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# Swedish Article Suggesting Israeli Troops Kill Palestinians, Harvest Organs Infuriates Israel


MATTI FRIEDMAN | 08/19/09 12:24 PM | 

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Comments

JERUSALEM — Israel and the Swedish Embassy responded furiously Wednesday to a Swedish newspaper article that suggested Israeli troops killed Palestinians and harvested their organs.

The article published Monday in Aftonbladet, Sweden's largest circulation daily, implies a link between those charges and the recent arrest in the U.S. of an American Jew for illicit organ trafficking. Later the reporter told Israel Radio he did not know if the allegations were true.

Headlined "Our sons are plundered for their organs," the story made news in Israel, where some commentators compared it to medieval libels that Jews killed Christian children for their blood. Daniel Seaman, who heads Israel's government press office, said the article played on "vile anti-Semitic themes."

The article was illustrated with a photograph of a dead Palestinian man with a line of surgical stitches running the length of his torso, apparently taken at an autopsy, as well as pictures of stone-throwing youths and Levy Izhak Rosenbaum, a New York resident arrested in an FBI sting last month and charged with plotting to buy a kidney from an Israeli and sell it to an American patient for \$160,000.

The writer, Donald Bostrom, based the story on accounts from Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza whom he identified only by their first names. Bostrom quotes an Israeli military spokesman denying the charges and saying that Palestinians killed by Israeli forces are routinely subjected to autopsies.

Interviewed on Israel Radio on Wednesday, Bostrom said he was worried by the allegations he reported but could not vouch for their accuracy.

"It concerns me, to the extent that I want it to be investigated, that's true. But whether it's true or not – I have no idea, I have no clue," he told the station.

Aftonbladet Editor Jan Helin said, "The article poses a question – why has this body been autopsied when the cause of death is obvious? There I think the authorities owe us an answer."

Story continues below ↓

Israeli legal expert Moshe Negbi said that according to Israeli law, "Autopsies are immediately performed after every unnatural death, and this is true in most other countries as well."

Helin also objected to what he called "the hate campaign that has been expressed in e-mails to me and the editorial office, but also through Israeli media."

Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor said, "This piece is so blatantly racist and can induce to hate crimes in such a way that we think authorities need to take care of the matter."

In a statement Wednesday, the Swedish embassy in Tel Aviv said the article was "as shocking and appalling to us Swedes as it is to Israeli citizens."

In Stockholm, the Swedish Foreign Ministry distanced itself from that statement. "We obviously don't think it is great to comment on what is written in the media," ministry spokesman Anders Jorle told The Associated Press.

In Sweden, the article drew a critical editorial from a rival daily, Sydsvenskan, which said it followed the "usual template of a conspiracy theory."

Israel's ambassador to Sweden, Benny Dagan, said the piece did not indicate a climate of general hostility toward Israel.

"It's certain elements," he told Israel Radio. "It's not all Sweden or mainstream Sweden or the Swedish parliament."

Associated Press Writer Malin Rising reported from Stockholm.

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