

Who Blinded Mohammad Shaban?

by Hugh Fitzgerald



[Algemeiner](#), August 23, 2021:

Eight-year-old Mohammed Shaban dreamed of returning to the classroom in Gaza for the start of the school year,” an article by Agence France-Presse (AFP) republished by numerous news outlets explains at its outset. “But after an exploded missile blinded him in May, he is staying home,” according to the piece.

“Every life is precious. Every injury to a child is especially tragic. And every reader at this point is likely thinking that Shaban sustained his wounds because from May 10-21 “the Israeli army pummeled the Gaza Strip,” in the AFP’s approximation.

The article continues:

Mohammed said he was walking to a market to buy clothes during the conflict when a missile exploded. As a result of the blast, his father Hani said, “Mohammed was injured in the eyes, which led to the loss of his eyes, and Mohammed became completely blind.”

A truly terrible incident that deserves recounting. Perhaps more so, if the AFP had actually done a modicum of due diligence in order to provide conclusive facts about how the injury was sustained.

While the article notes that “the Shabans say Mohammed was injured by a missile fired by the Israelis,” immediately thereafter it contains the modifier, “although AFP could not independently verify it.”

While AFP says that Mohammed Shaban was blinded by a missile “fired by the Israelis,” it does add that “AFP could not independently confirm it”; its readers, however, are likely to focus on the blame placed on Israel by the parents of the boy and not on AFP’s admitted inability to “confirm” their claim.

Enter Human Rights Watch (HRW) – admittedly, no great promoter of Israeli military actions (see here and here) – whose August 12 report, titled “Palestinian Rockets in May Killed Civilians in Israel, Gaza,” began thus:

Palestinian armed groups’ rocket and mortar attacks during the May 2021 fighting in the Gaza Strip, which killed and injured civilians in Israel and Gaza, violated the laws of war and amount to war crimes.

HRW, headed by the obsessively anti-Israel Kenneth Roth, seldom misses a chance to blame Israel and absolve the Palestinians of “war crimes.” Yet here, HRW admits that the Palestinians’ rocket and mortar attacks not only hit Israel, but also “killed and injured civilians in Gaza.” That is because many of Hamas’ rockets misfired, falling short and landing back in Gaza.

The HRW report continues:

A local shop owner said:

“People were gathering [on the street] watching the rockets in the sky. I saw a rocket spinning in the air and then it came down and exploded, about 10 meters from where I was standing. There was smoke. I saw the dead and injured. I couldn’t stand what I saw. I broke down... I saw a child, Mohammed Shaban, whose eyes were bleeding...” [emphasis added]

Charles Bybelezer comments at Algemeiner:

In fact, halfway through its profile, the AFP even cites HRW as saying that, "Palestinians fired indiscriminately at Israeli cities, with rockets that fell short killing at least seven Palestinians in Gaza and wounding others."

Based on this quote, one of the AFP editors or authors was undoubtedly aware that HRW had compiled reports on casualties in Gaza, but nonetheless failed to include the findings about the cause of Shaban's injury...

Why did AFP fail to report on the eyewitness testimony, included in the HRW report, of the shop owner who said he "saw a child, Mohammed Shaban, whose eyes were bleeding" just after a rocket was spinning in the air? A rocket that is out of control starts "spinning" soon after being launched, and not at the end of its flight. Thus the "spinning" rocket which the shop owner saw explode (and blind Mohammad Shaban), could only have been fired from Gaza, for any Israeli rockets that were out of control just after being launched would have fallen back inside Israel. Had AFP done so, it could have quoted that shop owner, and the blame for Mohammad Shaban's blinding would have been placed squarely on Hamas itself. Why did AFP choose not to include that eyewitness account of the "spinning" rocket that exploded only thirty feet from the boy? We know the answer: AFP was determined to pin the blame on an Israeli rocket.

AFP, like the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the BBC, and so many other members of the mainstream media, has its mind made up: Israel was guilty of "war crimes" in the Gaza war, and no eyewitness testimony that might in a particular case exculpate the IDF, and place the blame on Hamas, will be reported. Will the AFP now produce an amended version of its report, noting the evidence that a Hamas rocket "spinning" out of control was responsible for the blinding of Mohammad Shaban? You know the answer to that.

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