**Killing of Zuhair Qaisi Sparks Escalation Around Gaza**

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Israeli air strike, on Friday 03/09/2012, killed Popular Resistance Committees – PRC secretary Zuhair al-Qaisi (pic), who was at final stages of planning large-scale terror attack against Israeli targets – IDF said. Ahmad Hanini, senior PRC member was also killed in the blast. Zuhair al-Qaisi is the third consecutive PRC leader killed by IDF in recent years.

The power base of the Popular Resistance Committees – PRC is in the Southern Gaza Strip, they are very active in running many of the [Rafah Tunnels](http://www.globaljihad.net/?p=213) , which finance their terror activity .

The IDF confirmed that the two killed in the attack were: commander of the PRC Zuhair al-Qaisi; and a senior PRC member Ahmad Hanini, originally from the Palestinian West Bank. A[Hamas](http://www.globaljihad.net/?p=2647) official said Ahmad Hanani had been exiled by [Israel](http://www.globaljihad.net/?p=2577) five years ago, denying earlier reports he had been one of those freed from an Israeli jail, on 10/18/2011, as part of a prisoner swap deal to gain the release of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit.

The IDF stated that the attack was part of an operation to thwart the intentions of terrorists to carry out terror attacks in Sinai, along the border between Israel and [Egypt](http://www.globaljihad.net/?p=2649) (see – [Eilat Assault 2011](http://www.globaljihad.net/?p=4519" \o "Eilat Assault 2011)). Zuhair al-Qaisi had been planning and leading over the past few days, a major terror attack against Israeli targets, and the strike was conducted in order to prevent the attack, the IDF added.

IDF also stated that they were not interested in escalation but were ready to defend Israel and would respond forcefully and decisively against against any attempt at terrorist activity.

The explosion happened shortly after yet another two mortar shells were fired at Israel from the Hamas-ruled territory, causing no damage or injury. The explosions occurred in open fields in the Eshkol regional council, which abuts the border with the Gaza Strip.  
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The killing sparked major escalation around Gaza Strip as more then 60 rockets were fired from Gaza Strip toward Israeli towns and villages. some of the long range rockets , targeting Israeli towns in a range of 40 km, such as Ashkelon, the port town Ashdod and Beer Sheva, were intercepted by the Israeli defence anti-rocket system “Iron Dome”. But in one of the small villages in Eshkol district 4 civilians were injured, one of them seriously, as a rocket exploded inside their village.   
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12 Palestinians reportedly killed in IAF strikes in Gaza since Friday in an attempt to intercept and to kill rocket launcher teams. No civilians were reported as hurt in the Israeli attacks (see – Ashton’s Equation).