5 Palestinians Accused of Planning Attacks at Temple Mount

June 4, 2017

The Times of Israel

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/5-palestinians-accused-of-planning-attacks-at-temple-mount/>

Israel arrested and filed charges against five members of a Hamas-linked terror group suspected of planning to attack security forces and visitors at the Temple Mount.

The arrests of the alleged members of the group were carried out over the past few months by the Shin Bet security service and Jerusalem Police, and center around 25-year-old Old City resident Mahmoud Abed al-Wahhab Said Abed al-Latif, who the Shin Bet said was the recruiter and mastermind behind the cell.

According to a Shin Bet statement Sunday, the five — residents of East Jerusalem — were members of Al-Shabab Al-Aqsa, which was classified as a terror group in 2011 and is affiliated with Hamas.

The Shin Bet said that in addition to stoking violence on the Temple Mount to deter non-Muslim visitors, members of the group have also carried out a number of deadly terror attacks, including an [October 2016 shooting](http://www.timesofisrael.com/court-removes-gag-order-on-name-photo-of-jerusalem-terrorist/) in which two Israelis were killed at the capital’s Ammunition Hill light rail stop and during a subsequent shootout with police.

Following the arrest of the group, prosecutors from the Jerusalem District Court filed charges against the members of the cell. Al-Latif was charged on May 29 with belonging to a terror group and an outlawed organization, the Jerusalem District Court said in a statement Sunday.

The announcement of the arrest of the cell came during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, during which police have worked in past years to reduce heightened tensions around the Temple Mount, including by baring tourists to the site for parts of the holiday.

The Mount, known in Arabic as Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound, houses the third-holiest site in Islam — the Al-Aqsa Mosque — as well as the Dome of the Rock sanctuary. It is Judaism’s holiest site, venerated as the location of the first and second temples.