Hamas arrests Gaza comedian who protested economic hardship

April 25, 2019

By [Khaled Abu Toameh](https://www.jpost.com/Author/Khaled-Abu-Toameh)

The Jerusalem Post

<https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Hamas-arrests-Gaza-comedian-who-protested-economic-hardship-587766>

Hamas security forces have arrested Palestinian comedian Hussam Khalaf, who is known for his criticism of Hamas and Qatar, sources in the Gaza Strip confirmed on Wednesday.

The sources said that Khalaf, a resident of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, was arrested on Tuesday as he was walking on the streets of Rafah with a friend.

The comedian’s brother, Hassan, said that Hamas security officers walked up to Hussam and told him that their commander wants to talk with him.

“They took him in their car and since then we haven’t heard from him,” the brother said.

Nicknamed “The Brain,” Khalaf is known for criticizing the political and economic conditions in the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip through songs inspired by famous Egyptian singers. He has been critical, among other things, of new taxes imposed by Hamas on residents of the Gaza Strip and the high rate of unemployment there.

The sources said that the comedian is suspected of “misusing technology” – referring to his posts on social media; collaboration with the West Bank-based Palestinian Authority security forces in instigating unrest and chaos in the Gaza Strip; spreading rumors and fake news about life under Hamas; inciting Palestinians to demonstrate against Hamas; and chanting slogans against it.

According to the sources, Khalaf is also suspected of taking part in last month’s anti-Hamas protests throughout the Strip. The protests were launched by various youth groups demanding an end to the economic crisis there.

Hamas claims that the protests were part of a Fatah-led “conspiracy” to undermine its rule over the Gaza Strip and spark chaos and instability there.

Khalaf’s friends denied the charges and said that he was not affiliated with any Palestinian faction.