



Hamas activist Fadi al-Batsh killed in Malaysia

April 22, 2018

Overview

► **On April 21, 2018, two masked assailants shot Fadi al-Batsh to death in Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia.** Fadi al-Batsh, 35, a Palestinian from the Gaza Strip, was an electrical engineer and a lecturer at the British-Malaysian Institute of the Kuala Lumpur University. According to a Malaysian newspaper, **he was also an expert in the construction of rockets, active in Islamist groups in Malaysia and a Hamas activist.**

► **Hamas confirmed that Fadi al-Batsh was a member of the movement** and erected two mourning tents to commemorate him (one in Jabalia and the other in a "great return march" camp). Palestinian sources, led by Hamas, accused Israel of being involved in his death, although they emphasized that it was necessary to wait for the results of the investigation. According to **Isma'il Haniyeh**, head of Hamas' political bureau, **Israel opened a front against Hamas beyond its borders.**

Malaysia supports the Palestinian cause in general and Hamas in particular. It provides political, humanitarian and media support, but sometimes goes further. **For years Hamas' military wing has been active in Malaysia, recruiting and training operatives.** During Operation Protective Edge the IDF detained an operative of Hamas' Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades special unit in the southern Gaza Strip. During interrogation he said **he had been sent**, as part of group of 10 operatives, **to Malaysia for training in operating hang gliders, in preparation for infiltrating Israel to carry out a terrorist attack** (see appendix). In 2015 a resident of Hebron was detained who had been **recruited by Hamas while he was studying in Malaysia.** From Malaysia he had been flown to Turkey to participate in a management and command course, and from **there he was sent to Judea and Samaria.** Both incidents indicate that **Malaysia either enables or at the very least turns as blind eye to Hamas' military-intelligence activities carried out on its soil**, especially among Palestinian students and lecturers at its universities (although Malaysia strongly denies it).

Initial information about the killing of Fadi al-Batsh

- ▶ On April 21, 2018, two masked assailants riding a motorcycle shot Fadi al-Batsh near his home in Kuala Lumpur. He was shot at around 0600 hours while he was on his way to morning prayers at the mosque near his home in Gombak, in the northern part of the city. According to reports, the two assailants waited nearby for about 20 minutes until he left the house.
- ▶ According to the Kuala Lumpur chief of police, the assailants fired 14 bullets. One hit him in the head, killing him instantly. The Malaysian authorities began an investigation. Sources in the police force said it was a targeted killing and not a terrorist attack. A press conference was held the day after the attack where the chief of police said they had questioned the family but so far had no information about who was behind the killing. He asked for help from the public (Ynet, April 22, 2018).



The scene of the killing, Malaysia (Palinfo Twitter account, April 21, 2018).

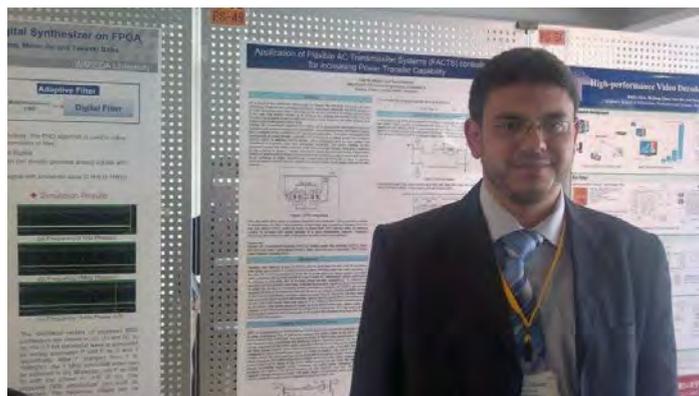
- ▶ **Deputy Malaysian prime minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi** expressed sorrow over the death of Fadi al-Batsh. He said that **the suspects were believed to have ties with a foreign intelligence agency**. He said that al-Batsh had been active in Palestinian NGOs and even had connections with foreign intelligence, and therefore could be seen as "a liability for a country that is an enemy of Palestine." He also said the Malaysian police had been instructed to begin a comprehensive investigation of the event (Reuters, April 21, 2018).



Death notice issued by the Palestinian students' association in Malaysia (Palinfo Twitter account, April 21, 2018).

Biographical information about Fadi al-Batsh

► **Fadi al-Batsh (Abu Muhammad)** was born in Jabalia in the Gaza Strip in 1983. He was married and had three children, and was a **devout Muslim**. He was an electrical engineer, and had a BS and an MS from the Islamic University in Gaza. When he finished his studies he worked for the Gazan electric authority. In 2011 he left the Gaza Strip for Malaysia and got his PhD at Malaya University. He was considered gifted in his field and won prizes for excellence. He had recently begun lecturing at the British-Malaysian Institute of the Kuala Lumpur University (aljazeera.net and the Palinfo Twitter account, April 21, 2018). He was also the imam of the al-Abbas mosque (Safa, April 21, 2018).



Fadi al-Batsh in Malaysia (Facebook page of Shehab, April 22, 2018).



**Fadi al-Batsh records Qur'an verses in Malaysia
(Twitter account of Adhem Abu Salmia, April 21, 2018).**

- The Malaysian New Street newspaper claimed that **as an electrical engineer he was also an expert in constructing rockets**. It also reported that in addition to his activities in Islamic groups in Malaysia, **he was a Hamas operative** (Eremnews, April 21, 2018).

Initial reactions to the death of Fadi al-Batsh

Hamas

- **Hamas confirmed that Fadi al-Batsh was a member of the movement and accused Israel of killing him**. Hamas said in a statement that he had been killed in Kuala Lumpur by a "treacherous hand." According to the statement, **al-Batsh was a Hamas activist from Jabalia and an expert scientist**. He had made significant contributions in the "field of energy" and participated in international energy conventions (Hamas website, April 21, 2018). On the other hand, **Usama Hamdan, in charge of Hamas' international relations**, said that it was impossible to accuse anyone because the Malaysian authorities were still investigating. He said Hamas was closely following the investigation and **would make accusations only after it had been completed** (al-Jazeera, April 21, 2018).



Cartoon drawn by Gazan 'Ala' al-Laqta accusing Israel of responsibility for the killing of Fadi al-Batsh (Palinfo Twitter account, April 22, 2018).

► Hamas erected a mourning tent in Jabalia. At the entrance there were banners, **one from Hamas the other from its military wing, the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades** (Palinfo Twitter account, April 21, 2018). Hamas erected a second mourning tent in a "return camp" east of Gaza City (Palinfo Twitter account, April 21, 2018). **Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau**, visited the mourning tent with other members of the Hamas leadership. He called the killing a violation of Malaysian sovereignty and of the understandings that regulate conduct between nations. He asked the Malaysian government to immediately begin an investigation into the circumstances of al-Batsh' death. **He said Hamas had sent a delegation to Malaysia to investigate.** He claimed it was a "failed attempt by Israel to draw international attention away from its crimes in the Gaza Strip." **He also said that Israel had opened a front of confrontation with Hamas, beyond its borders** (Shehab, April 21, 2018).



Right: Mourning tent erected by Hamas in Jabalia to commemorate Fadi al-Batsh. The banners at the entrance were hung by Hamas and the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, announce his death and call him one of their activists (Palinfo Twitter account, April 21, 2018). Left: Mourning tent erected by Hamas at the "return camp" east of Gaza City (Palinfo Twitter account, April 22, 2018).



**Right: Notice issued by Hamas about the death of Fadi al-Batsh (Hamas website, April 21, 2018).
Left: Isma'il Haniyeh and other senior Hamas figures offer their condolences to the family of Fadi
al-Batsh in Jabalia (Palinfo Twitter account, April 21, 2018).**

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)

► **Khaled al-Batsh, a senior PIJ figure and a relative of Fadi al-Batsh**, blamed Israel for his death. He demanded that the Malaysian authorities carry out an urgent investigation to expose those involved in the killing. He also called on the Malaysia authorities to return the body for burial in Jabalia (al-Mayadeen, April 21, 2018).

Fatah and the Palestinian Authority (PA)

► **Anwar al-Agha, PA representative in Malaysia**, said the Palestinians trusted the investigations carried out by the Malaysian security forces. He said that according to the initial findings, al-Batsh had been shot at close range by two assailants carrying guns with silencers. He refused to accuse any specific party, saying he preferred to wait for the outcome of the investigation. He said the Palestinian embassy in Malaysia was in contact with the Egyptian embassy to arrange for transporting the body to the Gaza Strip (Quds Press, April 21, 2018).



Notice issued by the PA embassy in Malaysia (Palinfo Twitter account, April 21, 2018).

- **Fatah issued a statement condemning the killing and accusing Israel.** It said Israel had returned to its policy of assassination in various capital cities around the globe, undermining state sovereignty (Dunia al-Watan, April 21, 2018).

Appendix

Hamas-Malaysia relations

Overview

Malaysia supports the Palestinian cause in general and Hamas in particular. It provides political, humanitarian and media support, but often its support for Hamas goes further. Several past events have shown that **Malaysia enables or at least turns a blind eye to Hamas recruiting and training operatives in Malaysian territory** (which Malaysia strongly denies). The activities are mostly carried out by Palestinian students in Malaysian universities. One is them was International Islamic University Malaysia,¹ where a Palestinian from Hebron was studying. He was recruited to Hamas and sent to Turkey for a course and from there to Judea and Samaria (see below). Because of Malaysia's distance from the Gaza Strip, Hamas does to handle the students directly from there but rather operates in countries closer to Judea and Samaria, especially Turkey.

Political ties between Hamas and Malaysia

► **The close political ties between Hamas and Malaysia include mutual visits.** On January 22, 2013, **Prime Minister Haji Muhammad Najib and his wife paid a one-day visit to the Gaza Strip** (without going to the PA). He was joined by a number of Malaysian ministers and businessmen, and **was personally received by Isma'il Haniyeh, head of the de facto Hamas administration** (Radio al-Aqsa, January 22, 2013). He laid cornerstones for the reconstruction of the Hamas administration building, which was destroyed during Operation Pillar of Defense, and for a vocational training school in the southern Gaza Strip. He also received an honorary PhD from al-Aqsa University in Gaza City, and went to see the vehicle of Ahmed al-Ja'abari, head of Hamas' military wing, who was killed by the IDF on November 14, 2012. His wife also inaugurated two medical projects (Safa, January 22, 2013).

¹ **The International Islamic University Malaysia** is a government institution whose main campus is in Gombak, in the northern part of Kuala Lumpur. The university was founded in 1983 with the support of a number of governments of Muslim countries, including Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Pakistan and Bangladesh. It teaches Islamic religious studies as well as the natural sciences, the social sciences and medicine (Wikipedia).

► In December 2013 Khaled Mashaal paid a visit to Malaysia, which included the International Islamic University Malaysia. While there he gave a speech in which he said **the "Palestinian resistance" [i.e., the path of terrorism] was the correct path and "the natural right" of the Palestinian people**. He added that the way to resolve the Palestinian issue was **not with a peace agreement or negotiations**. If the results of the "resistance" were compared with the results of negotiations, it could clearly be seen that the "resistance" had led to the liberation of the Gaza Strip, of the prisoners in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal, and the liberation of south Lebanon (Safa, December 4, 2013).

► Moreover, **there were 20 pro-Palestinian Malaysian activists aboard the *Mavi Marmara*** (2010). Nine of them belonged to pro-Palestinian Malaysian NGOs, prominent among which was an organization called Haluan. Six Malaysian activists were aboard the *Rachel Corrie*, which also participated in the *Mavi Marmara* flotilla.



The Malaysian delegation that participated in the *Mavi Marmara* flotilla

Hamas' military-terrorist activity in Malaysia²

► **Hamas' military wing has carried out activity in Malaysia for many years recruiting and training terrorist operatives**. In 2015 a student from Hebron was indicted when he returned from **Malaysia, where he had been recruited by Hamas**. According to the indictment, Hamas conducts extensive social and cultural activities among students in Malaysia. Those activities are also **exploited for the covert recruitment of operatives to Hamas military wing**, who are then sent by Hamas to participate in courses in Turkey, paid

² For further information, see the May 6, 2015 bulletin, "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."

for by Hamas. **They receive funds from Hamas and are sent to Judea and Samaria.** The Israel media reported that according to the Israel Security Agency, **several dozen Palestinians were recruited to the ranks of Hamas' military wing in recent years from Malaysia** (article by Amos Harel, Haaretz, April 28, 2015).

► **On the night of July 20, 2014, during Operation Protective Edge, an IDF force detained an Hamas operative in the region of Qarareh (Khan Yunis). He belonged to a special unit of the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades.** During interrogation he said he had been recruited to the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades in 2007. After three years in the military wing, **he joined a 10-man group from various units that was sent to Malaysia for training in the use of hang gliders.**

► **The operatives trained in Malaysia for about a week, learning how to use hang gliders in order to infiltrate Israel to carry out a terrorist attack.** When he returned to the Gaza Strip he and the other operatives were given more training in the Gaza Strip. They were all warned to keep the training secret and not to discuss the subject of hang gliders at all. In 2014 he and the operatives who had trained with him in Malaysia were given more training (Israel Security Agency, July 31, 2014).

► **Apparently, local authorities in Malaysia turn a blind eye to Hamas' activities, or may even authorize them.** However, **Malaysia has denied the media reports** claiming that it trained Hamas operatives in its territory. The deputy interior minister claimed Malaysia never organized secret military training for Hamas operatives or for any other group except for those from countries with which Malaysia has formal agreements (Malaysian News Agency, July 31, 2014). **Hamas also issued a denial.** Its military wing issued a press release stating that the accusations were false and their objective was to undermine international support for the Palestinians and influence Malaysia's position on the Palestinian cause (alresala.net, August 1, 2014).