

## Carter visits Sderot

*by UPI*

JERUSALEM -- Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter visited rocket-pocked Sderot Monday, saying the air assault directed at the southern Israeli city was a crime. Carter, in Israel as part of his Mideast tour, defended his controversial impending meeting in Damascus, Syria, with Hamas political chief Khaled Mashaal, saying it was important "that at least someone meet with the Hamas leaders to try to induce them to stop all attacks against innocent civilians in Israel and cooperate with Fatah," Ynetnews.com reported Monday. Carter also met with Knesset Member Yossi Beilin, discussing the release of kidnapped soldier Gilad Shalit and the Qassam rockets fired from Gaza. Carter said he would raise the issue of Shalit's release when he meets with Mashaal. Shimon Peres met with Carter Sunday, during which the Israeli president criticized Carter's remarks about Israel during recent years. Peres thanked Carter for his contribution to the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty, but said Carter's comments and meetings -- such as the one with Mashaal -- hurt Israel, Ynetnews.com said.

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