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## Senior PA minister suspected of sexually harassing employee

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<http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/senior-pa-minister-suspected-of-sexually...> [1]

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Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has ordered an investigation into a senior minister suspected of sexually harassing an employee in his office, Haaretz has learned. The minister is considered an Abbas appointee.

The harassment occurred a week ago, according to the employee, and her husband, a member of Abbas' Fatah party and a former Israeli prisoner, demanded that the PA investigate. The man's name is known to Haaretz.

After senior officials in Abbas' office informed the PA president of the complaint, he directed current and former senior Fatah officials, including former PA intelligence chief Tawfik Tirawi, to investigate.

The minister in question was suspected in the past of sexually abusing a minor. He holds a particularly sensitive job and is in constant communication with Abbas.

When the suspicions concerning the minor first arose, the suspect responded by saying it was a conspiracy by associates of Mohammed Dahlan, a former senior PA official now openly at odds with Abbas. The minister, an Abbas supporter, said Dahlan's people were trying to frame him because of this tension.

Yesterday, he reiterated this claim with regard to the new complaint. "It's an effort by Dahlan's group to frame me," he told Haaretz. "They're trying to harm our image. It's all rumors. Where is the complaint? Where is the complaint of the women who went to the police? This whole story is lies and rubbish. There's no investigation."

Despite the minister's claims, senior Fatah and PA officials verified the details, but said their publication could harm the investigation.

Sources close to the minister claimed that the woman's relatives met with the minister recently and believe his story. It's her husband who is trying to extort the PA through his wife's complaint, they charged, and he has changed his version of events several times.

In 2010, Abbas dismissed his bureau chief, Rafiq Hussein, after Channel 10 published footage filmed by Palestinian intelligence that showed Hussein trying to get a woman to have sex with him by promising her a job in Abbas' bureau and other benefits.

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