

Chinese Whispers in Palestine

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This is the second entry by guest-blogger LSE student Amanda Nunn. You can see Amanda's photos from this trip [here](#).

"The kidnapping of my best friend was probably not the highlight of my trip to the Palestinian West Bank. Nor was the war with Hezbollah.

I went there to gain a different perspective on the turbulent Israeli occupation of Palestine – instead I learnt to never trust the media.

My friend's name is Michael Phillips, he's 24 and from America. We lived in Nablus, the city Israel has dubbed the terrorist capital of the west bank, and worked in Balata refugee camp with the Red Crescent. We'd been there for about three months before it happened. He was bundled into a car while in the centre of Nablus at gun point, he was then blindfolded, his hands tied and covered with a blanket. He was in the car for about 30 minutes, then marched through some kind of foliage and tied to a bed by his wrists and ankles. The kidnappers made demands for the release of Palestinian prisoners in return for his freedom.

After 27 hours he was released in the same manner in which he had been seized and dropped off at the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade (our local freedom fighters/terrorist group) headquarters in the Balata Refugee Camp. He was then shuttled to a huge press conference at the home of the head of Fata Security and Intelligence.

Ok, so that's what actually happened. The newspapers however seemed to have other ideas.

Reports on the incident ranged from Al-Jazeera who said that he was "briefly" held to the Ynet (Israel's largest media company) reporting 48 hours. In an interview he allegedly said that he knew who his captors were – except he was blindfolded and they were wearing masks. The group identified for the kidnapping range from an Afghanistan terrorist group "Ansar A-Sunna" to Hamas themselves and even reports of Al-Qaeda.

The demands made for his release also differ. Some report they wanted the release of woman and children, while other claim only the destruction of Israel and America would suffice. Some didn't bother to report that he had been freed, just stating ominously that he was "gone". Depending which report you had read, the event was either a harmless prank or the death of an American when the terrorist's demand of the destruction of Israel and America were not met.

If you want to know what happened, don't read the newspaper."

Amanda Nunn.

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