



Demonstrations in the Gaza Strip against Hamas

March 30, 2025

Overview¹

- ▶ On March 25, 2025, Gazans held spontaneous popular demonstrations in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip to protest the continuation of the war and Hamas rule. In the following two days, additional demonstrations took place in Beit Lahia and in other areas of the Gaza Strip. However, since March 28, 2025, no physical demonstrations have been recorded and the protest has continued mainly on social media. Each demonstration was attended by dozens to hundreds of protesters.
- ▶ Alongside the calls to end the war, in light of the renewal of IDF attacks in the Gaza Strip, the demonstrators accused both Hamas and Israel of responsibility for their suffering and demanded Hamas relinquish control of the Gaza Strip, which it has held since 2007. The main messages of the demonstrators were "We don't want Hamas," "Hamas out," "Enough with blockades and wars" and "We want to live."
- ▶ Hamas initially tried to represent the demonstrations as protesting "Israeli aggression," but also claimed that "parties with suspicious agendas" were leading the protest in the service of Israel and warned residents to beware of "Israeli's psychological warfare." Later, Hamas forces used violence, and according to reports activists who participated in the protest or promoted it on social media received threats from Hamas operatives and were physically attacked, including a protester who was tortured to death.
- ▶ The Palestinian Authority and Fatah denied involvement in the demonstrations but called on Hamas to respond to the Gazans' calls and relinquish control of the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ The demonstrations were the first major public protest against Hamas since October 7, 2023. Until now, there was little criticism of Hamas and it had mainly been confined to the social media, but this time large numbers of Gazans participated in the demonstrations chanting

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

anti-Hamas slogans. The protest was widely supported, including by important figures in the Gazan clans.²

► Most of the reports on the protest appeared in media outlets not affiliated with Hamas and on social media. Hamas media outlets, and those affiliated with it such as Al Jazeera, either did not report on it or claimed it was directed against Israel.

► **In our assessment, the demonstrations express the Gazans' genuine pain, and therefore are spontaneous, without leadership or direction. However, the fear of the Hamas forces, whose use of physical force instills fear among the residents, may prevent an alternative leadership from emerging. After three days the demonstrations waned and ended, but if the fighting and the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip continue without a diplomatic breakthrough, the protest may be renewed and Hamas can be expected to suppress it rapidly.**

The Protests

► On March 25, 2025, spontaneous demonstrations began in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip, with the participation of hundreds of Gazans who called for an end to the war and condemned Hamas rule. The demonstrators marched toward Zaid Square, near the Indonesian Hospital, chanting "The people don't want Hamas" and "Hamas get out, out." They also blamed Hamas for the IDF's order to evacuate areas in Beit Lahia after rockets were fired at Israel, and held signs reading, "The blood of our children is not cheap... We want to live in peace and security... Stop the bloodshed," with other slogans calling to end the war and the harm to civilians (al-Sharq al-Awsat, March 25, 2025; al-Ayyam, March 26, 2025; BBC Arabic website, March 26, 2025). In the following hours the demonstrations spread to the Jabalia

² For further information, see the ITIC reports, "[The Price Gazans Pay for Criticizing Hamas](#)" (November 18, 2023); and "[Rifts between Gazan civilians and the Hamas leadership, and increasing public criticism of the organization](#)" (December 12, 2023); and the in-depth studies, "[The Mood in Gaza on the First Anniversary of the Gaza Strip War](#)" (December 8, 2024) and "[The atmosphere among Palestinians who returned to the northern Gaza Strip](#)" (February 9, 2025).

refugee camp in the north of the Strip and to Khan Yunis in the south, although they had fewer participants (Hamza al-Masri's Telegram channel, March 25, 2025).



The protest in Beit Lahia (Right: al-Sharq al-Awsat X account, March 25, 2025. Left: Hamza al-Masri's Telegram channel March 25, 2025)

► On March 26, 2025, protest demonstrations took place in Beit Lahia and in parts of Gaza City (the Shejaiya, Zeitoun and Sabra neighborhoods), the central Strip (the Nuseirat refugee camp and Deir al-Balah) and Khan Yunis. (al-Arabiya.net, March 27, 2025). Demonstrators chanted slogans including, " Hamas get out;" "We will be silent no longer;" "Enough trading in our blood"; "Gaza belongs to no faction or movement" (Sidou Army Telegram channel, March 26, 2025).



Right: Protest in Beit Lahia; Left: Protest in Deir al-Balah (Hamza al-Masri's Telegram channel, March 26, 2025)

► On March 27, 2025, smaller demonstrations were reported in Beit Lahia, the Jabalia refugee camp and at al-Saraya Square in Gaza City (Hamza al-Masri' Telegram channel, March 27, 2025); on March 28 and 29, 2025, no demonstrations were reported.



Right: Burning tires in the Zeitoun neighborhood of Gaza City (Hamza al-Masri's Telegram channel, March 26, 2025). Left: A protester in Beit Lahia holds a sign reading, " Hamas does not represent us" (Mustafa Asfour's X account, March 26, 2025)

The Demands of the Demonstrators

► The demonstrators called for an end to the fighting because of the resumption of Israeli attacks following the deadlock in the ceasefire agreement, but the protests focused on criticism of Hamas, which has ruled the Gaza Strip with an iron fist since 2007. The demonstrators accused Hamas of abandoning them to the Israeli "war of annihilation," leaving them exposed to attacks and hunger and doing nothing to protect them or provide for their basic needs. Many demonstrators claimed the Hamas movement had become "a second hostile regime" [after Israel], as it deprived them of liberty, freedom of expression and personal security, and instead of fighting the enemy, Hamas used its weapons against its own people and turned its arms into tools of internal repression. Hamas was also accused of cynically using the blood of the children who were killed as bargaining chips in the political arena. Many demonstrators emphasized that "the blood of our children is not cheap," referring directly to statements by Hamas leaders who allegedly encouraged the sacrifice of children (Sidou Army Telegram channel, March 26, 2025):

◆ Muhammad al-Kilani, an Arabic-language teacher and father of two who lost his job after the school he worked in was destroyed in an airstrike, said, "We are not numbers. We are people with homes and families and dreams. We are tired of wars that take our lives... But the problem is not just the war. The problem is that our lives are held hostage by people who don't care about us, not Hamas and not anyone else." Abu Khaled Abu Riyash, a fifty-year-old shop owner who, after his store was destroyed in a bombing, with his family was left without shelter or income, said, "Hamas asks us to be patient, but they

live in safety and their children are not being bombed." Mahmoud al-Huwajri, who lost his job in construction due to the destruction in the Strip, said, "We are not fuel for political agendas. We should not have to pay the price every time for leaders who care only about power" (Deutsche Welle Arabic website, March 25, 2025).



Right and center: Signs in Beit Lahia: "The blood of our children is not cheap" and "Enough wars" (Wafa, March 25, 2025 (Hamza al-Masri's Telegram channel, March 25, 2025)

◆ Majd al-Madi'a, a protestor in Beit Lahia, said, "This has to stop. We demand that Hamas immediately hand over power to the Palestinian National Authority" (BBC Arabic website, March 26, 2025). Another protestor shouted, "No one invited me to this demonstration. What invited me was hunger, poverty and death. The people are speaking. I lost my son for nothing. We want a new homeland." Abdallah al-Salam, who also participated in the protest, said, "I say to Hamas, enough. People lie in tents and every day we suffer from displacement and killing. I lost my home and my family. We keep calling out to Hamas that we don't want to die. End the war" (BBC Arabic website, March 26, 2025).

◆ Hisham al-Barawi, the mukhtar of the al-Barawi clan from Beit Lahia, said they did not oppose Hamas as a national or religious movement, but they protested its forced rule, the way it ignored the voices of the Gazans and dragged them into "endless wars." Families and clan leaders from the Khan Yunis and Rafah areas, considered more openly strongholds of Hamas support, also issued a joint public message stating, "Gaza is not anyone's hostage. It belongs to the people who live here, not to any political militia"; "The liberation of Gaza will only come through the will of the people, not by force and not in the name of ideology" (Gaza News Now Telegram channel, March 26, 2025).

◆ Journalist Abd al-Hamid Abd al-'Ati harshly criticized Hamas and blamed it for the destruction in the Gaza Strip. He said Hamas stole humanitarian aid, humiliated the

people, harmed children and used residents as hostages while protecting itself. He called for Hamas to be recognized as the source of the catastrophe in the Gaza Strip and warned that recovery would not be possible unless Hamas rule was broken and its oppression ended. He said the people had to rise up against Hamas just as they fought Israel (Telegram channel of discussions led by activist Hamza al-Masri, March 25, 2025).

► Some of the criticism was directed at the Hamas leadership living abroad, led by Khalil al-Haya, the head of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip, and Osama Hamdan, a Hamas figure in Lebanon. The protesters accused the leadership of being disconnected from the suffering of civilians under fire, preferring to flee and live in comfort abroad while the Gazans suffered:

◆ Amani al-'Arar criticized senior Hamas figure Ghazi Hamad, saying he fled to Egypt and left his comrades behind in the Strip. She said he had no right to criticize the Gazans while he was far out of harm's way, accusing him of arrogance and condescension, regarding the Gazans as animals because he was a veterinarian. She also criticized his promises to carry out actions similar to the October 7, 2023 attack, claiming that he himself did not believe in them. She suggested he change places with her, he should return to Gaza and she would take live in Egypt (Amani al-Arar's Facebook page, March 27, 2025).

◆ Asmaa Sabra said the Gazans suffered from neglect and had been abandoned by the Hamas leadership, who lived abroad, adding that as far as she was concerned, Hamas operated like "a blind militia driven by pettiness." She said Hamas' mask had already fallen and cried, "Hamas must fall – we want to live" (Asmaa Sabra's Facebook page, March 27, 2025).



A Hamas terrorist operative is surprised by a Gazan breaking free from his shackles (cartoon by Dajwar Ibrahim, March 26, 2025)

Motivations for the Protests

► According to the first reports about the protest in Beit Lahia, it was a spontaneous demonstration. One of the demonstrators, who identified himself as "Majdi," said that dozens of youths had gathered near the tents of the displaced persons in Beit Lahia and it turned into a spontaneous demonstration because people were fed up with the war. He added that when they marched in front of the Indonesian Hospital some of the participants chanted slogans against Hamas and shouted, "Enough war." A demonstrator named Muhammad said he did not know who organized the protest but he had participated spontaneously because it was an opportunity to send a message to the world that the people were tired of the war. He said he saw several Hamas security operatives in civilian clothes dispersing the protest (Deutsche Welle's Arabic website, March 25, 2025).

► Abd al-Mati Filfel, mukhtar of Beit Lahia, claimed the popular protest against Hamas was not political. He said it was motivated by the oppression, destruction, killing and ongoing displacement of the Gazans during the war, which festered inside them until they decided to take to the streets. He added that the people were on the verge of exploding, they had not even a shred of hope the war would end. He said the protests began after a meeting of dignitaries from Beit Lahia who decided to protest the situation and wanted to make their voices heard by the world. He added that the objective of the demonstrations was "humanitarian, it was a reaction to the oppression" (al-Hurra TV website, March 27, 2025).

► On March 28, 2025, Announcement No. 1 was published by "Anhad'" (Awake!), a Palestinian popular movement which claimed it had organized the protest. According to the announcement, "In recent days we have witnessed the various reactions in the Palestinian street to the killing of our people in the shadow of Arab, Islamic and international silence, for more than a year and a half, and especially to the stance of the masses who have come out in recent days to express their opinion and position regarding the killing, the 'siege' and displacement." The announcement stated it was necessary to stop the "killing and bloodshed" in the Strip and demanded that the UN provide the Gazans with international protection, claiming "Israel is the first and last enemy of our people." Hamas was called on to put the interests of the people above partisan considerations and to relinquish power in favor of the PA or the Arab League or Egypt within 48 hours. The announcement praised Egypt for its opposition to the "displacement" plan and called for the crossings between the Strip and Egypt to be opened. It also included a call for the masses to be ready to take to the squares and raise

their voices (Shukhat Abu Safiya Facebook page, March 28, 2025). However, it was not specified who was behind the movement and no names were mentioned.

Hamas Reactions

► The protest in the Gaza Strip challenged the Hamas movement after it had used the ceasefire which into effect on January 19, 2025, to "prove" its governance in the Gaza Strip, as well as agreeing to relinquish power once the war ended. "Palestinian sources" called the protests an "unprecedented challenge," after many years during which the voice of the opposition in the Gaza Strip had traditionally been silenced. In addition, "Palestinian sources" warned that ignoring popular anger would only worsen the current crisis (al-Arabiya, March 27, 2025).

► Some Hamas-affiliated media outlets and journalists, such as Anas al-Sharif, a Hamas activist and journalist, and Gazan correspondent Hassan Aslih, reported on the first demonstration in Beit Lahia and described it as a protest against the war and the ongoing Israeli "aggression," but did not report the anti-Hamas sentiment (al-Aqsa TV Telegram channel, March 25, 2025; Safa Telegram channel, March 25, 2025; Anas al-Sharif's X account, March 25, 2025). The trend continued in the following days in most Hamas affiliated media outlets both inside the Strip and outside of it, such as Qatar's Al Jazeera. One example was the repetition of statements made by the Hama- affiliated heads of clans in Beit Lahia and in the central Gaza Strip refugee camps, claiming that the demonstrations were a call to the free world to increase pressure on the "Zionist enemy" to stop the "bloodbath" and open the crossings to bring in aid. According to claims the marches were spontaneous and should not be exploited for political wrangling, and the clan leaders opposed "treacherous" attempts to portray the "resistance" as a foreign body (Shehab Telegram channel, March 25, 2025; Safa Telegram channel, March 25, 2025; correspondent Mahmoud al-Louh's Telegram channel, March 25, 2025).

► Hamas made efforts to minimize the significance of the protest and claim that the anti-Hamas slogans did not reflect the Gazans' positions. Hamas also accused "Israeli agents" of being behind the protest to drive a wedge between Hamas and the Gazans:

- ◆ The Hamas government media information office claimed that "any spontaneous slogans or positions expressed by some of the protesters against the path of resistance³ do not reflect the general national position, but rather come as a result of the unprecedented pressure on our people and the attempts by the occupation to spark

³ Anti-Israeli terrorism and violence.

internal conflicts and divert attention from its ongoing crimes." The statement added that the right of Palestinians to express their opinion and participate in peaceful protests was "legitimate and an integral part of the national values we believe in and protect," and that the protests on March 25, 2025, reflected "the tremendous pressure and the daily killing of our people. In light of the continued Israeli aggression and the bombings of civilians, that may lead to popular anger and resentment, which is only natural given the ongoing crimes." The media office called on Gazans to maintain national unity and direct their efforts toward confronting "the occupation and its schemes" (CNN in Arabic, March 26, 2025).

◆ Bassem Na'im, a member of the Hamas leadership in the Gaza Strip and the chairman of the political department, said all people had the right to "cry out in pain" and raise their voices against "the aggression against our people and the betrayal of our nation." However, he added that some exploited the humanitarian situation to promote "suspicious political agendas" or to absolve "the aggressive criminal, the occupation and its army" of responsibility, and that was unacceptable and deserved to be condemned. He asked why "those with suspicious agendas" did not protest the "aggression" in Judea and Samaria or allow people to take to the streets to denounce "the aggression," hinting at the Palestinian Authority (Reuters in Arabic, March 26, 2025).

◆ Hamas reported that the protests served the interests of Israel and called for internal unity in the face of the "bankrupt occupation," adding that "it is better to suffer than to cooperate with the enemy, whose hands are stained with Palestinian blood" (al-Arabiya, March 27, 2025).

◆ According to a message posted to a Hamas-affiliated Telegram channel, a distinction had to be made between two types of people opposing the war in the Gaza Strip: the first were those who had collapsed under the burden of war and the siege and whose despair at the Arab and international betrayal of the Gazans was understandable. Such people needed understanding, support and encouragement, as their intentions should not be doubted. In contrast, the second group included people supported by Israel and certain Arab countries, operating openly or covertly to disarm the Gaza Strip and harm the "resistance."⁴ According to the post, they were the successors of people who pretended to be Muslims and those who had had reservations about jihad throughout Islamic

⁴ The Palestinian terrorist operatives operating in the Gaza Strip.

history, calling them hypocrites who had to be fought with determination ("Media Supporting the Resistance" Telegram channel, March 27, 2025).



A cartoon by Alaa' al-Laqta, Hamas' inhouse cartoonist, of a "snake" among the protesters (Filastin al-Yawm Telegram channel, March 27, 2025)

► The Hamas security forces in the Gaza Strip also attempted to warn residents not to cooperate with the "enemy" and provided instructions to residents on how to deal with "psychological warfare" and not join street protests:

◆ Al-Hares TV⁵ reported an "exclusive" statement from the "resistance" security forces claiming they were monitoring instructions from "enemy intelligence" to "double agents" to organize protests with their families against the "resistance" and to participate in every public protest or activity. According to the "exclusive statement," enemy intelligence asked the agents to chant slogans against the "resistance" and in support of Israel during the protests, and afterward to document them in photos and send them to a news app. The public was warned of "enemy" attempts to incite people against the "resistance," after having failed for more than a year to defeat it on the ground, and called for uniting around the "resistance" until victory, as it was the last strong card in Palestinian hands. The public was also warned of a psychological warfare campaign led by Israeli intelligence, in which messages were sent to Gazans calling on them to take to the streets against the "resistance" to divide the Palestinian public and pressure Hamas to hand over the "captives" [hostages] (al-Hares TV Telegram channel, March 27, 2025).

◆ The home front platform of the information office of the Hamas ministry of interior published several guidelines, calling on Gazans not to cooperate with Israel's efforts to

⁵ Al-Hares TV represents itself as a media platform for the security of the "resistance," whose objective is to raise awareness.

push them into the streets against Hamas. According to one of the guidelines, "The war criminals in Israel want to harm our home front and achieve their despicable goals through chaos after they failed to achieve them through the barbaric war crimes..."; "Beware of becoming a criminal against your people and its victims, and of betraying the blood of the shaheeds. Beware of being an arrow aimed at the heart of your people in a time of hardship." According to another "guideline," "Legitimate demands do not justify joining hands with the occupation and its malicious goals. A person who betrays the blood of the shaheeds and stands with the enemy that slaughters our children and women is not a Palestinian. Whoever responds to the calls of war criminals Netanyahu and Katz is cooperating with the occupation against his own people and betraying the blood of the shaheeds and our great sacrifices. The occupation will certainly end, as every suffering ends, except for betrayal, which is an indelible stain of shame" (home front platform in Gaza X account, March 27, 2025).

► General warnings were insufficient for Hamas security forces, and according to reports protest activists received explicit threats and were physically assaulted:

◆ Osama Isma'il posted that Hamas security operatives tried to abduct his younger brother Khaled Isma'il from their home because of his participation in protests at the al-Maghazi camp on March 27, 2025. He said they publicly attacked his brother, and one operative from the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades said he would kill him that same night. Osama Isma'il added that he contacted the operative's family heads and said the operative would be fully responsible for any harm to his brother and demanded they protect him (Osama Ismail's Facebook page, March 27, 2025). One user responded to the post saying, "The people don't forget the black coup, the five wars and the destruction, the eighteen years of rule by fire and iron. The people don't forget the electricity protest and the 'We Want to Live' protest, the suicides of the youth, the dollars flowing underground while the people starve to death. The people don't forget the theft of public funds and your collaboration with Iran, which destroyed Arab states. The countdown has begun and Hamas will fall! We don't want Hamas in Gaza! Everyone share this: No more war, Hamas, get out!" (Yussuf Sakhr's Facebook page, March 27, 2025).

◆ Amin Abed wrote that Hamas security forces had contacted youths in Beit Lahia and the Jabalia refugee camp and requested from some of them not to chant "Out, out" and not to curse the movement's leadership. He added that summonses were issued to a

large group of youths in northern and central Gaza. Some burned the summons, some refused to attend after a phone call and others obeyed. Those who went were told not to insult the leadership (Amin Abed's Facebook page, March 28, 2025).

◆ Hamza al-Masri, a prominent social media influencer from Gaza who lives in Turkey, published a video in which he claimed to have received death threats from Hamas leaders because he supported and echoed the wave of protests against the movement. He called it his "last will and testament" in light of the danger to his life, and said he was prepared to die for his principles. He said he was proud of his actions and he always had Gaza's well-being in mind. He also said that for the first time, the voice of the Gazans was being heard, and he hoped the protests would bring change (Hamza al-Masri's Telegram channel, March 27, 2025). Many of the comments he received supported him and called him "the voice of truth," representing justice against tyranny. Many condemned Hamas, calling its operatives "cowards" and "deceivers," accusing it of betrayal, exploitation and ties with Iran at the cost of the people. However, some comments condemned Hamza, accusing him of creating internal division and collaborating with Israel, and portraying him as a collaborator with the enemy (Comments on Hamza al-Masri's Telegram channel, March 27, 2025).

◆ On March 29, 2025, a picture of the body of a young man named Uday Nasser al-Ruba'i, a 22-year-old resident of Tel al-Hawa, was published. He was reportedly abducted by Hamas operatives after participating in one of the protests and tortured for more than four hours until he died. It was also claimed that al-Rubai's body was thrown near his family's home with the message, "This is the price paid by those who criticize Hamas" (mustafa_ad's X account, March 29, 2025; Ihab Hassan's X account, March 29 and 30, 2025). One comment on social media read, "The Zionist enemy has its planes in the sky, and the Hamas soldiers are on the ground" (Hamza al-Masri's Telegram channel, March 30, 2025).



Uday Nasser al-Ruba'i (Ihab Hassan's X account, March 29, 2025)

◆ According to reports, on March 30, 2025, Hisham al-Barawi, mukhtar and one of the protest leaders in Beit Lahia who called for the end of the Hamas rule, died as a result of a "heart attack," apparently after receiving death threats from Hamas and being accused of treason (Mustafa KR's X account, March 30, 2025).

The Palestinian Authority (PA) Position

► The PA and Fatah denied involvement the protest demonstrations in the Gaza Strip. However, they expressed support for the protesters' positions, primarily the call to end Hamas rule:

◆ Fatah spokesman Maher al-Namoura called on Hamas to heed the call of the Gazans, who would not agree that their fate be tied to a regional-partisan agenda which did not reflect their national identity and interests. He said the legitimate popular demonstrations in the Strip were the inevitable result of decades during which Hamas exploited the Strip for "regional projects" and a product of persecution and suppression of every popular movement since its armed coup in 2007. He called on Hamas to allow the PA, which had the mandate over the Gaza Strip, to fulfill its role in reconstructing the Strip and address the "displacement and expulsion" plans (Wafa, March 25, 2025).

◆ Mahmoud al-Habbash, advisor to Mahmoud Abbas, the PA chairman, called on Hamas to hand over everything related to the Gaza Strip, weapons, negotiations and administration, to the PLO (al-Habbash's YouTube channel, March 25, 2025).

◆ Mundhir al-Hayek, Fatah spokesman in the Gaza Strip, said the movement had no connection to the "spontaneous demonstrations" resulting from the "disastrous war." He said the Gazans took to the streets to say "No to war" and to call on Hamas to let go of its rule and power (Radio Alam Telegram channel, March 26, 2025).

- ◆ Sabri Sidam, deputy secretary of Fatah's Central Committee, said Hamas had to understand the gravity of the situation and make a rational decision to protect Palestinian lives. He said that required Hamas to have a vision based on the Arab and UN initiatives, which were a life line to escape the difficult situation (Ouda channel Telegram, March 26, 2025).
- ◆ Ahmed Majdalani, a member of the PLO Executive Committee, called on the Hamas leadership to relinquish its control over the Gaza Strip. He said the wave of protests was not just an expression of opinion, but a "cry of pain" because Hamas policies had led to suffering since 2007. He said that if Hamas in fact acted for the public good, it had to give up its rule of Gaza and prioritize national interest over partisan concerns (Wafa, March 27, 2025).
- ◆ The Palestinian National Council expressed full support for the legitimate demands of the protesters in the Gaza Strip, who, it said, were demonstrating against the difficult situation and Hamas's continued sole rule. The Council claimed the protests reflected a popular desire to end the division and stop the "war of destruction and annihilation." The council placed responsibility on Hamas for the current situation in the Gaza Strip, called for an end to internal repression and the beginning of a national reconciliation process, and said the Palestinian people would not remain silent in the face of the tragedy. It also called for international intervention to end the bloodshed and lift the siege (Wafa, March 27, 2025).