

# Deported refugee killed

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A Palestinian refugee who was denied asylum in Australia and deported home was shot dead last week in Gaza, leaving a wife and four children behind.

Fr Frank Brennan SJ, who knew Akram al Masri well, said the young man had fled to Australia in the hope of finding a safe home for himself and his family.

'If Australia, in 2002, had been more generous to this Palestinian, al Masri, his wife and his four children would now be permanent residents of Australia', he told the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

Mr Masri was sent back to Gaza in September 2002 because he didn't have a visa, despite refugee advocates winning his release from the Woomera Detention Centre.

After his brother was killed earlier this year, Mr Masri applied for a visitor's visa to come to Australia, fearing he and his family would be killed next. His application was rejected.

It is unclear whether the shooting, outside a courthouse near the Khan Yunis refugee camp, was carried out by political party Fatah, who wrongly believed he was an Israeli collaborator, or if it was to avenge his alleged involvement in a clan dispute 18 months ago.

'He always claimed to be a refugee', said Fr Brennan. 'I don't know the circumstances of who killed him. But clearly he, like his brother, was a marked man.'

Fr Brennan spoke fondly of Mr Masri. 'He had a deep love of his wife and children, he wept for Palestine, and despite the dreadful adversity of Woomera, he always had a sense of humour.' ]\

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