After Hebron Shooting, Palestinians Ask UN to Probe ‘Executions’

March 28, 2016

By Dov Lieber

The Times of Israel

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/after-hebron-shooting-palestinians-ask-un-to-probe-executions/>

A senior Palestinian official submitted a request to the United Nations on Monday asking it to formally investigate what he called Israeli extrajudicial “executions” of Palestinian attackers, days after a soldier was filmed shooting to death a wounded assailant in Hebron.

Saeb Erekat, a top aide to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and senior PLO official, submitted the request during a meeting with the UN special coordinator for the peace process, Nickolay Mladenov.

In a statement after the meeting, Erekat said that 207 Palestinians had been “executed” by Israel since last September, which “requires an urgent international investigation,” according to a report in the Palestinian news outlet Safa.

The number roughly matches the number of Palestinians killed during a six-month round of terrorism and violence against Israel. The Israeli army says about two-thirds of them were killed while attacking soldiers, police or civilians, and the rest during clashes with troops.

On Thursday, video emerged of a soldier shooting a Palestinian stabber in the head from a few meters away as he lay wounded after being shot by responding forces.

The soldier has been charged with murder, and the case has sparked a heated debate on the rules of engagement among the country’s political leadership, as some have rushed to the infantryman’s defense.

Erekat claimed that while Israel says it will investigate [the Hebron](http://www.timesofisrael.com/after-killing-stabber-soldier-shook-hands-with-far-right-activist/) murder, “history has show that Israeli investigations do not serve justice.”

This is not the first time Erekat has turned to the UN asking for an investigation of Israeli “executions.”

In October, Erekat sent a letter to Christof Heyns, the UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, asking him to investigate Israeli instances when Israeli soldiers had killed suspected Palestinian attackers.

Since October, 29 Israelis and four foreign nationals have been killed in Palestinian attacks.

During the wave of fighting, some have questioned whether Israeli security forces are killing assailants when they can be disarmed in nonlethal ways. In January, Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallstrom was roundly condemned for calling for an investigation into accusations that Israel had carried out “extrajudicial killings.”

Israel’s Foreign Ministry at the time called Wallstom’s comments “irresponsible and delusional,” and claimed they served to “encourage violence and terrorism.”

Speaking about the incident in Hebron, Mladenov said Friday, “I strongly condemn yesterday’s apparent extrajudicial execution of a Palestinian assailant.”

“This was a gruesome, immoral and unjust act that can only fuel more violence and escalate an already volatile situation,” Mladenov added.

Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Friday criticized the soldier’s actions as immoral and in contravention of the army’s rules of engagement and ethical code.

In the Knesset on Monday, Ya’alon declared that, “This is a case of a soldier gone bad, not a hero.”

He noted that the IDF ordered an investigation into the incident before the video was disseminated. “The brigade commander called for a criminal investigation before the video [of the shooting] was published. Since then there has been a Military Police investigation. It is important to state that this is how the IDF chief and the defense minister and the prime minister immediately viewed the incident. We are not like the other side.”

The former military leader also slammed “all the fervor and false information and manipulation and attacks on the IDF chief.”

“Do you want a brutalized army that has lost its moral backbone?” he demanded. “I am proud of the company commander who pointed out that this was an irregular event. I regret that the coalition includes a minister who instead of calling the defense minister before going the media, called to encourage and support [the soldier].” This was an apparent reference to Education Minister Naftali Bennett (Jewish Home).

Israeli military prosecutors filed a murder charge against the soldier in the Jaffa Military Court last Friday, saying that the wounded assailant was not a threat to troops when he was killed.