



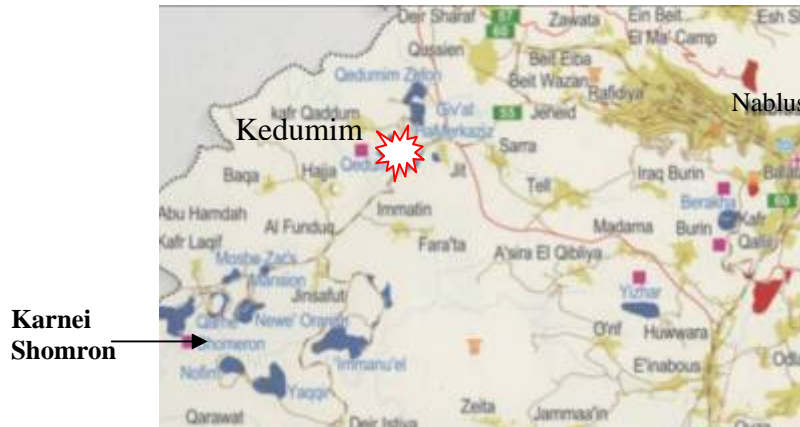
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**Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center
at the Center for Special Studies (C.S.S)**

Suicide bombing attack near Kedumim settlement in Samaria

Overview

■ On March 30, at 9:50 PM, a **suicide bomber disguised as an ultra-Orthodox Jew** blew himself up inside a civilian Israeli vehicle en route to the Samaria settlement of Kedumim. Four civilians were killed in the explosion: the couple inside the vehicle and two hitchhikers. **Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades** claimed responsibility for the terrorist attack.



The area of the terrorist attack

■ The couple, on their way home to the settlement of Kedumim, picked up three hitchhikers near the settlement of Karnei Shomron; one of them was the suicide bomber, **disguised as an ultra-Orthodox Jew**.¹ About six minutes

¹ It is not the first time that a suicide bomber disguises himself as an ultra-Orthodox Jew. Thus, for example, on May 17, 2003, a resident of Hebron, Hamas operative, arrived in the vicinity of the Gross Square in Hebron disguised as a religious Jew and detonated himself near the square. Two Israeli civilians were killed in the explosion.

later, at the junction near the entrance to Kedumim, the suicide bomber blew himself up. The explosion, caused by a 10-kg explosive charge that the suicide bomber carried inside a bag, killed all the passengers.

The victims of the terrorist attack²



Helena Halevy, 58,
from Kedumim.
Survived by four
children.



Rafi Halevy, 63, from
Kedumim. Survived by
four children.



The car in which the suicide bomber blew himself up going up in flames (source: IDF Spokesman)



Shaked Lasker, 16,
from Kedumim.
Survived by parents,
two brothers and a
sister



Reut Feldman, 20, from
Herzliya.

The suicide bomber

■ The suicide bomber is **Ahmed Mahmoud Ahmed Masharqa**, a 24-year-old single from the village of Al-Burj, near Dura, west of Hebron. He was a Fatah operative, wanted by the Israeli security forces and living underground since the beginning of the current violent confrontation. He was recently detained and questioned by the Palestinian security apparatuses and released not long ago. It is possible that operatives from Nablus were involved in the terrorist attack as well.

² The photographs and details of the fatalities are taken from the Foreign Ministry website.



Ahmed Masharqa, the suicide bomber, reading his will (Al-Arabiyya Television, March 31)

Fatah's claim of responsibility

■ **Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades** claimed responsibility for the terrorist attack. The organization's spokesman stated that the act was a response to Israel's "policy of elimination." He threatened the Israeli government that it should be "preparing shrouds" (for its dead), for suicide bombers were about to carry out additional terrorist attacks (Ma'an News Agency, March 30).

■ The suicide bombing attack at the entrance to Kedumim **is the first to be perpetrated by Fatah-related elements** in the age of Abu Mazen.³ The organization's previous attempts to perpetrate suicide bombing attacks were **thwarted** by the Israeli security forces (arrested in the course of 2005 were 47 Fatah Tanzim terrorists earmarked by the Israel Security Agency as potential suicide bombers). It appears that terrorist operatives belonging to Fatah, a **divided organization lacking in hierarchy and unified command structure**, found the window of opportunity to perpetrate the suicide bombing attack, without the involvement of Fatah's senior political echelon, which has no control over the operatives.

³ The Palestinian Islamic Jihad is still **clearly leading at the forefront** of perpetrating suicide bombing attacks. A total of 8 suicide bombing attacks were perpetrated since the beginning of 2005: 6 by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and 2 by Hamas. Fatah's last suicide bombing attack was on September 22, 2004, when a female suicide bomber blew herself up at a soldiers' hitchhiking station in the Jerusalem neighborhood of French Hill, killing two and injuring some seventeen people.

Hamas' stance: empathy for the terrorist attack and support of the way of terrorism

■ The terrorist attack near Kedumim was the first suicide bombing attack in the age of the new Hamas government sworn in the day before. The Hamas movement **continues avoiding** the perpetration of suicide bombing attacks and it has no interest, in our assessment, in an escalation on the ground. However, the government it heads did not condemn the terrorist attack **and most of the Hamas spokesmen even expressed sympathy with its perpetrators and principle support of the continuation of “resistance” (i.e., violence and terrorism).**

■ **Youssef Rezqa**, the Information Minister of Hamas' government, in addition to other spokesmen on behalf of Hamas, **repeatedly justified the terrorist attack in Kedumim** as well as terrorist attacks in general. They claimed that the “Israeli occupation” was to blame for the terrorist attacks and that it was the Palestinians' “right” to continue the “resistance”. The Information Minister claimed that the government's opinion and Abu Mazen's stance regarding the terrorist attack were not contradictory to each other (Al-Bayan, citing an interview granted by Youssef Rezqa to AFP, April 1).



Palestinian Information Minister Youssef Rezqa:
granting legitimacy to suicide bombing terrorism
(photo: the Hamas website)

Abu Mazen's condemnation of the terrorist attack

■ Palestinian Authority Chairman Abu Mazen, on a visit to South Africa, **condemned the attack** by saying that a suicide bombing that led to four victims would not promote peace. He noted that **the PLO** was still committed

to peace and urged Western governments not to stop the assistance to the Hamas government, thus “punishing” the Palestinian people for “choosing democracy” (Reuters, Cape Town, March 31).

■ Abu Mazen’s reaction, **different** from that of Hamas, illustrates therefore that the Palestinian Authority, in fact, **functions as a “two-headed authority”**, with the Prime Minister and his ministers presenting stances contrary to those of the Palestinian Authority Chairman regarding the issue of terrorism and other key issues.

The terrorist organizations step up efforts to perpetrate murderous terrorist attacks in Israeli territory

■ The terrorist organizations have recently stepped up their efforts to **perpetrate murderous terrorist attacks in Israeli territory**, including **suicide bombing attacks**. During the month of March, Israeli security forces thwarted several attempts to perpetrate shooting/suicide bombing attacks, some of which supposed to be perpetrated **close to the elections in Israel**. Examples of note follow:

- On March 29, an IDF force apprehended an 18-year-old Palestinian at the Beqaot roadblock (east of Nablus). He was found to be carrying an **explosive belt** weighing some 13 lbs.



The explosive belt seized on the teenager’s body at the Beqaot roadblock (source: IDF Spokesman)

- ✿ On March 22, an IDF force in Ramallah apprehended a Palestinian operative of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad who intended to perpetrate a suicide bombing attack in Israeli territory. The terrorist was **on his way to Jerusalem** to receive an **explosive belt**.

- ✿ On March 21, at the end of a car chase on the Jerusalem-Tel-Aviv highway, a vehicle was seized containing an **explosive belt** weighing some 15 lbs. Among the apprehended passengers was a Palestinian Islamic Jihad operative who intended to perpetrate a suicide bombing attack in Israeli territory.

- ✿ On March 7, **Samir Maher Salame Haddad**, a resident of Zeitoun (Gaza City), was detained at the Erez crossing. He attempted to infiltrate into Israel to perpetrate a **shooting attack** using an automatic weapon, for which purpose he had acquired fake medical authorizations.