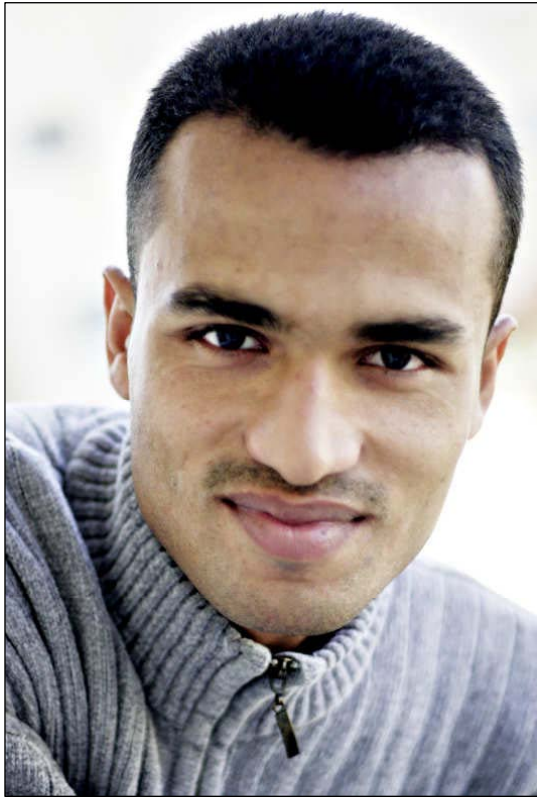


Gaza: Reports from the Ground

National Press Club, First Amendment Lounge, 529 14th St. NW, Washington, DC 20045

December 6, 2006, 1-2 pm (in-depth question and answer period, 2-3 pm)

For more information call *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* magazine, (202) 939-6050



Mohammed Omer, 22, was born and raised in the Rafah refugee camp, southern Gaza Strip near the Egyptian border. The oldest of eight children, Mohammed began working to support his family at age six when his father was in an Israeli prison. He hustled odd jobs and sold things like beans and popcorn in the street. In time, Mohammed landed a job in a backpack factory. Since then, Mohammed has built an impressive résumé as a translator, journalist and program coordinator.

At 17, he began translating for Global Exchange delegations to Gaza, traveling dignitaries and foreign reporters. At 18, he began writing regularly for international media, first with the now defunct *Social Nerve*. Mohammed has since published in dozens of newspapers and magazines worldwide, including the *Vermont Guardian*, *ArtVoice Weekly*, the Swedish dailies *Dagen Nyheter* and *Aftonbladet*, the Norwegian daily *Dagbladet*, the Basque daily *Berria*, the Swedish magazine *Arbetaren*, and the online magazine *Electronic Intifada*.

At age 19, he regularly appeared as an on-the-ground radio correspondent for *Free Speech Radio News*. Mohammed now makes frequent appearances on *BBC* and *BBC Scotland* radio, *BBC News 24 TV*, the Norwegian national *NRK TV*, and stations in Australia, South Africa, Ireland, and New Zealand. Currently he writes regularly on life in Gaza for the Norwegian weekly *Morgenbladet*, the German daily *junge Welt*, and the *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*. An excellent photographer, Mohammed's images are regularly featured in various international news agencies, including the Agence France-Presse (AFP) wire service. Mohammed also is known for the influential blog *RafahToday.org*, which grew out of his e-news letter *We Are Getting Killed*. For his articles in the *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, he has been honored by New American Media as the "Best Youth Voice" for 2006.



(Continued on reverse)

Mohammed also serves his fellow Gazans as project officer for international aid agencies and previously served as Gaza Coordinator for the Palestinian Children's Welfare Fund.

On Oct. 18, 2003, an Israeli sniper killed Mohammed's 17-year-old brother, Hussam as he was on his way to school. Nine days later, an Israeli D-9 bulldozer crushed Mohammed's family home without warning while his family was inside. As the walls buckled and the roof collapsed, the family was able to climb through a window. His mother was severely wounded during the escape, an injury from which she still suffers today. Over the years, almost all of Mohammed's siblings have been seriously maimed or injured by Israeli military forces.

In June 2006, Mohammed graduated with dual Bachelor degrees, English and Literature, from the Islamic University, Gaza's premier institution for higher education. His speaking tour of the United States, sponsored by the *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* will be his first. From Nov. 26 – Dec. 12, the tour will take him to more than fifteen U.S. cities.

Mohammed has experienced more pain, death, fear, destruction, hatred and despair in his 22 years than most people experience in a lifetime. He rises each day and, in spite of the pain, grabs his camera, pen and paper, and heads out into the war zone he calls home. "Words are my weapon against injustice, hate, starvation and oppression," he explains. With his bulletproof vest and Cannon D20 in hand, Mohammed is on the front lines.

