

## Palestinians: Hamas, Hezbollah cooperated on Jerusalem terror attack

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The gunman who murdered eight students at Mercaz Harav Yeshiva in Jerusalem last Thursday was acting on instructions from Hamas leaders in Damascus, in coordination with Hezbollah, Palestinian defense sources said.

Over the weekend, eight East Jerusalem residents were arrested in connection with gunman Ala Abu Dhaim's shooting attack. Abu Dhaim's father, two of his brothers and two cousins are among those detained.

The father also removed Hamas and Hezbollah 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.

Abu Dhaim, 25, was killed at the scene of the attack by an off-duty Israel Defense Forces officer who lives near the seminary.

So far no Palestinian or Arab organization has claimed responsibility for the attack, although Palestinian sources have said that the attack had been planned by a Hamas network in the West Bank acting on orders from its leaders in Damascus. Hamas' leadership in Gaza was not privy to the plan, which was drawn up in coordination with Hezbollah, the sources 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.

The Shin Bet security service said the gunman was not known to them. Major General Ilan Franco, the commander of Jerusalem's district police, told Channel 2 that the attacker was "not known to the security forces."

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 had personally chosen the location and time for the shooting. To this end, he carried out extensive reconnaissance and intelligence-gathering work on the yeshiva.

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.

Since Abu Dhaim, an East Jerusalem resident, had a blue identity card, and since he transported people in the area, he was able to move freely in the city's western part, too, and seems to have been well-acquainted with the attack site. The key question is where he obtained his AK-47 assault rifle, which he used to attack the yeshiva.

Investigators were seeking to establish whether Abu Dhaim had acted alone or was connected to any militant group, police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said. Abu Dhaim never worked in the yeshiva and the police dismissed the assumption that he had planned to stage a standoff inside the yeshiva, while taking students hostage.

In a television interview in Lebanon, a Hezbollah man on Saturday denied any connection to the attack. Hamas spokespeople in the Gaza Strip said they were checking whether their organization was connected to the attack.

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said Saturday that just as Israel has managed to stop Hezbollah from "firing a single missile for the past year and a half," so it will stop the terror organizations, too.