

Analysis |

Israeli Settlers' Hawara Pogrom Was a Preview of Sabra and Chatila 2

In 1982, the Israeli military did not stop the Phalangists carrying out a massacre of 600 men, women and children in a Lebanese refugee camp; this week in the West Bank, no one stopped the Phalangist settlers at Hawara

IDF soldiers and Israeli settlers in Hawara on Monday.Credit: Moti Milrod

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On Sunday afternoon young Radwan Dameidi took his wife and infant child from their home in the West Bank town of Hawara to his wife's family's house in Nablus. Dameidi owns a gold shop in Nablus and lives in a spacious home in Hawara. Immediately following Sunday's terrorist attack in Hawara in which two Israelis were killed, he learned from social media that settlers were planning a major act of revenge in town, so he quickly transferred his wife and baby to a safe place.

Haaretz reporter Hagar Shezaf knew that the [settlers were organizing a revenge march](#). She had heard about it on Sunday afternoon while in Paris. From Hawara to Paris, anyone who wished to, would know that a major revenge operation was about [to shake Hawara](#). There was only one player that didn't know, didn't see and didn't hear – or perhaps heard, knew but ignored it. The Israeli defense establishment.

The Israel Defense Forces, the Border Police and the Shin Bet security service didn't prepare for any kind of pogrom and didn't do anything to prevent it, whether out of apathy and complacency, or because they were very deliberately turning a blind eye. At least [400 settler thugs](#), according to an army estimate, some of them masked and armed and some with clubs, iron chains and fuel containers, raided Hawara. No one stopped them, and no one seriously tried to.

On Monday, the Border Police said its forces had actually prevented Jewish rioters from entering Hawara and that the rioters had invaded the town from a location that was the army's responsibility. Military reporters also explained that the soldiers had tried to prevent the settlers from entering on roads into town and that they therefore came down from the hills. One way or another, hundreds of rioters invaded the town with the aim of sowing destruction. No one stopped them and no one has taken responsibility for that.

This has again made clear how helpless the Palestinians are and that there is no entity on earth that is protecting their lives and property. Suspicions also arose on Sunday that the army's turning a blind eye wasn't at all a matter of happenstance.

Maybe IDF officials actually wanted the settlers to do their work for them, punishing the Palestinians and [achieving deterrence with a pogrom](#), as Otzma Yehudit Knesset member Zvi Fogel had urged.

Turning a blind eye in this way conjures up forgotten memories. The IDF also turned a blind eye in 1982 at the Palestinian refugee camps of [Sabra and Chatila in Lebanon](#), making it possible for Lebanese Phalangist militias to commit the terrible massacres there. There was no massacre at Hawara, not yet, but no one could have known in advance how things would turn out. If the rioters had also wanted to massacre the population, no one would have stood in their way on Sunday. No one stopped the Phalangists at Sabra and no one stopped the Phalangists at Hawara.

On Sunday, they made do with sowing destruction. But just wait for their next act of revenge, particularly when no one is brought to justice and punished for Sunday's pogrom. Sabra and Chatila 2 is on the way and no one's doing anything to stop it.

Hawara resembled [a ghost town on Monday](#), a city under wartime siege. It was Kherson in Hawara. Reporters were already in combat gear. All of the shops were shuttered and the streets empty. The residents huddled at home and few peeped through the bars that almost every window in town has due to prior pogroms.

The faces of the handful of residents out on the street reflected their anger and despair. It was only the settlers who were allowed to travel the streets of the town on Monday, [another clear sign of apartheid](#), and most of them did so defiantly and with crude provocation – victory honks, giving the finger and chants such as “death to the Arabs,” “sluts” and other epithets.



Burned cars in Hawara on Monday after Israeli settlers set to Palestinian town alight on Sunday evening.Credit: Moti Milrod

There were those who stopped, got out of their cars under the auspices of soldiers and began taunting the residents from up close at the doorways of their burnt out homes and smoking cars. The residents were bursting with rage but didn't dare utter

a word. The light touch that an armed soldier landed on the shoulder of one of the thugs summed up the situation better than a thousand words could.

On Sunday evening, when Radwan Dameidi returned from Nablus, where he had left his wife and child to shelter the night, he was stunned to see dozens of armed settlers running wild in his yard. They broke windows and burned the family's opulent guesthouse, which had just been completed four months ago. This scum plundered his smart TV and set his exercise bicycle on fire.