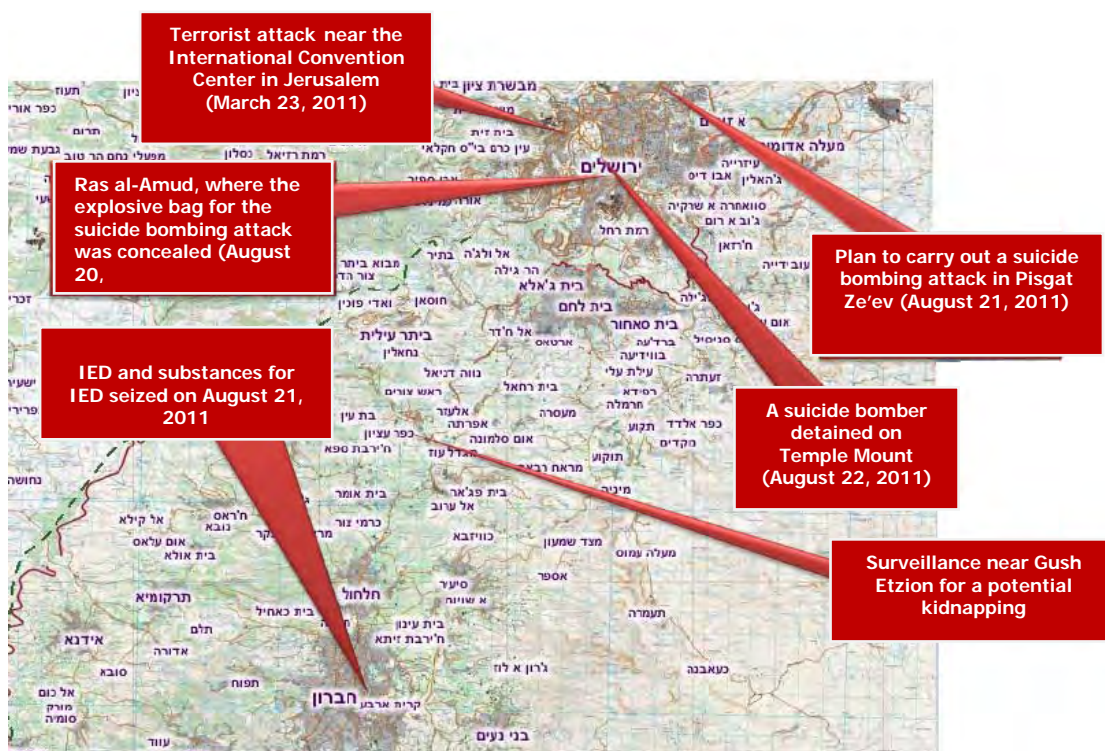




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**The Meir Amit Intelligence
and Terrorism Information Center**

Israeli security forces exposed Hamas terrorist cells in Judea and Samaria. One of them had exploded an IED in Jerusalem and planned to carry out a suicide bombing attack. This shows that Hamas is trying to rebuild its military infrastructure in Judea and Samaria, remaining highly motivated to perpetrate terrorist attacks.¹



Mapping terrorist activities carried out by the exposed cells (Israel Security Agency website, September 8, 2011)

¹ Based on information provided by the Israel Security Agency as it appears on its website (shabak.gov.il, September 2011).

Overview

1. Since May 2011, the Israel Security Agency (ISA), in collaboration with the IDF and the Israeli police, exposed **thirteen Hamas terrorist cells in Judea and Samaria**. The cells were **in various stages of preparation for terrorist attacks**. They operated mostly in **Hebron and Jerusalem**. **Dozens of Hamas operatives** have been detained so far as a result of the exposures.

2. Interrogation of the detainees showed that **their main objective was to kidnap Israeli citizens for bargaining**. Also planned were **mass murder terrorist attacks**, one of which was actually carried out: in March 2011 a cell based in Hebron detonated an IED near Binyane Ha'uma (the International Convention Center) in Jerusalem, killing a British tourist and wounding scores of Israelis. **Other operations planned by the cells were thwarted, and the operatives were detained.**

3. Interrogation of the detainees showed that **headquarters and operatives abroad and in Israeli prisons were highly involved in terrorist recruitment and handling in Judea and Samaria, which included assistance in transferring weapons and funds**. **In this context:**

a. The cells in Judea and Samaria **were directed and logistically assisted by Hamas headquarters in Syria and the Gaza Strip**. **The Hamas headquarters in Syria** transferred funds and instructions for terrorist attacks, and provided training in the use of firearms and preparation of explosives. **The Hamas headquarters in the Gaza Strip helped with guidance and funding, and intended to transfer weapons to Judea and Samaria via Sinai.**

b. **Hamas operatives held in Israeli prisons** were involved in recruiting soon-to-be-released convicts into terrorist cells, training them, and providing them with instructions for terrorist attacks.

c. **Saudi Arabia** was the place where **recruitment meetings were held and instructions from members of the Hamas military wing were transferred to operatives in Hebron**. One of the people involved in those meetings was a Hamas military operative who handles recruits in Judea and Samaria from his residence in Saudi Arabia. An operative from Hebron was also involved in operations carried out on behalf of the Hamas headquarters in Syria in other countries, including **China and Turkey**.

4. The exposure of these terrorist cells shows that **Hamas headquarters are engaged in intensive efforts to rebuild the movement's military infrastructure in Judea and Samaria** for the purpose of launching terrorist attacks against Israel, **heavily relying on terrorists held in Israeli prisons**, most of them former Hamas operatives. The exposure also indicates that **Hamas is highly motivated and well prepared to carry out terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria**, particularly kidnapping for bargaining purposes. **It is possible that the motivation to carry out terrorist attacks has even increased (and may increase still) ahead of the PA's application to the UN.**

5. Hamas' military wing spokesman **Abu Obeida** commented on the publication about the exposure of the cells by saying that Israel's claims "raise questions", even though Hamas maintains its "right" to "fight any element whatsoever". Abu Obeida claimed that the publication aims to spread incitement against prisoners, disrupt the prisoner swap deal, and compromise neighboring countries where Hamas allegedly operates (Ma'an News Agency, September 7, 2011).

The terrorist network directed from an Israeli prison (Ketziot)

6. Beginning in mid-2010, the ISA, with the assistance of the Israeli Prison Service, exposed a **Hamas military network operating in Ketziot prison**. The network recruited **over twenty convicts from Judea and Samaria** (most of them near the end of their sentences) for terrorist activity. They were instructed to organize into cells and carry out terrorist attacks, **and to focus on kidnapping soldiers to use as bargaining chips when negotiating the release of terrorist prisoners**. **The funding for the establishment and activity of the network came partly from Hamas elements in the Gaza Strip.**

7. **After being recruited**, the recruits, most of whom had been charged with involvement in terrorist activity, **received theoretical training in the preparation of IEDs**. They were given instructions telling them what to do upon release. Among other things, they were instructed to **establish cells, locate suitable places where they could hide kidnapped Israelis, obtain weapons by stealing from the PA security services and IDF bases, gather ammunition in IDF training grounds, and acquire weapons using funds received from Hamas operatives in the Gaza Strip.**

8. One of the network's most prominent figures is **Saber Diab**, from Qalqilya, who is serving a sentence in Ketziot prison until 2014 for terrorist activity, including setting IEDs and

planning a suicide bombing attack. **While in prison, he was involved in locating and recruiting operatives into the network, helped provide them with theoretical training in the preparation of IEDs, and worked to obtain funding from Hamas in the Gaza Strip for the establishment and operation of the network.**

Exposure of a Hamas network in Hebron which planned and carried out mass killing and kidnapping attacks

9. Beginning in mid-August 2010, the ISA, with the assistance of the IDF and the Israeli police, exposed a **Hamas military network based in Hebron that was planning to carry out mass murder terrorist attacks and kidnap Israeli citizens.** The Hebron network also had a **branch in Jerusalem, which on March 23, 2011 set an IED near the International Convention Center in Jerusalem.**²



Terrorist attack at a bus station near the International Convention Center in Jerusalem on March 23, 2011. A British citizen was killed and 47 Israeli citizens were wounded in the attack (photo by National Press Bureau, March 24, 2011).

10. One of the terrorist attacks planned by the Jerusalem cell was a **suicide bombing attack in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Pisgat Ze'ev, supposed to be carried out on August 21, 2011.** The would-be suicide bomber was **Sa'id Qawasmeh, 20, a Hamas operative from Hebron.** He was detained on Temple Mount on August 22. The explosive charge he was planning to use for the suicide bombing attack weighed about 6 kg and consisted of a fire extinguisher covered in metal pellets and filled with explosives. **The cell was also planning to kidnap Israelis near Gush Etzion and Hebron,** for which purpose it conducted surveillance near the Gush Etzion junction. In addition, it was planning several shooting attacks.

² In the afternoon of March 23 an IED concealed in a bag blew up at a bus station near the International Convention Center in Jerusalem. British citizen Mary-Jane Gardner, 59, was killed and 47 Israeli citizens were wounded. Two buses were hit.

11. **The Hebron network was directed by the Hamas headquarters in Syria**, which provided the network with **funds and instructions** by a courier. The courier, **Ayman al-Adam**, a Jordanian of Palestinian descent from the village of Beit Awla (near Hebron), was detained on July 27, 2011. During questioning, he said he had **received training in Syria**, which included the use of firearms and preparation of explosives. He was handled by **Azzam al-Aqra**, a top military operative in the Hamas headquarters in Syria. **Ayman al-Adam acted on Al-Aqra's behalf in various places worldwide, including Syria, China, and Turkey.** He was sent to Hebron by the headquarters in Syria, where he delivered **funds and instructions for bombings and kidnapping.**



Right: an IED seized in the house of Ishaq Arafa, a Hamas operative in East Jerusalem. Left: the bag where the IED was concealed (ISA website, August 8, 2011). Also seized in Hebron were another IED and explosives for the production of IEDs to be used in other bombings planned by the Hamas network.

12. **The following are details on two other key terrorist operatives belonging to the network:**

a. **Hussein Qawasmeh**, from Hebron, ex-convict, Hamas military operative and the network's expert on explosives (referred to as "the engineer"). He was recruited to participate in terrorist activity by **Ma'moun Qapisha, a Hamas military operative currently staying in Saudi Arabia, where he directs Hamas terrorist activity in Judea and Samaria.** Qawasmeh prepared the IED used in the terrorist attack near the International Convention Center (March 2011). Another IED was seized at his house.

b. **Ishaq Arafa**, 23, Hamas operative from the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Ras al-Amud, holder of an Israeli ID. Prior to his arrest, he worked at a function hall in Jerusalem; member of **Shabab al-Aqsa, a network comprised of young Hamas sympathizers whose aim is to conduct activity on Temple Mount.** Arafa is the person who, **together with Hussein Qawasmeh, prepared the IED that blew up near the International Convention Center, and the one who placed the explosive bag at a nearby bus station.** Ishaq Arafa brought the IED to Jerusalem

to use in the suicide bombing attack, and hid it near his house in Ras al-Amud. He was also supposed to meet with the suicide bomber and lead him to the designated bombing site in the Pisgat Ze'ev region. During questioning, he admitted that he had also planned a kidnapping near the Gush Etzion junction, for which purpose he conducted surveillance in that region.

Exposure of a Hamas cell in Hebron which planned kidnapping attacks

13. In June 2011, the ISA, with the assistance of the IDF, exposed **a Hamas cell in Hebron in final stages of preparation for terrorist attacks**. The cell members were **directed by the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the Hamas military wing in the Gaza Strip**. Among other things, the cell was instructed to carry out a kidnapping. Weapons for the cell **were supposed to be smuggled from the Gaza Strip via Sinai**.

14. A key figure in the affair was **Ahmed Madhoun**, leader of the Hebron cell, Hamas terrorist and ex-convict. **While in Saudi Arabia, he was recruited to participate in terrorist activity by two Hamas operatives from the Gaza Strip**, who instructed him to establish a military cell and kidnap a soldier for bargaining. **The two operatives gave him a sum of \$10,000 to establish and equip the cell**. He was also given reference materials on military subjects, including instructions for manufacturing weapons. When he came back, he began recruiting members into his cell.