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Senior Hamas Official Says Group Abducted Israeli Teens

A top Hamas official said members of his militant group kidnapped three Israeli teenagers whose deaths in June provoked a spiral of violence that led to the war in Gaza, the first acknowledgement of the movement's involvement. Hamas has up to now refused to confirm or deny Israeli accusations that it masterminded the abduction and killing of the three young men, one of them a joint U.S.-Israeli citizen, in Hebron. Speaking at a conference in Istanbul, Saleh al-Arouri, a Hamas official from the West Bank who lives in exile in Turkey, appeared to confirm Israeli allegations that the Islamist group was behind the teenagers' abduction. "The popular will was exercised throughout our occupied land, and culminated in the heroic operation by the Qassam Brigades in imprisoning the three settlers in Hebron," he said, referring to Hamas's armed wing. Israel said a third suspect arrested by its security forces admitted under interrogation to organizing the kidnapping with funds from Hamas in Gaza.