



[The Death of an Elderly Palestinian-American After Being Detained by Israeli Forces Sparks Widespread Calls for a Thorough Investigation](#)

The death of an 80-year-old Palestinian-American man after being detained and harassed by Israeli soldiers has drawn widespread outrage and calls for a serious investigation. Omar Asaad had lived in the Milwaukee, Wisconsin area for several decades, before returning to the West Bank in 2009. He was heading back home last week following a visit to relatives when Israeli forces stopped his car, bound and blindfolded Asaad, and led him to a nearby building that was still under construction. Asaad's body was later found showing no signs of life, as he remained blindfolded with a plastic zip tied around one of his wrists. The disturbing circumstances surrounding the incident have caught the attention of U.S. officials and lawmakers, with the State Department expressing that it is seeking answers from Israel over the death of Asaad. Federal lawmakers including Congresswoman Betty McCollum (D-MN), Congresswoman Marie Newman (D-IL), Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), and others have condemned the killing and echoed the Asaad family's calls for a thorough investigation. The death of Omar Asaad has shed light on the realities of life for Palestinians in the illegally Israeli-occupied West Bank, as they are often subjected to egregious human rights abuses at the hands of Israeli forces.

Four other Palestinians were detained along with Asaad and also blindfolded, gagged, and handcuffed with zip ties. It is suspected that when the Israeli soldiers saw that he had died while in their custody, they cut the handcuffs off the remaining Palestinians and left. One of the particularly alarming elements of the incident is the reports that an elderly citizen like Asaad was physically assaulted while in custody. Additionally, when his body was found at the construction site, it still had a zip tie around his wrists – contradicting the Israeli Defense Forces' version of events which claim that he was released, and alive when that was done. Relevant and legitimate questions have been put forth such as why would he have stayed at the site if he had been released alive and why did he still have a zip tie around his wrist if he had been freed of his detention, and these major points have fueled the large-scale calls for an investigation into the matter.

Adding to the concern is the fact that violence in the West Bank has been on the rise. Attacks by illegal Israeli settlers against native Palestinians and Israeli military arrest raids have become more frequent. Data compiled by the United Nations has revealed that last year in 2021, at least 79 Palestinians were killed by Israeli soldiers. The U.N. Mideast Peace Envoy has warned of the increase in violence, much of it brutal and lethal, in the illegally Israeli-occupied West Bank. The uptick is troubling because it appears to have emboldened further abuses and violations by Israeli forces, and as such, the calls for a probe into the death of Asaad are also important in trying to promote accountability for this behavior.

The volatile environment creates circumstances whereby more attacks and heinous incidents may be inflicted against civilians, and it also hinders the prospects of prolonged peace between Israelis and Palestinians. As a result, social justice activists are hopeful for a fair and thorough investigation into the death of Asaad in order to alleviate the understandable outrage regarding the array of Israeli abuses.