Palestinian rights groups demand probe into death of preacher in Hamas detention

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<https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-739943>

Palestinian human rights organizations have called for an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of a Palestinian man in a [Hamas detention](https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-710976) center in the Gaza Strip.

Mohammed al-Sufi, a 43-year-old Muslim preacher from Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, died hours after he was detained by Hamas police officers last Wednesday.

Sources in the Gaza Strip said Sufi was known for his criticism of [Hamas leaders and their ties to Iran](https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-702897). The sources said that in recent sermons he criticized Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar and other Hamas leaders for boasting of their close relations with Iran.

Sufi’s family said he was detained shortly after his return to the Gaza Strip from Egypt, together with his son Abdullah.

According to Abdullah, 16, the interrogators accused him and his father of smuggling “forbidden items” into the Gaza Strip. He claimed the interrogators beat him while he and his father were being held in the Hamas detention center in Rafah.

The son said he heard the interrogators while they were shouting at his father in a nearby room.

“I could hear my father moaning, then there was silence,” Abdullah recounted. “Then I heard the policemen call on my father to wake up after he apparently lost consciousness. Later one of the officers came and asked me if my father was suffering from any chronic diseases.”

Sufi was rushed to the Martyr Abu Yusef al-Najjar Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

The Hamas-controlled Ministry of the Interior said in a statement that Sufi died early Thursday “after a sudden health deterioration while in police custody.” The ministry said it has launched an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of the detainee.

**Sufi's death 'an unforgivable crime'**

Sufi’s clan said in a statement that his detention was illegal and that he died only two hours after he was taken to the Hamas detention center. The clan claimed that Sufi died as a result of “torture” and said it holds [Hamas fully responsible](https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/hamas-faces-harsh-criticism-for-crushing-gaza-protesters-583657) for his death.

“What happened with our son is an unforgivable crime,” the clan added. “We call on Hamas to hold to account those responsible for his detention and death.”

The Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR) in the Gaza Strip called for an investigation into the case, “including the interrogation circumstances and alleged violence and cruel treatment the father and son were subjected to.”

The Forensic Medicine Department in Gaza City informed the family that the forensic report emphasized that the cause of death was arteriosclerosis, according to PCHR, which demanded that the results of the investigation be published in public.

The International Commission to Support Palestinian People’s Rights, the Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights and the Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights expressed concern over the death of the detainee in a Hamas security center and called in separate statements for launching an immediate investigation into the case.