**Hamas Higher-Up In Gaza Pulled Trigger On Teens’ Abduction**

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http://www.timesofisrael.com/mastermind-behind-teens-abduction-was-freed-during-shalit-swap/

The Hamas leader responsible for sponsoring and planning the June 12 abduction of three Israeli teenagers was released from an Israeli prison during the 2011 prisoner swap for IDF soldier Gilad Shalit, and had been involved in the September 1996 killing of IDF soldier Sharon Edri, Palestinian security officials said on Wednesday.

The three teenagers were killed shortly after they were picked up from a hitchhiking post in the West Bank, south of Jerusalem.

The officials said that although the Hamas leadership repeatedly denied involvement in the attack, the terror organization’s military and political wings knew about the plans in advance and had approved similar activities.

Abed a-Rahman Ghaminat, one of the heads of a cell in Zurif (a village not far from Bethlehem) and a former resident of the village, was the Hamas military wing’s appointed leader over the Hebron area. Ghaminat was released from an Israeli prison in October 2011, and was deported to the Gaza Strip.

Like many others who were freed and deported as part of the Shalit deal, Ghaminat joined a special office under the Hamas military wing in Gaza, which operated under the leadership of the Turkey-based Saleh al-Arouri, one of the heads of the organization living in Ankara. The office hired several of the exiled prisoners to oversee the terror cells in the West Bank. Working from Gaza, Ghaminat was responsible for the Hebron area, along with another ex-prisoner released under the Shalit deal, Ayed Dodin, a Hamas man and resident of Dura, south of Hebron.

Ghaminat and Dodin attempted in past years to carry out numerous terror attacks in the Hebron area, and were responsible for raising the money for Hamas activities. Traveling through Egypt, the two also visited Turkey and Qatar more than once in the past two years to coordinate the Hamas schemes with Arouri, as well as with other political heads of Hamas living abroad.

Ghaminat was involved in the abduction and killing of IDF soldier Edri in 1996, as well as in the 1997 bombing of Café Apropo in Tel Aviv, in which three women were killed.

According to the Palestinian sources, Mahmoud Kawasme — another prisoner freed in the 2011 deal — worked under Ghaminat in Gaza. Kawasme recruited his brother Hussam and transferred NIS 200,000 to his account (according to the Shin Bet interrogation) to carry out the kidnapping. [Hussam Kawasme was indicted in an Israeli court last week.](http://www.timesofisrael.com/alleged-mastermind-of-3-teens-killing-indicted/)

The three teenagers – Gil-ad Shaar, 16, Naftali Fraenkel, 16, and Eyal Yifrach, 19 – were buried by the abductors/killers Marwan Kawasme and Amer Abu Aysha on a plot of land that Hussam Kawasme bought, not far from the village of Halhul.  The two killers are still on the run.