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### Film-maker's death 'was murder'

## The shooting of a British film maker in Gaza was "cold-blooded murder", a security expert has told an inquest.



James Miller was shot in the neck

James Miller, 34, from Devon, was shot by a soldier from the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) while making a film in a Palestinian refugee camp in 2003.

An Israeli investigation in April 2005 cleared a soldier of misusing firearms.

At St Pancras Coroner's Court in London, former weapons inspector Chris Cobb-Smith said there was no way the soldier fired by accident.

A reporters' statement said Mr Miller was also under a white flag.

"This was calculated and cold-blooded murder, without a shadow of a doubt,"

“ These were slow, deliberate, calculated and aimed shots

Chris Cobb-Smith

Mr Cobb-Smith told the inquest.

"These shots were not fired by a soldier who was frightened, not fired by a soldier facing incoming fire - these were slow, deliberate, calculated and aimed shots."

The 10-member inquest jury heard how Mr Miller had been wearing a helmet and flak jacket with the letters TV written in bright fluorescent tape as he approached the soldiers in Rafah at about 2300 on 2 May 2003.

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He was holding a torch which shone on a large white flag being held by his interpreter.

A shot was fired, followed by a second fatal shot 12 to 13 seconds later. Several more shots were fired at seven to 12 second intervals, hitting the Palestinian house, from which the TV crew had emerged.

## **Weapon records**

Mr Cobb-Smith said this illustrated that the shots were deliberate.

He said that although it was night-time, the TV crew would have been back-lit by lights from the house from which they emerged.

The Israeli soldiers would also have had night vision equipment on their armoured personnel carrier (APC) which would have made it obvious that the cameraman, reporter and interpreter were unarmed and presented no threat.

The security expert was also critical of the Israeli army as it was unable to provide a record of soldiers' weapons and any ammunition they may have discharged.

## **No help**

The inquest also heard evidence from reporter Saira Shah, who was standing next to Mr Miller when he was shot.

In a witness statement read out by coroner Dr Andrew Reid, the inquest heard that she and Mr Miller, accompanied by their interpreter Abdul Rahman Abdullah, slowly approached the IDF soldiers with their white flag held high.

All three froze after the first shot and then dropped to the ground when the second shot rang out, but by this time Mr Miller had been seriously wounded.

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As they struggled to move his body, the Israeli soldiers in their APC inched forward and eventually threw down a stretcher, the court heard.

"The Israeli soldiers watched us fumbling to remove James's body armour and get him back on to the stretcher but still would not help us," Ms Shah said.

The hearing was adjourned until Thursday.

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