

Author: Baltimore 'Riot Mom' Needed in Jerusalem

One of the most enduring images from the Baltimore riots was that of the irate mother of a rioter vigorously admonishing and slapping her law-breaking teenage son. Millions of frustrated Americans, watching the televised images of mobs of young people burning and looting at will, no doubt wondered, "Where are their parents?"

Toya Graham, dubbed "the Baltimore Riot Mom" by the media, was one parent who refused to stand idly by any longer.

Some Israelis are probably wishing there were a few "riot moms" in the Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem. The *New York Times* on May 1 published a lengthy, sympathetic report about two Arab boys, ages 12 and 7, who were arrested for throwing rocks at a bus in Jerusalem. The newspaper's correspondent, Diaa Hadid, reported that human rights groups claim that by arresting young rock-throwers, Israel is unfairly "traumatizing the children."

The article did note that a 4-year-old Israeli girl, Adele Biton, recently died from injuries caused by Arab rock-throwers. Although the *New York Times* did not mention it, at least 14 Israelis have been killed in rock-throwing attacks. Three of them were Israeli Arabs who were attacked because they were mistaken for Israeli Jews.

There are a number of ways that a rock can prove lethal. It can strike a passenger directly in the head, as happened, for example, to Esther Ohana, as she was delivering invitations to her wedding in 1983; and to 5-month-old Yehuda Shoham, as he was strapped in his infant car seat in 2001. Or it can strike the driver, causing a fatal crash, as happened to the driver of the car in which 11-year-old Chava Wechsberg was a

passenger, in 1993; and to Asher Palmer in 2011, killing him and his 1-year-old son.

Even if the rocks that were thrown at the bus in Jerusalem last week did not break the glass, the jolt and shock of a barrage of stones smashing against the front windshield could have caused the driver to swerve, endangering the lives of both the bus passengers and pedestrians nearby.

Much of the *New York Times* article consisted of quotes from relatives of the two arrested boys, trying to paint them in sympathetic terms. The grandfather of the younger rock-thrower, Ahmad Zaatari, said Ahmad was too young to throw a rock more than "a meter." A meter, of course, is just slightly more than three feet, a distance that any 7-year-old rock-thrower could certainly cover.

Ahmad's uncle, for his part, complained that during his detention from 7:30 p.m. until 2:30 a.m., the boy "was terrified and had not been given anything to eat." While one can perhaps understand why Ahmad would have liked a midnight snack, the failure of the Israeli police to provide late-night food service hardly seems to be evidence of mistreatment.

The contrast between the mother in Baltimore and the relatives in Jerusalem could not be more striking.

The Baltimore Riot Mom saw her son throwing rocks, and she responded by pulling him away from the rioting mob, slapping him and administering a thorough tongue-lashing. She made it unmistakably clear to her son that his behavior was immoral and unacceptable, and that she, as his parent, would not tolerate it.

The Jerusalem Riot Relatives saw their grandson and nephew throwing rocks, and they responded by denouncing the authorities for arresting him. The grandfather and uncle did not exhibit an ounce of sympathy for the innocent bus passengers who could have been maimed, or even murdered, by

the rocks that their boy threw.

All they could talk about was how Ahmad was scared and hungry and could not possibly have done what the Israelis said he did. The relatives gave no indication they would tell Ahmad that what he did was immoral or unacceptable.

There are many contributing factors that lead up to the moment when a youth picks up a rock and throws it at someone, whether it be in Baltimore or Jerusalem. Peer pressure, the influence of teachers, and the general religious and political environment all play some role.

But it all starts in the home. That's where family members have the opportunity to set a child straight—or to set him on the road to a lifetime of violence, bloodshed and imprisonment.

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