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Hamas arrests Salafists in Gaza



The Gaza Strip's Hamas rulers have arrested several radical Salafists, the Palestinian movement's interior ministry said on Thursday, two days after Israel carried out an air strike on a militant in the territory. "The internal security apparatus has arrested fanatics calling themselves Salafists, for security and criminal reasons. There were no arrests made for ideological or political reasons," a ministry statement said. "Four of those arrested were taken in on suspicion of stealing rockets belonging to Hamas, and two others for causing an unspecified explosion that resulted in "human and material damage," it added, without giving a total number. The Mujahedeen Shura Council (MSC) Salafist group, one of whose members was killed in the air strike on Gaza City on Tuesday, said the jihadists were being detained for ideological reasons. Salafists in Gaza -- who are considered more hardline than the Islamist Hamas -- have challenged the movement both over confrontations with Israel and the practice of Islamic rule, prompting it to crack down on their militant activities. The MSC implicitly denied stealing any rockets. Israel's air force targeted Haitham al-Mishal as he rode his motorcycle in western Gaza City on Tuesday, it said in a statement. Israel said Mishal was involved in an April 17 rocket attack launched from Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, adjoining Gaza, which struck the Israeli Red Sea resort of Eilat causing no casualties. The MSC has claimed a number of rocket attacks in the past few months, all except that of April 17 being launched from the Gaza Strip.