

Elimination of Izz al-Din al-Haddad, Head of Hamas' Military Wing: Reactions and Significance

May 17, 2026

Overview¹

- ▶ On May 15, 2026, the Israeli security forces eliminated Izz al-Din al-Haddad in a strike on an apartment in Gaza City. He was head of Hamas' military wing and one of the planners of the October 7, 2023 terrorist attack and massacre, and led Hamas' reconstruction after the ceasefire,
- ▶ Hamas confirmed al-Haddad's death, called him a "great commander" who had been involved in jihad for decades, culminating in the invasion of Israeli territory and the ensuing atrocities. Statements by the movement and its senior figures accused Israel of an assassination and a violation of the ceasefire agreement, claiming that the objective was to exert pressure on Hamas.
- ▶ Al-Haddad, who joined Hamas at the age of 17 with the establishment of the movement, rose through the ranks of the military wing and held a series of command positions. He was appointed commander of the Gaza Brigade in 2021 and commander of the military wing after the elimination of Muhammad al-Sinwar in May 2025. He was called the "ghost of al-Qassam" because he rarely appeared in public after surviving Israeli assassination attempts.
- ▶ He played a significant role in preparing for the October 7 attack and massacre. In an order given before the beginning of the attack, discovered by IDF forces in the Gaza Strip, he said the primary objective was to take a large number of soldiers captive in the first moments and send them into the Gaza Strip. During the war, he kept Israeli hostages around himself as human shields.
- ▶ Reportedly, the Hamas military wing was preparing to appoint a successor, although establishing a leadership council instead of a single commander was being considered.

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

► Hezbollah and other "resistance axis"² organizations issued death notices for al-Haddad's death and said they supported Hamas and the "Palestinian resistance."

► **In Amit Institute assessment, the elimination of al-Haddad is a blow to Hamas' reconstruction efforts, its continued military buildup and the tightening of its governance in areas under its control in the Gaza Strip after the ceasefire, despite demands that it relinquishes power and disarm. Al-Haddad was one of the last military commanders of Hamas' first generation, and his elimination will require the military wing to adapt itself to younger commanders who will have to make critical decisions regarding the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades' future.**

Formal Announcement of al-Haddad's Death

► On the evening of May 15, 2026 an apartment in the al-Mutaz Building in the al-Rimal neighborhood of Gaza City and a vehicle driving away were attacked. Emergency services reported at least seven dead and several wounded (Shehab Agency, May 15, 2026). Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Minister of Defense Israel Katz confirmed shortly afterward that the strike had targeted Izz al-Din al-Haddad, head of Hamas' military wing and one of the architects of the October 7, 2023 terrorist attack and massacre (Israeli media, May 15, 2026).

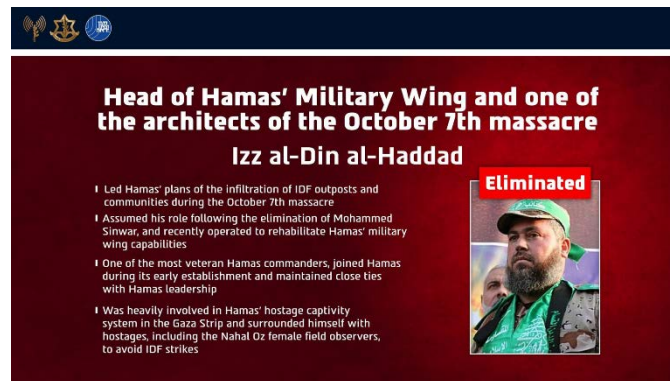
► The following morning, Hamas confirmed al-Haddad's death, reporting that family members and associates had identified his body (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, May 16, 2026). Mosques throughout Gaza announced death as well (Reuters, May 16, 2026). A funeral was held for him, his wife and daughter, and attended by hundreds of Gazans who chanted slogans for Hamas and against Israel and the Jews. One speaker described al-Haddad as a "great leader " and said, "Even if they crush our skulls, tear the ribs from our chests and rip out our hearts, we will never give up our weapons" (Al Jazeera Palestine Facebook page, May 16, 2026). No armed operatives or uniformed members of the Hamas military wing attended the funeral.

² Iran, Hezbollah, the Palestinian terrorist organizations, the Houthis in Yemen and the Shi'ite militias in Iraq.



Al-Haddad's funeral (Quds Agency, May 16, 2026)

► According to the Israeli announcement, al-Haddad had been one of Hamas' most experienced commanders, joining its ranks with the establishment of the movement and extremely close to the Hamas leadership. He held a series of key positions in Hamas, including commander of the Gaza City Brigade and of other units. He was appointed to head the military wing after the elimination of Muhammad al-Sinwar in May 2025, and in recent months had worked to rebuild its military capabilities and to plan terrorist attacks on civilians of the State of Israel and IDF forces.³ Throughout the war, he had held Israeli hostages, managing the mechanism for their captivity and surrounding himself with them to prevent Israel from attacking him (IDF and Israeli Security Agency spokespersons, May 16, 2026).



Al-Haddad's "ID card" (IDF spokesperson, May 16, 2026)

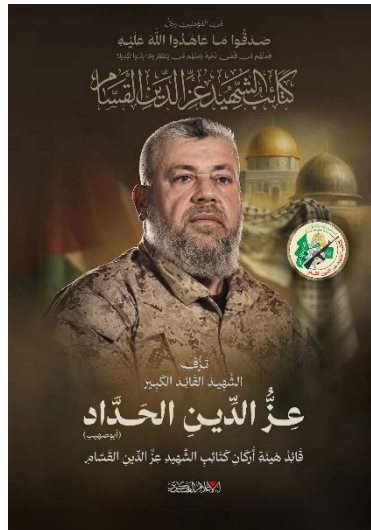
► Several hours after the funeral, Hamas officially confirmed the death of "the great commander, the shaheed jihad fighter," Izz al-Din al-Haddad, aka Abu Shuaib al-Suhaib, "commander general" of the al-Qassam Brigades. According to the statement, he was killed in an Israeli attack in which his wife, Umm Suhaib, his daughter Nour and several "innocent civilians" were also killed. Hama added that he had completed a long journey of jihad, sacrifice, preparation and confrontation with the "occupation" during which he remained steadfast in

³ See the February 2026 Amit Institute report, [Hamas Deploys to Recover and Retain Its Military Strength and Influence over the Gaza Strip](#)

the arenas of "resistance,"⁴ confrontation with the "occupation" and defense of his people and their land until his final moments. Hamas called him "an exceptional model of a steadfast jihad commander," "a beacon for jihad fighters and a barrier against attempts to erase the Palestinian issue and break the will of our people." Hamas claimed that al-Haddad's elimination confirmed the "occupation's" disregard for international law and its failure to impose a political-military reality by force. Hamas called on the international community, especially the mediators and guarantor countries of the ceasefire agreement, to assume responsibility and compel Israel to bear responsibility, and called on the Palestinian people to strengthen their unity and foil the occupation's plots to undermine the "resistance" (Hamas Telegram channel, May 16, 2026).

► Hamas' military wing also announced the death of the "great commander," Izz al-Din al-Haddad (Abu Suhaib), chief of staff of the al-Qassam Brigades, assassinated by an enemy that "respects neither agreements nor conventions." According to the announcement, he was killed together with his wife and daughter and several other "heroic people," and he and his wife had joined two of their sons, Suhaib and Mu'min, who were killed during the war, adding that the "lion" would rest after decades of jihad, resistance and pursuit of the enemies that culminated in his prominent role in the "glorious crossing" [the invasion of Israel and its attendant atrocities] on October 7, and his leadership in "battle to defend Gaza." Hamas also stated that after he received command of the military wing, he successfully led the battle and recorded "significant achievements" that culminated in the release of hundreds of prisoners from the prisons of the occupation. The al-Qassam Brigades added that although the "shaheed train" had not stopped for half a century, the enemy had achieved nothing. Hamas called his elimination the best proof of the enemy's character and promised that new commanders would inherit his command and the march would continue until the "liberation of the land and the people and the purification of al-Aqsa" (Telegram channel of the al-Qassam Brigades, May 16, 2026).

⁴ Terrorism.



**Death notice issued by the military wing
(Telegram channel of the al-Qassam Brigades, May 16, 2026)**

- ▶ Hamas spokesperson Hazem Qassem stated that Izz al-Din al-Haddad had "joined the ranks of the great figures in the history of the contemporary Palestinian revolution." He added that they had lost a "great man, but the column continues marching onward and will soon establish its camp in the courtyard of al-Aqsa Mosque" (Shehab Agency, May 16, 2026). He later said the elimination violated the ceasefire agreement and shifted responsibility to Nikolay Mladenov, representative of the Board of Peace, and called on the mediating and guarantor countries of the agreement to "compel" Israel to implement the terms of the agreement, warning that the Israeli actions endangered Arab security (Al Jazeera Mubasher, May 16, 2026).
- ▶ Hamas representative in Lebanon Osama Hamdan said one of the objectives of eliminating al-Haddad had been to exert pressure on Hamas, adding that "the enemy" wanted the resistance to surrender and was not interested in the American plan. He claimed contacts were taking place with the mediating countries regarding al-Haddad's elimination and claimed the "enemy" had violated the ceasefire agreement. He warned that if the enemy increased its "aggression," there would be a Palestinian response and a "greater regional response" region (Al Jazeera Mubasher, May 16, 2026).
- ▶ According to Hamas-affiliated media outlets, Izz al-Din al-Haddad was born in the al-Tuffah neighborhood of Gaza City in 1970. He joined the Hamas movement with its establishment in 1987 and integrated into the Majd forces, which dealt with pursuing collaborators. He subsequently rose through the ranks of the military wing from command over squads to battalion commander, until he received command of the Gaza Brigade after the elimination of the previous commander, Bassem Issa, in 2021, and had survived assassination attempts in

2009, 2012 and 2021 (Quds Agency, May 16, 2026). Hamas' *al-Risalah* called al-Haddad a "mysterious leader" who was nicknamed the "ghost of al-Qassam" because he almost never appeared in public and survived assassination attempts. Reportedly, he spent 39 years of "struggle and perseverance" in the ranks of the military wing, and was a prominent member of its military council. He had effectively become the only commander remaining from Hamas' initial military establishment and carried the "legacy" of many years of confrontation, clandestine operations and organizational work (*al-Risalah*, May 16, 2026).



Right: Al-Haddad with his predecessors in command of the military wing, Muhammad al-Deif (center) and Muhammad al-Sinwar. Left: Al-Haddad with former Hamas leader Isma'il Haniyeh (al-Siyad Telegram channel, May 16, 2026)

► A source said the movement was taking steps to appoint a new head to the military wing following the elimination of Izz al-Din al-Haddad. He noted that the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades was an organized military framework which did not collapse when its leaders were eliminated, and the selection of the new commander was advancing according to the internal mechanisms. According to him, the headquarters of the al-Qassam Brigades was also examining the possibility of establishing a leadership council instead of appointing a single commander (al-Sharq, May 16, 2026).

Al-Haddad and the October 7, 2023 Attack

► Al-Haddad was one of the central planners and perpetrators of the October 7, 2023 terrorist attack and massacre. Among the Hamas documents discovered by IDF forces in the Gaza Strip

was Operations Order No. 1, distributed by al-Haddad to commanders in the Gaza Brigade on October 6, 2023, before the beginning of the invasion of Israeli territory.

Out of faith in the promise of the second time and in Allah's crushing victory for His mujahideen servants, the leadership of the military apparatus,

The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades

approved the beginning of the major military Operation al-Aqsa Flood. Therefore, it is required to act according to the following instructions:

- * Place your faith and trust in Allah, rely on him and fight bravely, act with a clear conscience and let the cries of Allahu Akbar be the crowning glory.
- * Ensure that the security situation is under control at the level of company commanders and above.
- * Ensure that no operative leaves the assembly location.
- * Ensure that under no circumstances will cellular telephones be used.
- * The forces will receive explanations in the final two hours according to the timetable.
- * The battalion assemblies must be held underground.
- * Brother Abu Jamal Hamadiya [an intelligence officer in the Gaza Brigade] must notify the released prisoners in the West Bank to move to emergency locations at zero hour.
- * Prepare targets for the resistance factions¹ and transfer them through those responsible for coordination between the "factions."
- * After the loud [raid], prepare 10 fighting platoons to exploit [the operational achievement].
- * Ensure that there will be a live broadcast of the assault and takeover of the outposts and the kibbutzim. The brigade's information office has authorization to upload the documentation.
- * You may take flags of Arab and Islamic countries with you to raise them at the posts and the kibbutzim.
- * The primary objective of the military operation is to take a large number of soldiers captive in the first moments and send them into the Gaza Strip.

Remember the words of Allah the Exalted,

"If you support Allah, He will support you and make your feet steadfast."

Your brother, the jihad fighter,

Abu Suhaib al-Haddad,

Commander of the Gaza Brigade



The document brought back from the Gaza Strip: al-Haddad's order before the invasion of Israeli territory, October 6, 2023

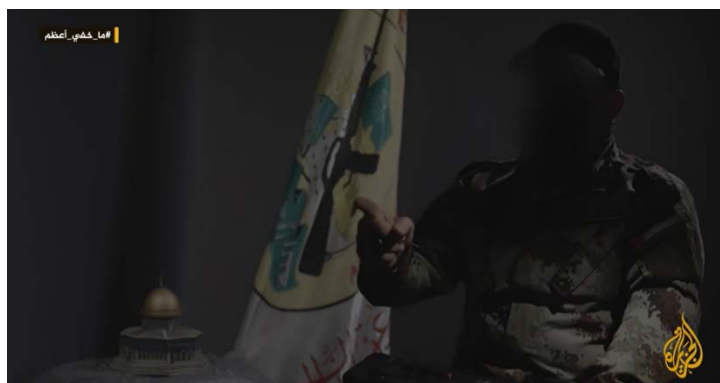
► On January 24, 2025, al-Haddad was interviewed for an episode of the investigative program More Than Meets the Eye on Al Jazeera TV, which focused on the Hamas terrorist attack and massacre from the perspective of the military wing, from the preparation stage to the actual execution. Al-Haddad, whose face was obscured, said that Hamas had updated its partners in the "resistance axis" regarding the general intention of the planned attack, but kept the exact timing completely secret and only a very limited number of individuals knew about it in order

to ensure its success. He said that beginning on October 1, 2023, Hamas' military headquarters held consecutive emergency meetings to approve the final plans and determine the timetable. He also said that in the 24 hours before the attack, the command centers were linked to the main command room, the attack forces were prepared and the weapons were on high alert until zero hour. Al-Haddad also explained why Hamas carried out the attack and had chosen October 7:

- ◆ **Israel's policy toward Palestinian prisoners:** He accused Israel of employing harsh measures toward Palestinian prisoners after they had been transferred to the responsibility of Minister Itamar Ben Gvir. He alleged [falsely] that Israel starved prisoners, neglected their medical conditions and that prison conditions were extreme.
- ◆ **Attacks on Islamic holy sites:** He alleged that all attempts to apply international pressure to halt Israel's attacks on Jerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque had failed, and the "occupation" continued to "attack, beat and abuse" without deterrence. Muhammad al-Deif was heard claiming during the preparations, "The Jews want to establish a Temple on the ruins of al-Aqsa. They carried out Jewish rituals on the Mount and declared the destruction of al-Aqsa and the establishment of a Temple, while cursing the Prophet inside the Mosque compound."
- ◆ **The siege of Gaza:** He accused the occupation of deliberately intensifying the siege to lead the Palestinians to a "slow death." He said, "We could not remain idle or watch from the sidelines."
- ◆ **Fear of a surprise Israeli strike:** He alleged they had identified "signs and had information" indicating that Israel was preparing to launch a destructive war in the Gaza Strip immediately after the High Holidays through an aerial attack against all the "resistance factions"⁵ followed by a broad, destructive ground invasion. He claimed Operation al-Aqsa Flood was a "preemptive blow to foil the enemy's systematic plan and strike it with an inconceivable surprise blow in defense of our holy places, our people and our resistance."
- ◆ **The economic situation in the Gaza Strip and in Judea and Samaria:** He said they had warned that the difficult economic situation could not continue, however the occupation tried to deceive and neutralize the resistance in the Gaza Strip through limited improvements in living conditions and partial concessions, with the aim of

⁵ Terrorist organizations.

separating the condition of Gaza residents from the struggle in Judea and Samaria and Jerusalem and the prisoners' struggle.



Al-Haddad interviewed for the program (Al Jazeera, January 24, 2025)

Other Reactions to al-Haddad's Death

► Death notices for al-Haddad were issued by other Palestinian and "resistance" terrorist organizations:

- ◆ Hezbollah condemned the "crime" that led to his death. It claimed the attack violated the ceasefire, exposed the enemy's lack of respect and violated all the conventions and agreements it had committed to. Hezbollah said it mourned the death of the "shaheed" al-Haddad and was proud of the sacrifices he made. It added that al-Haddad's death was another medal on Hamas' chest, "which proves every time that it is steadfast on the path of jihad and resistance, and that the elimination of commanders does not weaken it. Hezbollah concluded that Hamas' sacrifices would bring "glory, victory and honor" (Telegram channel of Hezbollah's military information wing, May 16, 2026).
- ◆ The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) offered its condolences to al-Haddad's family, Hamas and the al-Qassam Brigades. It said Abu Suhaib al-Haddad had played a key role in managing combat arenas, especially during Operation al-Aqsa Flood, and had contributed to strengthening the joint national military action for years. The PFLP stressed that the policy of eliminations would not guarantee an "image of victory" for the "occupation" or break the will of the resistance and the Palestinian people, and that the deaths of commanders and fighters would only strengthen the determination of the "resistance" (Quds Agency, May 16, 2026).
- ◆ Houthi leader Abdel-Malek al-Houthi sent a letter of condolence to the Hamas military wing, calling al-Haddad's death "part of a series of ongoing Zionist crimes against the residents of Gaza and the West Bank and the "desecration" of al-Aqsa Mosque." He

added that the sacrifices made by the al-Qassam Brigades and the other "resistance" organizations and the "resistance axis" operatives would only increase their strength and determination, and said the Houthis' support for the Gazans and "other oppressed Palestinian people," as well as for the peoples in Lebanon, Iran and the rest of the Islamic nation" (al-Masirah, May 17, 2026).

◆The political bureau of the Houthis conveyed its condolences to Hamas, to all "factions of the Palestinian resistance," to the Palestinian people and to the entire Islamic nation over the death of the "great resistance leader." The statement said that al-Haddad served as an example of a "steadfast jihad leader, a man of the Islamic nation who carried the banner of jihad and confrontation with unwavering faith and determination." The Houthis claimed the "renewed aggression against Gaza and resistance leaders once again exposed the true nature of the Zionist enemy, the greatest enemy of the [Muslim] nation." They called on Arabs and Muslims not to rely on American guarantees because the real Zionist and American project was to "steal the sources of the nation's strength and eliminate the forces of jihad and resistance," paving the way for imposing "Greater Israel." The Houthis declared that the eliminations would only increase the determination to continue on the path of jihad and "resistance"⁶ (al-Masirah, May 16, 2026)

⁶ Terrorist,