

Israeli soldier filmed assaulting Palestinian activist in occupied West Bank

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This screen-grab shows an Israeli soldier assaulting Palestinian activist Issa Amro on February 13, 2023.

Ramallah, February 14 (RHC)-- An Israeli soldier has been filmed assaulting a prominent Palestinian human rights activist in front of a famous American journalist in the occupied West Bank city of al-Khalil.

In a video posted on Twitter by Lawrence Wright of the New Yorker on Monday, the Israeli soldier is seen grabbing Issa Amro by his jacket and neck and throwing him to the ground. He then kicks Amro before being pulled away by another soldier.

"I never had a source assaulted in front of me until today when an Israeli soldier who stopped my interview did this ...I can't stop thinking how dehumanizing the occupation is on the young soldiers charged with enforcing it," Wright, the author of *The Looming Tower*, wrote in a post on his Twitter account.

The Israeli military claimed in a statement that the incident occurred after the soldier, who was guarding a military post, asked the Palestinian activist who approached the post, to step away. It further claimed that in response, the Palestinian began recording and cursing at the soldier, and that a verbal confrontation followed, which soon became a physical confrontation, during which the soldier hit the Palestinian.

However, Wright tweeted that Amro had done nothing to justify the "violent assault," adding that the Israeli military is "misrepresenting" the build-up to the assault on the Palestinian peace activist. "The soldier initiated the encounter, Amro did not curse him, [he] only asked to call his commander. Nothing to justify the violent assault that followed," he said. "Before the assault the other soldiers were afraid to intervene although I warned them it was getting out of hand," he added.

Amro also posted several videos of the run-up to the incident on Twitter, saying the Israeli military has lied about what happened. "I was detained outside the military post, I started shouting to bring the commander out, the soldiers refused to tell him, it was a trap for me by them. The commander came out only after I was beaten and grabbed by the throat and kicked and pushed on the ground," he wrote in another post.

He said that the video is not just about the activist as it tells the story of every Palestinian in Palestine. "It is not about Issa Amro, it is about the Palestinian women and children who are attacked frequently by Israeli soldiers and settlers. All Palestinians are living under Israeli occupation and apartheid. The video of the attack tells the story of each Palestinian in Palestine," he added.

The Israeli military said the soldier was jailed for 10 days in a military prison following the incident. Far-right Israeli minister Itamar Ben-Gvir has defended the soldier's actions, describing the decision to put him in a military prison as a "disgrace."

Amro, an engineer by profession, is a well-known human rights defender in his hometown of al-Khalil. He is the founder of Youth Against Settlements (YAS), which aims to empower the Palestinian community in the face of Israeli settlers in the Old City of al-Khalil.

He was detained in November days after filming a soldier assaulting an Israeli activist during a visit by Israeli anti-occupation activists to meet Palestinian residents near the Old City of al-Khalil.

Israeli occupation soldiers and Israeli settlers have noticeably been escalating their attacks against Palestinian civilians in the West Bank and other areas, in an attempt to forcibly expel Palestinians from their lands and make way for expanding illegal Jewish-only settlements.

More than 600,000 Israelis live in over 230 settlements built since the 1967 Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories of the West Bank and East al-Quds. All the settlements are illegal under international law. The UN Security Council has condemned Israel's settlement activities in the occupied territories in several resolutions.

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