The war is far from over

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 01.01.2025

The sustained rocket launches from Gaza into Israel, the elimination of the Nukhba unit commander who orchestrated the Oct. 7, 2023 assault on kibbutz Nir Oz and continued operating against us from within the humanitarian zone in Khan Yunis, alongside hundreds of Hamas fighters who engaged in combat, were captured, or eliminated in the Jabaliya sector last week – these directly counter assertions that "we have nothing left to accomplish in the Gaza Strip."

The blow Hamas sustained from Israel during the war is severe and painful, yet neither fatal nor irreversible. The murderous terror organization maintains its position as the central power force in the Gaza Strip. It commands thousands of fighters and operatives who, while not currently operating within organized military frameworks, maintain their potential to do so, awaiting "the day after" while inflicting damage and casualties on our forces through localized guerrilla operations.

Following the impressive achievements in IDF operations, estimates suggest Hamas still possesses many miles of unaddressed tunnels, substantial weaponry, and potentially some capacity for manufacturing bombs and ammunition. Its operatives control all areas lacking Israeli military presence, as well as a significant portion of humanitarian aid entering Gaza.

The organization's command structure maintains coordination, at least at a basic level, across all components. Their approach to hostage deal negotiations demonstrates effective leadership coordination between external and internal elements.

Israel's dilemma

The terror organization's remaining capabilities, combined with its deep-rooted control over Gaza's governing mechanisms and life systems, plus substantial Palestinian public support, reinforces its leadership's conviction that Hamas' era in Gaza persists. They pin their greatest hopes on concessions they aim to secure through the hostage agreement: war termination, IDF force withdrawal from Gaza, the population's return to evacuated areas, commitment to civilian reconstruction, and release of hundreds of terrorists from Israeli prisons. Hamas

leadership views these conditions as a launching point for restoring the organization's position. Without internal competition threatening Hamas' monopoly, and with support from Qatar and Turkey – key players in the emerging regional Sunni axis – this process might unfold more rapidly than anticipated.

This encapsulates Israel's dilemma: the hostage situation strengthens Hamas' aspirations to maintain central power in Gaza post-conflict. This hope aids their survival and hardens their negotiating stance. To advance both hostage return and Hamas' collapse, Israel needs to apply maximum pressure simultaneously through three parallel tracks: military operations, civilian infrastructure control, and diplomatic negotiations. Donald Trump's influence already looms in the region, promising support for this approach.

The five-point strategy

What's the correct course of action? First, intensify IDF operations within Gaza. This is essential, primarily to reduce future security threats to Israel. Beyond eliminating Nukhba operatives, we must target their commanders, facilitators, and trainees – along with weapons stockpiles and military equipment. The operation to clear Beit Hanoun of terrorists is crucial for protecting nearby Israeli residents.

Second, eliminate commanders and senior officials, both in Gaza and abroad. While the senior command structure has thinned, several effective brigade commanders, replacements, deputies, and numerous political bureau officials continue managing operations unimpeded.

Third, wrest humanitarian aid control from Hamas. This represents a critical governance resource. Alternative approaches exist and warrant decisive implementation rather than endless deliberation.

Fourth, target Hamas-controlled governmental mechanisms and capabilities. The "Sahm" ("Arrow") unit within Hamas' Interior Ministry and their Government Communications Bureau exemplify how the terror organization shapes Gaza's civilian landscape. Disrupting these elements is essential for achieving the war's stated objective of dismantling Hamas' governmental infrastructure.

Fifth, maximize American influence over negotiation mediators. While Egypt and Qatar's influence over Hamas has limits, it remains significant. Given Donald

Trump’s statements regarding hostages, these mediators should be expected to leverage all available resources to achieve results with Hamas.

Published in Israel Hayom, January 02, 2025.

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