



The Deception Plan Practiced by Hamas before the October 7, 2023 Attack (Including documents from the Gaza Strip)

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Overview¹

- ▶ The Hamas leadership, headed by the movement's leader in the Gaza Strip, Yahya al-Sinwar, viewed the Sword of Jerusalem campaign (Operation Guardian of the Walls) in May 2021 as a strategic victory and began formulating the decisive campaign against Israel, which was ultimately carried out in the October 7, 2023 terrorist attack and massacre. In addition to the military planning, Hamas used a plan to deceive and mislead Israeli intelligence and decision-makers into thinking the movement did not want a confrontation.
- ▶ An analysis of information in the Amit Institute's possession and based on Hamas documents captured in the Gaza Strip during the Gaza Strip War, found the following elements:
 - ◆ **Avoidance of direct confrontation with Israel** while containing tactical incidents, even when the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) was fighting against Israel.
 - ◆ **Creation of the false impression that the Hamas leadership was focused on its internal affairs and the economic situation in the Gaza Strip.** Hamas also called for "resistance" in Judea and Samaria and east Jerusalem to create the impression that the Gaza Strip was quiet.
 - ◆ **Conducting a series of joint military exercises with the other organizations in the Gaza Strip** to rehearse parts the planned attack, including the invasion of Israeli territory and abduction of soldiers, part of the "routine training activities" of the movement's military wing, claiming they were "defensive measures" in response to any future Israeli attack on the Gaza Strip.
 - ◆ **The renewal of violent incidents along the border** in the weeks preceding the attack and massacre under the guise of a crisis related to the economic situation and the Qatari grant, along with escalating threats concerning al-Aqsa Mosque during the Jewish High

¹ Click <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en> to subscribe and receive the ITIC's daily updates as well as its other publications.

Holy Days, to reach a renewed arrangement agreement with Israel close to the date of the planned invasion.

◆ In addition to deceiving Israel, a restricted forum of decision-makers within Hamas and its military wing in the Gaza Strip maintained strict compartmentalization, and concealed the plan and its date from senior movement figures and field-level commanders.

► **Deception was central to Hamas' strategic preparations for the October 7, 2023 attack and massacre. In Amit Institute assessment, the combined elements of the plan were intended to create the false impression that Hamas had been deterred, especially since Operation Guardian of the Walls in May 2021, and that it neither wanted nor was capable of launching an offensive attack on Israeli territory. Ultimately, the plan successfully misled Israel's security establishment and decision-makers, who believed Hamas had indeed been deterred and was focused on governance in the Gaza Strip and improving the Gazans' living conditions, and its public military exercises were nothing more than a demonstration of strength.**

Deception in Preparation for the Attack

► Senior Hamas leaders viewed the Battle of the Sword of Jerusalem (Hamas' name for Operation Guardian of the Walls in May 2021) as a tremendous achievement and a strategic victory over Israel. Hamas documents² brought back from the Gaza Strip by the IDF during war showed that the movement believed its achievements could be translated into realizing its vision of the destruction of Israel.³

► As a result, senior Hamas leaders, headed by the movement's chief in the Gaza Strip, Yahya al-Sinwar,⁴ and the head of its military wing, Muhammad Deif,⁵ began formulating a practical military plan for the decisive campaign against Israel (*Ma'rakat Wa'd al-Akhira* – The Promise of the Hereafter Campaign). Documents written in the summer of 2022 showed how the plan was discussed through correspondence and coordination talks between Hamas and its allies,

² Most of the documents mentioned in this report can be viewed in the archives of the Amit Institute.

³ See the March 2025 Amit Institute report, [Hamas' strategy to destroy Israel: from theory into practice, as seen in captured documents](#) and the April 2025 report, [Operation Guardian of the Walls as a watershed moment in Hamas' strategy for the "destruction of Israel," as reflected in documents found by the IDF in the Gaza Strip](#)

⁴ Later head of Hamas' "political bureau," and eliminated on October 16, 2024.

⁵ Eliminated on July 13, 2024.

Iran and Hezbollah. The documents revealed that al-Sinwar wanted a multi-front campaign which would include the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria, Israeli Arabs, the militias in Iraq, Yemen and Syria and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Although Hezbollah and Iran approved the plan, it was understood that Iran itself was not expected to participate actively.⁶

► As early as September 2022 Hamas apparently prepared to invade Israel in the near future. Ultimately, it was decided to postpone the attack, possibly to increase coordination with the other members of the "resistance axis"⁷ and to continue preparations in terms of training and planning (*New York Times*, October 12, 2024; Doron Kadosh' X account, May 27, 2026). A Hamas military wing military intelligence document from September 13, 2022, written during preparations for the possible execution of the invasion, emphasized the importance of a strategic deception plan as the foundation for a surprise Hamas attack on Israel.

5. There is a need to formulate a multidimensional deception plan at the strategic level (political-military-economic-media).

5. ضرورة بلورة خطة خداع على المستوى الاستراتيجي متعددة الطبقات (سياسي-عسكري-اقتصادي-إعلامي)

Document 1: Intelligence assessment by Hamas military intelligence, September 13, 2022

► Following the October 7, 2023 attack and massacre, Hamas confirmed it had followed a deception plan to confuse Israeli intelligence and decision-makers and cause them to believe that Hamas did not want a confrontation:

◆ A few days after the October 7, 2023 attack and massacre, Abu Obeida,⁸ spokesman for Hamas' military wing, said that since the beginning of 2022, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades had carried out a strategic deception plan against the enemy to ensure the success of the operation. He said one element of the deception plan was the willingness to absorb numerous "tactical incidents," such as the "violations of the occupation" against the Palestinian people in Judea and Samaria, east Jerusalem and al-Aqsa (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, October 12, 2023).

⁶ See the April 2025 Amit Institute report, [Operation Guardian of the Walls as a watershed moment in Hamas' strategy for the "destruction of Israel," as reflected in documents found by the IDF in the Gaza Strip](#)

⁷ Iran, Hezbollah, the Palestinian terrorist organizations, the Houthis in Yemen and the Shi'ite militias in Iraq, whose collective objective is the destruction and elimination of the State of Israel./

⁸ Eliminated in August 2025.

◆A source close to Hamas stated that the movement used an "unprecedented intelligence tactic" to mislead Israel during the months preceding the attack by creating the impression it was unwilling to engage in fighting or confrontation with Israel while simultaneously preparing for the operation (Reuters, October 10, 2023).

◆Hamas leader "abroad" Khaled Mashal said the deception plan created the impression that the Gaza Strip was focused on its internal affairs and did not want escalation. He said that continued until the attack itself, and even in the days preceding October 7, 2023, the movement's leadership continued sending Israel misleading messages (Ammar Taqi YouTube channel, January 19, 2024).

Putting the Deception Plan into Practice

Hamis Avoids Direct Confrontation with Israel

► Beginning in 2018 the terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip increased their level of violence against IDF forces and the State of Israel after more than three and a half years of relative calm following the end of Operation Protective Edge in the summer of 2014. Hamas used "controlled escalation" to pressure Israel for gains, such as easing the so-called "siege" of the Gaza Strip or increasing economic assistance. Hamas led several short rounds of escalation which included rocket fire into Israeli territory, not only near the border but at central Israel and Beersheba, by the military wings of Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (the PIJ) and other organizations.

► However, after Operation Guardian of the Walls in May 2021, and as part of its preparations for the "decisive campaign" against Israel, Hamas moved toward a policy of "containment." According to Hamas documents, senior figures stated that they should focus on the "big project" and avoid small-scale confrontations with Israel, emphasizing that they had to convince Israel that Hamas wanted calm in the Gaza Strip (New York Times, October 12, 2024).

► One example was the Flag March held on Jerusalem Day on May 29, 2022. A year earlier, Hamas had fired rockets from the Gaza Strip at the Jerusalem area during the march, which led to Operation Guardian of the Walls. However, despite public threats from Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist organizations calling for escalation, the march passed without unusual incident. In response to criticism from the Palestinian public, Hamas claimed that what had occurred in Jerusalem had indeed "crossed red lines" and justified a response, but it would be

carried out "when and how Hamas thought appropriate."⁹ According to documents from a Hamas leadership meeting in June 2022, the movement's leaders were satisfied that Hamas had avoided a confrontation despite the provocative march, thereby creating the impression that it did not want a larger clash with Israel (*New York Times*, October 12, 2024).

► Khaled Mashal noted that during Ramadan in 2023 there were two incidents in which Jews stormed al-Aqsa Mosque, yet Hamas did not respond. He said people were asking, "Where is Gaza?" and "the enemy" also saw it and concluded that Gaza was occupied with its own affairs (Ammar Taqi YouTube channel, January 19, 2024).

► A challenge to Hamas' policy, which sought to maintain the level of confrontation with Israel according to its own interests, came from the PIJ, which, between 2019 and 2023, was responsible for several rounds of escalation and rocket fire without Hamas involvement and apparently without its approval. Hamas documents reflected the dissatisfaction of senior Hamas figures with the PIJ's conduct. For example, during a meeting between Hamas representatives, Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah and the head of the Palestine Branch in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Qods Force, Muhammad Saeed Izadi (Hajj Ramadan) in August 2022, following Operation Breaking Dawn (August 5–7, 2022) between Israel and the PIJ, Hamas representatives said PIJ rocket fire without coordination and without consensus triggered Israeli responses which harmed Hamas and weakened the position of the "resistance."¹⁰ They said there had to be an agreement that no confrontation with Israel would be initiated without coordination between Hamas and the PIJ.¹¹

► Documents from a Hamas leadership meeting in May 2023, prompted by Operation Shield and Arrow between the PIJ and Israel (May 9–13), showed that while discussing the preferred timing for launching the "campaign" against Israel, senior movement figures stressed the need to avoid any additional confrontation with Israel which might disrupt the final preparations. According to the minutes of the meeting, "We need to control the behavior of the PIJ and the other 'factions' so that we do not fall into provocations which will destroy our 'big project' " (*New York Times*, October 12, 2024).

► During a Hamas political bureau meeting dated May 16, 2023, al-Sinwar (Abu Ibrahim) was quoted as saying that immediately after the start of Operation Shield and Arrow they decided

⁹ See the June 2022 Amit Institute report, [Hamas "explains" not firing rockets during the Flag March](#)

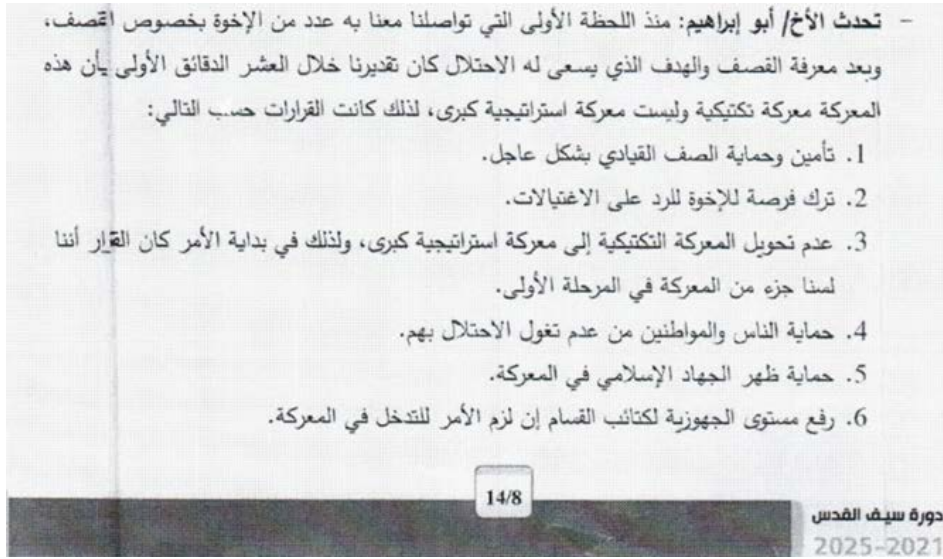
¹⁰ Hamas and the other terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip.

¹¹ See the January 2026 Amit Institute report, [Hamas Criticism of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad Revealed in Seized Documents from the Gaza Strip](#)

to allow the PIJ to respond to the attacks on its members, while avoiding turning the tactical campaign into a strategic campaign, and therefore Hamas did not join the fighting.

Brother Abu Ibrahim said, "From the very first moment, a number of brothers contacted us regarding the strikes, and after we learned about the strikes and the objective that the occupation was pursuing, our assessment during the first ten minutes was that it was a tactical campaign and not a major strategic campaign. Therefore, the decisions were as follows:

1. To urgently secure and protect the leadership echelon.
2. To give the brothers an opportunity to respond to the assassinations.
3. Not to turn the tactical campaign into a major strategic campaign. Therefore, at the outset, the decision was that we would not be part of the battle during the first stage.
4. To protect people and civilians from the oppression of the occupation.
5. To protect the rear of the Islamic Jihad during the campaign.
6. To raise the level of readiness of the al-Qassam Brigades, should it become necessary to intervene in the campaign.



Document 2: Minutes of the Hamas Political Bureau Meeting, May 16, 2023

► Referring to the Flag March in Jerusalem, which was scheduled to take place two days later, al-Sinwar noted the need to restrain the PIJ through the Joint Operations Room so that the event would not develop into a strategic campaign.

► **Brother Abu Ibrahim said:**

- We must be extremely careful not to be drawn into a tactical campaign during the Flag March. Managing it requires great caution to avoid turning it into a strategic campaign, unless it is connected to a strategic objective.
- According to our assessments, the Islamic Jihad will escalate matters on the day of the Flag March. Therefore, as a precautionary measure, the political and military leadership will be placed on high alert beginning at noon on Thursday, and the security forces will be notified regarding movements in preparation for any emergency situation that may arise, so that they can take the necessary security measures for the leadership.

◀ **تحدث الأخ/ أبو ابراهيم:**

- يجب أن نكون في غاية الحذر من الانجرار إلى معركة تكتيكية خلال مسيرة الأعلام، وإدارتها بقدرها من الحرص الشديد جداً من تحويلها إلى معركة استراتيجية إلا في حال ربطها في عنوان استراتيجي.

- حسب التقديرات التي لدينا بأن الجهاد الإسلامي سيذهب إلى تصعيد يوم مسيرة الأعلام، لذلك مع باب اتخاذ الإجراءات الاحتياطية رفع درجة اللون للقيادة السياسية والعسكرية ابتداءً من ظهر يوم الخميس، وإعلام الأمن بالتحركات، تحسباً لأي طارئ قد يحدث؛ ولكي يستطيعوا اتخاذ الإجراءات الأمنية اللازمة للقيادة.

- The only alternative is to send messages to the occupation through the mediators to ensure that the Flag March proceeds as planned so that matters do not deteriorate.
- It is essential to coordinate with the Islamic Jihad, restrain and control it through the Joint Operations Room and the factions of national action. The security bodies must monitor the Islamic Jihad above all during the coming period so that we can resolve matters before being drawn into a military campaign.

- لا بد من رسائل للاحتلال عبر الوسطاء بتمرير يوم مسيرة الأعلام لكيلا تتدرج الأمور.

- التنسيق مع الجهاد الإسلامي واحتوائه وضبطه من خلال الغرفة المشتركة وفصائل العمل الوطني، والعمل الأمني مراقبة الجهاد الإسلامي خلال الفترة القادمة أولاً بأول حتى نستطيع تفكيك الأمور قبل الانجرار إلى معركة.

Document 2: Minutes of the Hamas Political Bureau Meeting, May 16, 2023

- Abu Obeida, spokesman for Hamas' military wing, said they had permitted many of the confrontations between the Joint Operations Room of the "resistance factions"¹² and the

¹² The terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip.

Zionist enemy," but chose not to employ significant force as part of the "strategic plan to deceive the enemy" (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, October 12, 2023). Hamas political bureau member Muhammad Nazzal also said the movement had not participated in previous campaigns in order to preserve its ammunition and capabilities for the campaign (Al Jazeera Mubasher, October 11, 2023).

Creating the Impression of Focusing on Economic Relief for the Gaza Strip

► Since 2018, Qatar had transferred monthly grants of \$30 million to the Gaza Strip in coordination with Israel. The money was ostensibly for operating the Strip's power station, financing government employees and providing assistance to needy families. A significant portion of the money entered the Strip in suitcases carried by the Qatari special envoy, Ambassador Muhammad al-Emadi (*Doha News*, January 13, 2021; *New York Times*, December 10, 2023; CNN, December 11, 2023; Shomrim website, December 12, 2023; Ynet, April 13, 2024; Civil Commission of Inquiry into the October 7 Disaster Report, November 26, 2024).

► The Qatari funds became a mechanism for relieving security tensions between Israel and Hamas. Hamas would initiate an escalation against Israel, usually by increasing violent popular activity along the border fence, prompting Israel to approach the Qataris and request the transfer of funds to the Strip, together with Israeli agreements to limited concessions in exchange for temporary security calm (Civil Commission of Inquiry into the October 7 Disaster Report, November 26, 2024).¹³

► A document from the Hamas military wing's center for military and strategic studies, dated September 9, 2023, which analyzed Israeli policy regarding the rounds of fighting since Hamas seized power in 2006, identified Israel's desire to maintain calm in the Strip. According to the document, the Israeli government "maintains the current pattern of conduct toward Gaza, based on 'limited economic improvement in exchange for continued calm.'"¹⁴

► Hamas exploited the Qatari funds and Israeli policy toward the Strip as a key part of the deception plan, according to which the movement was focused on the day-to-day affairs of life in the Strip and worked primarily to improve the economic situation and living conditions and did not want a security escalation. According to documents from a Hamas leadership meeting

¹³ See the November 2018 Amit Institute report, [Summary of Events Along the Gaza Strip Border](#) and the September 13-22 weekly "Spotlight on Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict."

¹⁴ See the Amit Institute report, [How Hamas perceived Israel's rounds of deterrence, according to a document found in the Gaza Strip](#)

in the Gaza Strip in May 2023, they sought to create the impression that Gaza wanted life and economic growth (*New York Times*, October 12, 2024). Hamas also confirmed that after the war began:

- ◆ Izz al-Din Haddad, commander of Hamas' Gaza Brigade, who was later appointed head of the movement's military wing,¹⁵ told the Al Jazeera investigative program *More Than Meets the Eye* that they had opted for a strategic deception plan which would make Israel believe Hamas had swallowed the bait of economic benefits, while it continued its military preparations for the attack.¹⁶
- ◆ Khaled Mashal acknowledged that Hamas had acted in a way that would make Israel believe the movement was preoccupied with internal affairs and did not want a confrontation with Israel (Ammar Taqi YouTube channel, January 19, 2024).
- ◆ An article published by the pro-Hamas Palestinian columnist Fadi Ramadan on the afternoon of October 7, 2023, analyzed Hamas' deception plan activities prior to the attack. He said the "resistance leadership"¹⁷ had deceived Israel to the point where it believed that the policy of economic improvements in the Gaza Strip and the assassinations long threatened by the occupation's leaders were bearing fruit, and Israel had begun making extensive use of it (Shehab Agency, October 7, 2023).
- ◆ The minutes of a meeting held on December 29, 2019, by a Hamas delegation headed by the chairman of the political bureau, Isma'il Haniyeh,¹⁸ and the Qatari foreign minister, Muhammad bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, showed that Qatar understood the importance of the financial aid to Hamas as a mean of exerting pressure on Israel.

¹⁵ Eliminated on May 15, 2026. See the May 2026 Amit Institute report, [Elimination of Izz al-Din al-Haddad, Head of Hamas' Military Wing: Reactions and Significance](#)

¹⁶ See the February 2025 Amit Institute report, [Al-Jazeera Program about the October 7, 2023, Terrorist Attack and Massacre](#)

¹⁷ Heads of the terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip.

¹⁸ Eliminated by Israel in Tehran on July 30, 2024.

5. Ensuring the Flow of Qatari Aid:

There is no doubt that the Qatari grant is the primary lifeline because it:

Covers fuel expenses every month.

Provides assistance to 100,000 poor families.

Creates 3,000–4,000 temporary jobs.

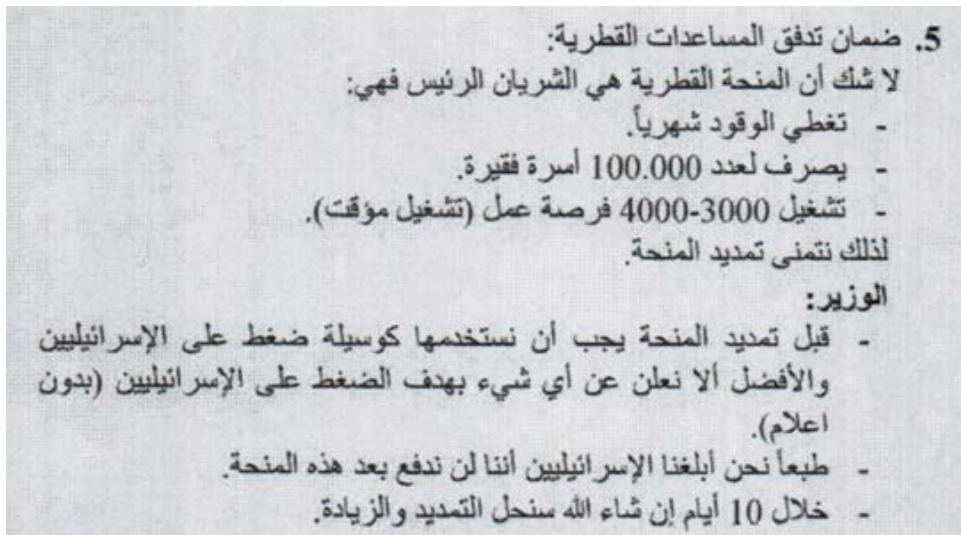
Therefore, we hope for an extension of the grant.

The Minister:

Regarding the extension of the grant, we must use it as a means of pressure on the Israelis, and it is best not to announce anything to pressure the Israelis (without publicizing it).

Of course, we informed the Israelis that we would not make any payments after this grant.

Within 10 days, Allah willing, we will resolve the extension and increase [of the aid funds].



Document 3: Minutes of the meeting between the Hamas delegation and the Qatari foreign minister, December 29, 2019

Focusing on Events in Judea and Samaria and al-Aqsa Mosque

► Throughout the entire period of preparations for the major terrorist attack, Hamas directed most of its propaganda and operational attention toward events in Judea and Samaria and east Jerusalem, as well as the issue of Palestinian prisoners, while almost completely avoiding public discussion of Gaza-related issues except for promoting the narrative of improving the economic situation. **The objective was to create a distinction between "boiling" Judea and Samaria and "calm" Gaza Strip.** The same rhetoric could be found in statements by senior Hamas figures:

◆At a Hamas rally marking the 35th anniversary of its founding on December 14, 2022, Yahya al-Sinwar said significant national challenges were expected in 2023, particularly in light of the rise of the right-wing government following the Israeli elections. He said those developments provided an opportunity "to ignite the resistance"¹⁹ in Judea and Samaria (Al Jazeera, December 14, 2022).

◆Isma'il Haniyeh declared that an escalation and expansion of the "resistance" was expected to uproot the settlers and the "occupation" from all Palestine. He added that "our people, especially those in Jerusalem and the West Bank, with the support of all regions, will continue on the path of resistance, will not fear threats, will cross the border and surprise the occupier and the settlers until they leave our land and our people return to it" (Hamas Telegram channel, December 28, 2022).

◆Hamas spokesman Abd al-Latif al-Qanou demanded that the Palestinian Authority leadership end all administrative arrests of movement "activists"²⁰ in Judea and Samaria. He added, "The land of the West Bank must be fertile ground for resistance, and the Authority must remove its heavy hand from the resistance fighters"²¹ (al-Aqsa TV, August 4, 2023).

◆At the end of August 2023, Salah al-Arouri,²² deputy Hamas political bureau chairman and in charge of Hamas activity in Judea and Samaria, gave a series of interviews in which he emphasized the continuing unrest in Judea and Samaria. He stated that the Palestinians always had the ability to "surprise the occupation," and one of the surprises was an escalation of the "resistance" in the West Bank following "unprecedented challenges." He accused Israel of wanting to destroy al-Aqsa Mosque, build the Temple, Judaize Jerusalem and expel the Palestinian people from the West Bank. He said, "I am speaking about the West Bank because it is currently at the heart of the battle" (al-Aqsa TV, August 24, 2023). During another interview he said, "We are preparing for an overall war and discussing the issue behind closed doors with all the relevant parties." He added that "the equation" in the West Bank had changed and the "resistance" was capable of closing Israel's airspace and maritime space and shutting down its electricity and economy (Al Mayadeen, August 25, 2023).

¹⁹ Increase terrorist attacks.

²⁰ Terrorist operatives.

²¹ Terrorist operatives.

²² Eliminated on January 2, 2024.



Salah al-Arouri (al-Aqsa TV, August 27, 2023)

- ◆ During a meeting of Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian,²³ Salah al-Arouri and the PIJ secretary general Ziyad al-Nakhalah in Beirut, the Palestinians noted their support for giving priority to "resistance activity" in the West Bank at that stage (Radio al-Nour, August 31, 2023).
- ◆ In a speech for the 18th anniversary of the IDF withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, Hamas military wing commander Muhammad Deif said, "The defeat of the occupation in Gaza lays the foundations for its defeat in the West Bank while heralding the liberation of Jaffa, Haifa, Jerusalem and the rest of the homeland" (Hamas Telegram channel, September 12, 2023).

Creating a Routine of Military Exercises

- ▶ A Hamas document written about a year before the October 7, 2023 attack and massacre had instructions from al-Sinwar to the military wing forces to train for operational readiness, but said everything should be done openly, and be documented by television crews. According to al-Sinwar, any attempt to conceal the exercises could lead Israeli security services to suspect that something larger was being planned, whereas if everything were done openly it would create the impression that what was taking place was "just for show" (Channel 12 News, June 5, 2026).²⁴
- ▶ In practice, al-Sinwar's directive was integrated into the terrorist operatives' routine military training activities and was implemented on the ground during the years preceding the attack and massacre. Hamas and the other terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip increased their military preparations through a series of large-scale exercises which tested their capabilities, including the rehearsal of military offensives that were ultimately reflected in the actual invasion of Israeli territory. Official statements asserted that the exercises were intended to

²³ Killed in a helicopter crash in May 2024.

²⁴ The Amit Institute is not in possession of the document.

demonstrate the response of Hamas and the other terrorist organizations to a possible Israeli attack on the Strip, as well as Israeli activities at al-Aqsa Mosque, as had occurred during the Sword of Jerusalem campaign in May 2021, or because of delays in negotiations concerning the release of Palestinian prisoners held in Israel.

◆ On December 29, 2020, Hamas' military wing, eleven military wings of other terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip and Hamas internal security apparatuses conducted the first exercise of its kind, called The Strong Pillar (*al-Rukn al-Shadid*), under the command of the Joint Operations Room. The organizers, who had publicized their intention to hold the exercise throughout the week preceding its inception, claimed it was defensive in nature, intended to respond to Israeli attacks and demonstrate the unity of the armed "factions." However, the exercise included offensive elements, such as rocket fire at Israel, attacks on tanks, infiltration into Israeli territory through tunnels and the abduction of soldiers.²⁵

◆ On December 15, 2021, Hamas' military wing announced the beginning of the Shield of Jerusalem exercise to raise combat readiness and practice a variety of scenarios. The scenarios included the seizure and assault of an IDF military base, urban warfare, RPG fire, attacks on an IDF tank and the abduction of IDF soldiers. Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem said they were monitoring IDF deployments around Gaza and that the exercise was intended to tell Israel they were aware of everything it did and that any foolish act would be met with an appropriate response. Palestinian sources indicated that the exercise signaled the mediators that because of delays in the reconstruction of the Strip and improvement of its economic situation, the "military option"²⁶ remained on the table.²⁷

◆ On December 26, 2021, Hamas held the Strong Pillar exercise. It lasted three days, compared to the 12 hours of the first exercise. It included defensive and offensive scenarios, including the seizure of Israeli positions, attacks on IDF armored vehicles and the abduction of Israeli soldiers.²⁸

²⁵ See the January 2021 Amit Institute report, [**The first military exercise was held under the command of the joint operations room of all the terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip. Its objective was to send messages of unity and improved military capabilities**](#)

²⁶ Terrorism and violence.

²⁷ See the Amit Institute report, "Spotlight on Terrorism – the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, December 14-21, 2021."

²⁸ Ibid, Footnote 19.

◆ Strong Pillar 3 took place on December 28, 2022. Its purpose was to test the response speed and readiness of the forces for emergencies and possible Israeli attacks. The exercise included various tactical scenarios, the most prominent of which was a raid into Israeli territory and the capture of IDF soldiers, with "elite fighters" employing light and medium weapons.²⁹ Hamas-affiliated commentator Ahmed Abu Zuhri said the exercise simulated defensive and offensive actions against "Zionist targets," and was intended to demonstrate that the "resistance"³⁰ was prepared for any "Zionist aggression" and was fully capable of offensive operations designed to capture large numbers of Israeli soldiers (al-Qassam Brigades website, January 2, 2023).



Right: Practicing a tank attack during Strong Pillar 2 (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, December 27, 2021). Left: Practicing the abduction of soldiers during Strong Pillar 3 (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, December 28, 2022)

► Hamas did not rely solely on military exercises to publicly present its invasion plans. During Ramadan in April 2022, the Hamas-produced television series *The Fist of the Free (Qabdat al-Ahram)* was broadcast, depicting an invasion of Israel in a manner similar to the October 7, 2023 attack and massacre (Palestinian Drama Telegram channel, April 2022).

► In contrast to the public nature of the exercises, Hamas maintained communications secrecy to complicate Israeli intelligence efforts. Senior Hamas figures used no electronic devices, such as mobile phones and computers, relying instead on a communications network of landline telephones within the tunnel network under the Gaza Strip (*The Daily Telegraph*, October 25, 2023; *New York Times*, October 29, 2023).

The Final Stage Before the Attack

²⁹ See the Amit Institute report, "Spotlight on Terrorism – the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, December 28-January 3, 2023."

³⁰ The terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip.

► According to a document from a Hamas leadership meeting in the Gaza Strip in September 2022, the original plan was to launch the campaign about a month later, during the Jewish High Holy Days, when al-Sinwar was already reviewing the final plans. However, the attack was postponed, apparently to allow the "resistance axis" partners, particularly Hezbollah, to prepare for their roles and to complete Hamas' own operational preparations for the invasion. According to another document from a Hamas leadership meeting in the Gaza Strip in May 2023, they had again agreed to attack during the Jewish High Holy Days, although the leaders were still debating between Yom Kippur on September 25, 2023, which was preferred by al-Sinwar, and Simchat Torah on October 7, 2023 (*New York Times*, October 12, 2024).³¹

► Khaled Mashal said "activity" during the holiday period became a central to the plan. He said, "The [Jewish] holidays were from September 15 to October 6 [2023], and then the movement's leadership, in its wisdom, once again misled the enemy" (Ammar Taqi YouTube channel, January 19, 2024). Thus Hamas combined the various elements of its plan, which included publicizing threats related to developments in Judea and Samaria and al-Aqsa Mosque while simultaneously increasing security confrontations near the border to create the appearance of wanting to promote a new "arrangement" in the Gaza Strip, thereby concealing the final preparations for the invasion.

Focusing on al-Aqsa Mosque

► Before and during the Jewish High Holy Days (September-October 2023), Hamas focused on claiming that Israel would exploit the holidays to change the status quo of al-Aqsa Mosque and urged Palestinians in Judea and Samaria and east Jerusalem to "resist:"

◆ Hamas said in a statement, "The occupation is responsible for whatever occurs during the Jewish holidays, and we call on our people in Jerusalem and the West Bank to remain in al-Aqsa Mosque. We affirm that our heroic operations will continue in response to the occupation's crimes" (Hamas Telegram channel, September 11, 2023).

◆ Khaled Mashal said the "resistance" would never allow the "occupation" to desecrate al-Aqsa. Israel, he said, was playing with fire. He called on every Palestinian who could to go to al-Aqsa Mosque and escalate the people's response to the crimes of the "occupation" in all arenas (al-Aqsa TV, September 24, 2023).

³¹ The document is not in Amit Institute possession.

◆ During the Sukkot holiday (late September–early October 2023), Hamas promoted the false claim that Israel had dug a new tunnel beneath al-Aqsa Mosque, extending from the Western Wall to an area south of the mosque, with part of the tunnel serving as a Temple Antiquities museum. Hamas accused Israel of continuing to Judaize Jerusalem and increase its control over the mosque, and warned that the Palestinians would not allow that to pass in without response and would confront it with full force. (Hamas Telegram channel, October 1, 2023). Hamas spokesman Abd al-Latif al-Qanou said the only alternative was to escalate confrontations against the "occupation" with direct "resistance" blows from the West Bank. He also called on Palestinians in Jerusalem, the West Bank and the "occupied interior" [Israeli Arabs] to confront the settlers' incursions into al-Aqsa, and on the Arab and Islamic nation to support them (al-Aqsa TV, October 1, 2023).



Alleged documentation of the tunnel (Hamas Telegram channel, October 1, 2023)

◆ On October 5, 2023, Hamas called upon the Palestinians in every city and village in "Palestine" to gather at al-Aqsa Mosque tomorrow (October 6) to protect it from the "occupation and the herds" of settlers (Hamas Telegram channel, October 5, 2023).

The Final Military Exercise

► Strong Pillar 4 took place over four hours on September 12, 2023. It included rocket fire from the Khan Yunis area toward the sea, training of commando squads against maritime targets, beach landing exercises under covering fire, rocket and anti-tank missile barrages and an assault on a simulated IDF outpost. The organizers claimed the objective was to test the response speed of the "resistance forces"³² to any emergency and evaluate the readiness of the "fighters."³³

³² Terrorist operatives.

³³ See the Amit Institute report, "Spotlight on Terrorism and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict, September 6-12, 2023."

► Muhammad Abu al-Hurbaid, a Palestinian security affairs expert, said Strong Pillar 4 sent misled the occupation regarding what was taking place (Palestine Online, October 8, 2023). While the earlier Strong Pillar exercises and other Hamas drills used Gaza Division bases as their primary targets, Strong Pillar 4 included raids on outposts identified with IDF forces in Judea and Samaria, such as Tarqumia, Shaked and the Judea Brigade headquarters (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, September 12, 2023).



Structures simulating IDF bases in Judea and Samaria during the Strong Pillar 4 exercise (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, September 12, 2023)



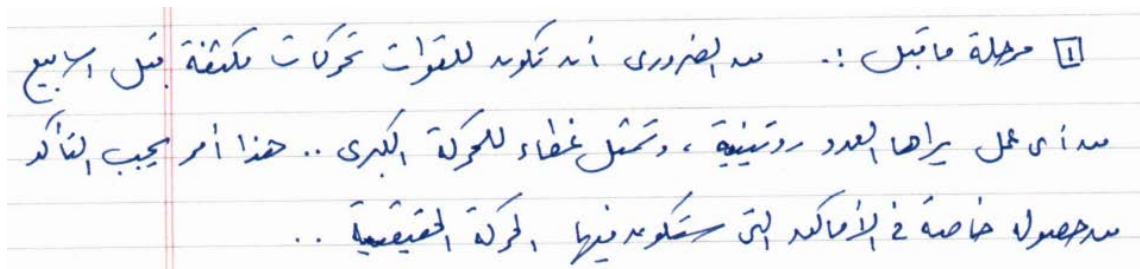
For comparison, right: Raid on the "Gaza Division" during the Hamas Shield of Jerusalem exercise in December 2021 (Shehab Agency, December 16, 2021). Left: Training for the abduction of soldiers from "Gefen Headquarters" (the Northern Brigade of the Gaza Division) during Strong Pillar 3 (al-Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, December 28, 2022)

Deception Along the Border Fence

► A document handwritten by al-Sinwar from August 2022 gave instructions for launching the campaign against Israel, which was already being considered for the Jewish holidays that began in late September 2022 but was ultimately postponed, and related to the deception plan required in the border area. He instructed his personnel to carry out intensive activities in the

Gaza Strip during the weeks leading up to the raid, but said they must appear to "the enemy" as routine movements and therefore would not be perceived as unusual preparations for an attack. In that way he sought to conceal the actual movements of Hamas terrorist operatives, particularly near the border fence, and create a false appearance of routine activity.³⁴

1. The Preparatory Stage Before the Raid: It is essential that the forces carry out intensive movements in the weeks preceding any operation in such a way that the enemy perceives them as routine activity. That will serve as camouflage for the major operation [the invasion]. Care must be taken to ensure that it occurs especially in the locations where the operation [the invasion] is planned to take place.



□ مهلة مابئس :- مد لضروري انه تكون للحركات مكثفة قبل الاسبوع
 مد عمل يراها بعدد روتينية ، وتحت غطاء للحركة الكبرى .. هذا امر يجب التاكيد
 مد جعله خاصة في الأماكن التي ستكون فيها الحركة الحقيقية ..

Document 4: Al-Sinwar's Handwritten Letter of Instructions, August 24, 2022

► Subsequently, a document from Hamas military wing military intelligence dated September 13, 2022 contained an intelligence assessment regarding countering the Israeli strategy of preemptive strikes and targeted killings of senior figures as part of preparations for a possible invasion. It noted several measures to strengthen deception plan ahead of a surprise Hamas attack on Israel. The document effectively transformed al-Sinwar's general instructions into an operational action plan based on two timelines: the use of routine activities (training, construction of military positions and troop movements) to advance preparations for the invasion; and the activation of a campaign designed to pressure the Israeli government into to a new agreement.

³⁴ See the October 2026 Amit Institute report, [Instructions Given by Yahya al-Sinwar for the October 7, 2023 Attack and Massacre](#)

5. It is necessary to formulate a multidimensional deception plan at the strategic level (political-military-economic-media) which includes advancing an exchange deal with Prime Minister Yair Lapid while continuing to build military positions (outposts) at the normal pace and continuing routine training until the beginning of the pressure campaign, which will provide suitable justification for reducing the activity.
6. *Nukhba* forces should be mobilized repeatedly so that the enemy loses the ability to identify the moment of attack. That will be particularly effective because the elite forces are subject to intensive intelligence monitoring.
7. The possibility of offensive intentions during routine activities (inventory counts, annual exercises) should be examined.
8. A military presence of our forces near the borders should be established so that over time it becomes routine activity which serves as cover for any future military initiative (military patrols, nearby *ribat* [defensive jihad preparedness along the borders], commanders' visits and demonstration exercises).

5. ضرورة بلورة خطة خداع على المستوى الاستراتيجي متعددة الطبقات (سياسي-عسكري-اقتصادي-إعلامي) تتضمن تحريك ملف صفقة التبادل مع رئيس الوزراء ليبيد، والاستمرار في بناء المواقع العسكرية بالمعدل الطبيعي، والاستمرار في التدريبات بشكل معناد حتى بداية حملة الضغط، والتي ستمنح المبرر المناسب للتخفيف.
6. العمل على استدعاء قوات النخبة بشكل متكرر. بحيث يفقد العدو القدرة على تحديد لحظة الهجوم، حيث أن هذه الأستراتيجية تكون مفيدة في هذا الصدد، خاصة أن قوات النخبة تخضع لجهد استخباري مكثف.
7. فحص إمكانية تنفيذ نوايا هجومية في حالة نشاطات عامة (جرد عناد، مناورة سنوية).
8. تثبيت حالة من التواجد العسكري لقواتنا قرب الحدود، لتصبح مع الوقت إجراءات روتينية للتغطية على أي مبادرة عسكرية مستقبلاً (توريات عسكرية، رباط قريب، زيارات قيادية، تدريبات استعراضية).

Document 1: Intelligence assessment by Hamas military intelligence, September 13, 2022

► In practice, beginning in late August 2023 and throughout September 2023, a number of unusual incidents occurred near the border, which in retrospect can be interpreted as part of the implementation of al-Sinwar's directive and the second stage (the pressure campaign) of the two-stage plan presented by military intelligence. Demonstrations were held near the security fence during which rocks and explosive devices were thrown, gunfire was directed at IDF forces and attempts were made to climb the fence. Bulldozers and heavy equipment were observed leveling terrain and preparing access routes, allegedly in preparation for the reestablishment of the return camps, which would accommodate demonstrators protesting the continued siege of the Gaza Strip and demanding the return of refugees to the lands from

which they had been displaced. The rioters at the fence also chanted slogans in support of Judea and Samaria, al-Aqsa Mosque and the prisoners.³⁵

► The renewal of violence near the border fence, which also included the launching of incendiary balloons at the communities surrounding the Gaza Strip after nearly two years of a significant decline in confrontations, was apparently also caused by a dispute between Hamas and Qatar regarding the continued payment of salaries to public-sector employees in the Gaza Strip and reports of a financial crisis affecting the Hamas administration, along with a Hamas demand that the number of Palestinian laborers permitted to enter Israel be increased to 20,000 (al-Arab, September 3, 2023). For example, sources stated that the decision to renew the activities of the Revolutionary Youth (the Hamas-affiliated organizers of the demonstrations) along the Gaza border had been made by the highest levels of the leadership and was intended to compel Israel "to find solutions" (Sada News, September 16, 2023).³⁶



Right: Rioters near the border fence (Shehab Agency, September 18, 2023).

Left: Rioters burning tires in the Khan Yunis area (al-Aqsa TV, September 22, 2023)

► According to testimony from IDF surveillance soldiers who served along the Gaza border, the demonstrations in the weeks preceding the October 7, 2023 attack appeared to be attempts to identify possible weaknesses in the border fence and test the IDF's response. They described explosive devices detonated near the fence, frequent movements of pickup trucks carrying terrorists and the approach of *nukhba* operatives disguised as shepherds and birdwatchers (Civil Commission of Inquiry into the October 7 Disaster Report, November 26, 2024, pp. 62–65; N12 News, October 16, 2023). According to another report, Hamas exploited the demonstrations for operational testing, including downing drones and partially disrupting IDF

³⁵ See the September 2023 Amit Institute report, [Possible Renewal of the Return Marches](#)

³⁶ See the Amit Institute reports, Spotlight on Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, September 13-20, 2023, and September 20-27, 2023.

communications systems in the area, breaching the border fence to allow passage, knocking down an IDF surveillance camera and conducting drills involving runs toward the fence (N12 News, November 5, 2023).

► In a document sent by the head of military intelligence, Yasser Odeh,³⁷ to Yahya al-Sinwar on September 25, 2023, he referred to the border events as the second stage of the "pressure plan" and said they had caused Israel to intensify contacts with Hamas through the mediators in an attempt to contain the situation. Odeh noted that the marches should continue until the objectives and humanitarian demands had been met because "the enemy" only responded under pressure. He said pressure should be applied gradually, with new demands raised each time, followed by a period of waiting for Israel's response before proceeding further. **The document is evidence of the implementation of the second part of the original plan (the beginning of the pressure campaign in the September 2022 assessment document) to reach a renewed arrangement which would reduce tensions along the border as the final stage of the deception plan.**

1. With regard to the above-mentioned matter, the border activities have exerted pressure on the enemy, causing it to accelerate communications through the mediators in an attempt to contain the situation. The movement presented an updated list of demands, including humanitarian demands which can be achieved through pressure management, a negotiating process and continued situation assessments at every stage. **We present to you an updated situation assessment in light of the latest developments.**

A. Continue the marches until the objectives are achieved. Experience has proven that the enemy responds only under pressure. Activity has been presented to secure the humanitarian demands. The Jewish holidays represent short-term opportunities, while in the medium term there is a desire by all parties to calm the situation in light of the Israeli-Saudi normalization project and the enemy's desire to reduce tensions and prevent linkage between the fronts and arenas.

³⁷ Eliminated on May 26, 2026, a few days after being appointed head of Hamas' military wing. See the May 2026 Amit Institute report, [Muhammad Odeh, New Head of the Hamas Military Wing, Eliminated in the Gaza Strip](#)

- B. The pressure must have a political motive. In other words, pressure should be applied, its results assessed, demands presented and the enemy given a reasonable amount of time to respond, and so on.
- C. Our demands are humanitarian and limited, and can be achieved through patience and sustained pressure, while ensuring that the level and type of pressure correspond to the scope of the achievement.
- D. Accordingly, we believe that the pressure should continue on Sunday, September 24, and that the protests should calm down on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday in order to obtain a response to our demands and update the mediators regarding the need to address the message. This period will provide an opportunity to reorganize the situation along the border while maintaining readiness to renew the movement on Thursday or Friday, according to the situation assessment agreed upon among the movement's components based on the response to our demands, and in a stronger manner than before.
- E. During this period, efforts must be coordinated among the movement's components, together with updating the factions and mobilizing their support for the movement. Attention should be paid to the danger that some elements of the military wings may become involved in border confrontations without coordination, so that will not serve as a pretext for violating the national consensus.

2. Recommendations

- A. It is essential to elevate slogans that combine the broader national situation (al-Aqsa, prisoners and aggression against the West Bank) with slogans calling for the lifting of the siege on Gaza, the right to work, the right to travel, the right to medical treatment, slogans concerning cancer-treatment equipment and opposition to the exploitation of patients at the Erez crossing and similar issues. These slogans should become the driving force behind popular actions at the border in response to the enemy and should be firmly embedded in the Palestinian people's consciousness.
- B. Communication with the military coordination committee is essential, and it must be kept informed of developments so that the military wings in the Joint Operations Room are updated.
- C. The activities and indirect negotiations with the enemy must be accompanied by comprehensive diplomatic efforts with friendly states and capable regional actors – Qatar, Turkey, Algeria and Kuwait – to provide support and help find solutions for Gaza's major

crises, especially unemployment, job creation and employment opportunities, and support for humanitarian, health and educational projects.

- D. Establish a civilian delegation from the Gaza Strip to present the issue of the siege on Gaza and its suffering to parliaments around the world and to international bodies concerned with the protection of human rights.
- E. Adopt monthly or weekly joint events for Palestinians worldwide and for movements and organizations supporting Palestinian rights, holding simultaneous demonstrations outside American and European embassies to demand an end to the siege on Gaza.
- F. Focus the movement's media efforts on humanitarian aspects and link the movement's activities to broader national issues: Jerusalem and the prisoners.
- G. Adopt parallel joint events along the borders of historic Palestine: Gaza (the 1948 territories), Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, in order to demand the right of return and an end to the siege on Gaza.

1. بالإشارة للموضوع أعلاه، شكلت الفعاليات الحدودية ضغطاً على العدو، دفعه لتكثيف التواصل عبر الوسطاء في محاولة لاحتواء الموقف، وقد قدمت الحركة ورقة مطالب محدثة، وهي مطالب إنسانية ممكن تحقيقها من خلال إدارة عملية الضغط والتفاوض وتقدير موقف متواصل ومستمر في كل مراحل خطة الضغط، **وفي هذا الصدد نضع بين أيديكم تحديث تقدير الموقف، في ضوء التطورات الأخيرة:**

أ. الاستمرار في المسيرات حتى تحقيق الأهداف، وقد أثبتت التجربة أن العدو لا يستجيب إلا تحت الضغط، والعمل على إنجاز المطالب الإنسانية التي تم تقديمها، ويوجد فرص في المدى القريب تتمثل بالأعياد اليهودية، وفي المدى المتوسط رغبة جميع الأطراف في تبريد المنطقة، في ظل مشروع التطبيع "الإسرائيلي-السعودي" ورغبة العدو في تخفيض التوتر ومنع الربط بين الجبهات والساحات.

ب. يجب أن يكون الضغط سياسياً، بمعنى أن يتم الضغط ومن ثم فحص نتائجه، وتقديم المطالب، ومنح العدو وقتاً يسيراً للرد وهكذا.

ج. مطالبنا إنسانية ومحدودة، ويمكن تحقيقها بالنفس الطويل مع استمرار الضغط، والمحافظة على أن يتناسب مستوى الضغط وأشكاله مع حجم الإنجاز.

د. وبناءً عليه، نرى أن يستمر الضغط يوم الأحد 24 سبتمبر، وتبريد الاحتجاجات أيام الإثنين والثلاثاء والأربعاء، للرد على مطالبنا، وإبلاغ الوسطاء بضرورة التقاط الرسالة، وتكون هذه الفترة فرصة لإعادة ترتيب أوضاع الحراك الحدودي مع الجاهزية لاستئنافه يوم الخميس أو الجمعة وفق تقدير موقف متوافق عليه بين مكونات الحركة، بناءً على رد رسالة المطالب وبشكل أقوى من السابق.

هـ. خلال هذه الفترة مطلوب تنسيق الجهود بين مكونات الحركة وإطلاع الفصائل وحشد موقفهم لدعم الحراك، مع الانتباه من خطورة انخراط بعض عناصر الأجنحة العسكرية بشكل مباشر في الاشتباك على الحدود بدون تنسيق، كي لا يتم أخذ ذلك ذريعة لخرق الإجماع الوطني.

2. التوصيات:

أ. ضرورة رفع شعارات تمزج بين الحالة الوطنية العامة (الأقصى، الأسرى، العدوان على الضفة)، وبين شعارات تدعو لفك الحصار عن غزة (الحق في العمل، الحق في السفر، الحق في العلاج، شعارات عن أجهزة علاج السرطان ورفض ابتزاز المرضى على حاجز إيريز، إلخ)، وتثبيت هذه العناوين كمحرك للفعاليات الشعبية الحدودية كأحد أشكال الرد على العدو، وتثبيتها في وعي الشارع الفلسطيني.

ب. التواصل مع التنسيق العسكري، ووضعه في صورة الأوضاع، بحيث يتم اطلاع الأجنحة العسكرية في الغرفة المشتركة.

ج. ضرورة أن يصاحب الفعاليات وخطوات التفاوض الغير مباشرة مع العدو حراك دبلوماسي واسع مع الأصدقاء والأطراف الإقليمية القادرة -قطر وتركيا والجزائر والكويت- على توفير الدعم والمساهمة في إيجاد الحلول لازمة غزة المركزية خاصة مشكلة البطالة وإيجاد سوق للعمل والتوظيف ودعم المشاريع الإنسانية الصحية والتعليمية.

د. تشكيل وفد مدني من قطاع غزة هدفه عرض مشكلة حصار غزة والامها على برلمانات العالم والجهات الدولية المختصة بالدفاع عن حقوق الانسان.

هـ. اعتماد فعاليات شهرية أو أسبوعية مشتركة لكل الفلسطينيين في العالم والحركات والقوى المناصرة للحق الفلسطيني للتظاهر المتزامن أمام السفارات الأمريكية والأوروبية مطالبة بفك الحصار عن غزة.

و. أن يكون التركيز الإعلامي الحركي على الجوانب الإنسانية وربط فعاليات الحراك بالقضايا الوطنية الجامعة "القدس والأسرى".

ز. اعتماد فعاليات مشتركة عند حدود فلسطين التاريخية متزامنة "غزة-الضفة -ال 48-الأردن-سوريا-لبنان، للمطالبة بحق العودة وفك الحصار عن غزة.

Document 5: Updated situation assessment regarding the second stage of the pressure plan, from Muhammad Odeh to Yahya al-Sinwar, September 25, 2023

► On September 29, 2023, Israel and Hamas, mediated by Qatar, reached a new arrangement on returning to the understandings reached after Operation Guardian of the Walls. According to the agreement, the number of entry permits for workers leaving the Gaza Strip for Israel would be increased, as would Qatari aid to the Gaza Strip, and the fishing zone off the coast of the Strip would be expanded (Ynet, September 29, 2023; *Yedioth Ahronoth*, January 2, 2026). The Revolutionary Youth then announced that they were halting activities at the border. However, Hamas warned that if there were an attack on Jerusalem during the High Holy Days

or if the understandings were not implemented, they would renew the youth protest at the border (*al-Akhbar*, September 29, 2023).

► On October 5, 2023, the Revolutionary Youth announced that the following day they would go to the border at the Karni Crossing to "attack the occupiers, shake their fortresses and burn tires in support of blessed al-Aqsa Mosque" (al-Bureij Tajma'na Telegram channel, October 5, 2023). However, the next day, the Revolutionary Youth reported that they had been prevented from reaching the security fence and that Hamas security forces had been deployed in large numbers along the border (Tufan October 7 Telegram channel, October 6, 2023). That enabled Hamas to continue with the deception plan and the final preparations for the terrorist attack, while Israel was left with the impression that the movement sought to ensure calm along the border, thereby avoiding raising the alert level on the Israeli side.

Internal Hamas and "Resistance Axis" Deception

► In addition to the extensive deception plan vis-à-vis Israel, internal deception was carried out within Hamas, at both the political and military levels, to limit the circle of those in the loop and reduce the possibility that Israeli intelligence services would prevent the planned attack. A former senior Hamas official said each unit knew only its own role within the overall plan, with many operatives receiving their precise targets only in the final moments before the start of the invasion.³⁸

► According to publications based on Israeli intelligence assessments, the only members of Hamas' top leadership who knew about the invasion plan and the exact date were Yahya al-Sinwar; Muhammad Deif and his deputy, Marwan Issa;³⁹ senior military wing operative Muhammad al-Sinwar;⁴⁰ head of the combat and administrative support system, Ghazi Abu Tama'a;⁴¹ and commander of the Northern Gaza Brigade, Ahmed Ghandour.⁴² Other senior figures, including al-Sinwar's deputy Khalil al-Hayya and head of the operations division and later head of the production staff, Ra'ed Saad,⁴³ knew about the plan, but it is not clear whether

³⁸ Muhanad Seloom, "Veiled intentions: Hamas's strategic deception and intelligence success on 7 October 2023," *Intelligence and National Security*, 41:1 (2026).

³⁹ Eliminated in March 2024.

⁴⁰ Eliminated in May 2025.

⁴¹ Eliminated in March 2024.

⁴² Eliminated in November 2023.

⁴³ Eliminated in December 2025.

they knew the date set for the invasion.⁴⁴ The documents indicate that Isma'il Haniyeh knew about the invasion and was involved in the coordination talks, but apparently was not aware of its exact date.⁴⁵

► Another publication claimed that most of the commanders of Hamas' five regional brigades did not know about the invasion until three days before the target date, without being informed of the timing, and afterward they briefed the 24 battalion commanders of the military wing. Ayman Siyyam, who headed Hamas' rocket array, was also updated about the impending attack in the final days before it was carried out.⁴⁶

► Bassem Na'im, the member of Hamas' political bureau who held the health portfolio, said that at the end of September 2023 he had left the Strip for Turkey with three other senior political bureau figures to participate in a conference on the "siege" on Gaza. He said that unlike previous occasions, this time al-Sinwar did not limit the duration of their stay abroad, despite the fact that other senior figures were already outside the Strip. Na'im noted that at the time they thought al-Sinwar considered their trip important and therefore did not object to their absence, but in retrospect they understood that they too had been part of the strategic deception before the attack (Ahmed Mansour's YouTube channel, March 12, 2025).



Bassem Na'im. "Al-Sinwar did not strategically deceive only the Israelis, but also some of those close to him" (Ahmed Mansour's YouTube channel, March 12, 2025)

⁴⁴ Amos Harel, 06:29 – *The October 7 Massacre: The Failures, Those Responsible, and the Consequences*, Kinneret Zmora-Bitan, 2026. [Hebrew only].

⁴⁵ See the April 2025 Amit Institute report, [Operation Guardian of the Walls as a watershed moment in Hamas' strategy for the "destruction of Israel," as reflected in documents found by the IDF in the Gaza Strip](#) and the March 2025 report, [Hamas' strategy to destroy Israel: from theory into practice, as seen in captured documents](#)

⁴⁶ *In the War Room: The Behind-the-Scenes Story of Israel's Struggle Against Hamas and the Iranian Axis*, by Yonah Jeremy Bob and Elliot Kaufman, Wicked Son, 2026.

► Confirmation of Naim's remarks appeared in the minutes of a Hamas political bureau meeting in the Gaza Strip on October 2, 2023, the last before the October 7 attack and massacre. The attendance list recorded that seven of the 22 bureau members were absent from the meeting, including Khalil al-Hayya, Bassem Na'im and Kamal Abu Aoun, who was secretary-general of the political bureau, with the notation "travel excuse" written next to their names.

أمانة سر المكتب السياسي
إقليم غزة

محضر اجتماع المكتب السياسي

رقم الجلسة: 51 الساعة: 01:00 م التاريخ: 2023/10/02 اليوم: الاثنين

الحضور:

م	الاسم	حاضر	مغتنر	ملاحظات	م	الاسم	حاضر	مغتنر	ملاحظات
1	بجبي السوار	✓			12	سهيل الهادي		✓	عذر السفر
2	خليل الحية		✓		13	مصام الدخيس		✓	
3	كمال أبو عون		✓		14	علي الماوي		✓	
4	روحي مشهي	✓			15	غازي حمد		✓	عذر السفر
5	إسماعيل برفوم	✓			16	فهمي حماد		✓	عذر السفر
6	باسم نعيم		✓		17	محمود الزهار		✓	
7	جميلة الشطي	✓			18	مروان عيسى		✓	
8	جود أبو شمالة	✓			19	أسامة المزيني		✓	
9	ركزي أبو ممر		✓		20	نزار عوض الله		✓	عذر السفر
10	سامح السراج	✓			21	صلاح الزويد		✓	
11	سامي عودة		✓		22	فاطمة شراب		✓	

جدول الأعمال:

1	متابعة المحضر السابق	5	إجراءات التخفيف عن الناس
2	الملف السياسي	6	الانتخابات البلدية والطلابية
3	الملف الأمني	7	الجولة الخارجية للكتلة البرلمانية
4	الملف الحكومي		

ملاحظات الاجتماع: فتح الاجتماع بقرأة آيات من القرآن الكريم تلاها الأخ/ أبو خالد ثم الدعاء، ومن ثم قام الأخ/ أبو إبراهيم بالدعاء والتعجب بالهزيمة والأزمات الشديدين، سألوا المولى عز وجل التوفيق والسداد.

16/1

دورة عهد القدس
2025-2021

Document 6: Attendance list from the minutes of the Hamas political bureau meeting, October 2, 2023

► However, the deception plan was not confined to Hamas. Although the military exercises were conducted within the framework of the Joint Operations Room, which also included the military wings of the other terrorist organizations operating in the Strip, Hamas' leadership apparently did not share the details of the plan with them or the exact date of the invasion. A document handwritten by al-Sinwar from August 2022, which had precise instructions for the first stages of the campaign related to that. Al-Sinwar said Hamas units would lead the breach into Israeli territory in the first and second waves, while the Palestinian organizations were supposed to join in the following waves. He said contact with the commanders of the military

wings of the other organizations should begin about fifteen minutes after the start of the raid, after which they would concentrate their forces in preparation for joining the fighting.⁴⁷

6. Forces of the other organizations – Fifteen minutes after the beginning of the first attack, contact should be made at the level of the entire Strip with the commanders of the military wings of the other Palestinian organizations, and then each brigade commander should summon the commanders of the basic forces of the most important wings and ask them to concentrate all their forces as quickly as possible in order to integrate them into the operational plan in an orderly manner, so that their forces can be incorporated into the third and fourth waves.

قوات بعضنا الأخرى .. بعد ربع ساعة من بدء الهجوم الأول يجب أن نطلب
 مركزاً مع قيادات الأجنحة العسكرية ، ومن ثم كل قائد لواء يجب أن يسيّر
 قادة التشكيلات الأساسية للأجنحة إليهم ، ويطلب منهم حشد قواتهم في
 أسرع وقت لمجتمع في خطة العملية بشكل مرتب ونهجي ، حسب الكوادر
 من المحلة وجميع قواتهم في الجبهات الثالثة والرابعة ..

Document 4: Al-Sinwar's handwritten letter of instructions, August 24, 2022

► Izz al-Din al-Haddad, who served as commander of the Gaza Brigade at the time of the attack, also said in an episode of the Al Jazeera investigative program More Than Meets the Eye, which dealt with the Hamas attack from the perspective of the movement's military wing, Hamas updated its partners in the "resistance axis" regarding the general intention of the

⁴⁷ See the October 2025 Amit Institute report, [Instructions Given by Yahya al-Sinwar for the October 7, 2023 Attack and Massacre](#)

planned attack, but kept zero hour completely secret to ensure success, with only a few people knowing it.⁴⁸

► According to a letter sent by Muhammad Deif, Yahya al-Sinwar and Marwan Issa to Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah⁴⁹ immediately after the attack began on the morning of October 7, 2023, they explained that they had been forced to conceal the timing from him lest Israeli intelligence uncovered it. According to the three senior Hamas figures, such a level of concealment was required even within the command and leadership ranks, especially those abroad and most of those inside, and it was necessary to restrict the transmission of the operational order until the final minutes, lest "the enemy" discover their intentions and initiate a counterattack with "a crushing blow, and you know its capabilities." They added, "We are certain that you, as we know you, will forgive us for not sharing the secret with you" (*Maariv*, May 15, 2026).⁵⁰

The Success of the Deception and How It Influenced Israel

► Hamas' plan for a raid into Israeli territory, which became known as the Jericho Wall plan, reached Israeli intelligence on several occasions beginning in 2018. However, it was not interpreted correctly, as the prevailing assessment was that it was a "vision" not feasible given Hamas' capabilities (Ynet, February 11, 2026; Doron Kadosh Telegram channel, May 24–28, 2026). It is also possible that some information was received regarding a "big plan" for a multi-front attack, but it remains unclear whether Hamas' central role in leading the plan was identified. Intelligence attention was directed more toward Iran and Hezbollah, which were perceived as more tangible threats, as well as toward the possibility of escalation in Judea and Samaria⁵¹ (testimony of Giora Eiland on the Civil Commission of Inquiry into the October 7 Disaster YouTube channel, August 15, 2025; interview with the late former head of the Research Division, Amit Saar, on the program Yihiyeh Tov on Kan 11, January 12, 2025).

► Statements by senior figures in Israel's political and security establishment during Hamas' preparations for the October 7, 2023 attack and massacre, together with investigations

⁴⁸ See the February 2025 Amit Institute report, [Al-Jazeera Program about the October 7, 2023, Terrorist Attack and Massacre](#)

⁴⁹ Eliminated in September 2024.

⁵⁰ The letter is not in Amit Institute possession.

⁵¹ See the June 2023 Amit Institute report, [Palestinian Activity in Jenin in Reaction to the IDF Presence in Judea and Samaria](#)

conducted by the Israeli security establishment after the attack, showed how the deception plan influenced Israeli perceptions of Hamas' condition and developments in the Gaza Strip:

- ◆ One of the central assumptions in Israel was that Hamas had been deterred, particularly following Operation Guardian of the Walls in May 2021. Israel's political and security leadership presented the operation as a major success which had significantly damaged Hamas' military capabilities, especially its tunnel network and rocket capabilities. Even two years later, Prime Minister Netanyahu continued to argue that the operation had altered the balance of deterrence with Hamas and had set the movement back by a decade. In contrast, Hamas documents brought back by the IDF during war in the Gaza Strip showed that senior Hamas figures regarded the campaign as a strategic victory which had humiliated Israel and given them confidence in their ability to advance the vision of the destruction of Israel.⁵²

- ◆ The core IDF investigations, which examined the performance of the Intelligence Directorate (AMAN), found that intelligence had failed to identify that Operation Guardian of the Walls had created within Hamas a sense of capability regarding confrontation with Israel and instead assumed that Hamas remained deterred. Intelligence also interpreted Hamas' avoidance of joining rounds of fighting between Israel and the PIJ as evidence that Hamas was deterred and more interested in "arrangements," failing to recognize it as deception. The investigations stated, "The surprise was complete, situational and fundamental, in the face of a strategic deception plan that lasted for years, an operational deception plan regarding the executed operation and a tactical deception plan during the night preceding the invasion" (Israeli media, February 27, 2025).

- ◆ The investigation conducted by the Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet) into events preceding the October 7, 2023 attack and massacre claimed that the agency had identified Hamas as not deterred and there was an understanding of the threat. However, the investigation acknowledged a gap in examining whether Hamas' actions constituted deception and stated that no competing hypothesis had been developed against the prevailing assessment that Hamas' leadership in the Gaza Strip was focused

⁵² See the April 2025 Amit Institute report, [Operation Guardian of the Walls as a watershed moment in Hamas' strategy for the "destruction of Israel," as reflected in documents found by the IDF in the Gaza Strip](#)

on igniting Judea and Samaria. The report further stated that the possibility that Hamas was conducting deception operations, tactical or strategic, had not been discussed sufficiently or presented as a realistic possibility, due to the absence of an effective review mechanism (Shin Bet Spokesperson, March 4, 2025).

◆ The pro-Hamas Palestinian columnist Fadi Ramadan argued that one of the objectives of Hamas' deception plan was to create the impression that any attack by the military wing against Israeli territory would be carried out through cross-border tunnels, thereby causing the IDF to focus on the underground threat. However, on October 7, 2023, Hamas achieved surprise by invading above ground and through what he called "airborne insertion" (Shehab Agency, October 7, 2023). It should be noted that the construction of the Gaza border barrier reinforced the Israeli conception regarding Hamas' ability to carry out a large-scale invasion of Israeli territory. The barrier, which cost 3.5 billion shekels (about \$1.25 billion) and was inaugurated in December 2021, included an underground wall and a physical fence alongside advanced technological detection systems, creating the perception that Hamas would be unable to use cross-border tunnels or breach the border without early detection by IDF systems. In practice, during the first minutes of the October 7, 2023 invasion, Hamas disabled detection systems in the border area and bypassed the fence using powered paragliders and motorized gliders (*Globes*, October 8, 2023; Walla, October 12, 2023; Israeli news channel N12, October 19, 2025).

◆ The riots near the border fence in August–September 2023 were likewise not perceived as part of a deception plan but rather as a Hamas pressure tactic intended to secure economic concessions from Israel to ease the internal situation in the Gaza Strip. According to reports, in an effort to end the tensions and prevent further escalation, the directive from Israel's political leadership was to work with Qatar to continue transferring funds to the Strip and even increase the amount designated for fuel purchases to be transferred to Hamas, ostensibly for operating fuel facilities in the Strip and paying salaries (Ynet, January 2, 2026; Channel 13 News, February 10, 2026; The Times of Israel, March 6, 2025). It was also reported that the IDF Southern Command established "red teams" simulating the role of the enemy in an effort to determine whether the disturbances near the fence were merely another round of Gaza border protests rather than preparations for military action by Hamas as outlined in the Jericho

Wall plan. However, the teams concluded that Hamas remained deterred and interested in arrangements and that Yahya al-Sinwar was "pursuing a pragmatic approach" (Ynet, February 11, 2026).