Shin Bet foils 9-man Hamas cell planning kidnapping of soldier in West Bank

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The Shin Bet security agency on Monday said it foiled plans by a Hamas terror cell to kidnap a soldier and carry out shooting and bombing attacks in the West Bank.

Nine Palestinians were arrested by Israeli security forces during the past month over their suspected involvement in establishing the cell on behalf of the Gaza Strip-based Hamas, in the West Bank town of Biddu on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

The Shin Bet said the investigation of the suspects revealed that they were planning to kidnap an Israeli soldier, and were additionally planning to carry out shooting attacks and bombing attacks against Israeli forces in the central West Bank.

“The members of the cell armed themselves, prepared explosives, mapped out escape routes, and conducted intelligence-gathering tours in order to learn the routine of the soldiers’ activities in the Binyamin area, and even prepared a place to hide the abductee,” the Shin Bet said.

The agency said the suspects set up a bomb-making lab in a residential home in Biddu.

Security forces who raided the lab seized raw materials for making explosives, a makeshift “Carlo” submachine gun, and “maps on which they sketched the planning of the attacks and the escape routes,” the Shin Bet said.

Police later published a video of Border Police officers detaining some of the suspects.

The Shin Bet said that “in light of the severity of the attack that they planned, the members of the cell operated in an isolated manner, while maintaining maximum secrecy in order to avoid revealing their activities.”

In September 2021, the Shin Bet and Israel Defense Forces foiled a large Hamas network in the West Bank planning major attacks,[arresting more than 50 members](https://www.timesofisrael.com/shin-bet-forces-thwart-major-hamas-terror-plans-nab-dozens-of-members/). In Biddu, troops killed three Hamas gunmen and later located a large cache of explosives.

The Shin Bet said some of the members of the network that was disrupted two years ago, residents of Biddu, are relatives of the Palestinians detained this past month. The recently detained suspects were not named.

Israeli officials generally believe that Hamas is seeking to carry out attacks in the West Bank and in Israel while maintaining relative calm in the Gaza Strip, where it serves as the de facto ruler.

“Hamas [in the West Bank] continues to try to destabilize the area with the support and direction of the Hamas headquarters abroad and in Gaza,” the Shin Bet said, adding that it “blatantly ignores the heavy price paid” by uninvolved Palestinians.

Violence has surged across the West Bank over the past year and a half, with a rise in Palestinian shooting attacks against Israeli civilians and troops, near-nightly arrest raids by the military, and an uptick in attacks by extremist Jewish settlers against Palestinians.