

# Settling a moral score in Doha

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 09.09.2025

At the time of writing, the results of the Israeli strike in Doha on the gathering place of senior Hamas political bureau members have yet to be clarified, but the operation itself is already creating shockwaves within Hamas and among all regional players. After the severe blow to the organization's leaders in the Gaza Strip, the leadership abroad became the most significant power center carrying the Hamas movement on its shoulders with all its components.

This leadership's activity served as a force multiplier for the terror organization and bridged gaps created in the functioning of some of its other mechanisms, following restrictions on them in the Gaza Strip or Judea and Samaria.

While its leaders in Gaza operate underground, struggle to function, and their voice is not heard, those "political leadership" figures whose life centers outside the region fill their place in presenting the movement's policy and advancing its interests: in Turkey, Qatar, Lebanon, or other countries.

They replace the hiding leadership, also in media appearances, on social networks, in conferences, and in political conversations. They are the organization's headquarters body, responsible for formulating its policy and explaining it, as well as bearing the burden of mobilizing the necessary political support and resources to build the organization's capabilities and activities in various areas.

Some fulfill operational roles, ranging from inter-regional coordination for terrorist purposes to directing concrete activities in different arenas. Saleh Arouri, remembered infamously, was among the activists known to the public, but like him there are about thirty activists: Khaled Mashaal, Khalil al-Hayya, Moussa Abu Marzouk, Nizar Awadallah, Bassem Naim, Sami Abu Zuhri, Izzat Rishq, Osama Hamadan, Mahmoud Mardawi, Taher Nono, Zaher Jabarin, and others. It appears some of these were the strike's target.

In the October 7 context, the publicized thanksgiving prayer of the organization's leaders, who were in Turkey at the time, is well remembered. And not only that, Israeli media also highlighted statements made after the massacre by Ghazi Hamad, a senior organization member in Gaza who relocated to Qatar, who

clarified: Israel is “a state we want to bring down”, “‘Al-Aqsa Flood’ is only the first time. There will also be a second, third, and fourth time. We have the resilience and ability to fight and pay the price.” Regarding Israel’s demand for Hamas to disarm, he ruled, “The resistance’s weapons are the essence of the Palestinian issue, we (in Hamas) are committed to this and will not hand over even one empty bullet.”

This headquarters is also the natural address that would take upon itself the task of rehabilitating the beaten terror organization, the moment this becomes possible. It is the one that will also make the connection to Iran and its proxies, to other supporting states, to the network of Islamic organizations spread throughout the world and identified with the “Muslim Brotherhood,” to money, to media, and to other resources that will be required for this purpose.

Given this leadership’s central role and its deep involvement in efforts to drag Israel into a multi-arena regional war, Israel could not afford to leave it standing. Refraining from striking it until now cast doubt among some players about Israel’s threats of total war against Hamas, and created the impression that staying in Turkey or Qatar guarantees immunity from it.

After disproving past assumptions about its ability to conduct prolonged or multi-arena warfare, Israel, in its recent operations, is challenging everything perceived by its enemies as “rules of the game.”

Doha’s announcement about suspending its involvement in mediation regarding Gaza matters is an expected step following the Israeli operation. Qatari anger will also find expression in incitement on *Al-Jazeera*, and expressions of rage and protest from Turkey should also be expected. The fact that Washington did not prevent Israel from operating in Doha will restrain their response.

On the ground, an escalation should be expected in attempts by Hamas activists in Judea and Samaria and Gaza to avenge the strike on the leadership. Attention must also be given to developments on the Temple Mount and in east Jerusalem.

The great unknown is the impact on the hostages’ situation and chances of resuming negotiations. On the face of it, it appears Hamas has a basic interest in preserving the hostages’ lives as they are the only insurance policy for the activists’ survival. However, it is difficult to predict the emotional reactions from the hostages’ captors and the red lines they have set for themselves. One matter

needs no concern: if Hamas wants to return to negotiations, the issue of the mediator will not be an obstacle.

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