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DEFENSE FOR CHILDREN INTERNATIONAL - PALESTINE'S TIES TO THE PFLP TERROR GROUP

NGO MONITOR



Defense for Children International – Palestine's Ties to the PFLP Terror Group

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NGO Monitor's mission is to provide information and analysis, promote accountability, and support discussion on the reports and activities of NGOs claiming to advance human rights and humanitarian agendas.

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INTRODUCTION

[Defense for Children International-Palestine](#) (DCI-P) is a Palestinian NGO that claims to promote Palestinian children's rights. However, numerous individuals with alleged ties to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) terrorist organization have been employed and appointed as board members at DCI-P. The PFLP is designated as a terrorist organization by the [US](#), [EU](#), [Canada](#), and [Israel](#).

DCI-P seeks to convince government officials, UN bodies, and the general public that Israel is systematically abusing Palestinian children. This campaign, known as "[No Way to Treat a Child](#)," provides false and inaccurate information regarding Palestinian minors and their interaction with Israeli legal and security frameworks. DCI-P receives funding from UNICEF-oPt – UNICEF's branch in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza – and serves as an NGO "implementing partner" on various UNICEF projects. DCI-P is also member of UNICEF's child protection Working Group, ostensibly charged with monitoring and reporting on violations against Palestinian children (see NGO Monitor's report "[UNICEF and its NGO Working Group](#)"). In addition to funding from UNICEF, DCI-P has also received support from the [Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Secretariat](#) – which was a joint NGO funding mechanism of the governments of Sweden, Switzerland, Denmark, and the Netherlands.

DCI-P is also actively involved in promoting BDS (boycott, divestment, and sanction) and legal campaigns ("lawfare") against Israel, particularly in the US and at international forums. For instance, on January 11, 2019, CUNY School of Law Human Rights and Gender Justice Law Clinic and DCI-P filed a joint 57-page submission to the UN Commission of Inquiry into the Gaza border violence (which began March 2018). The submission is replete with egregiously false statements, gross distortions of the law and the facts, and the whitewashing of terror groups including Hamas. (See here for NGO Monitor's [letter](#) to CUNY Law and [report](#).)

Additionally, on May 1, 2019, Rep. Betty McCollum (D-MN) introduced the "Promoting Human Rights for Palestinian Children Living Under Israeli Military Occupation Act" (HR 2407), a [revised version of a very similar bill from 2017](#). The bill is based largely on the lobbying efforts and accusations of DCI-P. The bill calls for sanctioning US military aid to Israel and demands an astounding \$19 million in US taxpayer funding to be allocated to DCI-P and its NGO allies.

The relationship between the self-proclaimed children's rights NGO DCI-P and the PFLP terrorist organization documented in this report demonstrates that the NGO fails to meet [UNICEF](#) and [UN guidelines](#) of partners being "neutral, impartial, and independent from all parties to the conflict." The NGO's PFLP ties are also antithetical to human rights norms and principles. Given these issues, DCI-P is an inappropriate partner and should thus be removed from the UNICEF-oPt Working Group.

US FUNDRAISING

DCI-P previously [directed](#) [donors](#) wishing to make contributions in US dollars to a Citi Bank account in New York (account number 36371743), as well as to an Arab Bank account in Ramallah. On June 26, 2018, UK Lawyers for Israel (UKLFI) announced that after presenting evidence of the close ties between DCI-P and the PFLP to Citibank and Arab Bank PLC, "these banks no longer provide banking services to the terror linked

NGO." As a result, DCI-P no longer directs its supporters to make donations through these institutions. Global Giving, a US-based crowdfunding resource, also [removed DCI-P](#) from its website.

FUNDING

In 2017-2019, DCI-P received [\\$90,000](#) from [Rockefeller Brothers Fund](#). In 2017-2019, the [European Commission](#) granted [€699,236](#) to DCI-P for a project titled "strengthening community resilience and social cohesion in East Jerusalem on both sides of the separation wall." The project included five Palestinian NGOs recipients, including [Union of Palestinian Women's Committees](#) (UPWC), Land Research Center, and the Bisan Center for Research and Development Association (both UPWC and Bisan also have ties to the PFLP). According to information released by donors, DCI-P received a core funding grant of [\\$1,104,700](#) (2014-2017) from the [Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Secretariat](#) (joint funding from [Denmark](#), the [Netherlands](#), [Sweden](#), and [Switzerland](#)).

Additionally, in 2013-2017, DCI-P was an implementing partner in UNICEF funded projects totaling \$1.4 million ([2013](#), [2014](#), [2015](#), [2016](#), [2017](#)). It is unclear how much DCI-P received from this funding.

DCI-P STAFF TIES TO THE PFLP

Hashem Abu Maria

According to DCI-P, Hashem Abu Maria "served as the coordinator of DCI-Palestine's community mobilization unit, promoting constructive child participation throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory" where he "focused on Palestinian teens monitoring and documenting child rights violations in Hebron." In July 2014, Abu Maria was killed during a violent confrontation in Beit Ummar.

- Following his death, he was hailed by the PFLP as a "[leader](#)," which issued an official mourning announcement.
- The [PFLP announcement](#) praised his work for DCI-P, stating "he was in the ranks of the national liberation struggle and the PFLP from an early age, arrested several times, and was a model for a steadfast struggler and advocate for the rights of our people through his work in Defence for Children International."
- The [PFLP also quoted](#) a post from Abu Maria's Facebook "It is clear the defeat of the ideas of tolerance, normalization...snuggling, kissing and beauty with the enemy state and its institutions, and instead the rise of the concepts of solidarity, co-operation and mutual support among the Palestinian people, promoting a culture of unity and resistance, a sense of belonging and identity...the youth are rising and the Intifada regrouping..." (emphasis added).
- The [PFLP announcement](#) furthered "With those words, this true revolutionary comrade went to join the demonstration and joined the martyrs of Palestine, his blood shed at the hands of the occupier's forces. The Front pledges to the leader and his fellow martyrs, to all of the martyrs who have fallen on the path of the struggle for the liberation of Palestine, that the struggle of the resistance everywhere in

- Palestine until all of Palestine, from the river to the sea, is liberated.”
- On September 23, 2014, DCI-P uploaded a video (see Appendix II) of a memorial service for Abu Maria, [featuring a speech by DCI-P General Director, Rifat Odeh Kassis](#). The courtyard where the memorial service took place was [decorated with PFLP flags](#), posters, and pictures of prominent PFLP figures, such as founder George Habash and former leader Ahmed Sa’adat. Nearly all of the audience is dressed in PFLP apparel.
 - The [PFLP also posted an article in September 2014](#) noting that the PFLP in Hebron held a memorial service for “its martyr.” The article notes that PFLP leader “comrade” Badran Jabir delivered the speech on behalf of the PFLP and Rifat Kasis spoke on behalf of DCI-P. The article further states that Sahar Francis (see below) spoke as a representative of “Hashem’s friends.”
 - Another video of the memorial service shows [posters of Abu Maria featuring the PFLP emblem](#) and of Abu Maria [with the DCI-P logo](#).
 - A December 28, 2014 video of a PFLP event commemorating a PFLP member killed by Israeli troops clearly shows PFLP posters honoring Abu Maria alongside posters of key figures in the terrorist organization. (See Appendix III, video on file with NGO Monitor).
 - [An August 2014 article in Ha’aretz](#) about Abu Maria’s death cites his position in DCI-P, as well as noting that “Mourning notices now drape the house, together with banners of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the organization in which Abu Maria was active politically.”
 - DCI-P [dedicated its 2014 annual report to Abu Maria](#) (see Appendix II).

Riyad Arar

[Director of DCI-P’s Child Protection Program.](#)¹ He previously served in other roles in the organization, including [directing the group’s Hebron office until at least August 2015](#). Arar is closely involved in [coordinating](#) DCI-P cooperation with UNICEF on “monitoring human rights violations.”

- Arar addressed the December 28, 2014 PFLP memorial event for a group member who was killed “while engaging in a demonstration confronting the occupation forces with stones and Molotov cocktails.” (See Appendix III, video on file with NGO Monitor.)
- The event featured PFLP paraphernalia and individuals clad in military garb – some of whom appear to be children (video on file with NGO Monitor).
- In February 2018, [Arar spoke at a Palestinian Prisoner Forum event](#) in Hebron alongside [“senior” PFLP official](#) Badran Jabir.

Nassar Ibrahim

[President of DCI-P’s General Assembly until at least 2017](#)² – one of the group’s [governing](#)

¹ As of a [May 15, 2019 video](#) posted on Facebook by Ma’an News. Riyad Arar is referred to as DCI-P’s Child Protection Program Director from as early as April [2016](#).

² [As of a May 13, 2017 article](#) posted on DCI-P’s Arabic language website.

[bodies](#) – and [previously](#) served on DCI-P's board.

- Ibrahim is the [former editor of El Hadaf](#) – the PFLP's weekly publication.
- On May 1, 2014, the [PFLP unveiled a mural](#) "developed by writer and journalist Nassar Ibrahim," honoring PFLP founder George Habash. Several PFLP members attended and spoke at the event.
- A December 2015 [video](#) shows Ibrahim presenting to a group of foreigners where he argues for a Palestinian "right of resistance":
 - "What you can do depends on you. I'm not asking you to come, to fight, to raise the gun. If you believe in that, do that...But I'm not asking you to come to raise the gun with me. I'm asking you to recognize my right to resist as a people under occupation...Don't judge me based on how I see my role in order to end the occupation."
 - "[The](#) balance of power to the ground will not be changed- only by resistance, not by negotiation... I am not saying that I am against the negotiation but the negotiation is not the tool to achieve the right it is a result of our resistance."
 - [The](#) policy of the Zionist government in Israel, they are preparing for a new holocaust in the Middle East for the Jewish...350 million Arabs will not be sleeping forever" (emphasis added).
- In 2002, together with Majed Nassar, Ibrahim published the book *The Palestinian Intifada: Cry Freedom*, which is unabashedly supportive of the terror campaign of the early 2000s:
 - "The Palestinian resistance movement has therefore concluded that every check-point, every soldier and every settler are legitimate targets in the struggle for freedom and independence, thus rendering all theories and strategies of supremacy irrelevant. In essence then, everything becomes a target: Jerusalem, Haifa, Hadera, Tel Aviv, Ashkelon, the settlements, the checkpoints, the military installations and even the Israeli Ministry of Defense" (page 94).
 - "No Palestinian accepts that the political parties that have struggled over the last fifty years should be regarded as 'terrorist organizations,' simply because their cause of liberation is anathema to the United States and its stepchild, Israel" (page 117).
- In February 2019 and July 2016, Ibrahim published articles on the PFLP's Lebanon website. He is also quoted on the PFLP's Syrian branch's website.
- A May 31, 2019 post by the "Alternative Information Center, Palestine" notes that Ibrahim also serves as its director and stated that he "believes in the right of the Palestinians to resist in all its forms, including the armed struggle... and calls for controlling the weapons of the resistance in accordance with a political vision."

Mahmoud Jiddah

According to DCI-P, Mahmoud Jiddah served as a DCI-P board member in [2012-2016](#). A May 13, 2017 [picture](#) taken at a [meeting of the DCI-P General Assembly](#) shows Jiddah standing next to General Assembly President Nassar Ibrahim, indicating his ongoing affiliation with DCI-P.

- Jiddah was imprisoned by Israel for [17 years](#) for carrying out grenade attacks against Israeli civilians in Jerusalem in 1968. A [February 2017 Al Jazeera article](#)

further that Jiddah was arrested in 1968 for joining the front and carrying out terrorist attacks in Jerusalem, Hebron, and Tel Aviv.

- According to [news reports](#), following a 2016 meeting with Jiddah, Didier Ortiz, then a Green Party candidate for the Fort Lauderdale City Council, posted an Instagram photo of Jiddah citing the latter's PFLP affiliation.
- An [April 2017 article in Arabic language media](#) notes that Jiddah is "of the PFLP cadres" and that he spent his last twenty years serving different periods of time in jail.
- A [March 2006 article in Arabic language media](#) notes that Jiddah was arrested and refers to him as a PFLP official.

Sahar Francis

DCI-P listed Sahar Francis [DCI-P board member](#) in [2007-2008](#).

- Francis was also referring to as serving on "the board of the Defense for Children International and the Union of Agricultural Work Committees" in a [September 2019](#) IMEMC interview. UAWC is identified by Fatah as an official Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) "[affiliate](#)" and by a [USAID-engaged audit](#) as the "agricultural arm" of the PFLP. According to academic scholar Glenn E. Robinson, UAWC was founded in 1986 by "[agronomists loosely affiliated with the PFLP](#)."
- Francis is the director of the Palestinian NGO [Addameer](#) – an [affiliate](#) of the PFLP.

Hassan Abdel Jawad

Hassan Abdel Jawad served as a DCI-P board member in [2012-2018](#).

- On October 17, 2016, Abdel Jawad appears to have [spoken on behalf of the PFLP](#) at an event commemorating a PFLP member who was killed (according to the PFLP) "while engaging in a demonstration confronting the occupation forces with stones and Molotov cocktails."
- Appears to have spoken on behalf of the PFLP at a [2012 event](#) organized by the group, honoring former Bethlehem mayor Victor Batarseh.
- Abdel Jawad appears to have been a [PFLP candidate](#) for the Palestinian Legislative Council in 2006.

Halima Abu-Solb

According to the organization DCI-P, [Halima Abu-Solb was elected to DCI-P's board](#) for a period of two years in April 2016 - 2018. A November 2014 article published in Ma'an also notes that [Abu-Solb was elected to the organization's general assembly for a period of two years in 2014](#).

- According to a June 2007 article in [Arabic language media](#), Abu-Solb was sentenced to a three year "PFLP prison-sentence."
- In a [March 2013 interview](#), Abu-Solb acknowledged that she was sent to prison before the Palestinian violence in the late 1980s for a period of three years. She also acknowledged that she is one of the founders of the PFLP-tied NGO [Addameer](#) and that she is a member of the "Women's Council at the [Palestinian]

lawyers' bar association."

- In July 2012, the PFLP, under its "[news](#)" section, reports that Abu-Solb spoke at a conference organized by the "[Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counselling](#)."
- Abu-Solb participated in an event with the wife of the PFLP secretary general Ahmed Saadat during at a "Land Day" [commemoration event](#) organized by the "Union of Women's Committees" of the Bethlehem area.

Mary Rock

According to DCI-P, Mary Rock was a [DCI-P board member](#) in [2014-2018](#).

- Rock was a [PFLP candidate](#) for the Palestinian Legislative Council in the [2006 elections](#).
- Attended a [2012 PFLP event](#) honoring former Bethlehem mayor Victor Batarseh.

Samer Ajaj

[Arabic language media](#) identifies Samer Ajaj as the coordinator of DCI-P's Community Empowerment Unit.³ He previously ran [DCI-P's office in Nablus](#).

- In 2012, Ajaj appears to have run for elected office in Nablus as a member of a list jointly controlled by the PFLP and another Palestinian organization.

Shawan Jabarin

Shawan Jabarin served on DCI-P's board from at least 2005-2009.

- According to a 1995 [Israeli submission to the UN](#), Jabarin was [convicted](#) in 1985 for recruiting and arranging training for members for the PFLP. [A 1994 Israeli statement to the UN](#) notes that he "had not discontinued his terrorist involvement and maintains his position in the leadership of the PFLP."
- [In 2007](#), the Israeli Supreme Court rejected his appeal to go abroad, stating that "the current petitioner is apparently acting as a manner of Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde, acting some of the time as the CEO of a human rights organization, and at other times as an activist in a terror organization which has not shied away from murder and attempted murder, which have nothing to do with rights..."
- [In 2009](#), Jabarin was again prohibited by the Israeli authorities from travelling abroad. Jabarin appealed to the Israeli Supreme Court which rejected his appeal, stating, "We found that the material pointing to the petitioner's involvement in the activity of terrorist entities is concrete and reliable material."

³ As of a [September 2019 article](#) in Asdaa Press, [November 2018 article posted by An-Najah National University](#), and a [February 2018 article in Ma'an News](#).

Majed Nasser

Nasser served as a [DCI-P board member from at least 2007-2009](#).

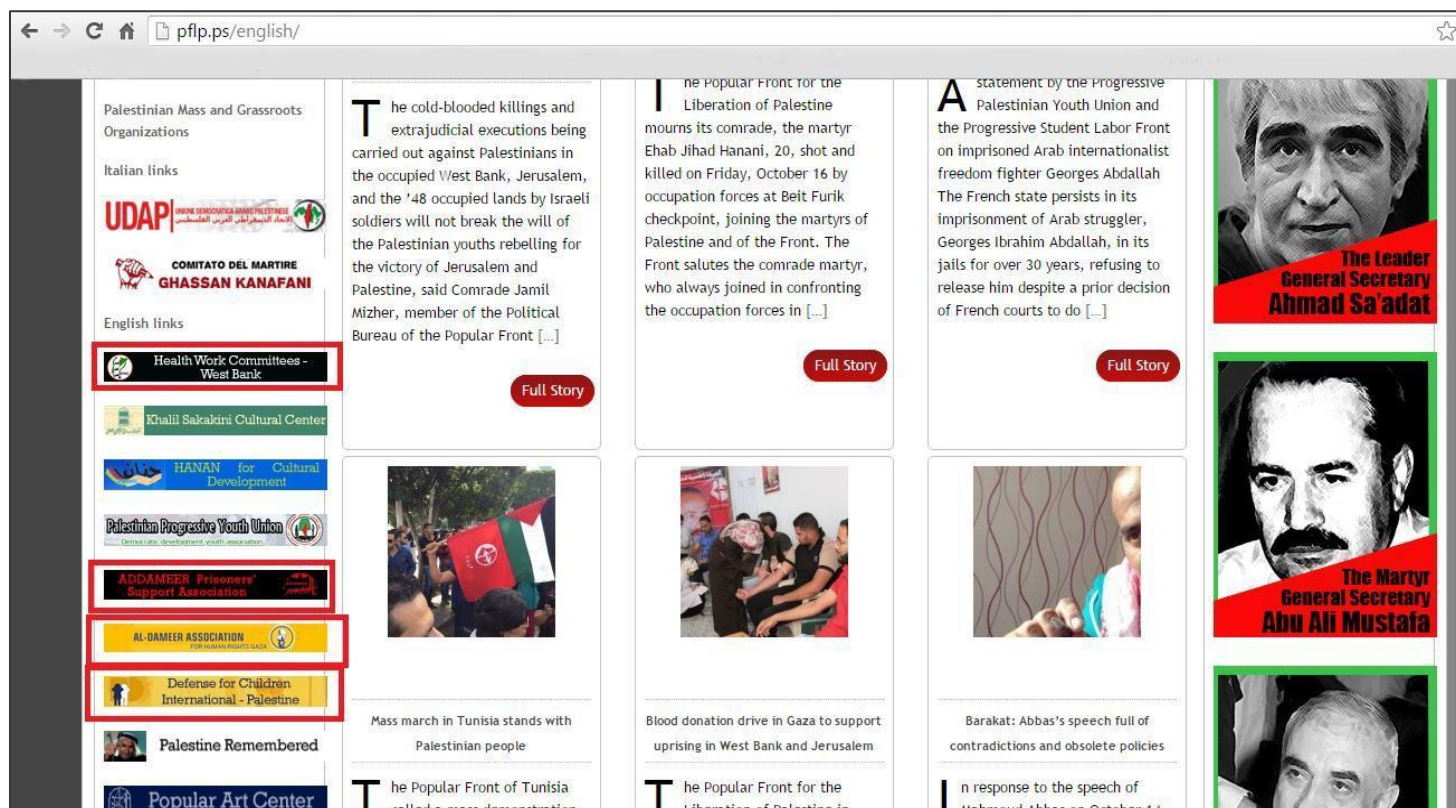
- Nasser previously served as [Executive Director](#) of the Palestinian Health Work Committees (HWC), an organization banned in 2015 by Israel for involvement in terrorism. In 2009, HWC's Nidal Center was closed by Israel because of its [ties to the PFLP](#).
- Nasser co-wrote The Palestinian Intifada: Cry Freedom, a book that praises the Palestinian terror campaign of the early 2000s (see section on Nassar Ibrahim above).

Fatima Daana

Fatima Daana served as a DCI-P board member in [2012-2018](#). In 2014-2016, she [served as the group's treasurer](#).

- Daana is the [widow of Raed Nazzal](#), the former [commander](#) of the PFLP's armed wing (the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades) in Qalqilya. Nazzal was responsible for several terrorist attacks and was [killed](#) in 2002 in a shootout with IDF forces.

APPENDIX I: PFLP WEBSITE LINKS TO DCI-P



Screenshot of PFLP website in English, which links to DCI-P's website and to the sites of other organizations with suspected PFLP ties (November 5, 2015):

APPENDIX II: DCI-P STAFFER HASHEM ABU MARIA'S PFLP TIES

[PFLP death notice for Hashem Abu Maria](#): Source: PFLP, الشعبية تنعي رفيقها الشهيد القيادي هاشم خضر أبو ماريا, July 25, 2014:
<https://tinyurl.com/yxoqfu9d>



But they didn't know that you had left generations behind you

In Memoriam: Hashem Abu Maria
Unlisted
130 views

Defence for Children Palestine
Uploaded on Sep 23, 2014

SUBSCRIBE 1.5K

DCI-P General Director Rifat Odeh Kassis addressing Abu Maria's memorial service in front of the [PFLP flag and pictures](#) of the group's founder, George Habash.



You were their leader.
You dedicated your life to defend them.

In Memoriam: Hashem Abu Maria
Unlisted
130 views

Defence for Children Palestine
Uploaded on Sep 23, 2014

SUBSCRIBE 1.5K


DCI-P poster featuring Hashem Abu Maria hung at his [memorial service](#):
Screenshot of a PFLP memorial event, commemorating Hashem Abu Maria (Uploaded to YouTube by “بريغيث عميد”, December 4, 2014).





0:01 / 2:02

Screenshot of a PFLP memorial event, commemorating Hashem Abu Maria (Uploaded to YouTube by “بريغيث عميد”, December 4, 2014).

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Palestinian Mass and Grassroots Organizations

Italian links

Aug 03 2014

PFLP mourns Comrade Hashem Abu Maria, murdered by occupation forces

On behalf of the imprisoned General Secretary of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Ahmad Sa'adat; his deputy, Comrade Abu Ahmad Fouad; and all of the leaders, cadres and members of the Front, and the Palestinian masses, the Popular Front mourns its comrade, the martyred leader Hashem Khader Abu Maria, 47, who was murdered by occupation forces Friday afternoon in Belt Ummar, occupied Palestine.

Our comrade Hashem Abu Maria and his fellow heroes, the sons of the Palestinian people, Sultan Shuqdam and Abdelhamid Al-Brigheith, are martyrs of the resistance of our people, killed when the Zionist enemy soldiers opened fire massively on hundreds of demonstrators. They are part of the resistance of our people in Gaza, in Belt Ommar, in Ramallah, Nablus and everywhere in occupied Palestine.

The Front praised the comrade as a leader, noting that he was in the ranks of the national liberation struggle and the PFLP from an early age, arrested several times, and was a model for a steadfast struggler and advocate for the rights of our people through his work in Defence for Children International. He was committed to stand alongside the battle to defend Gaza from the occupation assault, and he wrote in his last post before his murder on his Facebook page,: "It is clear the defeat of the ideas of tolerance, normalization...snuggling, kissing and beauty with the enemy state and its institutions, and instead the rise of the concepts of solidarity, cooperation and mutual support among the Palestinian people, promoting a culture of unity and resistance, a sense of belonging and identity...the youth are rising and the Intifada regrouping.."

With those words, this true revolutionary comrade went to join the demonstration and joined the martyrs of Palestine, his blood shed at the hands of the occupier's forces.

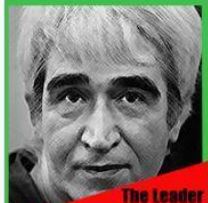
The Front pledges to the leader and his fellow martyrs, to all of the martyrs who have fallen on the path of the struggle for the liberation of Palestine, that the struggle of the resistance everywhere in Palestine until all of Palestine, from the river to the sea, is liberated.

Receive PFLP updates

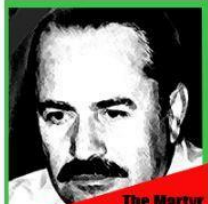
Enter email address

Subscribe

Leaders of the PFLP



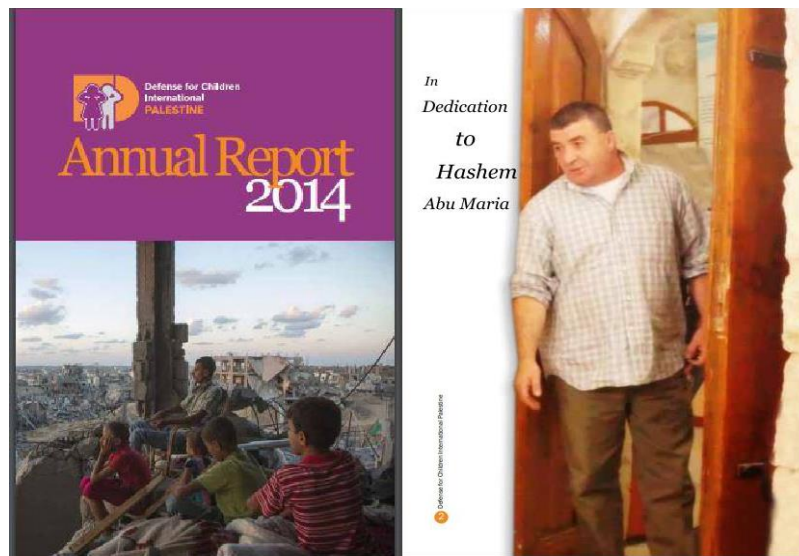
The leader
General Secretary
Ahmad Sa'adat



The Martyr
Hashem Abu Maria

PFLP on death of Hashem Abu Maria:

(Source: [PFLP, "PFLP mourns Comrade Hashem Abu Maria, murdered by occupation forces," August 3, 2014: https://english.pflp.ps/2014/08/03/pflp-mourns-comrade-hashem-abu-maria-murdered-by-occupation-forces/](https://english.pflp.ps/2014/08/03/pflp-mourns-comrade-hashem-abu-maria-murdered-by-occupation-forces/))



PFLP banner celebrating Hashem Abu Maria (Uploaded by "Defence for Children Palestine," September 23, 2014):

Source: Defense for Children International Palestine, "Annual Report 2014," 2015: https://d3n8a8pro7v7hmx.cloudfront.net/dcipalestine/pages/1314/attachments/original/1435333791/dci_report_2015_english_small.pdf?1435333791#page=3



In Memoriam: Hashem Abu Maria

Unlisted

130 views



Defence for Children Palestine
Uploaded on Sep 23, 2014

SUBSCRIBE 1.5K

Source: Defence for Children Palestine, "In Memoriam: Hashem Abu Maria," September 23, 2014: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFius6K0a6g&feature=youtu.be&t=68>

A

APPENDIX III: DCI-P'S DIRECTOR OF CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAM RIYAD ARAR SPEAKS AT PFLP MEMORIAL SERVICE



Riyad Arar addressing a memorial service for a PFLP member, surrounded by PFLP flags, posters of PFLP leaders George Habash and Ahmed Sa'adat, and posters of Hashem Abu Maria. (Source: "طنينه حسونه", YouTube, December 27, 2014: On File with NGO Monitor)



المارش العسكري الجبهة الشعبية مخيم العروب 27/12/2014

PFLP members marching during the memorial service:



المارش العسكري الجبهة الشعبية مخيم العروب 27/12/2014



المارش العسكري الجبهة الشعبية مخيم العروب 27/12/2014



المارش العسكري الجبهة الشعبية مخيم العروب 27/12/2014

APPENDIX IV: DEATH NOTICE

