Hamas’s delayed death announcement signals confidence, not weakness

written by Prof. Kobi Michael | 30.12.2025

On December 29, 2025, Hamas issued a statement confirming the deaths of five of its senior leaders, including Abu Obeidah, the organization’s iconic spokesperson; Mohammad Sinwar, commander of the military wing; Mohammad Shabana, commander of the Rafah Brigade; and Ra’ad Sa’ad, one of the masterminds behind the October 7 attack. The timing of this announcement – months after the IDF had already declared their deaths – raises important questions: Why now, and why in a single, consolidated statement?

The delay appears to be a calculated move by Hamas to undermine the credibility of the IDF’s reports, especially in the absence of independent verification. By postponing the announcement, Hamas sought to prevent demoralization among its operatives and to maintain its standing in the eyes of the local population. The organization aimed to project resilience and stability, despite the significant blow to its leadership.

The remaining leadership needed time to regroup, rehabilitate, and appoint successors. Now, with Hamas having reestablished control over western Gaza, its confidence has grown, and it has managed to fill key positions–even if not all appointments have been made public.

The new spokesperson was given the symbolic nickname “Abu Obeidah,” signaling continuity and stability, and preserving the organization’s tradition of fighting spirit.

Such a dramatic announcement by Hamas is never random; it serves a clear strategic purpose. The timing seems linked to the upcoming meeting between President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu, and the pressure on Israel to advance the second phase of Trump’s 20-point plan.

Increasing pressure on Israel

Hamas's statement is designed to project stability, determination, and above all, self-confidence. With Turkish and Qatari backing, this message is intended to increase pressure on Israel to soften its demands regarding Hamas's disarmament and the demilitarization of Gaza.

Hamas's leadership understands the US president's resolve to push forward with his plan, as well as the reservations of Arab and other countries expected to participate in the Stabilization Force (ISF) about confronting Hamas.

Hamas acts both practically–by consolidating its control–and declaratively–by announcing the deaths of its senior figures while reaffirming its commitment to the resistance narrative. The goal is to leverage current circumstances to ensure its continued presence in Gaza as an influential and unavoidable actor.

The announcement also serves as a message to Gaza's population: a message of continuity that transcends mere survival. It is a declaration of capability and strength that goes beyond the importance of individual leaders. Hamas seeks to present itself as a viable, stable organization, capable of rapid recovery even after painful losses.

What should Israel understand from this? The announcement is further evidence of an unfinished mission–a war objective not yet achieved. Hamas continues to exist, operate, defy, and control, creating conditions for its renewed empowerment. If the organization is not disarmed, Gaza will not be demilitarized, and no real alternative government will be established.

Without reconstruction and a viable alternative to Hamas, the stage will be set for the next conflict, which, even if it does not resemble October 7, could be dangerous and ignite additional fronts. Only the IDF can complete the task, and Israeli leadership must find a way to ensure this happens–sooner rather than later.

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