

Spokesman for Johnston's captors arrested

by UPI

GAZA - Hamas officials Monday arrested the spokesman for the Army of Islam, which has claimed it is holding BBC journalist Alan Johnston hostage.

The BBC said spokesman Khattab al-Maqdisi was arrested along with several other members of the Palestinian militant group on Monday by security forces after negotiations for Johnston's release broke down.

"The arrests were carried out after all negotiation attempts ... failed to free the abducted journalist," a Palestinian Interior Ministry statement said.

"The arrests are targeting figures who were involved in the abduction of the journalist," the ministry added.

Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri said Maqdisi was arrested in Gaza after he began shooting at local Hamas security officers.

The arrests represent the most recent escalation of tensions between Hamas and the Army of Islam that began when Hamas took over Gaza last month.

The BBC said the arrests also came as the broadcasting group marked Johnston's sixteenth week of captivity on Monday with a rally.

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