Al Jazeera's *What Is Hidden Is Greater's* Episode about Muhammad Deif and Planning the October 7, 2023 Terrorist Invasion and Massacre

November 1, 2026

Overview[1]

► On October 30, 2026, an episode of the Al Jazeera investigative program *What Is Hidden Is Greater* was devoted to the former head of Hamas' military wing, Muhammad Deif, who was eliminated in an Israeli strike in Khan Younes in July 2024.

► The program presented the story of Muhammad Deif's life through rare video clips featuring him and other senior Hamas terrorists, most of whom were eliminated during the war in the Gaza Strip, with interviews with senior military wing operatives who accompanied him and participated in terrorist activity against Israel. On interviewee was Abu Obeida, the current commander of the Gaza Brigade of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, whose face and identify were hidden.

► The investigation revealed Muhammad Deif's key role in the preparations for the October 7, 2023 invasion and massacre, including minutes of meetings of Hamas' restricted military council. A document from February 2023 claimed Hamas was prepared to cancel the attack, which was called Project Fahd (and later al-Aqsa Flood), if Israel stopped its "attacks" on al-Aqsa Mosque and prisoners in Israeli jails. Another document, dated October 5, 2023, stated they had decided to launch the attack because "the brutality at al-Aqsa had reached an unacceptable level," and determined it would begin at 6:30 a.m. on October 7, 2023.

► In Amit Institute assessment, the objective of the investigation was to establish Muhammad Deif's status as the most influential figure in shaping Hamas' military wing and as the architect of the attack on Israel. The program also alleged that contrary to assessments in Israel, Muhammad Deif functioned fully even after he had been seriously wounded and had lost an eye in an Israeli attempt to eliminate him. The motive for focusing on Muhammad Deif may have been concern within Hamas' military wing that since the attack the narrative had emphasized the role of Yahya al-Sinwar, head of the

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

Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip, as the person who orchestrated the invasion and massacre, while Muhammad Deif was pushed to the sidelines.

► The program also promoted the narrative that the policy of the Israeli government which came to power at the end of 2022, regarding al-Aqsa Mosque and the Palestinian prisoners, led to the preparations for the invasion and the decision to carry it out. However, other Hamas documents, also published by the Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, showed that practical preparations for the hostilities against Israel had already gained momentum after Operation Guardian of the Walls in May 2021, and the talks with Saudi Arabia about the normalization of relations with Israel and religious motives were also key in Hamas' decision to attack Israel.

► Al Jazeera provided evidence of the deep connection and reciprocal relations between the television network, which belongs to Qatar, and Hamas, particularly the way the military wing uses Al Jazeera to promote its narratives. The episode followed previous broadcasts of *Greater than Meets the Eye*, which revealed secret documents and video of the military wing's activity before the October 7, 2023 invasion and massacre and during the war. Documents from the Gaza Strip also revealed ties between Hamas' military wing and the program's presenter, Tamer al-Misshal.[2]

Issued Dealt with on the Program

► On October 30, 2026, Al Jazeera TV broadcast an episode of its investigative program *What Is Hidden Is Greater* about Muhammad Deif (aka Abu Khaled), the head of Hamas' military wing and one of the architects of the October 7, 2023 invasion and massacre (al-Aqsa Flood), who was eliminated in an Israeli strike in July 2024.



[2] See the ITIC October 2025 report, **Documentary Evidence of Hamas-Al Jazeera Relations and Cooperation**, and the February 2025 report, **Al-Jazeera Program about the October 7, 2023, Terrorist Attack and Massacre**.

Muhammad Deif, *What Is Hidden Is Greater*[3]

► The episode was divided in two. The first part presented Muhammad Deif's "jihad journey," based on videos of him and other Hamas terrorists. One of them was Abu Obeida, the current commander of the Gaza Brigade of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the Hamas military wing, who was interviewed with his face shadowed and his real name not given. The second part revealed the final preparations by Hamas' military leadership for the attack on Israel. The program followed previous episodes, including an investigation into the attack from June 2025.

► The program showed videos and photographs of Muhammad Deif and of meetings of the restricted military council in the Gaza Strip, documents whose objective was to reinforce the assertion that Hamas had invaded Israel because of Israel's actions at al-Aqsa Mosque and its alleged maltreatment of the Palestinian prisoners, and a change in the Israeli position would ostensibly have prevented the large-scale invasion and massacre with its attendant atrocities on October 7, 2023.

Profile of Muhammad Deif as Presented by Al Jazeera

► Tamer al-Misshal began by describing Muhammad Deif as a man who had lived in the shadows and for years had evaded the Israeli security services. "For many years, the name Muhammad Deif stirred controversy. Conflicting speculation and conjecture pursued him and increased the mystery surrounding his path and his true fate. The Hebrew and international press gave him various nicknames, including 'the man of the shadows' and 'Gaza's number one wanted man.'"

► The current commander of the Gaza Brigade, Abu Obeida, described Muhammad Deif's clandestine activity by saying, "Abu Khaled led the momentum of al-Qassam operations, but at the same time lived a life of patience and prolonged secrecy, maintaining silence and discretion and working diligently to develop weapons and build up the force."

[3] All the pictures were taken from the program.



Commander of the Gaza Brigade, Abu Obeida

► Al-Misshal said that according to Israel, Muhammad Deif was paralyzed, had lost limbs and was unable to walk, but in fact he "stood on his own two feet until the final moments of his life and personally supervised the al-Qassam headquarters." Video was shown of Muhammad Deif in the military wing's operations room during preparations for the October 7, 2023 terrorist invasion, with the former spokesman, Abu Obeida (eliminated in August 2025), Muhammad Odeh (head of military intelligence and head of the military wing, eliminated in May 2026) and Rafa Salama (commander of the Khan Younes Brigade, eliminated with Muhammad Deif in July 2024). In other video, Muhammad Deif was seen limping through tunnels in the Gaza Strip or walking around a garden in daylight.



Right: Muhammad Deif in a tunnel. Left: Muhammad Deif during preparations for the October 7, 2023 invasion and massacre with Odeh (right) and Salama

► Most of the program was based on Muhammad Deif's personal story, as he told it in videos revealed for the first time:

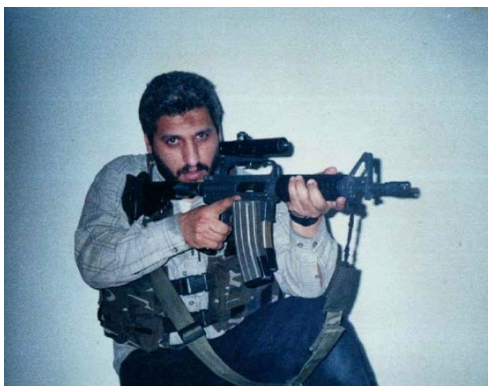
- Muhammad Deif said he was born in Khan Younes in 1965, to a family of refugees from the town of Kawkaba, east of Majdal (today Ashkelon). He graduated from high school with a grade average of 79.8 and then studied biology. He said that during his university studies he was part of the *al-Ayedoon* (the Returnees), a group which also acted in theaters. He admitted that it was perhaps unusual that a person who became a military man could have

been an actor, but added that "a person remains a person, with his own opinions, thoughts and characteristics."



The young Muhammad Deif talks about his childhood

◆ After the outbreak of the first intifada in 1987, he received an offer to join the Palestinian Jihad Fighters group, which belonged to Hamas. Two years later, he was detained by Israel, but claimed he had never admitted to anything during interrogations or in the military court, although he had been pressured to. In prison he met Sheikh Salah Shehadeh, one of the Hamas founders and a key figure in the military wing, and with Zakaria al-Shurbaji, also a military wing commander, with whom he coordinated an operation to abduct a soldier. According to Muhammad Deif, in prison he began learning about weapons from illustrations and after his release began training with guns. His first weapon belonged to an Israeli soldier who was murdered in a terrorist attack led by Muhammad Deif in 1992. Together with Imad Aqel, one of the heads of the military wing, he led terrorist attacks against Israeli military forces in the Gaza Strip. He said he used to conceal his movements and did not remain permanently in any one place.



Muhammad Deif at the beginning of his career in the military wing

◆ In 1993 he moved from the Gaza Strip to Judea and Samaria with several other terrorist operatives and their weapons. Mahmoud Issa, a Hamas operative who was serving life sentences in Israel and was released in the hostage release deal in October 2025, said

Muhammad Deif had established himself in the Bethlehem area and maintained contact with cells from Hebron and east Jerusalem. While in Judea and Samaria, he also met Yahya Ayyash, "the engineer," for the first time. After several months, Muhammad Deif returned to the Gaza Strip, from where he commanded a terrorist attack in Jerusalem in October 1994, to "avenge" Baruch Goldstein's attack at the Cave of the Patriarchs at the end of February 1994.

- He also commanded the abduction of soldier Nachshon Wachsman in October 1994. Jihad Yaghmour, who was one of the abductors (deported to Turkey as part of the Gilad Shalit exchange deal), claimed that when they abducted Wachsman, they promised they would not kill him. He said he transferred the video documenting Wachsman and the soldier's documents to the Gaza Strip, which the masked Muhammad Deif later displayed in his first public appearance.
- In 1995, Yahya Ayyash moved to the Gaza Strip. Abd al-Nasser Issa, a close associate of Ayyash who accompanied him (released from an Israeli prison as part of the hostage deal in February 2025), said Ayyash and Muhammad Deif worked in military development together and for the first time manufactured a detonator from locally available components. After Ayyash was eliminated in January 1996, Muhammad Deif led a series of terrorist attacks inside Israel, the so-called Holy Revenge operations, to avenge his death.
- After Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin was released from an Israeli prison in 1997, following the failed attempt to assassinate Khaled Mashal in Jordan, Muhammad Deif and Muhammad al-Sinwar met with him secretly in the Gaza Strip. According to Muhammad Deif, Yassin was deeply involved in Hamas terrorist activity. He said, "He instructed us to increase the purchase of weapons, increase the number of people and the number of cells and organize different types of operations, not all of which would be similar. He said there should be cells specializing in abducting soldiers. He said the priorities of military activity were the priorities of the movement."
- Muhammad Deif said that after the outbreak of the second intifada (the al-Aqsa intifada) in 2000, he and Salah Shehadeh worked to reorganize the al-Qassam Brigades with a military council and different areas of activity. After Shehadeh was eliminated in 2002, Muhammad Deif assumed command of the military wing. The broadcast noted that under Muhammad Deif's leadership, Hamas began independently manufacturing weapons and

digging tunnels for attacks against "the occupation forces and settlers in Gaza." According to claims, the activities contributed to the pressure which led to Israel's withdrawal in 2005.



Right: Muhammad Deif talks about his activity; at the right is Shehadeh. Left: Senior Hamas terrorists at a site in the Gaza Strip evacuated by Israel in 2005

◆According to Abu Obeida, to the commander of the Gaza Brigade, Muhammad Deif instructed senior military wing operatives not to join the Palestinian government after Hamas won the Legislative Council elections in 2006. He said Muhammad Deif wanted to preserve "the movement's character as a liberation movement, while taking advantage of the new situation to create a supportive environment which would enable the 'resistance'[4] to grow stronger despite the difficulties."

◆Al-Misshal said that in 2012, Muhammad Deif gave the order for the first rockets to be fired at Tel Aviv following the killing of senior military wing figure Ahmed al-Jaabari, showing the development of the "resistance's" capabilities. Abu Obeida added that in 2013, Muhammad Deif instructed the establishment of *nukhba* units (elite forces) and the development of warfare using tunnels, as demonstrated in the Eaten Straw campaign (Operation Protective Edge) in the summer of 2014.

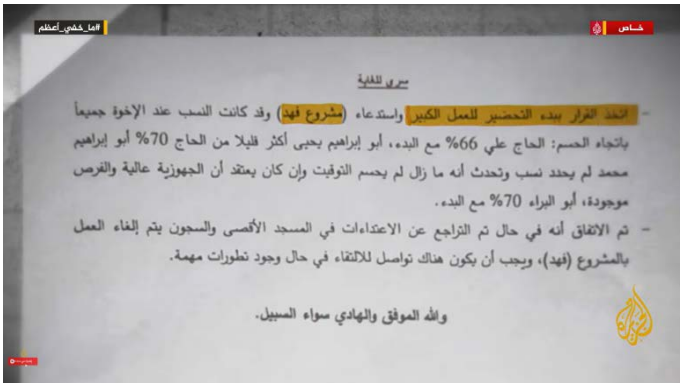
Preparations for the October 7, 2023 Terrorist Invasion and Massacre

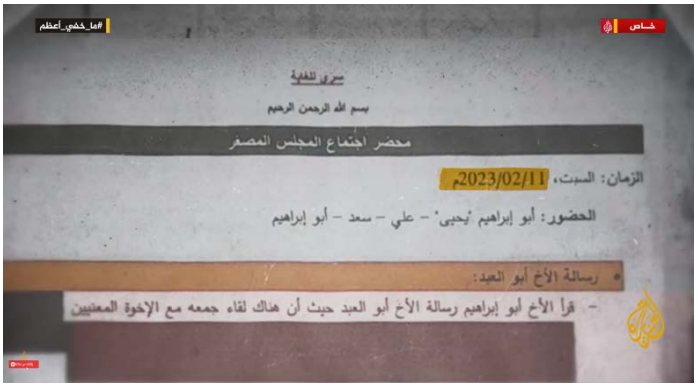
► According to the narrative promoted by Al Jazeera, the policies of the right-wing government in Israel formed in late 2022 accelerated the preparations for the attack on Israel. The commander of the Gaza Brigade, Abu Obeida, claimed that "After the Zionist elections, a Zionist right-wing government was formed. Hordes of settlers launched a chaotic and

[4] Terrorist organizations.

uncontrolled attack on Palestinian neighborhoods in the West Bank and Jerusalem and on al-Aqsa Mosque.'

► A document of the military wing disclosed in the program was from a meeting held on February 11, 2023. Present were Muhammad Deif (referred to as Ali), his deputy Marwan Issa (Saad), Hamas leader in the Gaza Strip, Yahya al-Sinwar (Abu Ibrahim Yahya, elected head of the Hamas political bureau in August 2024, eliminated in October 2024) and senior military operative figure Muhammad al-Sinwar (Abu Ibrahim). According to the minutes of the meeting, they discussed preparations for activating Project Fahd, reportedly the code name of the operation later named al-Aqsa Flood, because of an [alleged] unprecedented escalation of "attacks" on al-Aqsa Mosque and in the prisons under the right-wing government. All those present supported moving to implementation, although they differed in the degree of determination. Muhammad Deif gave 66% support for beginning the move, Yahya al-Sinwar stood at more than 70%, Muhammad al-Sinwar did not give an assessment of his own and noted that he had not decided on the timing, while Marwan Issa (Abu al-Baraa) gave 70% support for the move. The minutes further stated that if the attacks on al-Aqsa Mosque and in the prisons stopped, the project would be canceled.



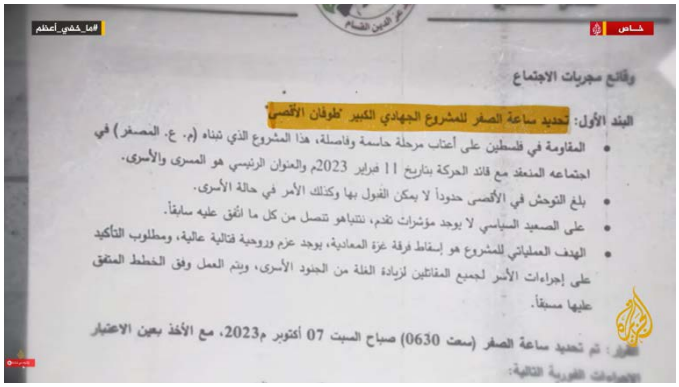


Right: Cover of the minutes with the participants and the date. Left: Reference to Project Fahd

► Abu Obeida said Muhammad Deif closely followed all the preparations, while strict security and compartmentalization were maintained. He claimed priority was given to the political track to prevent the "Zionist crimes," adding that the Hamas leadership was in contact with all the mediators, but Israel did not respond to the efforts.

► The program also revealed the minutes of the meeting of Muhammad Deif and the staff of the military wing leadership, which was held at noon on October 5, 2023, and lasted six hours. They decided to launch the hostilities on October 7, 2023, at 6:30 a.m., claiming the "brutality" at al-Aqsa and the treatment of the prisoners had reached an unacceptable level, and Netanyahu had reneged on everything which had previously been agreed to. The program showed video of Izz al-Din al-Haddad from October 6, 2023, about 17 hours before the beginning of the invasion, in which he announced Muhammad Deif's decision to launch the attack the following morning.





Right: Minutes of the meeting on October 5, 2023.
Left: Izz al-Din al-Haddad announces the decision to launch the attack

► Other Hamas documents from the Gaza Strip, which were examined by the Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, identified several factors which contributed to the Hamas leadership's decision to launch the attack, including the confidence of senior Hamas figures in their capabilities following Operation Guardian of the Walls, the progress of efforts to promote normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabia and the Hamas' religious worldview, which calls for jihad against Israel.[5]

What the Program Revealed

► Videos revealed the activity of the Hamas leadership, particularly the military wing under Muhammad Deif's leadership:

[5] See the March 2025 ITIC report, **Hamas' strategy to destroy Israel: from theory into practice, as seen in captured documents**, 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**, the June 2026 Amit Institute report **The Israel-Saudi Arabia Normalization: A motive for the October 7, 2023 terrorist attack and massacre reflected in documents from the Gaza Strip**, and the October 2026 report, **Hamas' Religious Ideology Reflected in the Planning and Execution of the Invasion and Massacre of October 7, 2023**.

◆ A meeting of the command headquarters of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades inside a tunnel in the Gaza Strip. Present were Muhammad Deif with his deputy Marwan Issa (eliminated in March 2024), Muhammad al-Sinwar (replaced Muhammad Deif as head of the military wing in July 2024, eliminated in May 2025), Izz al-Din al-Haddad (replaced al-Sinwar in May 2025, eliminated in May 2026), Muhammad Odeh (head of military intelligence, replaced al-Haddad as commander of the military wing in May 2026 and was eliminated two weeks later), Raed Saad (head of military production, eliminated in December 2025), Ayman Nofal (commander of the Central Gaza Strip Brigade, eliminated in October 2023), Ahmed al-Ghandour (commander of the Northern Gaza Strip Brigade), Rafa Salama (commander of the Khan Younes Brigade, eliminated with Muhammad Deif in July 2024), Hakem al-Issa (head of training, eliminated in June 2025), Ghazi Abu Tama'a (head of the combat support headquarters, eliminated in March 2024), Muhammad Shabana (commander of the Rafah Brigade, eliminated in May 2025), Raed Thabet (head of the manpower system, eliminated in March 2024) and Bassem Issa (commander of the Gaza Brigade, eliminated in Operation Guardian of the Walls in May 2021).





Right: Muhammad Deif is received by senior military wing figures at a meeting in a tunnel in the Gaza Strip. Left: Meeting of the military council. All those present were eliminated

◆ Muhammad Deif and Marwan Issa examine the list of terrorist operatives designated for release as part of the Gilad Shalit exchange deal in 2011.



Muhammad Deif and Issa with the lists

◆ A meeting held on an unknown date attended by Muhammad Deif and senior military wing figures with Hamas leaders Isma'il Haniyeh and Yahya al-Sinwar at one of the rocket production workshops in the Gaza Strip. Haniyeh is seen praising the role of the military wing commanders, while Muhammad Deif noted that progress had been made in development, "enabling greater precision capabilities."



Muhammad Deif with Haniyeh, Yahya al-Sinwar and Issa at the production facility

◆ Videos of Ayman Siyam, head of the military wing's rocket department (eliminated in November 2023), reading Muhammad Deif's order to launch rockets at Jerusalem at the beginning of Operation Sword of Jerusalem (Operation Guardian of the Walls) in May 2021.



Siyam gives the order to fire on May 10, 2021

- Video of Yahya al-Sinwar, with tears in his eyes, speaking by telephone with Muhammad Deif following the announcement of the ceasefire at the end of Operation Guardian of the Walls. In a short clip, al-Sinwar congratulates Muhammad Deif and prays Allah will protect him.



Al-Sinwar speaking with Muhammad Deif

- Video of Muhammad Deif, Marwan Issa, Muhammad al-Sinwar and Ayman Nofal examining a model of an Israeli tank during preparations for the October 7, 2023 invasion and massacre. In a different video, Muhammad Deif and other senior military wing figures examine the al-Yassin 105 anti-tank rocket.



Right: Senior military wing operatives examine the tank.
Left: Muhammad Deif and Issa examine the anti-tank rocket

◆ The commander of the Khan Younes Brigade of the military wing, Rafa Salama, during the October 7, 2023 attack.



Salama receives updates in the operations room during the October 7, 2023 invasion and massacre

◆ The only video of Muhammad Deif during the war in the Gaza Strip, seen speaking on the telephone and apparently directing operations against the Israeli forces.



Muhammad Deif during the war in the Gaza Strip