



## Hamas Deploys to Recover and Retain Its Military Strength and Influence over the Gaza Strip

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### Overview<sup>1</sup>

- ▶ According to the second phase of the ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip, Hamas will transfer authority in the Gaza Strip to a Palestinian technocrat committee, and the movement and all other armed terrorist organizations will disarm. In practice, the start of the new administration committee's practical activity has been delayed. It has not yet entered the Strip and Hamas is exploiting its absence to consolidate its civilian and security governance, accompanied by a public refusal to disarm the "resistance".
- ▶ The Israeli security establishment has said that since the ceasefire went into effect in October 2025, Hamas has accelerated its economic and military buildup. It is relying on locally produced weapons and smuggling weapons from Egypt using UAVs, and filling its coffers by taxing the entry of humanitarian aid trucks and smuggling cigarettes and other goods, which generate millions of shekels in revenue. In addition, thousands of new operatives have been recruited and trained and infrastructures serving security needs have been rehabilitated.
- ▶ **In ITIC assessment, although Hamas ostensibly claims it is prepared to relinquish control in favor of the new technocrat administration dictated by the United States and the mediators, it is building a network which will enable it to remain significant and an influential power factor on "the day after" and do everything in its power complicate its disarmament. To that end, it is strengthening its military arrays by producing and smuggling weapons, recruiting and training new operatives and renewing its facilities, some of which operate in civilian buildings. It is also integrating its operatives into the civilian mechanisms and security forces of the technocrat committee. In addition, a future opening of the Rafah Crossing for the transfer of goods will in all probability again make it possible for Hamas to smuggle in materials to assist its military reconstruction. As long as nothing is done to halt Hamas' military buildup and disarm the movement**

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**along with the establishment of an effective alternative administration in the Gaza Strip which has active international support and no Hamas personnel, the movement will remain an active threat to IDF forces and to the State of Israel.**

## Background

### Disarmament

► In mid-January 2026, the American administration announced the beginning of the second phase of the ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip. According to the agreement, a temporary Palestinian technocrat administration will be established in the Strip, called the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, which will replace Hamas rule and begin the comprehensive reconstruction of the Strip. The second phase will also include the beginning of disarming Hamas and the other terrorist organizations in accordance with the 20-point plan, according to which all military, terrorist and offensive infrastructure, including tunnels and weapon manufacturing facilities, will be destroyed and will not rebuilt. The demilitarization of the Gaza Strip will be under the supervision of independent inspectors (White House X account, September 30, 2025).<sup>2</sup>

► However, Hamas and the other terrorist organizations reject the demand to disarm, although they have hinted at a willingness to freeze or suspend the use of weapons as part of a prolonged ceasefire. They claim weapons are an internal Palestinian matter and they intend to preserve the "weapons of the resistance, as defense [sic] against Israel" until the establishment of a Palestinian state<sup>3</sup>:

- ◆ Hamas political bureau member Hussam Badran said Hamas' disarmament was an internal Palestinian matter and the weapons of the "resistance" were for defense against the occupation. He rejected demands to demilitarize, calling them an attempt to sabotage the agreement [sic] (Hamas Telegram channel, January 27, 2026).
- ◆ Hamas political bureau member Mousa Abu Marzouk said the movement had not agreed in the past and would not agree to disarm in any form and any future arrangement concerning the Gaza Strip had to be coordinated with Hamas (al-Jazeera, January 30, 2026).

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<sup>2</sup> See the October 2025 ITIC report, [The future of Hamas' weapons and its efforts to rebuild the military wing](#), and the January 2026 report, [The committee of Technocrats Who Will Manage the Gaza Strip](#)

<sup>3</sup> For other statements, see the ITIC's weekly reports, "Spotlight on Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict."

- ◆ A Hamas "source" said the issue of the weapons of the "resistance" was still being discussed, both between the [terrorist] organizations and with the mediators. He said the movement had suggested several ideas and approaches, such as transferring the weapons to the guardianship of an agreed Palestinian body, or under the guarantee of the mediators, in a way which would prevent disarmament suitable to the American or Israeli approach, or giving the weapons to either of them. Hamas "sources" inside and outside Gaza claimed that so far the issue had not been discussed seriously, saying Hamas wanted an agreement regarding weapons to be reached within an overall "national" framework (al-Sharq al-Awsat, January 29, 2026).
- ◆ At the 17th Al-Jazeera Forum in Doha, Hamas "external" chairman Khaled Mashal said that disarming the "resistance" was an attempt to turn the Palestinians into easy prey for Israel, which he said had various types of "international weapons." He claimed Israel wanted to take the Palestinian weapons and give them to militias in the Strip. He added that Hamas proposed a hudna (ceasefire) of five to ten years, during which weapons would not be used or be displayed, noting that the "resistance" would continue as long as the "occupation" did (Hamas Telegram channel in Judea and Samaria, February 8, 2026).



**Khaled Mashal (Al Jazeera, February 8, 2026)**

- ◆ The spokesperson of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), Muhammad al-Hajj Mousa, claimed the weapons of the "resistance" guaranteed the "protection" of the Palestinians, and added that the organization refused to disarm or accept dictates, as the matter was an internal Palestinian issue (al-Araby al-Jadeed, February 7, 2026).
- ◆ Hamas representative in Lebanon Osama Hamdan claimed the movement had not received a draft or proposal from the mediators regarding the issue of disarmament and that no decision had been made on the matter. He said the weapons of the "resistance"

were "legitimate" and could not be traded or bargained over, claiming that "resistance"<sup>4</sup> was a "right" as long as the occupation continued (al-Jazeera, February 11, 2026).

### Hamas Governance

► The Committee for the Administration of the Gaza Strip, led by Dr. Ali Shaath, was appointed to begin the second phase of the agreement, however, the members of the committee are still in Egypt (al-Ayyam, February 6, 2026). Hamas claimed it was prepared to transfer control to the technocrat committee, and according to reports, the Hamas government in Gaza had already informed more than 40,000 of its civilian employees and members of its security forces that they would have to cooperate with the Committee, and promised to integrate them into the new government, including its police (Reuters in Arabic, January 27, 2026).

► A senior Hamas figure told the German News Agency that the movement sought to integrate about 10,000 of its security operatives into the police force of the future Palestinian administration in the Gaza Strip, claiming that would help prevent dismissed police officers from joining extremist groups (al-Quds al-Arabi, January 27, 2026). However, senior Americans in the Peace Council said they had information with names and mapping of individuals who participated in the October 7, 2023 terrorist attack and massacre who were Hamas terrorist operatives, and such individuals would not be able to participate in civilian policing in the Gaza Strip or in forces which would assume command in the Strip (Ynet, January 29, 2026).

► "Sources close to the technocrat committee" reported that Hamas insisted its security force operatives continue to serve with the forces for which the administration committee will be responsible, but both the committee and the executive authority of the Peace Council opposed the demand. According to the sources, it shows Hamas wants a presence in the new administrative mechanism and is making appointments within its ranks to sabotage the plans prepared by Sami Nasman for managing the committee's security portfolio (al-Sharq al-Awsat, February 14, 2026). Hamas has accused Nasman of attempting to undermine public order and of involvement in murders. After it became known he would hold the security portfolio, Hamas security forces claimed he was "wanted as a spy" (al-Sayyad channel, January 15, 2026)<sup>5</sup>.

► Meanwhile, the vacuum created by the delay was exploited by Hamas to consolidate its civilian governance through the routine activities of its governmental mechanisms and

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<sup>4</sup> Any attack on the State of Israel or its citizens.

<sup>5</sup> See the January 2026 ITIC report, The committee of Technocrats Who Will Manage the Gaza Strip

security governance, mostly manifested by the pursuit of militia operatives who received support from Israel<sup>6</sup>:

- ◆ The Hamas police traffic department announced a campaign to monitor and supervise trucks in cooperation with the ministries of transportation and national security. It will focus on ensuring drivers and trucks comply with the law, including by checking the driver's license, its suitability for the truck category and the vehicle's technical and legal licensing. The traffic department said its teams would begin informing drivers about the consequences of noncompliance with traffic regulations, and would then begin implementing strict measures, including giving tickets and confiscating vehicles which did not meet the conditions (Hamas police Telegram channel, January 18, 2026).
- ◆ As part of actions against the militias, the Hamas security forces reported the killing of Raad Yasser al-Jamal, assistant to Rami Hallas, the commander of an Israeli-supported militia (Telegram channel of Hamas' Sahm Unit 103, January 19, 2026; Telegram channel al-Sayyad, January 19, 2026). It was also reported that Riyadh al-Shaqra, an operative in Hussam al-Astal's militia, was killed in a "resistance" operatives' ambush to trap militia members in the Khan Yunis district (Telegram channel of Amsak Amil, February 7–8, 2026).
- ◆ Abu Obeida, spokesman for the Hamas military wing, criticized residents who he claimed collaborated with the "occupation." He stated they operated only in areas under IDF control and under the protection of its tanks, and were not courageous but rather traitors desperately wanting to prove themselves. He warned they would be punished with death and even the enemy would not be able to protect them (Abu Obeida's Telegram channel, February 9, 2026).

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<sup>6</sup> For examples statements, see the ITIC's weekly reports, "Spotlight on Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict."



**Attacks on suspects of collaboration (al-Sayyad, January 23, 2026)**

## Hamas' Military Buildup

► With delays in ending Hamas' practical rule in the Gaza Strip and the uncertainty of disarming Hamas and the other terrorist organizations, in recent weeks Israeli media published assessments by the Israeli security establishment according to which Hamas, especially its military wing, was exploiting the situation for a military and economic buildup to retain significant power and influence on "the day after." Palestinian media, on the other hand, claimed the objective of the escalation in Israeli media and military discourse was to create internal and international backing for the renewal of the fighting and forced disarmament (Shams News Agency, January 31, 2026; Shehab, January 31, 2026).

### Local Manufacture of Weapons

► Immediately after the ceasefire, Hamas security forces launched an operation to collect weapons, ammunition, explosives, rockets and other equipment lost during the war, including thousands of IDF unexploded ordnance items which could be repurposed to make explosives and weapons. A call was also issued for anyone in possession of ammunition or other military equipment to hand it over to security points or to "resistance" operatives "to maintain security and prevent vandalism." Hamas claimed it was a "necessary step" to maintain public order (al-Risalah, October 18, 2025).

► According to Israeli security, Hamas operatives continue to produce weapons locally, although on a smaller scale and with fewer resources compared to the period before the October 7, 2023 attack and massacre and the outbreak of the war in the Gaza Strip. Most of the production focuses on explosive devices, produced in large quantities based on IDF bombs which did not explode, primitive attempts to produce anti-tank missiles and mortar shells, and efforts to again produce rockets which be fired into the heart of Israeli territory (IDF radio, January 5, 2026).

► On February 6, 2026, the IDF published an evacuation notice for a building in the al-Zeitoun neighborhood in western Gaza City, because it contained Hamas terrorist facilities. After the attack, it was reported that the site was used by Hamas for the production and storage of weapons (Arabic X account of the IDF spokesperson, February 6, 2026).



**Warning of an attack on a building in the al-Zeitoun neighborhood of Gaza City (IDF spokesperson X account in Arabic, February 6, 2026)**

► An Israeli security source reported that Hamas was erecting checkpoints in areas under its control to collect light weapons from local residents and the information was also transferred to the countries involved in the Peace Council. According to the source, the order to collect the weapons came directly from Izz al-Din al-Haddad, the acting commander of the military wing (The Times, February 17, 2026). According to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Hamas still possesses about 60,000 rifles (Prime Minister's Office website, February 15, 2026).

### Smuggling Using UAVs

► For years, Hamas used the Egyptian border to smuggle weapons through tunnels running from the Sinai Peninsula to the Rafah area. However, activity, Israeli and Egyptian, on both sides of the border, especially after the rise to power of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in 2013, halted the tunnel smuggling activity. Instead, the Rafah Crossing became the main route for smuggling weapons to Hamas, along with the entry of dual-use materials, such as construction materials and chip manufacturing machines, which helped Hamas produce weapons and construct its tunnel network (Israeli media, September 13, 2024; FM103, January 1, 2026).<sup>7</sup>

► Today, however, the most common method of smuggling on the use of UAVs. According to data presented to the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, in the three months before October 2025, there were nearly 900 smuggling attempts involving UAVs which entered

<sup>7</sup> See the October 2025 ITIC report, The future of Hamas' weapons and its efforts to rebuild the military wing.

Israel from Egyptian territory (Ynet, October 15, 2025). In addition, during the month after since the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip which began on October 10, 2025, about 130 UAV smuggling attempts were foiled involving 85 weapons, including machine guns and rifles (IDF spokesperson, November 17, 2025). After being smuggled in from Egypt, some of the weapons were transferred to the Kerem Shalom area and from there into the Gaza Strip by UAVs (Maariv, October 22, 2025). It was later reported that UAVs were detected flying on a direct route to the al-Mawasi area in western Khan Yunis. According to assessments, most of them were related to drug smuggling, but the main concern is that the aerial route will become an additional channel for smuggling weapons into the Gaza Strip (IDF radio, January 5, 2026).

#### **Two UAVs, carrying six M-16 rifles, seized on the Egyptian border**



**(IDF spokesperson, January 17, 2026)**

► The security establishment is concerned that UAVs will be improved to be able to smuggle contraband weighing up to one hundred kilograms (website of the Knesset Special Committee for Combating Drugs and Alcohol Abuse, February 11, 2026). The head of the Intelligence Division of the Israel Police told the Knesset that a UAV carried out three smuggling runs in one night, and only on the third was it seized while carrying 22 M-16 rifles and explosives (Telegram channel of Doron Kadosh and Moriah Asraf, December 30, 2025).

### **Reorganization of Hamas' Military Capabilities**

► During the war, it was reported that Hamas was restoring its military capabilities. In January 2025, two sources in the American Congress stated that according to American intelligence, Hamas had recruited between 10,000 and 15,000 new operatives since the beginning of the war, while a similar number were killed during the same period (Reuters, January 24, 2025).

► After the ceasefire went into effect in October 2025, IDF assessment was that Hamas had about 20,000 operatives in its military wing, compared to about 30,000 before the October 7, 2023 attack and massacre. Although the assessment was that more than 22,000 Hamas

operatives had been killed in the war, the military wing recruited new operatives, but they were apparently of lower quality and almost without significant military training. Hamas replenished the units that were damaged, with some units in the central Strip barely touched, mainly in areas the IDF did not enter due to concerns about harming hostages. It was further noted that Hamas operated as a guerrilla organization in small units and still possessed hundreds of rockets, most of them short-range but some capable of reaching central Israel, as well as thousands of light weapons (The Times of Israel, October 21, 2025).

► Reportedly, the military wing remains stable, replacements were appointed for commanders who were eliminated, and the command structure has been under the leadership of Izz al-Din al-Haddad, commander of the Gaza Brigade who serves as the acting military commander of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades (al-Sharq al-Awsat, December 31, 2025). Neither Hamas nor the Palestinian media published details about the new appointments to the movement's military leadership.

► In another report, "security sources" were quoted as saying that Hamas' military wing had shifted from fighting in brigade and battalion frameworks to guerrilla warfare based on the decentralized activity of lone terrorist operatives, a single terrorist cell or several cells operating simultaneously. It was also reported that replacements were appointed to the command chain but the successors lacked the operational experience of the previous commanders as well as their command authority and familiarity with the terrain and IDF forces. During 2025 Hamas recruited thousands of operatives, including teenagers, exploiting the economic distress in the Gaza Strip, and trained them quickly for various tasks, including intelligence collection and surveillance, logistics, turning unexploded ordnance and weapons left in the field into explosive devices, rehabilitating structures and headquarters, planting explosive devices and attacking IDF forces (Walla, January 28, 2026).

### **Preservation of Military Infrastructure and Facilities**

► Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reported that IDF forces had destroyed only 150 kilometers of 500 kilometers of tunnels in the Gaza Strip (Prime Minister's Office website, February 15, 2026). According to the IDF, all Hamas tunnels which reached the border fence and threatened the communities near the Gaza Strip were destroyed, however many tunnels remain which were neither located nor destroyed in areas under IDF control within the Yellow Line, and constitute a threat to the forward positions (Israeli media, February 9–10, 2026). That happened on February 14, 2026, when terrorists who emerged from a tunnel in Beit Hanoun

and approached IDF forces in the area were eliminated. The tunnel was in territory under IDF control since the end of 2023 (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, February 14, 2026).

► Reportedly Hamas also rehabilitated old tunnels and dug new ones. However, the quality of the new tunnels is allegedly lower than that of the previous ones since the entry of construction materials into the Strip is still prohibited, yet they are sufficient to provide shelter for Hamas terrorists, especially during attempts to attack IDF forces (Walla, January 28, 2026).

► Meanwhile, Hamas uses humanitarian and civilian facilities such as hospitals and schools for military activity, situating headquarters and storing weapons:<sup>8</sup> the IDF revealed pictures from UAVs which operated in the Yellow Line, which showed armed Hamas terrorist operatives using ambulances to transfer operatives and weapons from a hospital building to a school (IDF spokesperson, February 4, 2026). In addition, Doctors Without Borders said it had ceased its activity at Nasser Hospital on January 20, 2026, after armed "individuals" were seen and there were incidents of intimidation and arbitrary arrests of patients (Doctors Without Borders website, February 9, 2026).<sup>9</sup>

► A social media activist opposed to Hamas in the Gaza Strip claimed there were Hamas command and control centers inside the Nasser, al-Shuhada al-Aqsa, al-Shifa and al-Ahli hospitals, as well as in some of the smaller medical centers. He added that some of Hamas' "journalists," such as employees of the Hamas publication al-Risalah, monitored the activities of all opponents of Hamas on social media and sent them to Hamas for enforcing "security measures" (Mu'min al-Natour Facebook page, February 15, 2026).

### **Exploitation of Humanitarian Aid**

► According to the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), since the ceasefire went into effect on October 10, 2025, 4,200 aid trucks have entered the Gaza Strip each week, about 600 trucks per day, in accordance with the agreement. More than 70% are food trucks, four times the quantity required for the Gaza Strip according to UN data (COGAT X account, February 3, 2026).

► Israeli security assessments indicate that Hamas exploits the entry of aid to collect taxes which enrich it by millions of shekels. According to the information, about 200 of the 600 trucks which enter daily come from the private sector, and on each Hamas collects a tax of 15% to

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<sup>8</sup> Using civilian infrastructure such as schools and hospitals for terrorist purposes is characteristic of the activity of terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, especially Hamas. See the August 2024 ITIC report, The terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip exploit the civilian infrastructure for terrorist activities.

<sup>9</sup> See the November 2023 ITIC report, Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis, Southern Gaza Strip

25% of the value of the goods in the truck, thereby taking in about 45 million shekels (about \$14.6 million) per day. After the goods reach the markets, Hamas collects an additional tax on each sale. The Civil Administration claimed that warehouses in Gaza were full, yet food and other prices in the markets remain high due to Hamas taxation (Yedioth Ahronoth, January 7, 2026; IDF radio, January 29, 2026; Israeli Kan TV, January 29, 2026).



**World Food Programme truck in the Gaza Strip (Quds Agency, January 28, 2026)**

► An investigation found that since the beginning of the ceasefire, there has been a sharp rise in private imports into the Strip, with trucks of private merchants constituting about 20% to 30% of the daily average. Hamas collects a mandatory payment for each truck according to the type of goods, an average amount of about 50,000 shekels, thereby profiting by more than 50 million shekels per week (about \$16,000) and more than 200 million shekels (about \$65 million) from the beginning of the ceasefire to the date of publication of the investigation. Hamas also profited by diverting fuel intended for essential institutions to the black market, the sale of humanitarian aid that was not collected by displaced persons, and fees of up to %40 on the withdrawal of funds transferred through local applications (Shomrim, November 18, 2025).

### **Smuggling of Goods into the Gaza Strip**

► In addition to the entry of aid trucks through the official crossings, there is widespread smuggling of goods prohibited without supervision, such as cigarettes, tobacco, electrical products, mobile phones and dual-use materials which can be used to produce weapons. In some cases, it involved smuggling using aid trucks, despite the comprehensive inspection system (Yedioth Ahronoth, January 7, 2026; IDF radio, January 29, 2026). For example, in January 2026, the police and the anti-drug authority prevented the smuggling of dual-use materials suspected of being intended for manufacturing rockets and for terrorist facilities, including solar panels, phones, batteries and electrodes (Walla, January 5, 2026).

► Criminal networks were exposed, whose membership included Israeli citizens, who smuggled prohibited goods and equipment into the Gaza Strip. Indictments were filed for 12 individuals involved in smuggling, who were accused of aiding the enemy in wartime. Smuggling is a significant threat because it channels profits, technology and equipment which can assist in weapons production, the buildup of military capabilities and for promoting terrorist attacks on Israel and the security forces (ISA and police spokespersons, February 4, 2026). In another instance, an attempt was made at the Kerem Shalom crossing to smuggle hundreds of kilograms of tobacco into the Strip, hidden inside cans which were part of a shipment purchased by an authorized Israeli company operating in the private sector aid system (COGAT and Israeli media, February 16, 2026).

► Cigarette smuggling, which bypasses Israel's ban on the entry of tobacco, is the most prominent example of how Hamas makes profits which allow it to strengthen its economic power and reinforce governance. Hamas supervises and manages the cigarette trade and collects a cut of hundreds of shekels per carton through taxation by its ministry of the economy in the Gaza Strip, providing it with an income of millions of shekels (IDF radio, February 4, 2026).

► Gazans were harshly critical of the steep rise in cigarette prices in recent weeks, concerned over the cessation of smuggling and Hamas' increase in taxes. According to them, the price of a pack of 20 cigarettes reached 45 to 50 shekels (about \$14.5 to \$16) compared to about 100 shekels (about \$32) at the end of December 2025. They said the price increase was unjustified since trucks carrying cigarettes entered daily. Gazans uploaded videos in which they claimed the merchants were in fact the same people who ran the government, meaning that Hamas was responsible for the soaring prices (Hamza al-Masri Telegram channel, February 8 and 12, 2026; IDF radio, February 4, 2026). Some Gazans claimed that the increase was caused by the taxation the Hamas ministry of the economy imposed on merchants, due to the need to fill its coffers for the payment of officials' salaries (al- Mantiqa al Wusta Facebook page, January 29, 2026).