# **Witnesses: Hamas fired from school**

January 6, 2009

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Jerusalem Post

http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Witnesses-Hamas-fired-from-school

Two residents of the area near UN school that was shelled by the IDF on Tuesday said that they had seen a small group of terrorists firing mortar rounds from a street close to the school. The two spoke with The Associated Press by telephone on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal. Meanwhile, a UNRWA official denounced on Wednesday the shelling of the UN school, and demanded that an independent investigation be launched to determine the facts of the incident. Christopher Gunness of the UN Relief and Works Agency, responsible for the school, said the agency was "99.9 percent certain there were no militants or military activity in its school." Gunness said 1,300 people were taking shelter from the shelling at the school. At least 30 Palestinians were killed and over 50 wounded in the IDF attack on a Hamas rocket squad based in the UN school, military sources said. Dr. Bassam Abu Warda, director of Kamal Radwan Hospital, said 34 people were killed by a strike outside the school. The UN confirmed that 30 were killed and 55 were wounded by tank shells.

The army said the school grounds were being used by terrorists to fire mortar shells at troops stationed nearby, and the soldiers responded by firing back. According to the IDF, the dead included members of the Hamas rocket cell, including senior operatives Imad Abu Askhar and Hassan Abu Askhar. Defense officials told The Associated Press that booby-trapped bombs in the school had triggered secondary explosions that killed additional Palestinians there. The army noted that Tuesday was not the first time Hamas had attacked Israel from within a school. The IDF released a video taken by an unmanned aerial vehicle in late 2007 showing terrorists firing mortars from right outside a school. "Hamas has in the past fired at Israel and at troops from inside schools, [exploiting] civilians, as is proven by UAV footage," the army said. The UN said hundreds of people from a Gaza City refugee camp had gone to seek shelter in the school from the IDF's offensive. "There's nowhere safe in Gaza. Everyone here is terrorized and traumatized," said John Ging, an Irishman who is the top UN official in Gaza. "I am appealing to political leaders here, in Israel, and in the region and the world to get their act together and stop this," Ging said, speaking at the Strip's largest hospital. "They are responsible for these deaths." Maxwell Gaylard, the UN humanitarian coordinator for the Palestinian territories, demanded an investigation. "As one of the most densely populated places in the world, it is clear that more civilians will be killed," Gaylard said. "These tragic incidents need to be investigated, and if international humanitarian law has been contravened, those responsible must held accountable." Earlier Tuesday, seven Palestinians were killed in several other incidents. One young man was killed in an attack on a Hamas charity building, a 15-year-old was killed in an air force attack in the center of Gaza City and five people were killed when their house in the eastern part of Gaza City was shelled. Palestinians also said nine members of the same family were killed in the Zeitun neighborhood of Gaza City, six of them children. Three other people were reportedly killed in the strike.