**IDF court convicts Hamas mastermind in June kidnap, murder of 3 Israeli teens**

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The Judea Military Court on Wednesday convicted Hussam Hassan Kawasme of being the mastermind behind the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teenagers in June.

Kawasme was convicted based on his confession of planning and financing the attack, including receiving NIS 200,000 from Hamas in the Gaza Strip, purchasing and providing weapons for the other terrorists, hiding the bodies and destroying evidence.

The IDF Prosecution filed an indictment against Kawasme with the Judea Military Court in September.

The Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) arrested him on July 11, on suspicion of assisting the killers and hiding the victims’ bodies in land he owned in the Hebron area, security forces said.

On June 12, Hamas members kidnapped Gil-Ad Shaer, 16, Naftali Fraenkel, 16, and Eyal Yifrah, 19, as they waited for a ride outside the Alon Shvut settlement in Judea. The Shin Bet named the killers as Marwan Kawasme and Amar Abu Aisha.

The two men were killed in a shootout with the IDF near Hebron on September 23.

Hussam Kawasme, a resident of Hebron, was in Israeli prison from 1995 to 2002 after being convicted of involvement in Hamas terrorist offenses, including being part of a cell that carried out bomb attacks.

“He is the son of a family whose sons have been involved in severe terrorist attacks on behalf of Hamas,” the Shin Bet said.

Hussam’s brother Hassin Kawasme is serving a life sentence for his role in a bomb attack on a bus stop across from the Jerusalem International Convention Center in March 2011. Scottish tourist Mary Jane Gardner, 59, was killed in the attack and 39 people were wounded.

Another brother, Mahmoud Kawasme, was given a 20-year prison sentence for his role in a twin suicide bombing attack aboard buses in Beersheba in August 2004, which killed 16 residents of the city and wounded more than 100 people. He was released as part of the Gilad Schalit exchange with Hamas and expelled to the Gaza Strip.

From Gaza, Mahmoud Kawasme transferred funds to his brother in Hebron for the attack on the three teenagers.

“During questioning by the Shin Bet, and during the questioning of others, it emerged that Hussam Kawasme served as a command level for the kidnapping,” the domestic intelligence agency said.