



Yesh Din

Volunteers for Human Rights

This coming Wednesday, May 14, 2025, at 11:30 AM, the Supreme Court will hold an important hearing on a petition to prosecute the person who fatally stabbed Ali Harb

On June 21, 2022, a group of settlers, about 17 teens and one adult, Avraham Shemesh, invaded land belonging to the Harb family from the village of Iskaka in the West Bank. The settlers came ready to set up a new unauthorized outpost, bringing mattresses and tools with them, as part of a 'settlement building week' announced by the [Nachala movement](#). Several village residents quickly arrived at the scene and demanded that the trespassers leave, but the settlers ignored them and continued advancing into the private land. Although the village residents were unarmed—except for one elder holding a stick—Shemesh approached Ali Harb, a 27-year-old man, and stabbed him forcefully in the heart. Ali collapsed on the spot and died. Shemesh then hid the knife and returned home.

The police displayed criminal negligence both during and after the incident. Though police officers were on the scene and had witnessed the fatal stabbing, no one detained any of the settlers, including the stabber. Shemesh reported to the police the next day, having received a summons for questioning, and was interrogated by the Israel Security Agency (ISA, also known as Shin Bet). He initially denied he had anything to do with the stabbing and claimed he was unarmed. Several days later, after the knife he had hidden was recovered, he retracted his initial account during the police investigation and reconstructed the

stabbing. According to his new version of the events, the Palestinians who arrived at the scene were armed with axes and sticks, and the stabbing was an accident that occurred when he tried to push Ali Harb off and defend himself.

On July 5, 2022, the stabber was released to house arrest, and about six weeks later, the police announced it was closing the investigation on the grounds of “insufficient evidence.” After the investigation was closed, Ali’s father filed an appeal against the decision through Yesh Din. The appeal demanded that the stabber be prosecuted, including for murder and obstructing an investigation, detailing the evidence against the stabber and the many flaws in the investigation. On October 24, 2023, the State Attorney’s Office denied the appeal, stating, “all conditions required to establish self-defense were met, and therefore the case against the impugned individual was closed for insufficient evidence.”

A request by Yesh Din for reconsideration of the decision to close the investigation file, attaching further evidence received, was denied as well. Therefore, on August 5, 2024, Ali Harb’s father filed a High Court petition via Yesh Din, demanding Avraham Shemesh, who stabbed his son to death, be prosecuted for manslaughter and obstruction of justice. According to the petition, the police and the State Attorney’s Office accepted Shemesh’s testimony, which was riddled with contradictions and lies, without any basis.

The petition asserts that the State Attorney’s Office had “failed to conduct a thorough examination appropriate for a murder investigation” when it decided not to prosecute Shemesh, even though there is no dispute that he stabbed Ali Harb to death when he thrust the knife into his heart. The petition notes this decision runs counter to the Prosecution’s policy in countless similar cases. Yesh Din was unable to find a single example of a similar case with Jewish victims that closed citing self-defense. The petition also argues that the self-defense claim is irrelevant given armed police officers were present at the scene during the actual

incident, such that neither the stabber nor the teens were in mortal danger, and none of them were injured before or after the stabbing.

The negligence and bias shown by the authorities in this case are a direct extension of Israel's law enforcement failure when it comes to offenses Israelis commit against Palestinians – a failure Yesh Din has been documenting for 20 years, and recently addressed by the International Court of Justice in The Hague as well.

Further information on the petition

Read the full petition (Hebrew)

We highly encourage attending this court hearing, which raises fundamental questions about equality, law enforcement on settler violence, and the protection of human life. Anyone who would like to attend this hearing with Yesh Din is welcome to write Yahav Erez, Yesh Din's International Advocacy Coordinator, at yahave@yesh-din.org.

Justice for Ali Harb



This coming Tuesday, the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee will discuss preparation for the first reading of a bill intended to make it easier for Jews to purchase land in the West Bank (the bill to “Eliminate Discrimination in Real Estate Purchases in Judea and Samaria”)

This coming Tuesday, the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee is expected to hold a second discussion in preparation for the first vote in the Knesset on the proposed law to “Eliminate Discrimination in Land Acquisition,”

which recently passed a preliminary vote. The proposed bill aims to ease the purchase of land in the occupied territory by settlers and to expand the settlement enterprise.

Legislation by the Israeli Knesset regarding the occupied territory constitutes an act of annexation, in direct violation of international law, which prohibits the annexation of occupied land. Moreover, the explanatory notes to the proposed law state that it aims to correct an ongoing injustice—an alleged discrimination against the settler population. In reality, the opposite is true: the land regime in the West Bank is already deeply and blatantly discriminatory, systematically privileging Israeli settlers over Palestinian residents. If this legislation is passed, it will only deepen the existing discrimination.

It seeks a long-term change to entrench Israeli ownership of land in the occupied territory. Ownership of purchased land is permanent, not temporary. Currently, most land used for settlements is registered as public ('state') land and is allocated temporarily by the Civil Administration. The proposed bill would encourage Israelis to purchase land privately, significantly increasing the amount of land under permanent Israeli ownership—another dimension of entrenching Israeli presence in violation of international law.

The proposed legislation seeks to eliminate oversight, enabling land transaction fraud by effectively annulling Military Order No. 25, which was intended to ensure oversight over the acquisition and establishment of property rights in the West Bank and enables supervision by the military and the Civil Administration regarding the legality and validity of such transactions. In the past, serious allegations of forged land purchases in the West Bank have surfaced, often intended to retroactively legalize illegal outposts.

The advancement of the bill demonstrates a political appetite, indicating that this is the critical time for intervention to stop the legislation.

Therefore, rapid intervention is crucial to prevent further violations of human rights.

Join Our WhatsApp Group for Diplomatic Updates

We invite you to join our WhatsApp group for diplomatic updates, in which we send periodic updates on important developments in the West Bank easily and conveniently. It is a 'silent' group, meaning only the administrators can post messages, and there are no conversations or debates. You are welcome to join and share the link with colleagues.

Join Yesh Din's new WhatsApp group

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