The targeted killing of Mohammad Sinwar is a massive blow to Hamas & Iran

written by Dr. Yossi Mansharof | 01.06.2025

The successful targeting of Hamas's strategic tunnel and the destruction of the command and control center in which Hamas leader Mohammad Sinwar was hiding is not only a blow to Hamas, but also to Iran. The Israel Defense Forces and Shin Bet security agency demonstrated significant intelligence capabilities in their pursuit of the head of Hamas's military wing, and the Israeli Air Force proved its ability to effectively destroy a strategic underground facility built with Iranian assistance.

As his brother, late Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, himself previously acknowledged, the Quds Force played a central role in the development of Hamas's underground infrastructure. In a previous statement, Sinwar declared:

"We have hundreds of kilometers of tunnels and thousands of rockets. If it weren't for Iran, we would not have reached this point. Unlike our Arab brothers, Iran gave us money, weapons, and expertise. The Arab governments shut their doors to us and told us: 'Talk to the Americans first.'"

As emphasized by senior officials and propagandists of the Iranian regime, Tehran has been a key partner in the advancement of Hamas's tunneling network in Gaza. The Quds Force, under the leadership of Qassem Soleimani, provided Hamas with ongoing assistance and expertise over the years to develop the tunnel infrastructure into a strategic weapon.

The successful detection of this strategic tunnel, the intelligence tracking of its use, and its destruction, while housing the top Hamas commander in Gaza, is, therefore, a significant achievement for Israel and a blow to both Hamas and Iran.

Of course, this is not the end of the story. Israel must continue to crush Hamas and strive for the release of the 58 hostages still held by the group. However, the destruction of the strategic tunnel at the very moment Sinwar chose to flee into it may indicate that Israel possesses additional valuable intelligence and is waiting

for the right moment to act upon it.

A key figure now in Israel's sights is another Hamas leader, Ezz al-Din al-Haddad, who, according to reports, has already survived four targeted killing attempts since 2008. According to an *Al Jazeera* investigation, on the eve of the October 7 massacre, al-Haddad secretly gathered the commanders of the six battalions under his command and handed them operational orders for the attack.

In recent speeches, Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei claimed that Israeli assassinations of resistance axis leaders do not signify Israeli victory, arguing instead that these leaders leave behind a proud legacy, with many operatives trained to take their place, and even more who will join the organization in response to "Israeli crimes." However, as seen in Hezbollah after the killing of Hassan Nasrallah, the elimination of the leader and top command constitutes a historic rupture. The organization must now rebuild itself, with Nasrallah's successor, Naim Qassem, struggling to fill his predecessor's shoes, facing difficulties in decision-making, charisma, and projecting authority both within Hezbollah and externally.

As a guerrilla organization, Hamas is prepared to continue fighting for many more months, even without a structured leadership. The group recently released footage showcasing its ability to manufacture standardized explosives and booby-trap homes and roads in Gaza using explosive materials left behind by IDF troops. Still, the elimination of Mohammad Sinwar, alongside Rafah Brigade Commander Mohammad Shabana, is likely to severely disrupt Hamas's operational capacity. Without the leading figures who directed the war effort from Hamas's side, the group will struggle to function effectively, though it will likely continue to resist a comprehensive hostage deal, as the hostages remain Hamas's key bargaining chip for survival.

Alongside this, the institutionalization of humanitarian aid zones is a strategically crucial development. If implemented properly, it can undermine Hamas by gradually severing Gaza's civilian dependence on the organization.

It now remains to be seen how al-Haddad, poised to lead Hamas inside Gaza, and Khalil al-Hayya, expected to head Hamas's external wing, will function, and how their leadership will impact Hamas's decision-making, particularly regarding a potential hostage deal. Both men are meant to fill the vacuum left by the

elimination of Mohammad Sinwar, while continuing their constant efforts to evade Israeli detection.

Published in I24, June 01, 2025.