Israel Seizes Shipment of Palestinian Dolls Holding Rocks

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Israeli customs officials seized a shipment of 4,000 stuffed dolls designed as Palestinian rock-throwers that was en route this week to the Palestinian Authority from the United Arab Emirates.

The dolls were confiscated as Israelis have been targets of attacks during the past two months by Palestinians using rocks, knives and guns. The Israeli government denounced the dolls as a way to teach Palestinian children to "hate and kill Israelis," spokesman Ofir Gendelman told USA TODAY on Wednesday.

Each doll's face is covered with a black-and-white keffiyeh, an Arab head scarf. A separate Palestinian-colored scarf is wrapped around the neck with the Arabic words for "Jerusalem is Ours" and a picture of the holy site known to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary and to Jews as the Temple Mount. The doll's right hand is holding aloft what looks like a soft rock ready to be thrown.

“When indoctrination and incitement of Palestinian children to hate and kill Israelis begin at pre-school ages, it's no wonder they go and murder Israelis when they are teenagers or older," Gendelman said.

He said the dolls are part of a bigger problem of anti-Israel messages in “some Palestinian schools lessons” and children’s TV programs.

The Palestinian Authority could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

The heightened violence has killed 22 Israelis and foreign nationals since Sept. 22, mostly in stabbing attacks. More than 100 Palestinians have also been killed, the majority of them while carrying out attacks or during clashes between Palestinians and Israeli forces, according to the Israeli government.

Customs inspectors at the port in Haifi found the dolls in a container that was supposed to hold rugs and plastic items shipped from the UAE to the West Bank via Israel.

The Palestinian Authority “puts great effort into teaching children to hate Israel and promote violence,” said Itamar Marcus, director of Palestinian Media Watch, an Israeli group that monitors Palestinian education and messaging. The dolls “are just one more step in the process.”

The media watch group said the official Palestinian Authority daily referred to the confiscation as the "Israeli war against children's dolls" and said the problem was the head scarf: "Israel confiscated 4,000 dolls whose faces were covered with a Palestinian keffiyeh!" The paper did not mention that the doll was positioned to throw a rock, the group said.