

# Fatah's Civil War

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Neri Zilber, a journalist and analyst on Middle East politics and culture, is an adjunct fellow of The Washington Institute.



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## The killing of Ahmed Halawa highlights the complex web of rivalries, political calculations, and security fears driving recent West Bank power dynamics.

In the early morning hours of August 23, the Palestinian Authority Security Forces (PASF) arrested Ahmed Halawa. While in custody, the 50-year-old was viciously beaten to death. The incident caused an uproar in the northern West Bank city of Nablus, Halawa's hometown; [thousands took to the streets](#) (<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/03/world/middleeast/palestinians-clash-with-own-security-forces-as-elections-stir-deep-unease.html>) for his funeral procession, shouting slogans against the Palestinian Authority and dodging tear gas fired by the security forces. The facts of the events leading up to Halawa's death are surrounded by rumor and innuendo. In the government's telling, Halawa was an "outlaw and criminal" responsible for a litany of offenses, including "masterminding" the shooting death of four PASF officers in recent months. For the thousands who mourned him, however, Halawa was a peaceful local power broker who, by one telling, was collecting weapons in an effort to avoid a costly clan war.

As one source in Ramallah put it, "You ask ten people about the 'Nablus affair,' and you'll get ten different answers." And yet two things about Halawa are certain: until the day he died, he was a long-serving police officer in the same Palestinian Authority security apparatus responsible for his death, and he was a senior member of the al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, the dormant armed wing of the Fatah movement, which controls the PA. Thus, the main question remains why Fatah felt the need to go after one of its own prominent sons. For answers, some context is required...

[Read the full article on the Foreign Affairs website. \(<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/palestinian-authority/2016-09-29/fatahs-civil-war>\)](#) ♦

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