹

³⁶⁵ New York Times, '[Mahdawi I Was Detained for My Beliefs](#). Who Will Be Next?' May 2 2025

³⁶⁶ Al Jazeera '[US Appeals Court Overturns Ruling That Freed Columbia Activist Mahdawi](#)' July 21 2026

³⁶⁷ VTDigger '[With Support From Mohsen Mahdawi, State Leaders Launch Immigration Legal Defense fund](#)' May 8 2025

³⁶⁸ VTDigger '[Vermont Immigration Legal Defense Fund Surpasses its \\$1 Million Goal Year After Founding](#)' June 15 2026

³⁶⁹ Mahdawi listed as a speaker at a Knight Institute symposium '[The Forever War and the First Amendment](#)' on September 10 2026

³⁷⁰ David Collier and Rachel Feldman, '[The Synagogue Standing with a Terror Supporter](#)' August 7 2026

³⁷¹ Instagram reel, [Congresswoman Becca Balint "repbeccab" and Mohsen Mahdawi 'mohsen.of.palestine'](#) August 1 2026

Still Glorifying Terrorists in 2026

Unspecified 2026: There is a curious postscript to this story. Following our April 2025 article, Mahdawi left the Facebook group promoting his mother's programme “In the Home of a Fighter.”^{372 373} At some point subsequently, however, he rejoined the group and was restored as an administrator. The group was also made private.³⁷⁴ Its cover image, captured before April 2025, appeared as follows:



The group's cover image has since been replaced by a generic Facebook image:



³⁷² David Collier, [‘Vermont, Mohsen Mahdawi, and Mountains of Useful Idiots’](#) April 18 2025

³⁷³ This report page 20

³⁷⁴ Facebook group promoting [“In the Home of a Fighter” Programme](#) (English translation from Arabic)

While the cover image changed, the group's description remains unchanged (*emphasis added by authors*):^{375 376}

*The programme “**In the Home of a Fighter**” is a programme that sheds light on the sacrifices of our heroes — the martyrs, prisoners and wounded.*

In commemoration of our martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the homeland, and in appreciation of and to keep alive the cause of our brave prisoners... We have been, and continue to be, the link between the darkness of prison and the sunshine of their loved ones’ longing...

We began in 2006, and we will continue on this path until the liberation of all of Palestine.

The significance is not simply that this material remains online. Mahdawi left the group after our reporting brought attention to it. He subsequently chose to rejoin and once again became an administrator, while the group's description continued to celebrate its “heroes - the martyrs, prisoners and wounded” and pledged to remain on this path “until the liberation of all of Palestine.”

This was therefore no longer merely a legacy association from 2012; Mahdawi actively reassociated himself with a group glorifying terrorists in 2026.

³⁷⁵ Facebook group default [images](#)

³⁷⁶ Facebook group promoting [“In the Home of a Fighter” Programme](#) (English translation from Arabic)

Executive Overview

“Let's for once be shrewd and politically astute, and let's play skillfully with their minds; act meek until we gain the upper hand, and after that there will be plenty of ways to deal with it.”

Mohsen Mahdawi 2014³⁷⁷



Mohsen Mahdawi

خلينا مرة ديونجيبي و محنكين سياسيا و خلينا نلعب بعقولهم حلاوة و تتمسكن لحتى نتمكن و بعدها بيحلها الف حلال

Almost everybody who encounters Mohsen Mahdawi's story is presented with the same compelling arc. A child grows up amid violence in a Palestinian refugee camp. His younger brother dies. His best friend is shot dead in front of him. Consumed by thoughts of revenge, he sits beside their graves until a beloved uncle intervenes and teaches him that education, not violence, is the answer. Mahdawi eventually reaches America, embraces dialogue and non-violence, builds relationships with Jews and Israelis, and dedicates himself to peace.

It is an extraordinary story, delivered by a man with presence and charisma. As his ex-wife noted in her 2025 witness statement, Mahdawi has incredible people skills. But after months of research, it is also a story that is simply not sustained by the evidence.

Mahdawi has spent years engaging with certain Jewish audiences and has formed relationships with people within those communities. That much is not in dispute. The problem is not that this Mahdawi does not exist. It is that another Mahdawi exists alongside him.

What we have not found is evidence that the message of dialogue and mutual understanding Mahdawi presents to certain progressive Jewish audiences has ever operated with the same force in the other direction. His support for armed Palestinian “resistance”, meanwhile, remains clear. He asks Jewish audiences to listen, understand and trust him, while simultaneously expressing support for groups engaged in an armed struggle against the Jewish state.

It is why we cited the Desiderius Erasmus quote at the beginning of this report: **“There are no vices more dangerous than those which simulate virtue.”**

Long before Columbia, the Arabic-language record shows Mahdawi repeatedly venerating men and organisations associated with terrorism and armed struggle. Ahmed Yassin and Fathi al-Shiqaqi are

³⁷⁷ Mohsen Mahdawi, [Facebook comment](#), made during a discussion about Palestinian strategy and negotiations with Israel. February 17 2014. Screenshot and archived copy held by the authors.

honoured. Armed factions are praised. His militant uncle Thaer is remembered not merely as the gentle mentor of his later American accounts, but as the man who taught him "the first bullets and the first love." Even after Mahdawi reached Vermont, this language did not disappear.

That last point matters. A simple redemption story would be easier to understand. People change. A young man raised amid conflict may abandon ideas he once held, and evidence of that transformation should be taken seriously. Had the record shown Mahdawi encountering new ideas in America and subsequently repudiating his earlier support for violence, this report would have had a very different conclusion. But that is not what we found.

Instead, the two strands repeatedly overlap. The public image of a peace-builder develops while expressions of solidarity with armed "resistance" continue. And in one particularly revealing 2015 tribute to Thaer, Mahdawi appears almost to provide the vocabulary necessary to understand the transition himself. Having invoked the uncle who taught him "the first bullets", he writes that **"even if the form has changed"**, his commitment to his homeland remains.

Nine years later, the meaning of that distinction becomes clearer. In December 2024, after helping to launch the student protest movement at Columbia, Mahdawi recorded a ten-minute Arabic-language video about the Palestinian Authority's crackdown on armed groups in Jenin. He called the refugee camps the "heart of the resistance," and rejected the description of armed militants as "outlaws."

Most revealingly, Mahdawi placed his own activism within the same framework. The Palestinian Authority's actions, he said, were:

"a slap in the face of the resistance, whether armed resistance in the West Bank or Gaza, or the popular resistance that we began and are still engaged in outside the homeland."

This is perhaps the clearest answer to the central question raised by this report. Mahdawi does not describe the "popular resistance" he helped build abroad as a repudiation of armed struggle. He places the two alongside one another as different components of the same resistance.

Then there is the question of Mahdawi's biography itself. His childhood story is not a decorative anecdote. It is the moral foundation of the identity he constructed in America. The murdered friend explains the trauma and rage; Thaer's intervention provides the moment of transformation; education and dialogue become the answer. Yet when that story is compared with contemporary records and Mahdawi's own earlier accounts, it begins to fall apart.

The only known child death inside Al-Fara'a Camp during the Second Intifada does not correspond to the killing Mahdawi repeatedly describes. His own proximity to the supposed shooting changes over time, from returning roughly half an hour afterwards to eventually describing himself as holding his friend while saturated in his blood. And when Mahdawi finally corrects his age from ten to twelve, he renders the subsequent encounter with Thaer impossible: his uncle was already dead.

We cannot know precisely how these stories developed, nor do we need to. The evidence cannot tell us what Mahdawi remembers, believes or intended when he told them. It tells us something simpler and more important: **the formative episode cannot have happened as he has repeatedly described it.**

There is a wider failure here too.

Mahdawi did not tell his story in obscurity. He told it to journalists, academics, religious communities and students. It was repeated in profiles and interviews and ultimately carried to a vast audience by

one of America's most prestigious television news programmes. The emotional power of the narrative was obvious. The scrutiny applied to it was not.

Perhaps that is the broader lesson of this investigation. Mahdawi offered Western audiences an extraordinarily attractive story: a refugee who had experienced the worst of conflict yet rejected hatred; a former angry child transformed through education; a man who could move between Palestinian activism, Buddhism, Jewish dialogue and American progressive politics while speaking the language of reconciliation.

There is nothing wrong with wanting that story to be true. There is something wrong with allowing that desire to replace journalism.

The Arabic posts were there. The earlier interviews were there. The dates were there. The contradictions were there. Much of what was required to test Mahdawi's public biography did not depend upon secret intelligence, leaked documents or inaccessible archives. It required taking his claims seriously enough to check them. Mahdawi co-founded and helped lead a movement in which open calls for violence were displayed, while the wider campus environment became so intimidating that some Jewish students left and returned home in fear. Still, parts of the media portrayed him as a "peace activist." And this, ultimately, is why the distinction between conversion and continuity matters.

Mohsen Mahdawi's surroundings changed. His language changed. His methods changed. But the evidence documented in these pages does not support the much simpler transformation so often presented to the American public. His own words suggest something more complicated.

The form changed, but the struggle remained.

And this continuity was not something that emerged only during the turmoil at Columbia after October 7. It was visible almost from the moment Mahdawi arrived in America. In the summer of 2014, newly arrived in Vermont, he was already speaking about different forms of resistance while praising the armed wings of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

Mahdawi frequently speaks of justice. It is one of the central themes of the identity he presents to American audiences. But justice requires something more fundamental: **truth**.

After almost one hundred pages examining his words, his history and the stories upon which his public identity was built, that is where the problem with Mohsen Mahdawi ultimately lies.

Too much of the story simply isn't true.

About the Authors

David Collier is a British investigative journalist and researcher whose work focuses on antisemitism, extremism, antizionist activism and misinformation surrounding Israel. He has conducted more than a decade of investigative and undercover research in the UK and internationally. His investigations have repeatedly generated national and international headlines, including his 2018 exposure of the *Palestine Live* Facebook group, which revealed Jeremy Corbyn's participation in a forum containing extensive antisemitic material, and his 2025 investigation into the BBC documentary *Gaza: How to Survive a Warzone*, which identified the programme's child narrator as the son of a Hamas official; the BBC subsequently withdrew the documentary. In 2025, his investigation of a widely circulated *New York Times* Gaza famine image also established that the child pictured suffered from serious pre-existing medical conditions, prompting the newspaper to amend its reporting. Collier was named by *The Algemeiner* to its 2017 J100 list of people positively influencing Jewish life and received CAMERA's Portrait of Courage award in 2022.

Rachel Feldman is an American independent researcher, journalist and public speaker focusing on antisemitism, antizionism and misinformation about Israel, with a particular specialization on its spread across the United States. Using her background as a communications professional and former journalist with extensive experience in state politics and government, she now acts as a consultant for various organisations tackling the spread of anti-Jewish and anti-Western activity in local governments, communities, and schools. Prior to October 7, 2023, Feldman worked as a journalist at the *Barre-Montpelier Times Argus*, *WCAX-TV*, and *MTV News* before becoming Chief of Staff to then-Lieutenant Governor Phil Scott. She later joined the Scott administration in a senior role following his election as Governor in 2016, and was appointed to roles in both the Department of Corrections and the Agency of Human Services. Her work since October 7 is dedicated to Roni Polvanov z"l, 23, of Ramla, Israel, murdered at the Nova Music Party.

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