

Israel gives details of ' Hamas training Palestinian students in Malaysia'
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Israel's secret service Shin Bet has for the first time presented details of its allegation last year that Hamas was training Palestinian students in Malaysia to conduct military operations, Israeli daily Haaretz reports.

Malaysia had previously denied a claim by Israel that the Palestinian movement was training its operatives in paragliding techniques in the country.

This time, the allegations form part of an indictment filed last month in the Judea Military Court against a Hebron resident, Waseem Qawasmeh, who was arrested on February 13 upon returning from Malaysia.

The 24-year-old is charged with belonging to a banned organisation, making contact and receiving money from an enemy.

According to Shin Bet, Hamas men in Malaysia were actively recruiting Palestinian students studying in the country for military training.

It said upon completion of their stint, the trainees are sent to set up military networks in the West Bank, act as messengers between the territories and foreign countries, and carry out secret transfers of funds.

Last summer, Israel published details from the interrogation of a member of Hamas's tunnel forces in the Gaza Strip, where it claimed the man had trained in Malaysia to paraglide into Israeli territory in order to carry out murders and kidnappings.

Malaysia does not have diplomatic relations with Israel and is a strong supporter of Palestine, with Datuk Seri Najib Razak being the first Malaysian prime minister to visit Gaza in January 2013.

According to the Shin Bet, Qawasmeh began his relationship with Hamas through its student association at the International Islamic University in Kuala Lumpur.

In December 2013 he was recruited by Mustafa Najam, a senior Hamas activist, to join the Muslim Brotherhood.

Shin Bet said Qawasmeh took part in a swearing-in ceremony attended by Ma'an Hatib and Radwan al-Atrash, senior Hamas officials residing in Malaysia.

It described Hatib as "responsible in Malaysia for the Hamas foreign desk", while Atrash is "a senior figure in the Shura council" in which Hamas clergymen in Malaysia are active, Haaretz reported.

The charge against Qawasmeh states that he underwent a security check and was

then trained for clandestine operations by Hamas men in Malaysia. He was also sent for a week to Turkey to train with Hamas there.

In denying the claims in August last year, Home Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said Malaysia never had any cooperation with Hamas or other Palestinian groups other than in diplomacy, trade and culture.

"Malaysia is also a strong supporter of the Palestinians, morally and via humanitarian aid. The strong support of Malaysians is because of the long relationship between Malaysian and Palestinian leaders.

"This may have caused dissatisfaction on the part of Israel," Zahid had said. – April 29, 2015.

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