



Islamic Theology of Counter Terrorism
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7th OCT: Hamas Strategy, Military Drills, Weapons Capability & Infiltration

Noor Dahri



HAMAS STRATEGY BEFORE 7TH OCT

- *West Bank Unrest*
- *Al-Aqsa Uprising*
- *Great March of Return*
- *Hamas Recce*
- *Military Drill*
- *Hard Wired Phone System*

HAMAS INFLITRATION ON 7TH OCT

- *Missile Launching*
- *Breaking the Wall*
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- *Suicide Drones*
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AUTHOR INTRODUCTION

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He has written many research articles on the hot issues such as Counter Terrorism, Violent Extremism, De-Radicalisation, and Israel-

Palestine conflict which have been published in various newspapers. Noor has attended many counter terrorism events and delivered numerous speeches at international conferences on the threat of Counter Terrorism and visited many institutes on this issue. He regularly attends multiple TV and Radio shows for his interviews and opinions.

He has also written many books on the topic of Islamist terrorism, Israel Palestine issue and the Middle East politics. He is currently writing a book about the Hamas attacks on 7th Oct 2023.

Noor Dahri has received a “Life Achievement Award Certificate” by Lord Frank Judd at The House of Lords- London in 2017.

His opinions can be found on twitter/X: @dahriNoor2.

SUMMARY

It was Doom's Day for the people of Israel when on October 7, 2023, more than an estimated 1,500 terrorists infiltrated the South of the country from Gaza and massacred about 1,200 people, a figure that includes some 400 security officials, while also abducting more than 250 Israelis back to Gaza. This is the second largest massacre in Jewish history, the first being during the Holocaust era.

Israeli security services consist of Mossad, Shin Bet, military intelligence, Unit 8200, among other units. In the recent dark incident of the October 7, many Israeli citizens are accusing Mossad for its failed role to protect, however, it is not Mossad's role to deal with internal threats of the country, rather Shin Bet's. Mossad's role is to protect the country and people from cross-border threats. There are different units and departments working inside Shin Bet such as the Arab Affairs Department, Foreign Department, Jewish Department and the Protective Security Department (Unit 730). The Arab Affairs department deals with the threats posed by Arabs and Palestinians from Gaza, West Bank (Judea & Samaria) and from inside Israel.¹

While Shin Bet seems to be largely responsible for the poor security measures that endangered the lives of thousands of Israelis, decisions across the political echelon deserve scrutiny as well. As the investigation into these events is not expected to be conducted until after the current Israel-Hamas war ends, this article will not discuss those aspects.

Hamas is an Iranian proxy, with funding, assistance, military and logistical support provided by the Islamic regime. It is an Islamist organisation banned by a majority of western and some Gulf countries, although Hamas does maintain close relations with Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey and Qatar. The Hamas October 7 massacre was a well-planned project perpetrated by the Iranian regime and started in early 2022 in Iran. According to the US Intel reports this plan was architected by Iran and there is evidence that 500 Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) members of the special unit participated in military drills conducted by Al Quds force in September 2023.²



*An image released last year that appeared on social media showing fighters, including from Hamas, training at an undisclosed location.
Photo Credit: The Washington Post*

US Intel experts have also assessed the entire Hamas operation and concluded that it could not have been conducted without the help of Hezbollah and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corp. (IRGC) as Hamas does not have the capabilities to conduct such difficult and well organised attacks, otherwise, they would have been conducted earlier. Khaled Meshaal, a senior Hamas official in Doha, has also admitted “Hezbollah and Iran supported us with weapons, expertise, and technology.”³

¹ <https://www.shabak.gov.il/en#=1>

² Hamas Fighters Trained in Iran Before Oct. 7 Attacks - WSJ

³ Ibid

GAZA BORDER INTRODUCTION

Israel's border with Gaza has always been believed to have among the toughest security measures in the world. It has multi-layers above and under the ground with barriers including wire, metal and concrete, which is further reinforced by security post positions for Army snipers and a digital security tower, etc. There are also security zones on both sides which cannot be passed or entered without military approval, such as Risk Zone, No Go Zone and Sand barriers that slow down vehicles, which are outlined in the graphic below. These security measures had so far protected the southern residents including kibbutz communities of Israel.

Israel's perimeter fence and access-restricted area

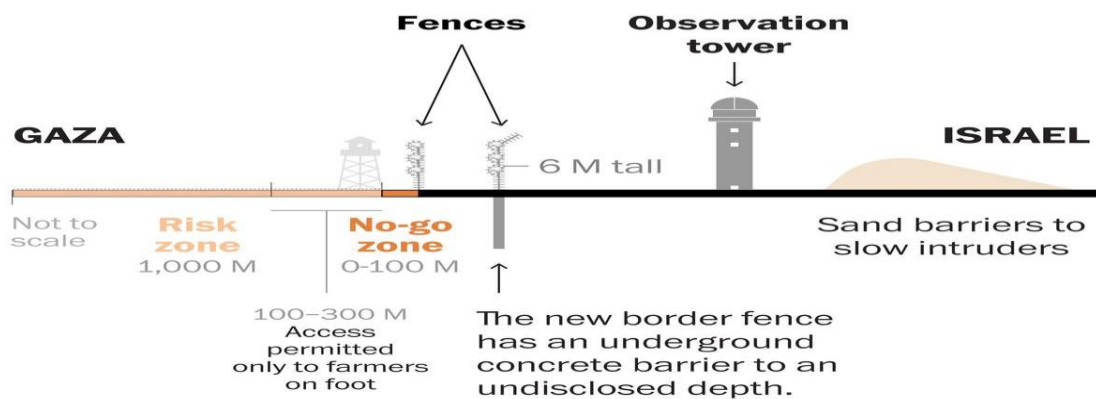


Photo Credit: Washington Post

Over the years, numerous Gazans tried to infiltrate Israel but were arrested by Israel's border forces. There are seven high level security measures on the Gaza border that prevent infiltration by foot or vehicle. A person has to pass many phases before entering in Israel.

Phase 1: Security Buffer Zone (where access is granted by foot only to farmers)

Phase 2: High Risk Area (Observation tower guarded by Israeli army with sniper guns)

Phase 3: Metal fence (6-meter-high fence guarded by Israel army)

Phase 4: Underground Metal wall (sensors to detect terrorist tunnels)

Phase 5: Metal Fence (20-foot-high metal fence with razor wire)

Phase 6: Observation Towers (equipped with digital cameras and alarm system)

Phase 7: Security Sand (sand dunes to slow down intruders)

On October 7, hundreds of Hamas terrorists breached all seven security phases without any indication to Israeli forces, entered into Israeli areas, remained inside for several hours tortured and massacred about 1,200 civilians and security forces, burned vehicles, houses and security forces stations, kidnapped an estimated 225 Israelis and went back to Gaza via those same security systems successfully. Some operatives were caught even days later. This has raised many questions on the security system of the state of Israel, which had been considered "unbreakable".

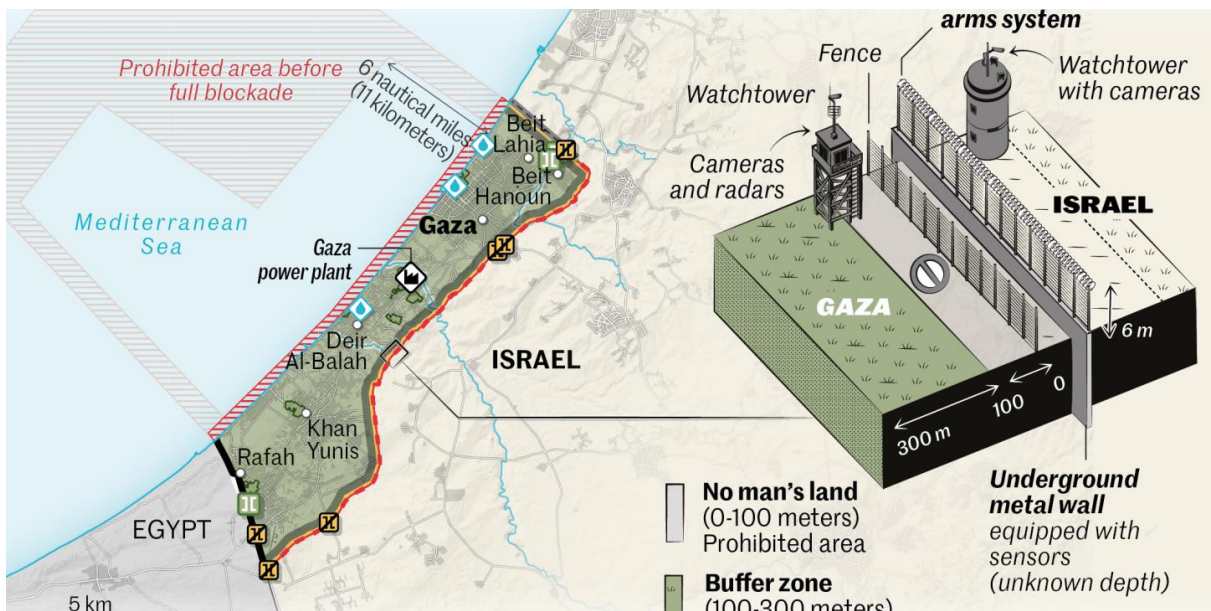


Photo credit: Financial Times

HAMAS STRATEGY

On October 7, more than 1,500 members of Nukhba Force (Naval commandoes in a special forces unit of the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigade) of Hamas successfully conducted the first ground operation in the history of their wars against Israel.⁴ Hamas was preparing the members of the Nukhba force for several months inside and outside the Gaza strip, including Syria, Lebanon and Iran.



Photo Credit: The Times

The Hamas movement had military academy training with a range of specialisations that included cyber security as well as a naval commando unit among its 40,000-strong military wing. The movement had less than 10,000 fighters back in the 90s and had low range rockets with a maximum range of 40 km (25 miles). By the time of the 2021 conflict, that range grew to 250 km.⁵

⁴ How Hamas secretly built a 'mini-army' to fight Israel | Reuters

⁵ Ibid

Hamas Rocket Arsenal 2021 that fired on Israel



Photo Credit: AP News

Hamas' attacks have not only shocked Israeli security services but also western intelligence communities, as experts had not expected such a high level of organized terrorist activity, which destroyed the border defence system allowing hostile elements to enter and leave Israel with hundreds of Israeli captives. There is no doubt that the operation was planned for years with IRGC and Hezbollah assistance, however we must also assess the timing, intel, mapping, profiling, movement and military drills before the attacks. The attacks that bypassed the world's most advanced security system were massive and complex.

West Bank Unrest:

Hamas had instructed their members in the West Bank (Judea and Samaria) areas months before October to start attacking security forces and Israelis in order to foment unrest for the security situation, with Hamas' goal being to reduce the Israeli security presence in southern areas of Israel, including at the Gaza border. There were terrorist attacks from areas such as Jenin and Nablus refugee camps and as a result the Israeli army was moved from the southern borders with Gaza to be stationed in the West Bank to carry out military operations in those Palestinian camps to combat terrorist attacks. According to Aharon Ze'evi Farkash, the former head of the Military Intelligence Directorate in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF): "There was a need for more soldiers, so where did they take them from? From the Gaza border, where they thought it was calm. Not surprising that Hamas and Islamic Jihad noticed the low staffing at the border."⁶ The Gaza border, it soon became clear, was minimally manned, and it took hours to redirect units stationed in the West Bank, which has been the main area of focus for the military this year, according to Miri Regev, Israel's transportation minister.⁷

⁶ After Hamas attack, Israel grapples with intelligence, military failures - The Washington Post

⁷ Ibid



Photo Credit: The Times of Israel

Al- Aqsa Uprising:

Throughout the year 2023, Hamas members carried out chaos and instability not just in the West Bank but also at Al Aqsa Mosque/Temple Mount area in East Jerusalem. In April 2023, Hamas diverted Israeli security force’s attention towards the Temple Mount as riots broke out and Palestinian supporters of Hamas stormed Al Aqsa Mosque in the holy month of Ramadan. Hundreds of Palestinians were injured during the clashes, generating international pressure on Israel to calm the situation down. During the Ramadan riots at the Temple Mount, Hamas achieved multiple goals in carrying out drills in preparation for the October 7 attack without being noticed by Israeli Intel departments. In addition, Hamas launched hundreds of rockets in solidarity with Al Aqsa rioters, also a plan of diversion.⁸ Hamas was playing all its card in a very organised manner to carry out operation Al Aqsa Flood on a planned timeline. The Hamas operation is estimated to have taken between 18 to 24 months from planning to execution, a period that also included riots at Al Aqsa mosque, unrest and terrorism in the West Bank areas (Jenin and Nablus), instability inside Israel by Israeli Arabs, launching rockets from Gaza and Lebanon, the “Freedom March” at the Gaza border – all pre-planned to carry out the Al Aqsa Flood operation inside Israel.



Photo Credit: EL PAIS

⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/apr/05/palestinians-injured-after-israeli-police-raid-al-aqsa-mosque-again>

Great March of Return:

Multiple camps were placed near the Gaza border by the March participants, a majority of who were Hamas members and supporters from north of Gaza. Gaza's north is an area that Hamas operates in and from, consisting of most of their military headquarters, ammunition storage warehouses, training camps and rocket-launching bases. There are many Israeli residential areas located close to the north side of the Gaza border including Nahal Oz, Kfar Aza, Erez, and many more including Sderot town.



Photo Credit: LTC Peter Lerner

The majority of Palestinians who attended the “Great March of Return” were protesting 500 meters from the Gaza border. Israeli guidelines allow people to stay at least 300-500 meters from the security fences. By the end of the March, approximately 32 people were killed and more than 1,500 wounded by the Israeli security forces. These casualties were caused because Hamas’ active member entered the no-go zone located within 100 meters of the security fence and started shooting and throwing grenades at the Israeli security, who reacted with live fire. According to a report conducted by the British Israel Communications and Research Centre (BICOM): “Hamas operatives approached the fence and fired at IDF soldiers; other Hamas operatives threw a grenade at soldiers near the Karni crossing; pipe bombs and fire bombs were thrown at the fence and at Israeli soldiers; a number of attempts were made to cut the border fence; two improvised explosive devices were planted on the border in the northern part of the Strip by three Palestinians caught crossing the fence; and four explosives were found alongside the fence. In one case made public by the IDF, a seven-year-old girl was sent across the border by Hamas before being identified by troops and returned to her family.”⁹

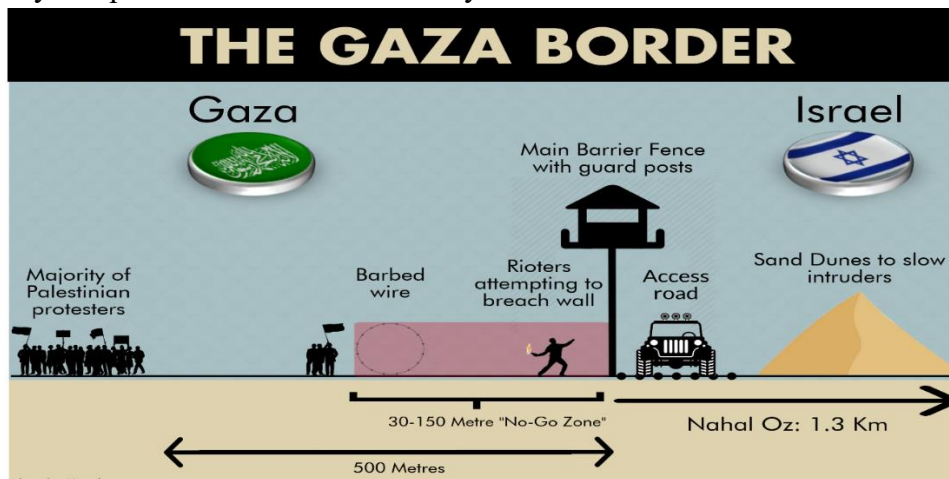


Photo Credit Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre (Bicom)

The “March of Return” was initially organised by the Higher National Commission for the March of Return and Breaking the Siege (an umbrella organisation comprised of national and Islamist factions), and later hijacked by Hamas. Hamas’ leader, Yahya Sinwar, attended the demonstrations and gave

⁹<https://www.bicom.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Hamas-Israel-and-the-Gaza-Border-April-2018-2.pdf>

speeches emphasising that the “March of Return affirms that our people can’t give up one inch of the land of Palestine”.¹⁰ According to the IDF, most of the casualties on both Fridays took place when small groups of young men tried to break through the border fence.¹¹

The Great March of Return in 2018 was ultimately Hamas’ assessment towards the viability of the October 7 operation. Their plan was to test the strength, capability, response and action of the Israeli forces, for example, seeing how Palestinian rioters were dragged away from the barbed wire near the security fence at Gaza border. Every single act of Hamas at the Gaza border for the last couple of years was geared to test military strategy and assess IDF positions and response amid preparations for the Al Aqsa Flood operations that began October 7.



Photo Credit: The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center

Hamis Recce:

In 2022, Israel had increased work permits to the people of Gaza from 15,000 to 18,000. Gazan workers earn ten times more in Israel than in Gaza. Every day, Gazan workers with Israeli work permits entered into Israel via Erez border of Gaza despite a blockade initiated to stop the flow of suicide bombing against Israeli citizens by Hamas terrorists. Every time Hamas escalates the situation by, for example, launching thousands of rockets, Israel would close the Erez border for security reasons and reopen immediately after calm was restored.

Before 2007, more than 100,000 Gazans worked in Israel. But after Hamas took control, Israel stopped issuing permits. In Gaza, workers were earning ILS40 (\$10) a day. In Israel, by contrast, Gazans can earn nearly ILS400 (\$100) a day in sectors such as industry and agriculture, which can be a life-changing amount.¹² Out of 18,000 Gazans permit holders, majority were working in and around southern areas of Israel including the *residential* as formers and construction workers.¹³

It is widely believed that Hamas successfully infiltrated its sympathisers, who were disguised among Gazan work permit holders, to enter Israel in order to conduct reconnaissance (recce) on the Jewish residential areas and small towns, although there is a dispute on the extent to which this occurred.¹⁴ Some reports indicate that these infiltrators provided information about armed and unarmed residents, houses, police stations, check points, IDF bases, entry and exit points, CCTV cameras, assessments of quick response measures, communication systems, the weakness of the system, etc. It is believed that Hamas could not have carried out such a well organised operation inside Israeli residential areas without having

¹⁰ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-head-sinwar-says-gaza-protests-will-continue-until-border-erased/>

¹¹ <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/great-return-march-last-fridays-riots-coming-two-days-may-14-15/>

¹² <https://www.ft.com/content/b246af87-1ab9-4e1c-8935-31f2a277626b>

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ <https://www.ynet.co.il/yedioth/article/yokra13881440>

complete and specific information collected and provided by their work permit holder spies. ¹⁵After the deadly October 7 attack, Israeli authorities immediately revoked 17,500 work permits of Gazans who were working inside Israel. At the time many of them were unable to return to Gaza. ¹⁶

There are confirmed reports that the IDF arrested Palestinian permit holders from West bank and Gaza and held them under investigation at an undisclosed army base. The exact number of detainees are unknown, however there are some estimates it was hundreds, with Israel's Channel 12 claiming there may be as many as 4,000. ¹⁷

Military Drills:

Months before invading the south of Isarel, Hamas conducted military exercises dubbed Operation "Strong Pillar" in body armour and combat fatigues. The operation included the destruction of mock-ups of a border wall's concrete towers and communications antenna, just as they would do for real in the deadly attack on Saturday October 7. One of the compounds Hamas used for military training facilities was so close to an Israeli border checkpoint that soldiers could observe the site with binoculars. ¹⁸ Hamas has released dozens of videos that reveal how they had conducted military training, including the destruction of mock-ups of the wall's concrete towers and paraglider exercise. They issued several videos that were dated up to two years before the event, proving that Hamas was conducting mock training even that long ago in front of IDF checkpoints. One of the videos shows Hamas terrorists practicing take-offs, landings and assaults with paragliders, the same unusual assault mode that Hamas deployed with lethal effect on October 7. ¹⁹

There were =different Hamas military training facilities across several Gaza Strip sites, two of which were located in north Gaza, a mile distance from an IDF checkpoint: one in central Gaza, and three on the south side of Gaza in the Khan Yunis area. Hamas terrorists had conducted paraglider training in three locations in the south part of Gaza near the Rafah border. They had constructed houses, entry and exits points similar to the houses located in Kibbutz areas in order to carry out mock operations for the preparation of the Al-Aqsa Flood. They created mock Israeli buildings and streets and are seen executing a number of different assault tactics on them. According to the IDF spokesperson Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus' "Hamas may have made the facilities look civilian." ²⁰

Hamas commandos dressed like IDF soldiers to conduct military drills and this was also how they operated inside Israel using IDF uniforms to trap Israeli civilians. They even released some training videos a month before the October 7 attacks, which was widely reported in Israeli media, however, Israeli authorities expressed confidence that Hamas does not have such a capability to wage a sophisticated war against Israel. This is now known as the "Hamas Surprise". ²¹

Miri Eisin, a former senior intelligence officer in the IDF, said "the operation was the result of at least two years of planning, a period that included two conflicts between the IDF and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), a smaller militant group in Gaza. At the time, Hamas was criticized for standing on the sidelines as PIJ leaders were eliminated by Israeli strikes." ²²

¹⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/how-israel-was-duped-hamas-planned-devastating-assault-2023-10-08/>

¹⁶ <https://www.france24.com/en/tv-shows/business-daily/20231013-some-gaza-residents-with-israeli-work-permits-unable-to-return-home>

¹⁷ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/unable-to-return-to-gaza-hundreds-of-laborers-detained-by-idf-in-the-west-bank/>

¹⁸ <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/hamas-posted-video-of-mock-attack-on-social-media-weeks-before-border-breach>

¹⁹ <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/10/12/middleeast/hamas-training-site-gaza-israel-intl/index.html>

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/israel-gaza-hamas-months-old-training-videos-foreshadowed-deadly-assault/>

²² <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/10/16/hamas-attack-israel/>





Source: CNN analysis of videos released by Hamas and its affiliates - Graphic: Renée Rigdon and Lou Robinson, CNN

Hard-Wired Phone System:

There are credible reports that Hamas used a hard-wired phone system in the “spider web” of tunnels under Gaza to evade Israeli intelligence for two years before plotting the deadly October 7 attacks.²³ The hard-wired phone system inside the tunnels allowed Hamas to communicate without being detected by the Israeli and the US intelligence agencies. These phones were specifically built for use in underground tunnels for communication, thereby evading being tracked by Israeli intelligence officials. In addition, Hamas terrorists were avoiding computers and mobile phones as these devices can be easily tracked and traced by Israel’s intelligence establishment.²⁴

The New York Post reported that intelligence sources said: “Planning meetings were held in person whenever possible, and digital communications on cell phones and computers were avoided to ensure secrecy, the sources said. Knowledge about the attack was also kept secret from the majority of Hamas’ fighting force until days before the shock assault in an effort to prevent any information from slipping out even as the terrorists trained above ground without knowing their objective.”²⁵

Israeli intelligence officials believe that Hamas used old fashioned counterintelligence measures and stayed off the grid of digital communication channels, which sends signals that can be tracked instantly. This was one of the ways that Hamas planned a deadly plot under the nose of Israel and the US intelligence community without behind noticed.²⁶



Hamis terrorists used landline phones in the tunnels under Gaza and avoided digital communications to evade Israeli intelligence. Getty Images/New York Post

²³ <https://nypost.com/2023/10/24/news/hamis-used-landlines-to-evade-israeli-intelligence-while-plannig-attack/>

²⁴ <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/10/24/politics/intelligence-hamis-israel-attack-tunnels-phone-lines/index.html>

²⁵ <https://nypost.com/2023/10/24/news/hamis-used-landlines-to-evade-israeli-intelligence-while-plannig-attack/>

²⁶ <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1828089/hamis-militants-phone-lines-underground-tunnels-israel-attack>



HAMAS INFILTRATION

Hamas's choices of timing, locations and usage of their military infrastructure was beyond anyone's imagination and would not have been possible without the assistance and training of Hezbollah and the Al-Quds force in the Middle East. As discussed earlier, the operation is considered well organised and well planned, with trained manpower using sophisticated arms, and which has instilled existential fear among Israelis. The groups planned several operational methods to make it extremely successful, such as timing the operation during a Jewish high holiday, while also taking a perceived advantage of political turmoil within Israeli society as pushback against government policies related to the Supreme Court caused division, for example, reservists threatening to refuse to continue military service.

Before the infiltration in Israeli territory on October 7, they carried out military tactics such as launching missiles and rockets, breaking the iron wall, using Paragliders, sending drones to disable cellular communications stations and surveillance towers along the border, using earth-moving equipment to breach the border fence, infiltrating via sea, ultimately allowing more than 1,500 fighters to surge through nearly 30 points along the border. All these tactics were used at the same time to engage the Israeli security forces from every side and corner.²⁷

Jewish Holidays:

Civilians in the south were left to fend for themselves against Hamas gunmen during the Jewish Sabbath and Simchat Torah holiday of 2023. The attack was carried out the day after the 50th year anniversary of the Yom Kippur war in 1967, also called the six-day war. Israeli Jews were celebrating Simchat Torah, a religious observance held on the last day of Sukkot, known as the Festival of Booths, which represents the completion of the yearly cycle of Torah reading and the beginning of the next cycle. Torah scrolls are removed from the ark and carried through the synagogue seven times in a joyful procession, sometimes followed by children waving flags.²⁸ These are sacred days for the Jewish people and Hamas took advantage of this time to start attacking Israel.

Missile Launching:

Hamas launched thousands of missiles and rockets into Israel in the early morning of October 7. At around 6:30 a.m. local time, sirens sounded so that citizens could take cover in shelters. An estimated 2,200 rockets were fired toward southern and central Israel, including Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, by Hamas militants.²⁹ The barrage of rockets continued even after the Israeli Airforce retaliated. After one Israeli strike, a Hamas rocket barrage hit four cities, including Tel Aviv and a nearby suburb. Throughout the day, Hamas fired more than 3,500 rockets, the Israeli military said.³⁰ At time of writing, (1st week of Jan 2024), Hamas continues to fire rockets from the Rafah area, near the Rafah border crossing with Egypt. Hamas has been using Qassam rockets for nearly two decades to fire on Israel with the first launch in 2001 during the second Intifada. They used hundreds of rockets in a short timeframe, making it difficult for the control system to intercept all targets. On October 7, Hamas was believed to have launched over 5,000 rockets in just 20 minutes, resulting in some getting through the Iron Dome defence system.³¹ These inaccurate, sugar and potassium nitrate fertilizer-propelled home-made rockets are believed to be accompanied by larger, more advanced missiles, such as the Soviet era BM-21 Grad MLRS. According to

²⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/10/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-security-failure.html>

²⁸ <https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13735-simhat-torah>

²⁹ <https://abcnews.go.com/International/timeline-surprise-rocket-attack-hamas-israel/story?id=103816006>

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ <https://www.shephardmedia.com/news/air-warfare/inside-hamas-arsenal-rockets-drones-loitering-munitions-and-tactics-deployed-in-the-assault-on-israel/>

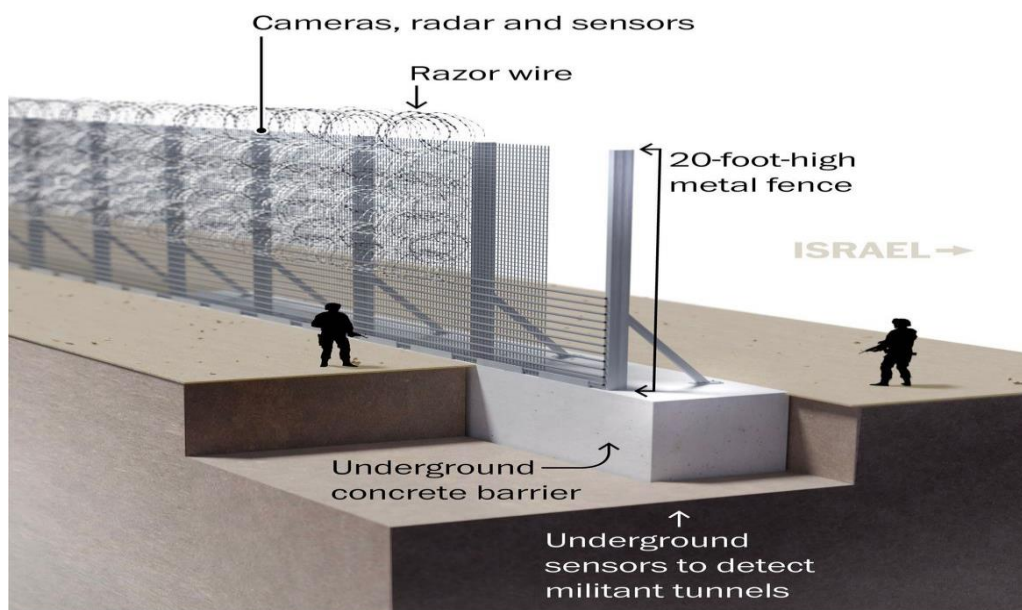


the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, “at least some of these 122mm Grad rockets were produced in Iran, but it is not clear how many such weapons Hamas has in its arsenal.”³²



Breaking the Wall:

In 2021, Israel announced the completion of a “Smart Fence” on the Gaza border at a cost of some \$1 billion. It runs along the border for 40 miles with an underground concrete barrier. This fence required 140,000 tons of iron and steel as well as the installation of hundreds of security cameras, radars and sensors.³³ The fence was breached at 29 points.³⁴ There were Israeli security towers positioned every 500 feet along the perimeters of the wall, where terrorists found little resistance and killed Israeli guards.



A picture taken from Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip shows smoke billowing next to an Israeli observation tower on Saturday. (Said Khatib/AFP/Getty Images) Source: Washington Post

The project was publicly announced in 2016 after Hamas used underground tunnels to attack Israeli forces in the 2014 war. Access near the fence on the Gaza side was limited to farmers on foot. On the Israeli side, observation towers and sand dunes were put in place to monitor threats and slow intruders.³⁵

³² <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/tracking-anti-us-strikes-iraq-and-syria-during-gaza-crisis>

³³ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-announces-completion-underground-gaza-border-barrier-2021-12-07/>

³⁴ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/10/09/hamas-israel-war-explainer/>

³⁵ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/10/10/how-hamas-entered-israel/>

Hamas used bulldozers that ripped through the six-metre (almost 20-foot) tall double fence barrier. Hamas terrorists drove through the fence with jeeps, pick-up trucks, motorbikes and other vehicles, which is clearly recorded in hours of footage that has been shared on social media, taken from security cameras, car dashcams and the phones of terrorists.³⁶



Photo Credit: The Wall Street Journal

Paraglider:

The first Hamas militants flew into Israel by paraglider as dawn broke over the Gaza Strip on Saturday October 7. When other Hamas militants landed, they stormed Israeli bases and shot everyone they could find, according to slick video footage of the raids published by the militants' media wing.³⁷ Hamas terrorists were trained in Syria to raid Israeli homes and take civilians hostage, while the men who carried out the paraglider attacks were trained in Lebanon, the New York Times reported.³⁸ As news of wider involvement became known, the United States administration embarked on high-stakes shuttle diplomacy to prevent war in the Middle East.

In the weeks leading up to Hamas's October 7 attacks on Israel, hundreds of the Palestinian Islamist militant group's fighters received specialized combat training in Iran, according to people familiar with intelligence related to the assault. Roughly 500 militants from Hamas and an allied group, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, participated in the exercises in September, which were led by officers of the Quds Force, the foreign operations arm of the IRGC, the people said. Senior Palestinian officials and Iranian Brig. Gen. Esmail Qaani, the head of Quds Force, also attended, they said.³⁹



(Picture source: Hindustan Times)

³⁶ Hamas fighters enter Israel after breaching border fence (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yezlk8tftpU>)

³⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KF5vPfqtJBM&t=68s>

³⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/13/world/middleeast/hamas-iran-israel-attack.html?searchResultPosition=1>

³⁹ <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/hamas-fighters-trained-in-iran-before-oct-7-attacks-e2a8dbb9>

The New York Post reported that the powered paragliders appeared to consist of a seat, motor and parafoil. The air attack was just one of the methods used by Hamas terrorists as part of their multifaceted strategy to unleash fear and terror on the Israeli population, it reported.⁴⁰

According to the report by CNN: “Paragliders, which use wind to propel forward and upward, or powered parachutes, which have an engine, are commonly used by adventure seekers. But they aren’t commonly used in warfare and for good reason.”⁴¹ In late 1987, a Palestinian fighter was strapped to a hang glider similar to a paraglider, but the frame was found too rigid for its wings entering Israeli airspace.⁴² In 2012, a Spanish al-Qaeda cell was arrested near the border of Gibraltar planning to commit an act of terrorism in Gibraltar targeting a shopping mall. These terrorist suspects had received paraglider training from the local instructor how to fly.⁴³

Naval Terrorism:

Hamas has its own naval commando force called Nukhba or Al-Nukhba. This elite unit is considered among the top militants in Hamas. The commandos of the unit reportedly protect the senior leadership of Hamas. They are selected and tasked with carrying out ambushes, raids and moving through tunnels to infiltrate areas in Israel. They are also involved in armed strikes using anti-tank missiles, rockets and sniper rifles.



The members of Al-Nukhba force. (Image: Reuters)

While the Nukhba force was not widely discussed in Israeli media, the IDF had been engaged with the unit’s naval commandos on numerous occasions on sea. The Nukhba force was an undercover commando unit whose goal was to infiltrate in Israel with underwater vessels in order to target an energy facility, a populated town, or wreak havoc in some other way. According to IDF officials: “The Nukhba fighters were ‘one of the leading forces’ that infiltrated Israel in the weekend attack.”⁴⁴

According to Israel's security service Shin Bet, captured Nukhba members were ordered to kill everyone they saw and carry out atrocities against civilians including women and children. They were given instructions to kill everyone they saw, including beheading victims and cutting off their legs. They were given permission to rape the corpse of a girl. If they brought hostages back to Gaza, they would be rewarded with a grant, an apartment and \$10,000.”⁴⁵

⁴⁰ <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/video-shows-hamas-gunmen-paraglide-into-israel-amid-all-night-party-near-gaza-strip-101696738113154.html>

⁴¹ <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/10/13/middleeast/hamas-weapons-invs/index.html>

⁴² <https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,966139,00.html>

⁴³ <https://edition.cnn.com/2012/08/05/world/europe/spain-terror-arrests/index.html>

⁴⁴ <https://www.newsweek.com/israel-hamas-air-strikes-elite-nukhba-1834045>

⁴⁵ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/kill-behead-rape-interrogated-hamas-members-detail-atrocities-against-civilians/>



Their main focus is to attack on or underwater, and to infiltrate Israel via its beaches, using underwater explosives and guided missiles and therefore not prevented by the Iron Dome air defence system. Targets include Israeli infrastructure at sea, military and civilian vessels and power stations.⁴⁶ Shaul Chorev, a retired Israeli admiral who is Head of Haifa University's Maritime Policy and Strategy Research Center, was cited in the New York Times as stating that Israel in recent years has been increasingly concerned about Hamas's naval commando units, and undercover and surprise sea attacks were one way the militant group had sought to overcome Israel's superior military power, including its mighty air force and Iron Dome defence system used to shoot down rockets fired by militants in Gaza.

"The fear is that these commando units can be used to target infrastructure like power stations or to try and infiltrate Israel by sea," he said.⁴⁷ A 2017 report in the Independent said that growing numbers of Nukhba gunmen had at that time been defecting from Hamas to Islamic State in the neighbouring Sinai region. This included specialists in anti-tank missile firing and bomb making.⁴⁸

Hamas naval commandos attacked Israel on October 7 as part of the terrorist group's massacre of 1,200 people. Naval commandos attacked the Zikim beach area and murdered civilians. The Israeli navy killed the terrorists over the course of two days. On October 28, Israel killed Hamas naval terror commander Rateb Abu Sahiban, who had attempted an attack on the Zikim beach on October 24. Throughout the war, Israel has deployed its own naval commandos and ships to target Hamas coastal terror infrastructure.⁴⁹

OTHER TERRORIST GROUPS

It is now confirmed that apart from Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), more than five terrorist groups based in Gaza participated in the October 7 military operation.⁵⁰

They are:

Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades:



Photo Credit: Islamic World News

Abu Ali Mustafa is actually an armed wing of the Marxist/Leninist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in Gaza. The original name of the organisation was "Red Eagle Brigade", renamed after the killing of its leader Abu Ali Mustafa by Israel in August 2001. According to the CIA World Factbook, the exact strength of the Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades is unknown, but in the thousands. Its known weaponry includes small arms, light machine guns, rocket artillery, mortars, man-portable surface-to-air missiles, improvised weapons, and explosives, including IEDs, and suicide vests.⁵¹

⁴⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/17/world/middleeast/hamas-navy.html>

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2023/10/12/israel-aims-destroy-nukhba-hamas-commando-squad/>

⁴⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/17/world/middleeast/hamas-navy.html>

⁵⁰ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-67480680>

⁵¹ https://ecfr.eu/special/mapping_palestinian_politics/abu_ali_mustafa_brigades_pflp/



Omer al-Qasim Forces:



Photo Credit: Islamic World News

The original name of the Omer al-Qasim force is National Resistance Brigade. The group is a military wing of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFP). DFLP is a secular Palestinian Marxist–Leninist and Maoist organisation that operates in Gaza.⁵² It was originally formed in 1969 but was fully established and operational in 2000. The group was initially known as the Red Star Brigades, before being renamed the Palestinian National Resistance Battalions during the Second Intifada.⁵³

The National Resistance Brigades participated in the 2023 Hamas-led attack on Israel against Israeli forces,⁵⁴ and their troops joined the operation launched by Hamas.⁵⁵ On October 7 they claimed to have lost three fighters in combat with the Israel Defence Forces, and on October 8 they were engaged with Israeli forces in Kfar Aza, Be'eri, and Kissufim.⁵⁶

On February 19, 2024, Omer al-Qasim's spokesman, Abu Khaled, announced that during the attack the National Resistance Brigades had carried out more than 400 operations, including 100 armed clashes with Israeli forces, targeting 25 vehicles, sniping 5 soldiers, firing 110 rocket salvos, targeting 160 positions with mortars, and shooting down Israeli drones. He also stated that 37 fighters had been killed during the war, including on October 7th and from airstrikes, and others had been arrested or were missing.⁵⁷

Mujahideen Brigades:



Photo Credit: Islamic World News

⁵² https://ecfr.eu/special/mapping_palestinian_politics/national_resistance_brigades_dflp/

⁵³ <https://www.camera.org/article/camera-backgrounder-democratic-front-for-the-liberation-of-palestine-dflp/>

⁵⁴ <https://alhouriah.org/article/125236>

⁵⁵ <https://www.plenglish.com/news/2023/10/07/palestinian-militias-back-hamas-against-israel/>

⁵⁶ <https://alhouriah.org/article/125237>

⁵⁷ <https://alhouriah.org/article/132203>

The Mujahideen Brigades are the armed wing of the Palestinian Mujahideen Movement. They operate in both Gaza and the West Bank (including Jenin). The Brigades have claimed responsibility for rocket fire against Israel and operate in cooperation with Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades.⁵⁸ According to the Long War Journal: "Palestinian Islamic Jihad is another militant group that exceeds what Mujahideen Brigades is capable of. Specifically, their rocket arsenal has a range of striking targets close to the Gaza border and as far away as Jerusalem which lies approximately 50 miles east. What is also noteworthy is that many of the rockets are locally manufactured by the group who received its know-how from Iran's IRGC Qods Force."⁵⁹

Jihad Jibril Brigades:



Photo Credit: Islamic World News

The Jihad Jibril Brigades form the paramilitary branch of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – General Command (PFLP-CG). PFLP-GC is a Palestinian nationalist militant organisation based in Syria. They are named after Jihad Ahmed Jibril, the son of founder Ahmed Jibril and former head of the brigades, who died in a car bombing in Beirut in 2002.⁶⁰

The Jihad Jibril Brigades actively participate in joint training in the Gaza Strip with other Palestinian factions, cooperating with the Palestinian Islamic Jihad despite their ideological differences.⁶¹ Their forces participated in the 2023 Hamas attack on Israel, which has provoked the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas.⁶²

⁵⁸ <https://english.aawsat.com/features/4720961-asharq-al-awsat-reviews-palestinian-factions-gaza>

⁵⁹ <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2020/02/gaza-based-militant-group-mujahideen-brigades-publish-series-the-beating-heart-of-a-nation.php>

⁶⁰ <https://arabic.iswnews.com/11217>

⁶¹ <https://ar.abna24.com/story/1363977>

⁶² <https://www.vetogate.com/5002565>

Al- Nasser Salah al-Din Brigade:



Photo Credit: Islamic World News

Al-Nasser Salah al-Din Brigades was founded in 2000. It is a military wing of the Popular Resistance Committee (PRC) which is against the Palestinian Authority/Fatah party. The group operates in the Gaza Strip and have a strong footprint in the West Bank area of Jenin, where they act against the Israeli forces as well as the Palestinian ruling Fatah party. Israel assassinated ten of its most prominent leaders and founders over the last decade. It is the third-strongest armed faction in the Gaza Strip in terms of its human and weapons capabilities. The Gaza-based members of the organisation are involved in recruiting young Palestinians from the West Bank and providing them with military training in order to attack Israeli forces.⁶³

HAMAS WEAPONS

A forensic investigation by BBC Arabic has revealed that the militant group Hamas is using advanced weapons in its war against Israel. According to military experts, some of the weapons used by Hamas are more advanced than those used in past clashes with Israel⁶⁴.

On October 7, Hamas launched an attack on Israel from Gaza, firing hundreds of rockets and missiles, deploying explosive-laden drones and using an unknown number of small arms.

BBC Arabic has identified the use of four weapons by Hamas and its military wing, the al-Qassam Brigades, also verifying Hamas's use of them, extent of their capabilities, and how Hamas obtained the weapons.⁶⁵

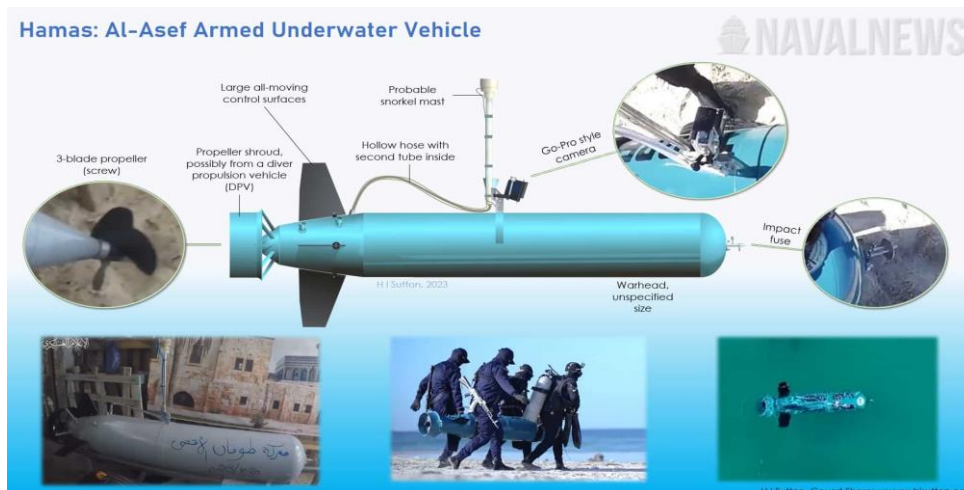
Submarine Drone:

Hamas has shown a promotional video of its 'Al-Asef' guided 'torpedo'. The locally produced weapon has reportedly been used against multiple Israeli targets. This provides a first look at Hamas' use of this type of weapon.

⁶³ <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2023/03/21/popular-resistance-committees-attempts-to-establish-a-foothold-in-the-west-bank/>

⁶⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/articles/c9723jg8901o>

⁶⁵ Ibid



Hamas has revealed a new torpedo-like weapon which it claims has been used against Israel. Source: (Naval News)

Little information about the weapon has been shared by Hamas. However, analysis of the imagery reveals several details. It appears to be a basic semi-submerging uncrewed underwater vehicle (UUV). The nose appears to feature a rudimentary impact fuse for a modest-sized explosive warhead. It is guided by a go-pro style camera which is mounted near to the body. This suggests only very shallow diving during the attack, more of a semi-submersible than a true underwater vehicle.⁶⁶

Although the images offer new details, the existence of Hamas' underwater 'torpedoes' were publicly known. In May 2021 the Israeli government reported that Hamas attempted to attack Israeli naval assets with a similar weapon. That was launched from northern Gaza, in the vicinity of 31.529581°, 34.437747°. Both the weapon and the team that launched it were quickly neutralized by Israeli forces.⁶⁷ Similar weapons, which combine features of torpedoes and underwater drones, have been built by Iran and North Korea. It is possible that Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthi Movement in Yemen have something similar. The Iranian-made submarine drones are more professional, similar to a long-ranged torpedo. The North Korean Haeil family meanwhile is much larger and heavily armed, possibly with a nuclear warhead.⁶⁸

The weapon has been shown being carried into the water by four Hamas divers of the Al-Qassam Brigades. It has apparently been used during the October 7 Hamas-led Al-Aqsa Flood attack against Israel. This fact is unverified, but the weapon's existence is clear. Based on the available video evidence, at least two of the weapons have been built, but there are likely more.⁶⁹ Former Egyptian army chief of staff Yassin Hashim called it an 'unmanned underground vehicle' that is housed partially underwater. He described its merits in underwater missions including mapping, surveillance, inspection of underwater objects, environmental monitoring and combat operations.⁷⁰

Brigadier General Raghieb says that this weapon was made in Gaza. Its components can include compressed gas cylinders, internal combustion engines, cameras and guidance antennas that do not restrict movement. They can also be made from recycled materials. According to him, only workshops capable of 3D printing can make such weapons. Although the Hamas video promotes the Al-Asef water cannon, there is limited evidence of its effectiveness⁷¹.

⁶⁶ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/10/19/hamas-weapons-drones-submersible-missiles/>

⁶⁷ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-says-it-thwarted-underwater-drone-attack-by-hamas-from-northern-gaza/>

⁶⁸ <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2023/11/first-details-of-hamas-new-submarine-drone-weapon/#:~:text=Little%20information%20about%20the%20weapon,a%20modest%20sized%20explosive%20warhead.>

⁶⁹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/10/19/hamas-weapons-drones-submersible-missiles/>

⁷⁰ <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/security-aviation/2023-11-02/ty-article/.premium/between-a-torpedo-and-a-submarine-hamas-reveals-unmanned-attack-weapon/0000018b-8f2f-db71-a7df-ffe4da80000>

⁷¹ <https://www.timesnownews.com/videos/times-now/india/hamas-says-used-indigenous-torpedo-al-asif-during-oct-7-attack-releases-video-video-104917575>

In May 2021, the Israeli military released a video and claimed to have targeted a 'small remote submarine' in an offshore airstrike. However, no images of this weapon were revealed at the time⁷².

Suicide Drone:

Hamas used suicide drones to attack Israeli automated security measures that use an artificial intelligence system. The drones were able to disable some of the Israeli military's cellular communications stations and surveillance towers along the border. The drones also destroyed remote-controlled machine guns that Israel had installed on its border fortifications, removing a key means of combating a ground attack.



Hamas claimed to use Shebab loitering munition (Photo: Hamas/Telegram/Shephard Media)

Hamas has claimed to use its Shebab loitering munition and the Al-Zawari UAV which were capable of avoiding the Israeli Iron Dome interceptors due to its ability to fly close to the ground. According to *Global Defence Corp*, the 35 Al-Zawari catapult-launched loitering munition, which was used against Israel in the latest attack, is an Iranian drone. It is named after the Tunisian drone maker Mohammed Al-Zawari, who was assassinated in 2016.⁷³

Footage shared on Telegram indicates a simultaneous launch of Zawaris UAVs with a high-volume rocket barrage, aimed at overwhelming defence capabilities and maximising the likelihood of penetration. The newly deployed drone likely integrates insights gained from earlier attempts to probe Iron Dome, including the adoption of the most successful flight patterns.⁷⁴ Hamas had also deployed small UAVs such as Shebab loitering munition to target key Israeli surveillance systems, security towers, border posts, communication towers and even Merkava tanks. Hamas claimed the use of Shebab drones to target IDF positions during the October 7 attack.



(Picture source: The Dronning Company)

⁷² <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2021-05-17/ty-article/.premium/army-thwarts-hamas-automated-submarine-attack-on-israeli-ships/0000017f-e81b-df2c-a1ff-fe5b82440000>

⁷³ <https://www.globaldefensecorp.com/2023/10/09/hamas-used-iranian-made-kamikaze-drones-to-target-israeli-positions-and-idf-started-bombing-hamas-positions/>

⁷⁴ <https://www.shephardmedia.com/news/air-warfare/inside-hamas-arsenal-rockets-drones-loitering-munitions-and-tactics-deployed-in-the-assault-on-israel/>

Unconfirmed reports suggest that Israel lost 6 Merkavas, 10 Achzarit APCs, 5 M1113 APC and 2 Namer APC, alongside multiple wheeled vehicles on the day.⁷⁵ Hamas apparently deployed drones in its initial attacks on Israel. Footage released by Hamas that is easily accessible on YouTube and other social media shows drones targeting Israeli observation towers along the Gaza border.⁷⁶ Unlike Russia or Ukraine, Hamas couldn't source military drones through an open tender. So, it tapped Tunisian-born aerospace engineer Mohamed Zouari to, in the early 2010s, design Hamas' first fleet of operational drones and stand up an industry to produce them. They called the first model Ababeel, which was very similar to an Iranian drone and had three different models. One version was designed to conduct surveillance, one to deliver small munitions, and the third was a suicide drone.⁷⁷

It was not the first time that Hamas entered into Israeli airspace using drones, also capturing photos, mapping areas and on one occasion dropped an explosive to damage an IDF vehicle in 2019. According to a detailed report on drone technology published by the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT): "Hamas' first foray into drone development has been traced back to 2003, when Israel reportedly killed members of a Hamas cell working on drone development."⁷⁸ After an ensuing lull for the better part of a decade (notwithstanding regular concerns among Israeli security circles), incidents picked up in 2012–2013, when several test flights by Hamas were reported, in conjunction with Israeli strikes on facilities claimed to be supporting drone development.

In July 2014, Israeli Patriot anti-air missile batteries intercepted Hamas drones on two occasions, with Hamas claiming to have successfully penetrated Israeli airspace. According to Hamas, several drones succeeded in overflying Tel Aviv and capturing footage, though Israel claimed it chose to let Hamas drones enter its airspace to wait for the optimal opportunity for interception. By May 2018, reports suggested IDF were fortifying Iron Dome missile batteries to reduce the potential damage from regular drone attacks by Hamas, while the following year an IDF vehicle was damaged by drone dropped explosives.⁷⁹

Yasin 105- Anti-Tank Missile:



Photo credit: MEMRI

⁷⁵ <https://twitter.com/emilkastehelmi/status/1710689546164183425>

⁷⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=imwWXuS2CQQ>

⁷⁷ <https://www.wired.com/story/hamas-drones-israel-war/>

⁷⁸ Ressler, 'Remotely Piloted Innovation', 30–31. (<https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/AD1019773>)

⁷⁹ <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-5318598,00.html>

The Yasin 105mm anti-tank missile has been featured in several videos shared by Al-Qassam Brigades since the start of Israel's ground offensive, seen targeting Israeli Merkava tanks in Gaza.⁸⁰

The missile is named after Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the founder of the Hamas movement. It is fired using a Russian-made Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) launcher. Former Brigadier General Samir Raghieb of the Egyptian Army has said that the Yasin 105's dual weapon design is an important innovation. According to him, the first explosive attack targets the armour of the tank. The second attack ensures penetration of the tank, destroying it.

Philip Ingram, a former intelligence officer of the British Army, says that this missile has a range of 150 to 500 meters (m) and a maximum speed of 300 meters per second (m/s). He says that due to the unique design of this missile, it requires skill to operate it, which also serves to estimate Hamas' capabilities in developing advanced weapons. He further states that Israeli tanks are equipped with anti-missile systems. Military experts estimate that Hamas has at least 2,000 Yasin 105 missiles, considered a large stockpile.

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North Korea's F-Seven RPG:



Photo credit: Graphic News

The F-7 RPG can be seen prominently in videos of the October 7 attack by Hamas. It was also used in clashes with Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip. This grenade launcher comes from North Korea and its distinctive feature is the red colour on the front of its projectile shell. Azuddin Al-Qassam Brigade has also shown this weapon in a combat operations video. Among the weapons seized during Israeli military operations, the IDF showed the F-7 RPG to journalists to evidence its use by Hamas. Special features of the F-7 RPG are its short reload time and its effectiveness against heavy vehicles⁸².

Philip Ingram, a former British military intelligence officer, said that according to online videos, Hamas fighters appear to have modified the launcher. They say they replaced the anti-tank projectile with an anti-personnel mount that contains pellets. In other words, it is a makeshift bomb that can be used against ground forces. Ingram said that while “there is no direct evidence that these weapons have reached Hamas from North Korea or from Iran”, it is widely believed that North Korea has been supplying weapons to Iran for many years. “There is no other way for these weapons to reach them,” he said, adding that this is how North Korea earns foreign currency.⁸³

⁸⁰ <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/jon-elmer/how-gaza-made-weapons-are-impacting-battle-against-israeli-armored-vehicles#>

⁸¹ <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/articles/c9723jg8901o>

⁸² <https://www.timesofisrael.com/evidence-shows-hamas-likely-used-north-korean-weapons-in-attack-on-israel/>

⁸³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5rQg15aUsXs>

Through its official news agency, Pyongyang has denied allegations that Hamas received the weapons from North Korea and dismissed such reports about the October 7 attacks as “speculation and lies”.⁸⁴ However, South Korea's official news agency cited intelligence information in early January that North Korean-made weapons were being used by Hamas in Gaza⁸⁵.

Al-Qassam Brigades spokesperson Abu Ubaidah has claimed that all weapons – including small arms, ammunition, rockets and other devices – were produced locally. According to Gaza-based writer and analyst Ahmed Fouad Alkhatib “Sometimes, that’s the only way they can get them.”⁸⁶ The IDF has dismissed Hamas’ claims that most of the weapons were locally produced and manufactured.⁸⁷

Explosive Device ‘The Shawaz Charge’:



Photo Credit: Long War Journal

Another weapon can be seen in Hamas’ videos on social media, which is called ‘The Shawaz Charge’, meaning “flame” in Arabic. It is an improvised explosive device that detonates nearby vehicles. Hamas's military wing confirmed its use during Israel's ground operations in Gaza. Israel has revealed a large number of these weapons in Gaza, indicating that they are being produced locally on a large scale. Hamas had modified the weapon during the war and it has the ability to destroy Israeli armoured vehicles. The device consists of a metal disc, usually made of copper, on top of which explosives are placed⁸⁸.

Upon detonation, the copper disc transforms into a projectile capable of destroying armoured vehicles. The design of these devices is simple yet effective. The most difficult task is to design the copper disk. Hamas is also recycling detonated Israeli bombs and scavenging metal and wires from destroyed buildings. Brigadier General Raghieb said that Iran has helped smuggle weapons into the Gaza Strip. This is possible through secret tunnels and boats on the Gaza border via the Mediterranean Sea, despite Israel’s attempts to block such cargo. Former IRGC general Ezzatullah Zarghami, now Iran's tourism minister, admitted his role in supplying Iranian missiles to Palestinian militant groups in Gaza through tunnels in an interview with state-run TV in November 2023.⁹⁰ Israeli authorities announced in

⁸⁴ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2023/10/19/hamas-terrorists-north-korean-weapons-israel-attack/#:~:text=Weapons%20seized%20by%20the%20Israeli,Hamas%20used%20in%20the%20attack>.

⁸⁵ <https://en.topwar.ru/228257-vlasti-juzhnoj-korei-schitajut-cto-kndr-prjamo-ili-kosvenno-mozhet-sotrudnicat-s-hamas.html>

⁸⁶ <https://english.elpais.com/international/2024-02-03/hamas-weaponry-made-in-gaza.html#>

⁸⁷ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2023/10/19/hamas-terrorists-north-korean-weapons-israel-attack/#:~:text=Weapons%20seized%20by%20the%20Israeli,Hamas%20used%20in%20the%20attack>.

⁸⁸ <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2023/10/15/idf-seizes-efps-rpgs-and-other-weapons-from-hamas/>

⁸⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/28/world/middleeast/israel-hamas-weapons-rockets.html>

⁹⁰ <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202310301314>

September 2022 that it had foiled a plot to smuggle explosive weapons through the Gaza crossing. The explosives were hidden in a shipment of clothes⁹¹.

Cyber Unit:



Picture Credit: Globes

Hamas-nexus cyber-attacks include “Mass Phishing Campaigns to Deliver Malware or Steal Email Data”, said Kristen Dennesen, threat intelligence analyst for Google’s Threat Analysis Group (TAG). In addition, mobile spyware via various Android backdoors dropped via phishing were activated. Known threat actors include “BLACKATOM”, one of the three primary Hamas-linked cyber actors alongside BLACKSTEM (aka MOLERATS, Extreme Jackal) and DESERTVARNISH (aka UNC718, Renegade Jackal, Desert Falcons, Arid Viper).⁹²

In September, BLACKATOM began a social engineering campaign aimed at software engineers in the Israel Defence Forces (IDF), as well as Israel’s defence and aerospace industries. The ruse involved posing as employees of companies on LinkedIn and messaging targets with fake freelance job opportunities. After the initial contact, the false recruiters would send a lure document with instructions for participating in a coding assessment.⁹³

Hamas has been engaging in many types of cyber-attacks – such as hack and leak campaigns, website defacements and espionage – to obtain operational information. There are several Hacktivist groups that support Hamas, such as Anonymous Sudan and Cyber Av3ngers that have intensified cyber-attacks against Israeli government websites, media outlets and critical military infrastructure. For example, in 2019, a group linked to Hamas attempted a failed cyberattack on Israel’s water system as well and Anonymous Sudan hit the largest English newspaper with a cyber-attack.⁹⁴

Anonymous Sudan also claimed that it has successfully targeted Israel’s Iron Dome Air Defence system from the Gaza strip during a rocket attack in May 2023 in advance of the October 7 operation. According to the Jerusalem Post: “The hacker group said on its Telegram channel that it had succeeded in taking down the websites of the rocket warning services Cumta, Red Alert, Halamish and Evigilo, as well as targeting some of their smartphone apps. All four sites are still down at the time of writing, though smartphone apps seem to be functional.”⁹⁵ According to the same news, 22 rockets were fired from Gaza to Israel and only four rockets were intercepted, 16 landed in open areas, and two hit an urban area.⁹⁶

⁹¹ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-says-it-foiled-attempt-to-smuggle-explosives-from-gaza-to-west-bank/>

⁹² <https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/hamas-cyberattacks-ceased-after-october-7-attack-but-why>

⁹³ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-02-14/pro-hamas-hackers-targeted-israeli-engineers-ahead-of-oct-7?embedded-checkout=true>

⁹⁴ <https://www.securityweek.com/hackers-join-in-on-israel-hamas-war-with-disruptive-cyberattacks/>

⁹⁵ <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-741869>

⁹⁶ Ibid

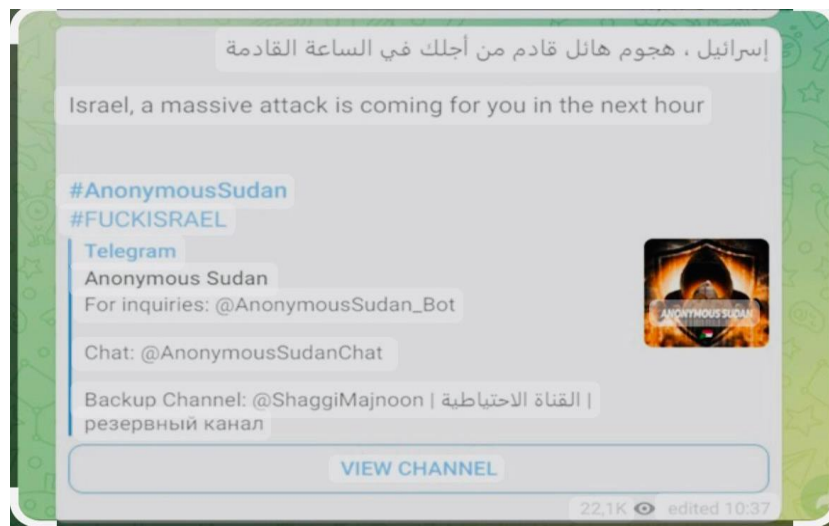


Photo credit: Cyberint

Hamas had spent significant efforts and resources to create its cyber capability in such a way as to hit Israeli government infrastructure and military installations successfully. Hamas not only targeted Israeli institutions but also its political rivals, launching cyber-attacks against the Fatah party led by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas as well as the official government websites of Egypt. In 2019, the IDF destroyed one of the Hamas's cyber headquarters. The IDF spokesperson claimed at the time that "Hamas has no longer cyber capabilities" as a result of the strike.⁹⁷

Hamas received training for its cyber criminals from Iran, which has also instigated state-backed cyber-attacks against Israel. Yaron Edan, a cyber expert, owner of Edan Worldwide Cyber Security, and head of the cyber studies department at the Institute of Technology and Innovation, says that the investigations that he is conducting show that cyber-attacks against Israel by terrorist groups are a fact. The target is no longer shutting down or defacing Israeli websites - actions that are irritating but cause no concrete damage and do not require technical know-how. "The phenomenon is widespread, and the cyber dimension has become a battlefield for all intents and purposes. There are attacks by Hamas groups in the Gaza Strip, and not only by them, and they are aimed in two spheres: the personal and the commercial. We're seeing an increase in this phenomenon on the social networks, which I also see as a battlefield for cyber-attacks."⁹⁸

These cyber-attacks are not new as Hamas had previously been active during outbreaks in war, for example, during 2014's 'Operation Protective Edge', Hamas increased its cyber-attacks against civilian and military sites. In addition, dozens of telephones of IDF soldiers and officers were hacked by Hamas in 2017. Hamas cyber criminals have also penetrated hundreds of Israeli Facebook groups which were related to the IDF and contained sensitive information sharing.⁹⁹ According to a report from the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security: "In July 2018, the IDF revealed that Hamas had initiated a sophisticated cyber-attack in which it utilized fake profiles of women on the social networks to take control of soldiers' mobile phones and computers. Hamas also tried to attack soldiers by means of WhatsApp and even managed to open three dating apps and to upload pictures and messages to the official stores. By way of these attacks, Hamas obtained access to the microphone and camera of mobile phone owners, without them being aware."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ <https://freebeacon.com/national-security/hamas-emerges-as-newest-cyber-espionage-powerhouse/>

⁹⁸ <https://en.globes.co.il/en/article-hamas-preparing-for-cyber-war-1001246720>

⁹⁹ <https://jiss.org.il/en/dostri-hamas-cyber-activity-against-israel/>

¹⁰⁰ Ibid

On October 7, Hamas cyber terrorists successfully penetrated into Israeli military installations in order to carry out successful attacks against Israeli civilians. Hamas' central intelligence body, called "Internal Security Force (ISF), had 2,100 operatives who were trained and equipped by Iran and Hezbollah prior to the October 7 attacks. Hamas ISF operatives had entered the IDF security system and hacked dozens of security cameras on the Israel-Gaza border, particularly the cameras that were installed inside the Kibbutzim areas.¹⁰¹

Moreover, Hamas cyber operatives posted on the group's official Telegram channel that they had successfully penetrated into the computer systems of Israel's Nevatim Air Force Base and collected information about the facility's pilots, personnel and their families 11 days after the attacks. They had published screenshots and videos taken from security cameras near the base. According to the news published at Cyberscoop website: "The message claiming responsibility for the attack on Nevatim was one among a series of claims made by hacktivist groups about the systems they have breached since the latest round of fighting kicked off earlier this month. Located in southern Israel, Nevatim is one of the country's largest air bases, regularly hosts American military assets and has taken delivery of multiple American military aid shipments."¹⁰²

Control Risks, a global specialist risk consultancy, has conducted comprehensive research on legacy and current Hamas cyber-attacks. The firm's research shows that Hamas had hit high volume cyber targets the day before, on and the day after October 7 in a bid to heavily disrupt Israel's defence capability.



Photo Credit: Control Risks

These cyber-attacks were ongoing even after Israeli air strikes post-October 7. According to Control Risks: "In the days since the conflict started, we have seen a sharp uptick in activity, primarily by cyber activist groups targeting Israeli organisations. More than 60 cyber activist groups have launched attacks against entities in Israel and the Palestinian Territories. These have mainly targeted critical national infrastructure (CNI) including government, communications and energy. Some groups have claimed attacks against Israel's early warning radar and rocket alert system, power grid operator NOGA and the DORAD power plant."¹⁰³

Hackers sympathetic to Hamas are working to make the Israel-Gaza conflict the next front of cyberwarfare, according to Politico, which provides analysis showing that hackers are coming from outside Gaza as sophisticated cyber operations cannot be conducted inside due to low internet connectivity, severe power cuts and Israeli strikes against hackers' locations.¹⁰⁴ According to Liz Wu, spokesperson for Israeli-based cybersecurity group Check Point Software, "the company had tracked

¹⁰¹ <https://www.jpost.com/israel-hamas-war/article-792074>

¹⁰² <https://cyberscoop.com/cyber-israel-hamas-gaza/>

¹⁰³ <https://www.controlrisks.com/our-thinking/insights/israel-hamas-conflict-to-heighten-cyber-espionage-and-disruptive-cyber-threats>

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.politico.eu/article/israel-hamas-war-hackers-cyberattacks/>



more than 40 groups conducting attacks that overwhelmed and disrupted more than 80 websites starting with the day of the Hamas onslaught. These included government and media sites.”¹⁰⁵

It is reported in a separate news article on Hamas cyber-attacks on October 7: “During the Oct. 7 attack, Hamas used more concrete tactics to circumvent and disrupt the vast Israeli surveillance apparatus: researching spots where cameras were thin, bulldozing fences, launching rockets and destroying drones before they could get in the air.”¹⁰⁶

Civilians or Militants



Photo Credit: The Times of Isarel

There were pictures and video circulating that clearly showed the faces of ordinary Gaza civilians who infiltrated in Israel on October 7, committed atrocities against Israeli civilians and kidnapped Israelis hostages in cars, on motorbikes and even dragged them across the border into Gaza. This was not just a small group of Palestinian terrorists, rather evidence seems to indicate that many civilians participated in the October 7 massacre, including Palestinian children and even old men on crutches.

Survivors’ accounts, video evidence and the interrogation recordings of apprehended Palestinians paint a damning picture of the complicity of Gazan civilians both in the October 7 attacks, in which more than 1,200 people were murdered and 250 abducted to Gaza. This has sparked a heated debate in Israel that challenges the inclination to draw distinctions between ordinary Palestinian civilians of Gaza, often referred to in Israel as “uninvolved”, and terrorist leadership.

Around 700 Palestinians stormed Kibbutz Nir Oz, located less than a five-minute drive from Gaza, that day, CCTV footage shows. Eran Smilansky, a member of the kibbutz’s security squad, estimated that the overwhelming majority of those, around 550, were civilians. They were largely unarmed and not in uniform. Some of those civilians carried out wholesale acts of terror¹⁰⁷ themselves, including rape and abduction and in some cases the eventual sale of hostages to Hamas¹⁰⁸, while others abetted the terrorists. Yet others took advantage of the porous border to loot Israeli homes and farms, including stealing hundreds of thousands of shekels in agricultural equipment.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Ibid

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.c4isrnet.com/cyber/2023/10/31/hacktivists-join-the-front-lines-in-israel-hamas-war/>

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Ew7WJEFFjs>

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israeli-nurse-spent-gaza-captivity-aiding-elderly-hostages-underground-2024-01-09/>

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.geektime.co.il/john-deere-tractors-were-shut-down-from-afar-in-gaza/>

In one video that has become emblematic of the debate around the “uninvolved,” Palestinian civilians, an elderly Palestinian man with walking sticks is seen hobbling at an impressive clip along with the rest of the mob through the breached gate of Be’eri, as are children riding bicycles.¹¹⁰



Photo Credit: Hen Mazzig

Differentiating between terrorists and civilians is notoriously difficult in the Palestinian case, because Hamas terrorists often wear civilian clothing to blend in, a tactic evident in the ongoing war in Gaza¹¹¹. However, other indicators help make this distinction, such as the absence of weapons and the fact that many were filmed crossing the border barefoot or even on horseback. Senior Hamas official Mousa Abu Marzouk readily admitted that Gaza civilians had taken part in the October 7 atrocities.¹¹²

Conclusion

Hamas is recognized as a terrorist organisation by the international community and has also proved the group’s capability to carry out deadly attacks that fit the definition of genocide under the Rome Statute with extremely high motivation and great amount of manpower. Since the very first day of Hamas creation’, Jewish genocide and the destruction of the Jewish state was in the Hamas charter and manifesto of the organisation.

Hamas’ staying power is punctuated by its 37-year existence. The capability of Hamas’ rule can be eliminated, the manpower can be reduced in the recent Israel war against Hamas but the Hamas motivation to strike and ideology to destroy the Jewish nation cannot be eliminated because this is linked to the survival of Hamas. Hamas can rise as soon as Israel leaves Gaza because its members live among the people of Gaza and its ideology is widespread.

Over the last 17 years, Hamas has invested billions of dollars to build military infrastructure, recruit tens of thousands of members and indoctrinate the Gaza Strip’s population. So too has the terrorist group created a powerful economic system to generate money for its military infrastructure in order to carry out the high level terror attack in Israel on October 7, which, in just one day, may have cost multi-millions in funding to carry out complex operations from the land, sea, air, as well as human intel, signal intel operation, cyber operation, military training, military equipment, arms, manpower, chemical material, rockets/missiles and buying hostages from civilians of Gaza.

¹¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/zpyarom/status/1713917089264656801>

¹¹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qk7IKvIROXk>

¹¹² <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2023/12/shift-top-hamas-official-floats-israel-recognition>

Hamas has a deep network in the West Bank Palestinian areas, where they and PIJ have ideological influence over the young generation and who are not only supporters and sympathisers of the terrorist organisations but constantly carry out terrorist activity against Jewish communities living in Israeli settlements. In the latest survey, 90 percent of Palestinians of the West Bank showed their support and interest in the Hamas-led October 7 attacks. This would indicate that Hamas can easily survive in the Palestinian territories living among the citizenry.

The Israel-Hamas conflict represents a multi-zonal warfare that includes ideological, racial, political, geographical, and religious dimensions, which Hamas and other Jihadist groups have spearheaded against the state of Israel for several decades with the help of local and regional players who wish to see the decline of the Jewish state. De-programming the Palestinian population of Gaza and the West Bank is not an easy task and could take decades via investing billions of dollars in education, changing their way of life, good governance, changing religious syllabus, political stability, improving employment, reducing poverty rate, economic growth, and social coexistence.

Entire generations over the last 75 years have been indoctrinated by Palestinian Jihadist organisations in the name of land, race and religion and it will take decades to de-radicalise the young generation. The State of Israel and the regional and international peace-seeking communities should take serious steps to save the entire nation from political and religious extremism that has ruined three generations of Palestinians – from Freedom generation to Intifada generation to a Hamas generation in Gaza and the West Bank. Ultimately, Israel cannot stop the constant domestic and cross-border terrorist attempts against their people from different angles and tactics, and it is only a matter of time until the next one.

ABOUT ITCT

ITCT is UK based organisation and founded in 2018. It is a non-political and non-profitable organisation and is a unique think tank in itself. There is not a single organisation around that specifically counters the narratives of Islamist terrorism by using the tools of Islamic Theology. ITCT exposes the root causes of Political Islam and works hard to eliminate it through introducing the actual concept of Islamic Theology.

ITCT conducts a comprehensive research to find out the key elements that draw the most vulnerable people of the society into the fire of religious extremism. ITCT works on three main factors in order to educate the Muslim community:

- That Islamist Terrorism is wrongly associated with Islam
- And is committed by misguided Muslims
- By manipulating religious texts to brainwash Muslims

ITCT has three pillars to stand on:

- **MISSION**

Countering Islamist Terrorism

- **VISION**

Educating Muslim Community

- **OBJECTIVE**

Providing the Solution of Islamist Terrorism

ITCT is an independent organisation that generates funds through donations. ITCT warmly welcomes talented writers, researchers and experts and would like to publish their work.