

Palestinian gunmen with axes shot dead on way to 'major massacre in Israel'

From [Reuters](#), the [Times of Israel](#) and [The Telegraph](#)

Israeli police say they shot dead Palestinians wielding axes, guns and ammunition who planned to carry out "a major attack or a massacre in Israel".

Kobi Shabtai, the national police chief, said the group of three men were eliminated at a checkpoint near Jerusalem on Thursday.

The suspects had arrived in a vehicle from the direction of Bethlehem (*Latest news from Bethlehem – [Christmas celebrations are cancelled](#) – they are a Western and capitalist tradition imposed upon them by the British*) and opened fire when Israeli forces began questioning them.

...a shooting targeting the "tunnels" checkpoint on the West Bank's Route 60, south of Jerusalem, police and medics said Thursday morning.

One of the victims of the attack said all the doors of a white Skoda opened at once, with each gunman shooting in a different direction, and security forces quickly returning fire.

Police said the car in which the terrorists arrived had false license plates, and identified two of them as Palestinians from the Hebron area. The Shin Bet security agency later named the two as Hamas member Abdelqader Qawasmeh, 26, and 28-year-old Hassan Qafisha, who is affiliated with Hamas and whose father was the head of the terror group's military arm in Hebron until he was killed in 2003. The identity of the third gunman was still under review.

Police said many weapons were found inside the car, including two M16 rifles, two pistols, about 10 loaded magazines, hundreds of additional bullets, and two axes. Also found in the vehicle were uniforms resembling those of the Israeli military.



Police Commissioner Kobi Shabtai, who arrived at the scene, said this indicated that they had planned a much larger-scale terror “massacre” inside Jerusalem.

There was no immediate comment from Palestinian officials. Footage on social media, shot from inside a bus, showed a man in uniform running and falling as gun shots ring out at the checkpoint in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Security forces scanned the area for more possible assailants, and after a search, ruled out the possibility that an explosive device had been left at the scene.

All roads leading to the portion of Route 60 known as the "tunnels road" were temporarily blocked, leading to heavy traffic, and were later reopened.