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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.

Hamas executes three Palestinians in Gaza, says they collaborated with Israel

By Nidal al-Mughrabi

Reuters (06.04.2017) - <http://reut.rs/2nHMNf6> - Gaza's ruling Hamas movement executed three Palestinians on Thursday convicted of collaborating with Israel, hanging the men during a campaign to persuade any Israeli-recruited agents to come forward in return for more lenient punishment.

Hamas leaders and officials, along with the heads of Gaza clans and local security chiefs, watched the execution in the courtyard of the enclave's main police headquarters.

The Hamas-run Interior Ministry said the men, aged 32, 42 and 55, were convicted of treason and spying for hostile foreign parties and had provided information that helped Israel track and kill Palestinians, including leaders of militant factions.

Their trials were conducted by Hamas-run security courts in the past two years and they were put to death after all legal procedures were exhausted, the ministry said.

Since seizing control of Gaza from Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah party in 2007, Hamas-run courts have sentenced 106 people to death and executed 22 of them, Palestinian and international rights groups say.

New York-based Human Rights Watch condemned Thursday's hangings.

"Hamas authorities will never achieve true security or stability through firing squads or by the gallows, but rather through respect for international norms and the rule of law." Sarah Leah Whitson, executive director of the group's Middle East division, said in a statement.

Hamas issued a public ultimatum for "collaborators" to turn themselves in after the killing last month of Mazen Fuqaha, a senior leader of its armed wing, accusing Israel or its local agents of assassinating him.

Punishment would be softened for those who surrender and they would remain anonymous, Hamas said, holding out the prospect of protecting their families from the stigma attached in Gaza to cooperating with Israel.

Hamas, which has arrested an unknown number of suspects in the investigation of Fuqaha's death, has not said if anyone has taken up the offer.

Suggesting that Fuqaha was assassinated as a result of internal rivalries, Israeli Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman said in public remarks that Hamas should look at its own people to find the killers. Hamas officials said Lieberman was attempting to obscure Israel's role in the death.

Over the years, Israel has established a network of contacts in the Palestinian territories, using a combination of pressure and sweeteners to entice Palestinians to divulge intelligence.

Palestinian and International Human Rights groups have repeatedly condemned death penalty, and urged Hamas and the Palestinian Authority to suspend it. Palestinian law says President Mahmoud Abbas, who has no actual control over Gaza, has the final word on whether executions can be carried out.
