

While attention shifts to Iran, Hamas continues to rearm quietly

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 12.05.2026

In a joint operation by the Israel Defense Forces and the Shin Bet security agency, a weapons production site belonging to Islamic Jihad was destroyed over the weekend in the northern Gaza Strip, the IDF Spokesperson said. He added that the site belonged to Islamic Jihad but had recently also been used by Hamas to manufacture explosive devices and store weapons “intended to harm IDF troops operating in the yellow line area and Israeli civilians.”

In a separate statement, the IDF Spokesperson said Sunday that forces under the command of the Kfir Brigade had destroyed two underground tunnel routes in which several living quarters and weapons were found. During searches in the area, the forces found dozens of rockets and explosive devices.

The two fairly routine statements provide official confirmation of media reports about the rearmament processes taking place in the Gaza Strip, to which the public is not exposed and whose scale it cannot even assess.

Under cover of the war against Iran and Hezbollah and the ceasefire in Gaza, figures who until recently were mentioned almost daily in military correspondents' reports have disappeared from Israeli consciousness.

One example is Izz al-Din al-Haddad, who assumed command of the military wing in Gaza after the elimination of Mohammed Deif and Raad Saad, and who is considered one of the surviving architects of the Oct. 7 massacre. Others include Mohammed Oudeh, commander of the northern brigade; Tawfiq Abu Naim, head of Hamas' security apparatuses and a member of the terrorist organization's founding generation; Ali Amoudi, one of the senior leaders in Gaza; and other operatives who have lowered their media profile and are operating under a heavy cloak of secrecy.

The deadline set for Hamas to disarm expired, was extended, and no one is following its renewed validity anymore. Hamas political bureau member Basem Naim stressed a few days ago that it was impossible to discuss the ceasefire agreement because of “violations by Israel.” He made clear that “resistance” is

the Palestinian people's "right" and that weapons are an inseparable part of that "resistance."

Earlier, the spokesman for Hamas' military wing claimed that the demand to disarm was "a scandalous attempt by the occupation to achieve through negotiations what it could not achieve on the battlefield." Hamas' position on the issue of weapons does not need to be read between the lines.

Alongside the restoration of governance, Hamas is continuing its military entrenchment. Although for now it is projecting a desire for quiet that will allow it to rebuild, it will not miss any opportunity that comes its way to abduct soldiers or carry out an offensive operation if it believes its chances of success are reasonable.

Israeli counterterrorism efforts in Gaza are far from keeping pace with Hamas' reconstruction and reflect a walk on an excessively thin tightrope in the face of the threats on the ground. A large share of the IDF's attention and resources is rightly directed toward Iran and Lebanon. This is precisely the space in which the Shin Bet and IDF Southern Command can step in, since they do not bear the operational burden on the Iranian and northern fronts and can bring their capabilities to bear in the Gazan arena, where it all began.

This is not only about thwarting weapons smuggling and production or cutting off Hamas' takeover of resources intended for Gaza's civilian population. It is also about initiating offensive operations against members, infrastructure, weapons stockpiles, tunnels, governing facilities and the like. Such operations would force Hamas to invest its resources in escape and concealment rather than reconstruction.

A string of successful counterterrorism operations in the Gaza Strip, without interfering with efforts on other fronts, is the mission Israel's political and security leadership should assign to the Shin Bet and IDF Southern Command. That is what is needed at the national level. The indirect benefit would be restoring the Shin Bet's reputation, channeling its positive forces into the operational sphere, and restoring the reputation it lost.

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