

Young Palestinians launch hashtag intifada

October 9 2015, by Hossam Ezzedine



Palestinian stone throwers clash with Israeli security forces in Beit El, near the West Bank city of Ramallah, on October 8, 2015

Videos spread on social media showing Palestinians stabbing Israelis and throwing stones at soldiers are mustering online youth activists to the frontline after days of violence.

A Facebook page set up as clashes and stabbings continue to rock Israel and the occupied West Bank declares in Arabic that "the intifada (uprising) has been launched".

The page has its own logo of a masked youth throwing stones bordered by a halo by the black, red and green of the Palestinian flag.

The hashtag "#Jerusalem intifada" is also being widely shared online.

Violence has spread in spite of calls from Israeli and Palestinian leaders for calm and there are fears tensions could boil over in to a repeat of previous Palestinian intifadas, the most recent of which began in 2000.

Unlike previous uprisings, Palestinians now have a range of [social media](#) tools at their disposal to spread images of protests and violence in real time.

Shortly after the death last month of Dia al-Talahmeh, 21, whose bomb exploded before he threw it at a West Bank checkpoint, a picture of his lifeless face was posted on Facebook by a 19-year-old Palestinian named Mohannad Halabi.

Days later, Halabi killed two Israelis and wounded two more—including a toddler—in a knife and gun assault in Jerusalem, before he was shot dead by police.

In the age of smartphones and live tweeting, images of this attack were online almost instantly.

The radical Islamic Jihad movement said Halabi was a member and swiftly posted a video clip bearing the logo of its military wing and advocating suicide attacks of the kind that sowed terror in Israel during the last intifada.

The clip showed a smiling young man speaking to the camera, his gloved hands adjusting what looks like a bomber's explosives belt.

It registered almost 40,000 views.

The death of Samir Alloun, killed by police on Sunday after allegedly stabbing and wounding a 15-year-old in west Jerusalem—an account contested by Palestinians—was seen online 100,000 times.



Israeli Zaka volunteers clean up blood stains at site where a 19-year-old Palestinian man stabbed a Jewish man in Jerusalem on October 8, 2015

'We will burn everything'

Experts say the parade of images on social networks is having a profound impact on young Palestinians.

"Every day we see a new martyr and the least that we can do to show

solidarity is to change our profile pictures and share images," a protester in the West Bank city of Ramallah told AFP on condition of anonymity.

Selfies are being posted of youthful stone throwers against a background of burning tyres or billowing tear gas.

Young Palestinians are at particular risk when they participate in protests or violence, according to psychologist Najah al-Khatib.

"They don't have the concept of danger or the sense of caution that an adult has," he said, adding that children and adolescents are more likely to be influenced by images on social media.

Palestinian "martyrs", especially young ones, become icons to other children, Khatib said.

Since Sunday, a 13-year-old and an 18-year-old have been among three Palestinians killed in clashes with Israeli forces.

"I like throwing stones at the soldiers, like the other youngsters," said Mustafa, 10. "I want to die a martyr."

Mustafa and his generation did not experience the last intifada, but he still pledges to "liberate Palestine"—specifically the flashpoint Al-Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem where young Muslims and Israeli police have repeatedly clashed in recent weeks.

"We have seen such hard things since our birth that we can no longer tolerate the occupation, which makes our lives impossible," added Ahmed, 16.

At his side are two boys, their school satchels still slung over their shoulders. They say they have been throwing stones for hours.

Asked why, one replies with indignation.

"Why? I could give you a new reason every day; the attacks on Al-Aqsa, children killed, the occupation.

"It is decided, we are going to burn everything."

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