



**Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center  
at the Israel Intelligence Heritage  
& Commemoration Center (IICC)**

June 22, 2008

**Using civilians as human shields: ten Palestinians killed and several dozens (including women and children) injured in Beit Lahiya as a result of a “work accident”: an explosion flattened the house of Ahmed Hamouda, a senior Hamas operative in the northern Gaza Strip**

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Ahmed Hamouda's house, flattened as a result of the explosion (Al-Aqsa TV, June 12). The explosion was caused by a “work accident” involving Hamas operatives who were making preparations for a terrorist attack. Nearby residential buildings hit in the explosion can also be seen in the photograph.

## Overview

1. On June 12 in the afternoon, Palestinian media reported that a powerful explosion shook the Gaza neighborhood of Beit Lahiya, in the northern Gaza Strip. A six-storey residential building belonging to Ahmed Hamouda was almost completely destroyed and several nearby residential buildings and businesses were severely damaged. Ten Palestinians were killed and several dozens were wounded in the explosion. Six of those killed were Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades operatives, including three commanders in the northern Gaza Strip. Also killed and wounded were many civilians, including Hamouda's four-month-old baby daughter.

2. The owner of the exploded building was **Ahmed Muhammad Khaled Hamouda**, a senior Hamas operative, born in Beit Lahiya in 1977. He studied engineering in the Islamic University of Gaza and was active in Hamas's social infrastructure (*da'wa*) since 1998. He was involved in terrorist-operative activity since 2001 and attained the rank of senior commander in the Gaza Strip.



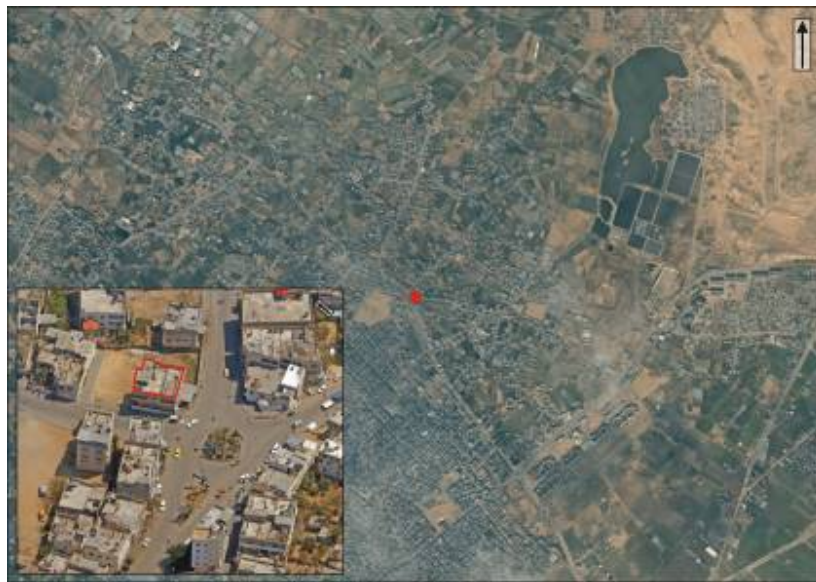
Ahmed Hamouda  
(Izz al-Din al-Qassam  
Brigades' website,  
June 12)

## Attempt to blame Israel for the explosion

3. Hamas and other terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip rushed to blame Israel for the explosion. **A spokesman for the Hamas administration's Ministry of Interior Affairs** claimed that, according to an initial inquiry, the explosion was caused by an attack of F-16 fighter planes (Ma'an News Agency, June 12). **In response, the IDF Spokesman noted that the IDF had nothing to do with the incident, and that IDF's land and air forces were not involved in any operations in the area at the time the explosion had occurred.**



The flattened house in Beit Lahiya (Al-Aqsa TV, June 12)



An aerial photograph of Ahmed Hamouda's house before the "work accident". It is clearly evident that the house is located inside a densely-populated residential quarter.

4. Having accused Israel of being responsible for the explosion, and before conducting a thorough investigation of the incident, Hamas spokesman **Mushir al-Masri** announced that Israel would pay a heavy price for the Beit Lahiya explosion. At the same time, Hamas's terrorist-operative wing launched a **massive rocket and mortar attack from the northern Gaza Strip at Israeli territory** (a total of about 20 rockets and 30 mortar shells were fired at Israeli population centers near the northern Gaza Strip).



Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades “return fire” at Israeli population centers  
(Al-Aqsa TV, June 12)

## Investigation of the incident shows it was a “work accident”

5. Later, **after dozens of mortar shells and rockets were fired at Israel in response**, Hamas spokesman Ayman Taha announced that an investigation of the explosion got underway. Following the investigation, whose details were not disclosed, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades issued an official statement according to which the explosion resulted in the deaths of six military-terrorist operatives, including three commanders, who **“were making final preparations for carrying out a special mission of jihad”**. The statement also said that two civilian members of the Hamouda family were killed in the explosion, including Nour Majdi Hamouda, the daughter of a Hamas commander (Izz al-Din al-Qassam website, June 13).<sup>1</sup>

6. The text of Hamas’s announcement leads one to conclude that **the building collapsed as a result of a “work accident” involving Hamas operatives who were making preparations for a terrorist attack.**<sup>2</sup> The nature of the explosion and the damage caused to the building and to nearby buildings show **that it was a large quantity of explosives** that led to the building’s collapse. Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum said that the movement would

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<sup>1</sup> The death toll increased to 10 after two more civilians died of their wounds.

<sup>2</sup> According to the Pal-Press website (June 12), the investigation showed that the explosion was in fact a result of a “work accident”. According to the report, the explosion occurred in the house of Ahmed Hamouda, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades commander in the Beit Lahiya region, who worked in Hamas’s (weapons) manufacturing unit.

compensate and assist the relatives of those killed or injured in the explosion (Al-Hayat, June 14).

7. It is not the first time that civilian population in the Gaza Strip suffers as a result of “work accidents” of Hamas and other terrorist organizations. **Such accidents are fairly common**, since most of the weapons manufacturing infrastructure of those organizations is located inside **densely-populated civilian areas** (including weapons storehouses, explosive laboratories, military-terrorist bases, and weapons manufacturing workshops).<sup>3</sup> Palestinian terrorist organizations occasionally blame Israel for such “work accidents” and follow up those incidents with rocket and mortar attacks on Israeli population centers, reacting to incidents which, as was the case in Beit Lahiya, have nothing to do with Israel (see Appendix).

8. Referring to the “work accident”, Fatah sources criticized Hamas, claiming that the incident exposed Hamas’s disregard for human lives and the fact that it uses the civilian environment for military purposes (Palestinian TV, June 14). Furthermore, the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, headed by Bassem Eid, issued a statement titled “Stop This Tragedy!” The statement expresses concern over the recurrence of such explosions as took place in Beit Lahiya,<sup>4</sup> caused by manufacturing weapons and storing them in populated areas. The statement also calls upon the organizations to take effective steps to ensure the non-recurrence of such incidents (see Appendix B).

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<sup>3</sup> For details, see our Information Bulletin: “During the last round of escalation in the Gaza Strip the terrorist organizations again made extensive use of Palestinian civilians as human shields” (March 5, 2008).

## Appendix A

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### Examples of “work accidents” harming innocent civilians<sup>5</sup>

1. **On May 31, 2008**, Hamas operative Nader Abu Sha'ban was killed in an explosion which took place in his house as he was manufacturing explosives. Sixteen of his neighbors and family members were injured.

2. **On February 15, 2008** in the evening, an explosion occurred in the house of PIJ senior **Ayman al-Fayed**, located in the Al-Bureij refugee camp (in the central Gaza Strip). According to Palestinian media reports, nine Palestinians were killed in the explosion, including Al-Fayed, his wife and his daughter, and dozens of civilians were injured. At first, Palestinian media reported that the incident was a “work accident”, but then, as usual, laid the blame at Israel’s door. **In response, the IDF Spokesman stated that Israel was in no way involved.**

3. **On September 23, 2005**, the Hamas movement held a victory rally in the Jebaliya refugee camp, in the outskirts of Gaza City. Weapons were displayed on a military parade that took place as part of the rally. An explosion which occurred during the military parade killed 19 and injured over 80 people, some of them senior Hamas operatives. The explosion took place when two rockets fell out of a vehicle during the parade. Hamas rushed to blame Israel for the incident. **Several hours after the accident, there was an exceptional barrage of 15 rockets fired at the town of Sderot.** Also, one rocket landed near the power plant in Ashkelon. That was a “response” to an incident which Israel had nothing to do with.

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<sup>4</sup> The statement uses the term “internal explosions” to refer to blasts resulting from “work accidents”.

<sup>5</sup> Usually, the media in the Gaza Strip are controlled by Hamas and do not publish reliable information on “work accidents”, let alone admit that Hamas and other terrorist organizations are responsible for them.



The explosion during the military parade ( Hamas's website)

4. **On September 5, 2005**, a “work accident” occurred in one of Hamas’s explosive laboratories, located in the Gaza City neighborhood of Shajaiyya. As a result of the explosion, four civilians were killed and more than thirty were wounded.

## Appendix B

### Statement issued by the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights



Palestinian Centre for Human Rights  
المركز الفلسطيني لحقوق الإنسان

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- Special Consultive Status, ECOSOC
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- Affiliate, International Commission of Jurists
- Member, Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network
- International Legal Assistance Consortium (ILAC)

#### Press Releases

Ref: 54/2008

Date: 15 June 2008

Time: 09:30 GMT

#### Stop This Tragedy!

#### **PCHR Concerned Over Casualties Caused by Continuing Internal Explosions: 8 Palestinians, Including a Child, Killed and More than 40 Injured After Explosion in Beit Lahia**

PCHR is deeply concerned about the recurrence of internal explosions as a result of weapons being manufactured, and stored, in areas populated by civilians. These actions are threatening the lives and property of Palestinian civilians. PCHR calls upon Palestinian resistance groups to take immediate measures to ensure the non-recurrence of such explosions. The most recent explosion, in Beit Lahia on June 12, killed eight Palestinians, including an infant, and injured at least forty others.

According to investigations conducted by PCHR and eye-witness testimonies, at approximately 13:30 on Thursday, 12 June, a huge explosion occurred in a 400-square-meter house belonging to 'Abdul 'Azim Khaled Hammouda in the centre of Beit Lahia town, in the northern Gaza Strip. The house was completely destroyed and dozens of neighboring houses were also damaged, five of them



seriously. Ambulances and civil defense crews rushed to the area, and removed victims' bodies from beneath the ruins of the destroyed house, and neighbouring houses. The victims included 4-month-old Nour Majdi Hammouda, who was killed whilst inside her family home, and 16-year-old Mahmoud 'Ataya Hammouda, who was killed whilst walking near the site of the explosion.

The 'Izziddin al-Qassam Brigades (the armed wing of Hamas) stated in a press release issued on 13 June, that 6 of its members were killed "while they were in the final stage of preparation for a special Jihad mission." Those members have been identified as:

- 1) Ashraf Na'im Mushtaha, 32;
- 2) Hassan Mohammed Abu Shaqfa, 28;
- 3) Majid 'Aadel Hammouda, 28;
- 4) Mohammed Sabri Abu Naja, 25;
- 5) Mohammed Hamdan Miqdad, 22;
- 6) Ahmed Muneer Subaih, 20.

In light of the above, PCHR:

- 1) Warns of the dangers caused by continued manufacturing or storage of explosive devices by Palestinian resistance groups in civilian-populated areas, which threaten the lives of Palestinian civilians and violate international humanitarian law.
- 2) Calls upon Palestinian resistance groups to take effective steps to ensure the non-recurrence of such incidents.