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Seized Gazan's Lawyer Calls Israeli Charges 'Farce'

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JERUSALEM — The lawyer for a Gazan engineer held under secrecy in Israel accused authorities on Wednesday of concocting charges against him after seizing him in Ukraine.

Relatives of Dirar Abu Sisi, a manager of the Gaza Strip's main power plant, say he was abducted from a train in Ukraine last month. Israeli officials have confirmed he is in custody but declined further comment, citing court-issued gag orders.

Smadar Ben-Natan, Abu Sisi's attorney, linked his detention to Israel's efforts to gather intelligence on the hostile, Hamas-ruled territory, frequent site of cross-border fighting and the 4 1/2-year captivity of an Israeli soldier.

The Mossad spy agency and other Israeli security services have in recent years ramped up efforts to disrupt weaponry and cash smuggling to Hamas from foreign sponsors such as Iran.

"When someone came along who they thought was senior [in Hamas] and was located outside the Gaza Strip, they got their hands on him, without this matter being really justified,

in retrospect," Ben-Natan said on Israel's Army Radio.

Abu Sisi was scheduled to appear at another remand hearing on Thursday. Ben-Natan, an Israeli, said she expected to know then "how the state intends to indict [him], if at all."

The case has further potential to embarrass Israel should it emerge that Abu Sisi was spirited out of Ukraine without Kiev's approval. The Palestinian's wife, a native of Ukraine, said he had gone there in a bid by the family to emigrate from Gaza.

Visiting Israel this month, Ukrainian Prime Minister Mykola Azarov said Abu Sisi's disappearance was under investigation.

Asked in a newspaper interview about the possibility that the Palestinian had been abducted by Israeli agents, Azarov said, "I don't want to imagine that such things are carried out on the soil of a friendly state."

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