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Hamas Activity in Malaysia: Hamas' military-terrorist wing recruits students from Judea and Samaria in Malaysia. In addition, its operatives have been trained in Malaysia to use hang gliders to attack Israel.



The Malaysian prime minister visits the Gaza Strip after Operation Pillar of Defense. Left: Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak lays the cornerstone for reconstructing the Hamas administration building destroyed in Operation Pillar of Defense. Right: Najib Razak and Ismail Haniya, at the time head of the de-facto Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip, look at the remains of the vehicle of Ahmed Jaabari, commander of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing (Safa.ps, January 22, 2013).

Hamas' Military-Terrorist Wing's Activities in Malaysia

1. In recent years **two instances of Hamas military-terrorist wing activity in Malaysia were revealed**: following the indictment of **Wasim Qawasmeh, from Hebron**, it was recently made public that **he had been recruited by Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades in Malaysia**, along with other Palestinians from Judea and Samaria studying there. Previously, during Operation Protective Edge, the interrogation of a Hamas terrorist operative captured by the IDF near Khan Yunis, revealed that **he had been recruited by Hamas' military-terrorist wing and sent to Malaysia with nine other operatives to train in the use of hang gliders for carrying out a terrorist attack against Israel**. In ITIC assessment the local Malaysian authorities turn a blind eye to Hamas' activity, or even allow it, despite the

denials issued by both the Malaysian government and Hamas after Israel publicized the information.

2. According to the indictment handed down against Wasim Qawasmeh, **Hamas conducts extensive social and cultural activities for students at the International Islamic University Malaysia**. The activities are carried out by Palestinian students and lecturers in committees directed by Hamas (a cultural committee, a *da'wah* committee, etc.). The case of Wasim Qawasmeh shows that **the social and cultural activities are also exploited for covert activities in which operatives are recruited to Hamas' military-terrorist wing, sent to a course in Turkey (at Hamas' expense), given money by Hamas and then sent to Judea and Samaria**. The Israeli media reported that according to the Israel Security Agency, **in recent years the method was used to recruit forty Palestinian students to the ranks of Hamas' military-terrorist wing** (Amos Harel for Haaretz.com, April 28, 2015).

Recruitment to Hamas' Military Terrorist Wing While Studying in Malaysia: The Case of Wasim Qawasmeh

3. On **February 13, 2015, Wasim Rashad Umran Qawasmeh**, from Hebron, was detained at the Allenby Bridge when he returned from his studies in Malaysia via Jordan. On **March 18, 2015**, he was indicted by the Ofer Judea Military Court. According to the indictment he was recruited by Hamas during his studies at the **International Islamic University Malaysia**.¹ He then participated in Hamas activities and meetings, and **received funds from a Hamas operative** (Website of the Israeli military courts, March 18, 2015).

¹ The **International Islamic University Malaysia** is a state university whose main campus is in the city of Gombak, north of the capital city of Kuala Lumpur. The university was founded in 1983 with the support of a number of Islamic state governments, among them Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Pakistan and Bangladesh. It offers studies in the religion of Islam, the natural sciences, the social sciences and medicine (Wikipedia).

4. According to the indictment handed down by the Judea Military Court,² **Wasim Qawasmeh was recruited in the following manner:**

1) In 2011 Wasim Qawasmeh began his studies at the International Islamic University Malaysia. While there he belonged to a **Hamas cultural committee called Rabitat Bilad al-Sham – Malaysia** (The Greater Syria Association in Malaysia).³ At the beginning of 2014 he participated in Hamas' cultural and social activities as a member of the **local da'wah committee**. In December 2014 he was recruited to the Muslim Brotherhood by **Mustafa Nijm**, a Hamas activist in Malaysia, who formerly lived in Jordan (**Note:** Mustafa Nijm was head of Hamas' *da'wah* committee at the International Islamic University).

2) Around May 2014 Wasim Qawasmeh spoke to a man called "**Abu Muhammad**," who represented himself as **responsible, on behalf of Hamas, for students from Judea and Samaria** in Malaysia. They later met at a local mall where Abu Muhammad gave Qawasmeh 2,000 ringgit (about \$554). **He knew the money came from Hamas** (**Note:** In ITIC assessment Abu Muhammad was the Hamas military-terrorist operative who recruited Qawasmeh).

3) In July 2014 **Sharif Abu Shamala** (a Hamas activist in the Islamic University student association) **proposed to Wasim Qawasmeh that he participate in a Hamas management and command course in Turkey**. Qawasmeh agreed and in August 2014 **he flew from Malaysia to Turkey and participated in the course**, which lasted a week. **Hamas financed his stay in Turkey**. One of the lectures was given by **Muhammad Nizal**,⁴ a senior Hamas figure responsible the organization's foreign affairs (see below for Turkey's role in handling terrorist operatives and recruiting students).

² This section is based for the most part on the text of the indictment handed down against Wasim Qawasmeh, with additions from the article by Amos Harel in Haaretz, April 28, 2015, and additional ITIC information.

³ The student organization is called Rabitat Tulab al-Sham – Malaysia (that is, the Student Association Of Greater Syria, Malaysia). It has a Facebook page where it posts information about its activities.

⁴ **Muhammad Nizal** (Abu Baraa') has been a member of Hamas' political bureau since 1966. He was born in Jordan in 1963 to a family originally from Qalqiliya, and was educated in Kuwait. He has a B.A. and an M.A. in chemistry from the University of Karachi in Pakistan and a Ph.D. in communications from the University of Kuwait.

4) Around October 2014 Wasim Qawasmeh met with Abu Muhammad a second time and told him he wanted to work in management and not in the military sphere. Around December 2014 he participated in a meeting in Malaysia organized by Hamas' "training committee." That is the committee responsible for training Hamas operatives in research, management, the use of computers and the teaching of Hamas' history. A short time before he returned to Judea and Samaria he met with Abu Muhammad again and asked for additional funds, receiving a loan of \$1,000.

5) Approximately ten days before he was detained, Wasim Qawasmeh told Abu Muhammad that he was planning to return to Judea and Samaria. Abu Muhammad replied that **he would instruct him how on to conduct himself should he be detained and interrogated.** He told him **how to behave during the security check at the Allenby Bridge and what to say if detained by the Israeli security forces.** Shortly before he left he received an additional sum of 1,500 shekels (about \$390) from Abu Muhammad.

6) Around December 2013, while in Malaysia, Wasim Qawasmeh swore allegiance to Hamas. Present at the ceremony were Hamas activists, among them **Dr. Ma'an Khatib** (who taught at a Malaysian university and was responsible for the Malaysian arena for Hamas' external headquarters) and **Dr. Radwan al-Atrash** (who also taught at a Malaysian university).

5. In response to the reports in the Israeli media about Wasim Qawasmeh's recruitment in Malaysia, Hamas denied it recruited Palestinian students in Malaysia and claimed the reports were "mere lies." Malaysian Home Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamid also rejected the reports. He claimed they were "ridiculous" and that they were meant "to smear Malaysia's good name" (Rakyattimes.com, April 28, 2015). He also said "Malaysia is also a strong supporter of the Palestinians, morally and via humanitarian aid, ...[and] the strong support of Malaysians is because of the long relationship between Malaysian and Palestinian leaders. This may have caused dissatisfaction on the part of Israel" (Themalaysianinsider.com, April 29, 2015). **Malaysia's Deputy Home Minister Datuk Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar** said, "This is ridiculous, [the Israelis] are creating reasons to oppose Malaysia. You know this is what they always do, when they dislike a country..." (Rakayattimes.com, April 29, 2015).

Training Military-Terrorist Operatives in Malaysia in the Use of Hang Gliders

6. On the night of **July 20, 2014**, during Operation Protective Edge, an IDF force in the region of Qarara (Khan Yunis) detained a Hamas terrorist operative from **an Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades elite unit**. Interrogation revealed that he had been recruited to Hamas' military-terrorist wing in 2007. After three years **he and nine other Hamas terrorist operatives from various battalions were sent to Malaysia to train in the use of hang gliders**.

7. **They trained in Malaysia for a week in preparation for using hang gliders to infiltrate Israel to carry out an attack**. Upon his return to the Gaza Strip they were called for **additional training** in the Gaza Strip. **They were all warned to keep their activities secret and not to mention hang gliders**. **Later 2014 he underwent more training** in the Gaza Strip along with the other terrorist operatives who had trained in Malaysia (Shabak.gov.il, July 31, 2014). The entire group trained on the same hang glider.

8. **Malaysia denied the reports in the Israeli media** about Hamas operatives training in the country. The deputy home minister claimed Malaysia had never organized covert military training for Hamas operatives or for any other foreign country with which it had formal agreements (Malaysian News Agency, July 31, 2014). **Hamas also denied the reports**. The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades said in a press release that the accusations were lies meant to sabotage international support for the Palestinians and influence Malaysia's position on the Palestinian cause (Alresala.net, August 1, 2014).

The Role of Hamas' Military-Terrorist Headquarters in Turkey in Handling Terrorist Operatives

9. **Hamas' external military-terrorist headquarters is located in Turkey. Saleh Muhammad Suleiman al-Aroui**, one of the founders of Hamas military-terrorist wing in Judea and Samaria,⁵ is in charge. The IDF security services' interrogations of terrorist operatives clearly indicate **the main role played by Turkey in directing Hamas terrorism**. The Turkish headquarters gave the course attended by Wasim Qawasmeh.

10. According to the indictment, during interrogation Wasim Qawasmeh **admitted he had been sent by Hamas to a week-long course in Turkey**. While in Turkey he attended lectures given by Hamas operatives, among them **Muhammad Nizal**, responsible for Hamas' foreign desk. Among the activities it undertakes abroad, **Hamas' military-terrorist headquarters enlists Palestinian students and trains them, either in the countries where they study or in Turkey**. When they return to Judea and Samaria they are expected to participate in various operations **according to directions given by senior Hamas operatives in Turkey** (Shabak.gov.il, November 27, 2014).

11. Turkey provides Hamas with political, media and financial support. The case of Wasim Qawasmeh and other information gained from uncovering the Hamas terrorist networks in Judea and Samaria directed from Turkey, **again make it clear that Turkey allows or at least turns a blind eye to Hamas terrorist operations carried out within its borders** (also repeatedly denied by the Turkish authorities).

Malaysia's Relations with Hamas

12. Malaysia supports the Palestinian cause in general and Hamas in particular. For the most part it provides humanitarian and media support, but occasionally goes further. As seen by the two cases described above, Malaysia enables or at least turns a blind eye to the military-terrorist activities Hamas carried out on its soil, although Malaysian authorities have repeatedly denied it.

⁵ For **Saleh al-Aroui's** direction of Hamas terrorism from Turkey, see the August 24, 2014 bulletin "Saleh al-Aroui, Turkey-based senior Hamas operative who handles military-terrorist networks in Judea and Samaria, admitted that Hamas was behind the abduction and murder of the three Jewish youths from Gush Etzion."

13. The close political ties between Malaysia and Hamas are manifested by mutual visits:

1) **On January 22, 2013, Najib Razak, the prime minister of Malaysia**, and his wife paid a one-day visit to the Gaza Strip (without visiting the Palestinian Authority). He and his entourage of several ministers and senior businessmen were received by Ismail Haniya, at that time head of the de-facto Hamas administration (Radio Al-Aqsa, January 22, 2013). Najib Razak laid the cornerstone for the new Hamas administration building in Gaza City (after the previous one had been destroyed during Operation Pillar of Defense) and for a vocational school in the southern Gaza Strip. He was also awarded an honorary degree by Al-Aqsa University and visited the remains of the vehicle of Ahmed al-Jaabari, commander of Hamas' military-terrorist wing, who was killed by the IDF on November 14, 2012. During the visit his wife launched two medical projects (Safa.ps, January 22, 2013).

2) In **December 2013**, during a visit to Malaysia, **Khaled Mashaal**, head of Hamas' political bureau, made remarks praising the so-called "resistance" [i.e., the path of terrorism]. While in Malaysia he **visited the International Islamic University** (where Wasim Qawasmeh studied and where Hamas is active) and gave a speech where he claimed the "Palestinian resistance" was the "correct path" and "the natural right" of the Palestinian people. He also claimed that the solution for the Palestinian issue was not a peace agreement or negotiations, because if the results of the "resistance" were compared with the results of negotiations, it was clear that the "resistance" had led to the liberation of the Gaza Strip, the release of the prisoners in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal, the liberation of south Lebanon, etc. (Safa.ps, December 4, 2013).

14. **Note: Twenty-one pro-Palestinian Malaysian activists** participated in the *Mavi Marmara* flotilla to the Gaza Strip in May 2010. Nine belonged to pro-Palestinian NGOs, the most prominent of which was Haluan. Six others aboard the *Rachel Corrie* also participated in the flotilla.



The Malaysian delegation aboard the Mavi Marmara.