



An Exhibit On Campus Celebrates Grisly Deed

By IAN FISHER
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The students did as they were told and today tried to tone down, to the extent such a thing is possible, an exhibit here that celebrates a suicide bombing.

The exhibit at Al Najah University, the largest in the West Bank, has outraged Israelis since it opened on Sunday. The most contentious section is a mock-up of the Sbarro restaurant in Jerusalem where 15 people were killed in a suicide attack in August including not only gnawed pizza crusts but bloody plastic body parts suspended from the ceiling as if they were blasting through the air.

Created by a student faction of Hamas, the radical Islamic group that claimed responsibility for the Sbarro attack, the exhibit by definition portrays an extreme view. It marks the one year anniversary of the so-called second intifada, when Palestinians declared the peace talks dead and renewed fighting. Israelis contend that it was Yasir Arafat, the Palestinian leader, who walked away from the peace deal brokered last year by President Clinton.

Worried about a backlash at a time when much of the world is shocked by suicide bombings, Mr. Arafat issued a statement today that he was "gravely disturbed and offended by the images in the exhibit," and that he ordered it closed. It had been scheduled to close at the end of the day on Tuesday.

But this afternoon it was still open, if altered: on orders, the students cut down a plastic hand dangling from the ceiling. But they managed only partly to obscure a fake severed leg, encased in jeans and a bloody black sneaker. The heel still poked out from behind a curtain.

Aside from anger, some Israelis noted that the exhibit shows how many strands of mutual empathy have been cut, as the warring sides here mark the first anniversary, this Thursday, of renewed fighting between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers.

"The superficial conclusion will be that they are something else, that they are not human beings," said Benny Elon, a right-wing member of Israeli Parliament. "This is not the truth. They are intelligent students, up to date, but with another mentality, another way of thinking. They are really proud of the exhibit."

Mr. Elon said specifically the exhibit is one more example of how Muslims have declared cultural war on the West, in the same way of the plotters who carried out the attacks two weeks ago that toppled the World Trade Center, damaged the Pentagon and killed more than 6,000 people.

Many Palestinians argue that, unlike Osama bin Laden, their fight is not with West, but with Israel.

Students confirmed Mr. Elon's view that the two sides here do not view things the same way: where Israelis see attacks like the one on Sbarro as simple terrorism, many Palestinians see them as acts of resistance in renewed fighting that has taken more than 800 lives in the last year, three quarters of them Palestinians. "I would hope to see more than that," Amani Ewagan, a 20-year-old architecture student, meaning that a few Israeli body parts in an exhibit were not enough. "As Palestinian, I hope to see more Israelis killed by more Palestinians."

Her friend, Amani Aquad, a administration student, added: "The Israelis have no compassion for us. Why should I feel sympathy for them?"

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Much of the exhibit is devoted to the dead on the Palestinian side: rows of gory photographs show Palestinians hit by bullets or shells, and there is no shortage of body parts there either: there are parts of brains, a headless torso, a severed hand. There are also photographs of several children killed in the last year.

But the part that has received the most attention is the Sbarro restaurant, which also serves as the exhibit's entrance. The doormat is composed of two flags, one Israeli and one American. Above it hangs the green and red Sbarro sign.

Inside are toppled stools, pizza crusts, police tape, broken glass, as well as photographs of the actual scene of carnage and of the young Palestinian, Izzeden Masri, who carried into the restaurant some 20 pounds of explosive reportedly hidden in a guitar.

Ala'a Hmeidani, 25, the student activist who headed up the exhibit, said he understood the anger that the Sbarro exhibit generated.

"This section represents resistance," he said. "The problem is with this kind of resistance, it is addressed against civilians. This creates a negative reaction from the world. But where was the world when Israel was killing Palestinian children?"

One student, Mohamed Mahamud, 23, said he wondered too if now was the moment for celebrating what happened in the Sbarro.

"It is not a good time to exhibit these things," he said. "We must look for peace, not look for war."



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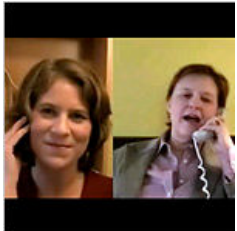
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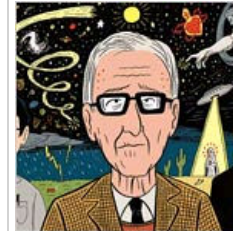
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