

Palestinian Converts to Judaism, Is Tortured by Palestinian Authority

A 50-year-old Palestinian man, who converted to Judaism this year just before Rosh Hashana, has been held in captivity and tortured by Palestinian Authority (PA) forces over the past two weeks. He is reported to be the grandson of an Arab who helped save 26 Jews during the 1929 Hebron massacre.

The victim is a resident of Hebron and works at a supermarket in the Jerusalem area. He claims his family had set him up for arrest in order to prove their allegiance to the Palestinian regime. His own siblings have mercilessly beaten him, while the PA has burned his arms and legs, *Ynet* reported.

The official reason for the arrest is a police complaint, filed by his brother, that the convert had assaulted him several months ago. However, the accused man denies the allegations.

It is assumed that the brothers are trying to protect their inheritance by showing disdain for their now-Jewish sibling, according to *Ynet*.

"His brothers must distance themselves in order to show that they don't support the conversion, otherwise they will also suffer greatly," said attorney Michael Teplow, who is associated with the Legal Forum for the Land of Israel, which specializes in assisting Palestinians who cooperate with Israel, reported *Ynet*.

The man's capture occurred when he traveled to an area of Judea and Samaria under Palestinian security control, just before Yom Kippur, in order to meet one of his nine Muslim children.

During the reunion, a white Skoda vehicle carrying four men approached. They got out of the car, dragged him into the vehicle and drove away. He was then dropped off at the PA's Hebron police station.

The man was converted to Judaism by Rabbi Nissim Karelitz, a prominent arbiter of Jewish law and head of an ultra-Orthodox Jewish court in the city of Bnei Brak. The rabbi passed away on Monday.

The convert was waiting for Israel's Chief Rabbinate to recognize the conversion so he could apply for an Israeli passport. He was granted a temporary Israeli residence permit, *The Jewish Press* reported.

Prior to his conversion, he studied at Machon Meir Yeshiva in Jerusalem, an institution strongly associated with nationalist politics and the settler movement, according to *Ynet*.

Haim Perg, a leader of the Jewish community in Hebron who had spoken to the Palestinian convert by phone and heard first-hand about the torture, is trying to help him.

"As far as I'm concerned, he's like my son, and I will shake up the world for somebody to come and save him," Perg said, according to *Ynet*. "The man's grandfather rescued 26 Jews during the events in Hebron. Now that he is in danger, we have a commitment to help him."

Samaria Regional Council head Yossi Dagan has contacted senior civilian officials, Knesset members and government ministers to help release the detainee, but to date he remains in PA custody. {eo}

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