

# Canadian Press Newswire

## Canadian activist says Jerusalem is a city in fear after Yassin assassination

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The leader of a Canadian peace mission to the Middle East spoke Wednesday of a "city in fear" as Jerusalem braced for Hamas retaliation following Israel's assassination of the Palestinian militant group's founder, Sheik Ahmed Yassin.

"We're waiting for the other shoe to drop," Dale Hildebrand quoted a Jerusalem resident saying.

Hildebrand, who is the regional co-ordinator for the Toronto-based ecumenical organization KAIROS, spoke with The Canadian Press by telephone on a day Hamas threatened a massive attack against Israel.

His team of nine church leaders and laypeople arrived in the region just days before an Israeli air strike killed Yassin in Gaza City on Monday.

"That really changed the whole trip for us," said Hildebrand.

He said the team had to change its travel plans extensively because there were security concerns about foreigners and the Palestinians were "very very" angry.

"Canadians can easily be mistaken for Americans and we were told to keep a low profile which we did."

He said in Jerusalem residents were waiting for "things to explode."

"It's not a question of if, it is going to happen ... Every Israeli says it's going to happen and they know Hamas is going to hit hard and everybody is waiting for that."

He said there were police in every corner of West Jerusalem and temporary checkpoints had been set up all over the city.

"It's a city in fear."

Hildebrand said everybody he met \_ Israelis, Palestinians and diplomats \_ believes the assassination was an "incredibly stupid" thing to do because it's going to unleash much more bloodshed and it's not going to bring security to Israel.

Despite the heightened tensions, both sides still see a two-state solution as the only way out, Hildebrand said.

The team met Gadi Golan, the religious affairs chief at the Israeli Foreign Ministry on Wednesday.

"He said the solution is clear-cut. One day there will

be two states.' "

The group earlier held talks with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat at his headquarters in the West Bank town Ramallah.

Arafat doesn't believe there's a partner for peace on the Israeli side, Hildebrand said.

KAIROS, which believes the Israeli occupation of Arab territories is the main obstacle to peace, is trying to promote peace "that is just for both peoples."

The team returns home Thursday.

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