

Hizbullah, Hamas Cooperated on Jerusalem Attack, Report

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The gunman who killed eight Jewish teenagers at a Jerusalem religious school was acting upon instructions from Hamas leaders in Damascus and in coordination with Hizbullah, the Israeli daily Haaretz said Sunday.

The Islamist Hamas movement on Friday claimed responsibility for the gun attack that took place Thursday night.

Haaretz said that over the weekend, eight East Jerusalem residents were arrested in connection with Ala Abu Dhaim's shooting attack. Abu Dhaim's father, two of his brothers and two cousins are among those detained, Haaretz said on its website.

It said that the father also removed Hamas and Hizbullah flags from a mourners' tent the family had erected, after being instructed to do so by police.

According to the Palestinian news agency Maan, Abu Dhaim's father had in the past been a member of Hamas.

Haaretz quoted Palestinian sources as saying that the attack had been planned by a Hamas network in the West Bank acting on orders from its leaders in Damascus.

They said the leadership in Gaza was not privy to the plot, which was drawn up in coordination with Hizbullah.

Haaretz said the Palestinian authority believes this was the first of a number of planned attacks by both Hamas and Islamic Jihad, independent of each other.

Israel's Shin Bet security service said the gunman was not known to them, Haaretz wrote.

It said an initial police investigation has revealed that the shooting was not a spontaneous attack, but had been planned in advance.

Police also learnt that Abu Dhaim, who had personally chosen the location and time for the shooting, had carried out extensive reconnaissance and intelligence-gathering work on the religious school, according to Haaretz.

The gunman had also stockpiled weapons and ammunition, only some of which he took to perpetrate the attack - an AK-47 assault rifle, two pistols and a few magazines, the paper added.

It said that Abu Dhaim, an East Jerusalem resident, had a blue identity card that gave him access to "move freely" in the city's western part.

Haaretz said the key question was where did he get the guns?

Investigators were seeking to establish whether Abu Dhaim had acted alone or was connected to any militant group, Haaretz quoted police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld as saying.

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