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Protestors say Israel is unjustly punishing the victims Arabs on trial for lynching Israeli "terrorist"



Arab Israelis protest outside Haifa Justice Court asking Israel's Attorney General to close the case against seven Arab Israelis

Haifa, ISRAEL (Al Arabiya, AFP)

Dozens of Israeli Arabs protested on Wednesday outside the Haifa district court, located in the northern port city, where the trial of seven Israeli Arabs charged with lynching a Jewish "terrorist" after he opened fire on a bus and killed four people.

The men are charged with violent acts that led to the death of the Israeli soldier, while another five people face lesser charges, but the defendants said they are innocent because the soldier committed a terror attack on innocent people.

"I am frustrated and angry, we're innocent," the Jerusalem Post quoted defendant Jamil Sfouri as saying.

"This soldier committed a terror attack, whoever carries out a terror attack deserves to die," another defendant said.

In August 2005 the soldier, Eden Natan Zada, opened fire with his M-16 automatic rifle on a bus in the northern town of Shfaram, killing four people and wounding more than 20.

Zada, a far-right activist virulently opposed to the withdrawal of soldiers and settlers from Gaza that was then under way, was beaten to death by an angry mob following his unprovoked shooting spree.

"Stop discrimination against Arabs"

The indictments have infuriated Israel's Arab community, which numbers 1.2 million people and makes up 20 percent of Israel's population of seven million.

Dozens of protestors gathered outside the courthouse holding signs reading "Shfaram is a victim of

terrorism" and "Stop discrimination against Arabs."

"Yet again they are blaming the victim, and we do not accept this equation," said Israeli Arab MP Mohammed Barakeh, who attended the protest.

Sheikh Raed Saleh, who also attended the demonstration, slammed the proceedings.

"The Israeli establishment should be ashamed and it should close all these cases. It is unthinkable to transform the victim into the accused."

Israeli Arab leaders argue that Jewish citizens are never punished for attacking the perpetrators of violence against Israelis, even after they have been neutralized.

Israel's Arab citizens are the descendants of the 160,000 Palestinians who remained in Israel following the 1948 war that erupted after the creation of the Jewish state.

In 2006, Israel's High Court denounced the "discrimination" suffered by the community since the creation of the state.