



Photo by: Mati Wagner

Chief Rabbis condemn killing of Abu Khdeir as 'outrageous murder'

By JEREMY SHARON
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Rabbi Levanon says it is biblical precept to 'eradicate evil from your midst;' says death penalty should also be used for Jewish teens' murderers.

Chief Rabbis Yitzhak Yosef and David Lau both condemned on Monday the murder of Muhammad Abu Khdeir, the Arab youth who was burnt alive last week, and called for an end to the violence and inter-communal tensions that have gripped the country in recent days.

Lau spoke out strongly against the murder saying it was not the way of the Torah, but also called on Arab leaders work actively to prevent a further deterioration in the security situation.

"There is no place for continued blood-letting from all sides, and communal tensions must be calmed," Lau said during the meeting of the Council of the Chief Rabbinate.

Yosef also condemned the murder, although a planned visit to Abu Khdeir's family was canceled by the police and the Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) due to specific security concerns for public figures wishing to pay their respects at the family home.

Yosef's office said the chief rabbi had wished "to transmit a message of conciliation and to fiercely denounce the outrageous murder that was perpetrated against the innocent young man."

“We as religious leaders need to lead with a conciliatory message to prevent continued pain and bereavement so that no one else is harmed,” Yosef said.

And on Sunday, Rabbi Elyakim Levanon, one of the leading rabbis of the settlements in Judea and Samaria, has called for the imposition of the death penalty for the murderers of Abu Khdeir.

Speaking to Walla news website, Levanon said Jewish law is not merciful when dealing with “such a cruel murder,” regardless of whether the victim was Jewish or not.

“There is an obligation to give them the death penalty, in order to fulfill the [Biblical precept of] ‘you shall eradicate the evil from your midst,’” the rabbi said.

“The State of Israel and its operational arms, the IDF and the security services are required and commanded to wage war against terror without mercy, until it has been expunged from the world,” adding that the murderers of Gil-Ad Shaer, Eyal Yifrah and Naftali Fraenkel should also receive the death penalty.

And the Barkai Center for Practical Rabbinics, which provides training for communal rabbis, called on synagogue rabbis to underline to their congregations that “revenge has absolutely no place in Judaism and that there is no such thing as murder in the name of God.”

Rabbis David Fine and Shlomo Sobol, the deans of Barkai, said “congregational rabbis during these times can have great influence and therefore it is critical that rabbis speak out unequivocally and unambiguously in deploring this dangerous and non-Jewish trend.”