Hamas hands death sentence to two alleged collaborators with Israel

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A Hamas military court announced on Tuesday that two Gazans had been sentenced to death for allegedly collaborating with Israel, raising the total number of death sentences for suspected Israeli spies in Gaza to eight in the past month alone.

The two accused were both sentenced to death by hanging. The Hamas military judiciary identified them as residents of Gaza City aged 57 and 46.

A third Palestinian man was sentenced to death for drug dealing, Hamas judicial officials said in a statement. Another 11 Palestinians were handed various prison sentences for drug trafficking and spying for Israel, although officials did not specify how many were convicted of each offense.

The Hamas terror group has ruled the Gaza Strip since 2007, when it took over the enclave in a bloody coup from its rival, the Palestinian Authority. The Islamists have since dealt harshly with those accused of being Israeli spies.

Based on figures from the B’Tselem rights group and including the fresh cases, some 15 death sentences have been issued this year. At least one of the defendants was tried in absentia.

Hamas has sentenced over 130 people to death since 2007; in practice, it has executed some 25 people, according to B’Tselem. The international community has condemned the practice.

The “judgments issued have fulfilled all legal procedures. All those convicted were given every legal recourse,” the Hamas court stated on Tuesday.

The Gaza-based Palestinian rights group al-Mezan has criticized the “incessant issuance of death sentences” by Hamas in the past, calling them “ineffective in preventing or deterring serious crime.”

The practice “continues despite the global trend toward universal abolition of capital punishment,” the watchdog said following another spate of death sentences in late October.