

BBC journalist in Gaza said still alive

by UPI

GAZA - A negotiator says Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has been assured that a BBC journalist abducted by Islamic extremists is still alive.

Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat said sources told the president that Alan Johnston, who was captured last month in Gaza, was not killed by the Kataeb al-Jihad al-Tawheed -- which translates as "the Brigades of Holy War and Unity" -- as some reports suggested, The Times of London reported Thursday.

"All sources in Gaza have informed the president that, contrary to these reports, Mr. Johnston is alive," Erekat said. "The president is reassured that he is alive and every effort is being exerted now to acquire his release."

Erekat said he is not aware of any ransom demands made by the extremist group.

The Kataeb al-Jihad al-Tawheed made claims Sunday that the journalist had been killed due to the failure of Palestinian and British authorities to secure the release of prisoners held in Israeli jails. The group said a video of his death will be released.

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