

Saleh (Salah) Al-Arouri



Saleh Muhammad Suleiman Al-Arouri, aka Salih Suleiman and Salih Dar Sulaiman, is a senior Hamas military operative and leader. His history with Hamas dates to his role as a Hamas student cell leader at Hebron University in the early 1990s. Al-Arouri was born in 1966 in the Palestinian village of Aroura in the Ramallah district.¹ Al-Arouri was detained in Israel, serving various prison sentences for Hamas related activities from 1992 until 2010, when he was ultimately expelled from Israel and left for Syria. He then relocated to Turkey after the Syrian civil war made Hamas' presence there impractical. Al-Arouri currently enjoys operational freedom of action in Turkey.²

Al-Arouri is a commander of the Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades, the Hamas military wing.³ The Al-Qassam Brigades has its roots going back to 1986 but was formally established circa 1992 and has been the active armed branch of Hamas since. It was the first Palestinian group to carry out a suicide attack against Israel.⁴ Al-Arouri was identified in an Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) organizational chart for the Al-Qassam Brigades in Hebron (West Bank) dated January 7, 1993 as the leader of that particular division, though it identified Al-Arouri at the time as “detained.”⁵

Al-Arouri was involved in moving money for arms for Hamas in the early 1990s. The following excerpts related to Al-Arouri are from criminal prosecution documents in the case of Muhammad Hamid Khalil Salah and Abdelhaleem Hasan Abdelraziq Ashqar, both U.S.-based Hamas operatives who were convicted in U.S. District Court in Chicago in 2007 for federal obstruction and contempt violations.⁶ Al-Arouri was a Hamas unindicted co-conspirator in the case.⁷ These excerpts identify Al-Arouri's Hamas activities in the early 1990s.

¹ The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Saleh Al-Arouri Profile, August 20, 2014, <http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/20706>

² Ibid

³ Al-Qassam Website, http://www.qassam.ps/prisoner-37-Saleh_Al_Aruri.html

⁴ Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium (TRAC), <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/izz-ad-din-al-qassam-brigades>

⁵ IDF Organization Chart for Al-Qassam Brigades in Hebron, *January 7, 1993*, http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/2574.pdf

⁶ USA v Marzook, Salah & Ashqar, 03-CR-978, Northern District of Illinois, <http://www.investigativeproject.org/case/88>

*Saleh Al-Arouri, a/k/a “Salih Suleiman,” and “Salih Dar Sulaiman,” was a high-ranking Hamas military leader dating back to his role as a Hamas student cell leader at Hebron University in the early 1990s. In his capacity as a Hamas military leader, Al-Arouri met with and received from defendant Salah tens of thousands of dollars for Hamas-related activities. Al-Arouri used the funds provided by defendant Salah for the purchase of weapons that were to be used in terrorist attacks.*⁸

*Co-conspirator B was a Hamas member who has lived in Louisiana. Co-conspirator B traveled between the United States and West Bank on numerous occasions over the past 15 years using approximately 14 passports. During the early 1990s, coconspirator B relayed messages between defendant Salah and high-ranking Hamas military leaders, including Adel Awadallah and Saleh Al-Arouri. On one occasion, co-conspirator B relayed a message and passport photographs from Adel Awadallah to defendant Salah in order for defendant Salah to obtain a false passport for Awadallah so that Awadallah could travel outside of the West Bank without detection by the Israeli government. In addition, in the early 1990s co-conspirator B received approximately \$140,000 in a wire transfer from overseas in relation to his Hamas activities.*⁹

2. Salah Travels to Israel in September 1992 on Behalf of Hamas

In approximately August 1992, Salah met with co-conspirators Marzook and Mohammed Qassem Sawalha regarding the need to revitalize Hamas terrorist operations in the West Bank. During the meeting, Sawalha, who had previously been in charge of Hamas terrorist operations within the West Bank, identified specific Hamas members still residing in the West Bank who could be used to revitalize Hamas’ terrorist activities. Among these individuals were co-conspirators Adel Ahmed Awadallah and Saleh Al-Arouri.

*At the time of this meeting, co-conspirator Adel Ahmed Awadallah was a rapidly rising Hamas military leader in the West Bank. He is believed to be responsible for several deadly terrorist attacks carried out in Israel including a series of suicide bombings of buses in the mid-1990’s. On September 9, 1998, Awadallah was killed during a shootout with Israeli defense forces in the West Bank town of Hebron. Co-conspirator Saleh Al-Arouri was a high-ranking Hamas military leader dating back to his days as a Hamas student cell leader at Hebron University in the early 1990s.*¹⁰

Also while in the West Bank in September 1992, Salah met with co-conspirator Al-Arouri.

⁷ USA v Marzook, Salah & Ashqar, 03-CR-978, Northern District of Illinois, 2nd Superseding Indictment (Pages 5-7), http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/80.pdf

⁸ USA v Marzook, Salah & Ashqar, 03-CR-978, Northern District of Illinois, Government’s Evidentiary Proffer Supporting The Admissibility Of Co-Conspirator Statements (Page 19), http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/170.pdf

⁹ USA v Marzook, Salah & Ashqar, 03-CR-978, Northern District of Illinois, Government’s Evidentiary Proffer Supporting The Admissibility Of Co-Conspirator Statements (Page 20), http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/170.pdf

¹⁰ USA v Marzook, Salah & Ashqar, 03-CR-978, Northern District of Illinois, Government’s Evidentiary Proffer Supporting The Admissibility Of Co-Conspirator Statements (Pages 22-23), http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/170.pdf

Al-Arouri informed Salah that Hamas needed money to purchase weapons to carry out terrorist activities. Salah agreed to provide Al-Arouri money for the purchase of weapons and other military apparatus and, thereafter, provided Al-Arouri at least approximately \$50,000 for these purposes.

Salah was able to provide the money to Al-Arouri by making structured withdrawals from one of his Chicago bank accounts of ten \$5,000 checks which were cashed in Israel on or about September 8, 1992.¹¹

Ultimately, Salah was indicted for his role in Hamas. In January 1995, Salah pled guilty to a revised indictment that charged him with participating in Hamas affairs. Among other things, Salah admitted: (1) he was a member of Hamas from 1988 until the day of his arrest and was a representative for, among others, Sawalha; (2) he was an envoy for Hamas members outside the occupied territories; (3) he was chosen to be the head of military operations in the West Bank at the request of Marzook and Sawalha; (4) he provided Marzook with reports from the occupied territories; (5) he provided information to a particular Hamas member about where weapons were stashed; and (6) he repeatedly met with Adel Awadallah and Salah Al-Arouri regarding Hamas matters. He was sentenced to 5 years in prison, but released in November 1997.¹²

In addition, Ashqar was in possession of significant portions of defendant Salah's statements to Israel. In fact, the Arabic translation of two of defendant Salah's statements to the INP, originally written by the officer in Hebrew, were among the documents in Ashqar's possession. Other confessions included that of co-conspirator J, who for a short time was in charge of West Bank activities for Hamas (and who, according to bank records, received considerable amounts of money from Marzook). Co-conspirator J's confession includes references to and coordinated activities with Salah Al-Arouri, Adel Awadallah and others with whom Salah interacted in 1992 and 1993. Still another confession outlines aspects of Hamas, including defendant Ashqar's role as a communication and financial conduit.¹³

Saleh Al-Arouri has previously requested not to send Abu Ahmad because he is naive and not witty enough.

It is a mistake to send two persons who know each other at one time.

The people outside are harshly criticized because they have sent Abu Ahmed. They are accused with not knowing the particularities of the inside, they don't sympathize with the people inside, and they don't value the bloodshed.¹⁴

¹¹ USA v Marzook, Salah & Ashqar, 03-CR-978, Northern District of Illinois, Government's Evidentiary Proffer Supporting The Admissibility Of Co-Conspirator Statements (Page 24), http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/170.pdf

¹² USA v Marzook, Salah & Ashqar, 03-CR-978, Northern District of Illinois, Government's Evidentiary Proffer Supporting The Admissibility Of Co-Conspirator Statements (Pages 30-31), http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/170.pdf

¹³ USA v Marzook, Salah & Ashqar, 03-CR-978, Northern District of Illinois, Government's Evidentiary Proffer Supporting The Admissibility Of Co-Conspirator Statements (Page 48), http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/170.pdf

¹⁴ USA v Marzook, Salah & Ashqar, 03-CR-978, Northern District of Illinois, Government's Evidentiary Proffer Supporting The Admissibility Of Co-Conspirator Statements (Page 49), http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/170.pdf

Defendant Muhammad Salah, convicted in the noted Chicago criminal case, had been previously arrested and imprisoned in Israel for transferring money to Hamas. During Salah's interrogation by Israeli authorities, he implicated other Hamas co-conspirators, including Al-Arouri. Israeli police shared Salah's statements made to them with U.S. law enforcement, and those statements were used as evidence in the noted U.S. criminal trial. Within Salah's statement to Israeli police on January 27, 1993 is the following related to Al-Arouri:

*Note that my visit to the West Bank in the summer of 1992 was per the instruction of Muhammad Kathem, Abu Obadah. I was sent on his behalf to check out the situation of HAMAS on the West Bank. So at that time, I met with **Saleh Al-Arouri**, a student in Hebron University, who asked me for the sum of \$48,000 for buying weapons for the operations. I agreed, and called Abu Obadah who gave me approval. I gave **Saleh Al-Arouri** this sum. I gave him this sum in cash, which I received from my friend, Walid Kiswani from Chicago, who was visiting Israel at that time. I paid him the money back in Chicago, after I received this money from Abu Obadah.*¹⁵

In August 2014, Al-Arouri claimed the Al-Qassam Brigades were responsible for the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teenagers in June (2014).¹⁶ One of the murdered teenagers, Naftali Fraenkel, was a U.S. citizen.¹⁷

Al-Arouri was involved in the Hamas negotiations for the release of kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit.¹⁸ During a television interview in Jordan on a show hosted by another Palestinian terrorist released for Shalit, Al-Arouri said the following:

*"The only way to free our prisoners from jail is through resistance, abductions and prisoner swaps," he said, calling on the Palestinian factions to kidnap Israeli soldiers and officers.*¹⁹

Since the Shalit prisoner swap, Israeli security forces thwarted numerous Hamas terror plots engineered by the Al-Qassam Brigades involving Hamas terrorists who were released under that prisoner exchange negotiated by Al-Arouri.²⁰ Those plots included terrorist plans to establish a Hamas cell in the West Bank city of Hebron for the purpose of kidnapping Israeli soldiers.²¹

Additional recent Al-Qassam Brigades terror plots have involved providing money to Hamas operatives planning to attack Jewish worshipers and Israeli authorities near the Temple Mount

¹⁵ Muhammad Salah Statement to Israeli Police (Page 11), *January 27, 1993*, http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/2573.pdf

¹⁶ Top Hamas Sheikh Admits to June Kidnapping of Israeli Teens, *The Times of Israel*, August 20, 2014, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/top-hamas-sheikh-admits-to-june-kidnapping-of-israeli-teens/>

¹⁷ Statement by the President on the Deaths of Naftali Fraenkel, Eyal Yifrach, and Gilad Shaar, *The White House*, June 30, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/30/statement-president-deaths-naftali-fraenkel-eyal-yifrach-and-gilad-shaar>

¹⁸ Sbarro Terrorist Gets TV Show, *Ynet News*, March 1, 2012, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4197288,00.html>

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Security Forces Capture Hamas Terrorist, *Israeli Defense Forces*, June 3, 2013, <http://www.idf.il/1283-19091-EN/Dover.aspx>

²¹ Hamas Terrorist in Qatar Helps Hebron Terror Cell Plan Kidnappings, *Threat Matrix*, January 31, 2013, http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2013/01/israeli_authorities_uncover_ha.php

and the Old City of Jerusalem. These plots, too, involved prisoners released in the Shalit swap.²² This Hamas money-for-weapons smuggling directly implicated Al-Arouri.²³

Al-Arouri is currently the de facto Hamas chief in the organization's Turkish bureau.²⁴ As recently as September (2014), Israeli security forces disrupted a plot involving 30 Hamas terrorists from the West Bank directed from the Al-Qassam Brigades in Turkey to kidnap Israelis, attack a Jerusalem soccer stadium and a light rail transit.²⁵

Al-Arouri has publicly claimed responsibility for involvement in the terrorist kidnapping and murder of the Israeli teenagers in June (2014), one of whom was a U.S. citizen.²⁶ Turkey is a NATO member and ostensibly an ally of the United States and the West. The U.S. government is authorized to investigate and prosecute murder and attempted murder of U.S. citizens committed in foreign countries.²⁷ The FBI and other federal law enforcement agencies and the Department of Justice have investigated and prosecuted many such cases, particularly cases involving terrorism. A number of the FBI's "most wanted" terrorists²⁸ are being pursued under this legal premise.

The U.S. has a long-standing extradition treaty with Turkey.²⁹ In August, Nitsana Darshan-Leitner, the founder and director of the Israeli NGO law center Shurat HaDin,³⁰ wrote a letter³¹ to U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder requesting the U.S. government investigate, prosecute and extradite from Turkey Al-Arouri on charges related to the murder of Fraenkel. To date, there has been no indication the U.S. government has initiated any viable legal action against Al-Arouri.

²² Israel Indicts More Palestinian Terror Cells, *Threat Matrix*, April 18, 2013, http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2013/04/israel_indicts_more_palestina.php

²³ Israeli Security Agency Report, 2013, <http://www.shabak.gov.il/publications/publications/Pages/shotef170413.aspx>

²⁴ Turkey's Hamas 'Bureau', *Al-Monitor: The Pulse of the Middle East*, December 1, 2014, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/12/saleh-al-arouri-khaled-meshaal-hamas-leadership-turkey-gaza.html>

²⁵ Hamas Gang Plotted 'Major Attack' at Jerusalem Soccer Stadium, *The Times of Israel*, November 27, 2014, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/shin-bet-busts-hamas-plot-to-attack-jerusalem-soccer-arena/>

²⁶ The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Saleh Al-Arouri Profile, August 24, 2014, <http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/20706>

²⁷ Title 18, Section 2332 United States Code, <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/2332>

²⁸ FBI's Most Wanted Terrorists, http://www.fbi.gov/wanted/wanted_terrorists/@@wanted-group-listing

²⁹ U.S. - Turkey Extradition Treaty, <http://photos.state.gov/libraries/turkey/461177/pdf/32t3111.pdf>

³⁰ Shurat HaDin, <http://israelawcenter.org/>

³¹ Eric Holder Asked to Extradite Hamas Official Involved in Murdering American Citizen, *Breitbart*, August 26, 2014, <http://www.breitbart.com/Big-Peace/2014/08/26/Eric-Holder-asked-to-extradite-Hamas-official>