

# **BELGIUM/PALESTINE: Belgium suspends funds for two Palestinian schools over name change honoring terrorist**

By Shlomo Papirblat

Haaretz (10.10.2017) – <http://bit.ly/2kKdS5g> – The Belgian government is suspending funding for two school construction projects in the Palestinian territories after it emerged that a school it backed was later renamed after a woman it considers a terrorist.

Belgium said it backed a school in the south of Hebron only to find out in 2013 that local authorities changed its name to “Dalal Mughrabi Elementary School.” Belgian Foreign Minister Didier Reynders said that Mughrabi was “a Palestinian terrorist” who led a 1978 attack against Israel which killed 38, including 13 children.

“Belgium will not allow itself to be associated with the names of terrorists in any way,” a statement from Reynders’ office said. Two projects totaling \$3.9 million have been put on hold.

Belgian officials stressed today that the school’s renaming in the name of the terrorist Dalal was carried out without their knowledge, and the reaction came as soon as the matter became known in Brussels.

The Mission of Palestine to the EU, Belgium and Luxembourg was asked to respond to the incident, the mission told reporters that they preferred to wait at this stage for the response.

Palestinian Education Minister Sabri Saydam said in a statement he regretted the Belgian action and invited the Belgian Consul General "to meet and discuss the matter."

Mughrabi is considered by many Palestinians to be a national hero. In March 1978, she entered Israel from Lebanon by boat, heading a squad of militants. They murdered the American photographer Gail Rubin on the beach and hijacked a bus on the coastal road. The militants blew up the bus and shot at the passengers who tried to escape. In an exchange of fire with the police, Mughrabi and other members of the squad were killed.

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