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## The Body Snatchers Are Back

By Israel Shamir

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In the Turkish blockbuster action movie Valley of the Wolves, an American Jewish doctor in Abu Ghraib prison gently removes a kidney out of live and suffering Arab prisoner and places it into a special vessel with the label "To Tel Aviv", thus reinforcing the Israeli-American bond of eternal friendship. Real life imitates cinema, as we learn from the dreadful story of Palestinian youths being hunted for their inner organs by that most moral army in the world, Israel's, as published by a leading Swedish newspaper [read its English translation below]

Donald Boström, a Swedish photographer who worked in the West Bank in 1992, was tipped off by UN officials to follow the bloody trail of Israeli soldiers who had kidnapped young Palestinians and returned their dead bodies five days later "with a slit from the abdomen up to the chin." The families in the West Bank and in Gaza felt that they knew exactly what had happened: "Our sons were used as involuntary organ donors; they disappeared for a number of days only to be returned in the dark of night, dead and autopsied. Why did they keep their bodies for five days before letting us bury them? What happened to their bodies in the meantime? Why are they performing autopsies, against our will, when the cause of death is obvious? Why were their bodies returned at night time? Why was this done with a military escort? Why was the area closed off during the funeral? Why was the power supply interrupted?"

These questions continued to haunt Boström. He took gruesome pictures of the returned bodies. Like Vanunu, he smuggled his films abroad. When back in Sweden, he offered the story to Dagens Nyheter, a liberal newspaper which, incidentally, is owned by the Jewish Bonnier family. DN refused to publish it. The story was laid to rest until now, when the Social Democrat newspaper Aftonbladet decided to let it run.

In Israel, the reaction was hysterical. The country is in danger of busting its guts in rage. Huge pressure has been exerted upon Swedish authorities to condemn the newspaper, to punish the offending author and to beg forgiveness. The Swedish Ambassador in Tel Aviv, a member of the rich and influential Jewish family Bonnier who incidentally own the majority of Swedish newspapers, TV networks and cinemas, expressed her 'shock and disapproval' on a website. Her speedy acceptance of the Tel Aviv diktat misfired. The Swedish government rejected her interference with the freedom of press; the editors of Aftonbladet insisted on their right to say what they find fit and called for an international inquiry.

This proud stance lasted but a day or two. Carl Bildt, the Swedish Foreign Minister, was discomfited by Israel's intention to cancel his scheduled visit and had already written in a blog that "such articles can cause anti-Semitism, and instigation is against the Swedish law". However, because he did not cry uncle in the way Netanyahu and

Lieberman had demanded, the rage and hysterics in Tel Aviv increased all the more.

It is easier to express 'outrage about the old canard' than to answer the questions posed by Bostrom. The facts are disturbing, and the accusations are not new. There were too many reports of such goings on, beside the cases mentioned by the Aftonbladet. Knesset Members Ahmed Tibi and Hashem Mahmid accused the Abu Kabir institute of forensic medicine of expropriating the inner parts of Palestinian corpses. They said that Palestinian doctors have complained about receiving the bodies of their dead emptied of their innards. Israeli newspapers reported that in 2007 three Palestinian teenagers were killed near Khan Younes in Gaza Strip and their bodies were returned to their parents all cut and brutalised six days later. Israel often does not even return the dead bodies of Palestinians to their families but has them buried in a secret cemetery. This causes even more suspicions.

Worse, it fits into a larger pattern.

All over the world, Israel and Israelis are involved in trafficking human flesh, this modern form of cannibalism. Beside the case of the New Jersey ring mentioned in the Boström's article, there are plenty others.

Turkey: An Israeli professor Zaki Shapira was arrested in Turkey for allegedly cutting into live Turks for spare parts, reported the notoriously anti-Semitic paper Jerusalem Post.

South Africa: Another anti-Semitic paper, the New York Times, reported on an Israeli trafficking ring active from South Africa to Brazil.

Brazil: An Israeli officer, Gedalya Tauber, was arrested in Brazil for inducing the poor to part with their body parts. He spilled the beans about activity of his fellow countrymen.

The Ukraine: The Jerusalem Post reported the arrest of "an Israeli illegal organ-smuggling ring" that flew their donors and recipients to the Ukraine.

In many cases, Israelis were the doctors, traffickers, smugglers and recipients of the body parts, as the Jewish state is the only country in the world where the state pays for, and best doctors are legally engaged in, the transplanting of illegally obtained organs, reported Ha'aretz. The next step was the evolution of international networks for this sort of traffic. Jews are well positioned to get involved in this sordid business: there are many Jewish doctors, there are many ties between Jewish communities in different countries, and there are few moral inhibitions.

This lack of moral inhibitions allowed a leading Khabbad rabbi, Yitzhak Ginzburg, to give his religious permission to a Jew to take a liver from a goy even without his consent. He said that "a Jew is entitled to extract the liver from a goy if he needs it, for the life of a Jew is more valuable than the life of a goy, likewise the life of a goy is more valuable than the life of an animal."

Modern Israelis have forgotten their faith, but have retained this lack of inhibition. An Israeli business newspaper, The Marker, has published an opinion piece by an Israeli lawyer justifying the trade in body organs, for "organs are just commodity, and so they can be bought and sold like any commodity in an open market".

The distance between kidneys bought and snatched is not that big: if organs are "just a commodity", surely it is permissible to take them from Palestinians, just as it is 'permitted' to take from Palestinians centuries-old olive trees while building the Wall.

Indignation is easy, but it is not so easy to prove that the Israelis, who do not hesitate to break arms and legs and pour napalm on schoolchildren, do draw a line about getting some profit from Palestinian innards. Aftonbladet's demand for an international enquiry is reasonable: if the Israelis have done nothing wrong (beyond murdering hundreds of young men), they have nothing to fear from an international

investigation. Yet Israel refused UN enquiry commissions permission to visit Jenin after the 2002 massacre and Gaza after the 2009 massacre.

For Israel, the most upsetting part of this affair was the breach made in the wall. I do not mean the monstrous Sharon's Wall protecting the biggest Jewish ghetto in the Middle East, but the wall of media control which protects it overseas. Jews buy media all over the world not for fun, and not for profit, but for the influence it has over minds. This is the case in Sweden, where members of its tiny Jewish community own newspapers, magazines, publishing houses and even Swedish Hollywood - SFI. This media actively promotes the neo-liberal policies of privatisation, commodification, immigrant influx, dismantling the welfare state in short, policies that are good for wealthy Jews.

Israeli representatives work hard to keep reporting from the Middle East under their control. A few years ago, the leading radical left magazine Ordfront published a thoughtful piece Israeli Regime Directs Swedish Media by Johannes Wahlström, telling of Israeli meddling with the Swedish press, of Israeli officials going to newspaper editors and to correspondents. In that article Donald Boström tells of the dreadful story he wanted to tell, but he couldn't get through the wall of pro-Israeli censorship in the Swedish media.

Israel is not the only country suspected of such nefarious activities. Carla del Ponte, chief prosecutor at the Hague tribunal for Balkan crimes, wrote in her 2008 book *The Hunt: Me and War Criminals* that under the aegis of the Kosovo Liberation Army, this ally of NATO and the US, hundreds of young Serb prisoners were allegedly taken by truck from Kosovo to northern Albania where their organs were removed. Some prisoners were sewn up after having kidneys removed until the moment they were killed for other vital organs. Carla Del Ponte had seen the house where such surgeries were done and had met with the people involved, one of whom "personally made an organ delivery" to an Albanian airport for transport abroad.

However, Carla del Ponte's accusation against Albanians did not cause such a stir, and nobody condemned her as "anti-Albanian", nor would she care if somebody had, for it is perfectly all right to be anti-anybody as long as not anti-Jewish. The Jews have a potent weapon in their "anti-Semitism" label. Or do they?

Could it be that the useful-for-Israel fear of anti-Semitism does not work like a charm anymore? This is possible. The Cairo speech of Obama apparently has had no direct consequences; Obama tried to apply pressure to Israel in order to freeze the settlements, but in vain. Did he fail? It is too early to judge, as Chou En Lai was wont to say. Such changes rarely occur by the wave of a magic wand they take time. Recent publications on the Jewish criminal gang in New Jersey, attacks on Goldman Sachs, medals for Mary Robinson and Desmond Tutu, an award to Felicia Langer, the collapse of the pro-Jewish socialist party and the appearance of an anti-zionist party in France, the Boström article in *Aftonbladet* all are small and separate incidents, but together they imply that the change is coming. Swedes, French, Germans and even New Jerseyans are no longer afraid of Washington coming at them like sixteen tons in defence of Zionists, as would have been the case in the days of George W. Bush. Obama even refused to appoint a new anti-anti-semitic commissar.

This thought frightens the Tel Aviv government more than anything. If today they let the Swedes get away with it, tomorrow there will be somebody else, and then the fear of the Jews will be assigned to the category of unmanly unrealistic fears, like fear of mice.

Second Ending

More importantly, Israeli outrage is a proof that - despite approval for it by radical Cabbalists and neoliberals - transplantation of human organs is an immoral dreadful

thing, too close to cannibalism, and we all know that. Yes, it is awful if Israeli soldiers tear kidneys out of Palestinians and kill them afterwards. But it is equally awful, if a kind doctor removes a kidney out of a Detroit mechanic whose house was repossessed by a gentle banker, or out of a Ukrainian worker who was sacked by a polite oligarch, or out of an Indian farmer who has to pay his debt to Monsanto. Every poor man on the planet is a Palestinian though the means of his dispossession may vary. This kind of thing should be stopped. The human body is sacred. These operations are too expensive and can't be justified. Mankind should overcome its fear of death. We live and we die. There is no reason to waste thousands of dollars prolonging a life by expensive operations if this money can be used for feeding the starving. More about this later...

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An English translation of the famous article in a leading Swedish paper.

Our Sons Plundered For Their Organs

By Donald Boström

You could call me a "matchmaker," said Levy Yitzhak Rosenbaum, from Brooklyn, USA, in a secret recording with an FBI-agent whom he believed to be a client. Ten days later, at the end of July this year, Rosenbaum was arrested and a vast, Sopranos-like, imbrogio of money-laundering and illegal organ-trade was revealed. Rosenbaum's matchmaking had nothing to do with romance. It was all about buying and selling kidneys from Israel on the black market. Rosenbaum says that he buys the kidneys for 10,000 dollars, from poor people. He then proceeds to sell the organs to desperate patients in the States for 160,000 dollars. The accusations have shaken the American transplantation business. If they are true it means that organ trafficking is documented for the first time in the US, experts tell the New Jersey Real-Time News.

On the question of how many organs he has sold Rosenbaum replies: "Quite a lot. And I have never failed," he boasts. The business has been running for quite some time. Francis Delmonici, professor of transplant surgery at Harvard and member of the National Kidney Foundation's Board of Directors, tells the same newspaper that organ-trafficking, similar to the one reported from Israel, is carried out in other places of the world as well. 5-6,000 operations a year, about ten per cent of the world's kidney transplants are carried out illegally, according to Delmonici.

Countries suspected of these activities are Pakistan, the Philippines and China, where the organs are allegedly taken from executed prisoners. But Palestinians also harbor strong suspicions against Israel for seizing young men and having them serve as the country's organ reserve - a very serious accusation, with enough question marks to motivate the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to start an investigation about possible war crimes.

Israel has repeatedly been under fire for its unethical ways of dealing with organs and transplants. France was among the countries that ceased organ collaboration with Israel in the nineties. Jerusalem Post wrote that "the rest of the European countries are expected to follow France's example shortly."

Half of the kidneys transplanted to Israelis since the beginning of the 2000s have been bought illegally from Turkey, Eastern Europe or Latin America. Israeli health authorities have full knowledge of this business but do nothing to stop it. At a conference in 2003 it was shown that Israel is the only western country with a medical profession that doesn't condemn the illegal organ trade. The country takes no legal measures against doctors participating in the illegal business - on the contrary, chief medical officers of Israel's big hospitals are involved in most of the illegal transplants, according to Dagens Nyheter (December 5, 2003).

In the summer of 1992, Ehud Olmert, then minister of health, tried to address the issue of organ shortage by launching a big campaign aimed at having the Israeli public register for postmortal organ donation. Half a million pamphlets were spread in local newspapers. Ehud Olmert himself was the first person to sign up. A couple of weeks later the Jerusalem Post reported that the campaign was a success. No fewer than 35,000 people had signed up. Prior to the campaign it would have been 500 in a normal month. In the same article, however, Judy Siegel, the reporter, wrote that the gap between supply and demand was still large. 500 people were in line for a kidney transplant, but only 124 transplants could be performed. Of 45 people in need of a new liver, only three could be operated on in Israel.

While the campaign was running, young Palestinian men started to disappear from villages in the West Bank and Gaza. After five days Israeli soldiers would bring them back dead, with their bodies ripped open.

Talk of the bodies terrified the population of the occupied territories. There were rumors of a dramatic increase of young men disappearing, with ensuing nightly funerals of autopsied bodies.

I was in the area at the time, working on a book. On several occasions I was approached by UN staff concerned about the developments. The persons contacting me said that organ theft definitely occurred but that they were prevented from doing anything about it. On an assignment from a broadcasting network I then travelled around interviewing a great number of Palestinian families in the West Bank and Gaza - meeting parents who told of how their sons had been deprived of organs before being killed. One example that I encountered on this eerie trip was the young stone-thrower Bilal Ahmed Ghanan.

It was close to midnight when the motor roar from an Israeli military column sounded from the outskirts of Imatin, a small village in the northern parts of the West Bank. The two thousand inhabitants were awake. They were still, waiting, like silent shadows in the dark, some lying upon roofs, others hiding behind curtains, walls, or trees that provided protection during the curfew but still offered a full view toward what would become the grave for the first martyr of the village. The military had interrupted the electricity and the area was now a closed-off military zone - not even a cat could move outdoors without risking its life. The overpowering silence of the dark night was only interrupted by quiet sobbing. I don't remember if our shivering was due to the cold or to the tension. Five days earlier, on May 13, 1992, an Israeli special force had used the village's carpentry workshop for an ambush. The person they were assigned to put out of action was Bilal Ahmed Ghanan, one of the stone-throwing Palestinian youngsters who made life difficult for the Israeli soldiers.

As one of the leading stone-throwers Bilal Ghanan had been wanted by the military for a couple of years. Together with other stone-throwing boys he hid in the Nablus mountains, with no roof over his head. Getting caught meant torture and death for these boys - they had to stay in the mountains at all costs.

On May 13 Bilal made an exception, when for some reason, he walked unprotected by the carpentry workshop. Not even Talal, his older brother, knows why he took this risk. Maybe the boys were out of food and needed to restock.

Everything went according to plan for the Israeli special force. The soldiers stubbed their cigarettes, put away their cans of Coca-Cola, and calmly aimed through the broken window. When Bilal was close enough they needed only to pull the triggers. The first shot hit him in the chest. According to villagers who witnessed the incident he was subsequently shot with one bullet in each leg. Two soldiers then ran down from the carpentry workshop and shot Bilal once in the stomach. Finally, they grabbed him by his feet and dragged him up the twenty stone steps of the workshop

stair. Villagers say that people from both the UN and the Red Crescent were close by, heard the discharge and came to look for wounded people in need of care. Some arguing took place as to who should take care of the victim. Discussions ended with Israeli soldiers loading the badly wounded Bilal in a jeep and driving him to the outskirts of the village, where a military helicopter waited. The boy was flown to a destination unknown to his family. Five days later he came back, dead and wrapped in green hospital fabric.

A villager recognized Captain Yahya, the leader of the military column who had transported Bilal from the postmortem center Abu Kabir, outside of Tel Aviv, to the place for his final rest. "Captain Yahya is the worst of them all," the villager whispered in my ear. After Yahya had unloaded the body and changed the green fabric for a light cotton one, some male relatives of the victim were chosen by the soldiers to do the job of digging and mixing cement.

Together with the sharp noises from the shovels we could hear laughter from the soldiers who, as they waited to go home, exchanged some jokes. As Bilal was put in the grave his chest was uncovered. Suddenly it became clear to the few people present just what kind of abuse the boy had been exposed to. Bilal was not by far the first young Palestinian to be buried with a slit from his abdomen up to his chin.

The families in the West Bank and in Gaza felt that they knew exactly what had happened: "Our sons are used as involuntary organ donors," relatives of Khaled from Nablus told me, as did the mother of Raed from Jenin and the uncles of Mahmud and Nafes from Gaza, who had all disappeared for a number of days only to return at night, dead and autopsied.

- Why are they keeping the bodies for up to five days before they let us bury them? What happened to the bodies during that time? Why are they performing autopsy, against our will, when the cause of death is obvious? Why are the bodies returned at night? Why is it done with a military escort? Why is the area closed off during the funeral? Why is the electricity interrupted? Nafes's uncle was upset and he had a lot of questions.

The relatives of the dead Palestinians no longer harbored any doubts as to the reasons for the killings, but the spokesperson for the Israeli army claimed that the allegations of organ theft were lies. All the Palestinian victims go through autopsy on a routine basis, he said. Bilal Ahmed Ghanem was one of 133 Palestinians killed in various ways that year. According to the Palestinian statistics the causes of death were: shot in the street, explosion, tear gas, deliberately run over, hanged in prison, shot in school, killed at home et cetera. The 133 people killed were between four months to 88 years old. Only half of them, 69 victims, went through postmortem examination. The routine autopsy of killed Palestinians - of which the army spokesperson was talking - has no bearing on the reality in the occupied territories. The questions remain.

We know that Israel has a great need for organs, that there is a vast and illegal trade of organs which has been running for many years now, that the authorities are aware of it and that doctors in managing positions at the big hospitals participate, as well as civil servants at various levels. We also know that young Palestinian men disappeared, that they were brought back after five days, at night, under tremendous secrecy, stitched back together after having been cut from abdomen to chin.

It's time to bring clarity to this macabre business, to shed light on what is going on and what has taken place in the territories occupied by Israel since the Intifada began.

Donald Boström

THIS IS THE ORIGINAL ARTICLE:

<http://www.aftonbladet.se/kultur/article5652583.ab>