



## The Elimination of Yahya al-Sinwar, Head of Hamas: Reactions and Insights

October 20 , 2024

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

- ▶ On October 17, 2024, the IDF spokesperson announced that Yahya al-Sinwar, head of Hamas' political bureau, had been killed in an encounter with IDF forces while he was hiding in a building in the Tel al-Sultan neighborhood in Rafah. The IDF spokesperson reported that al-Sinwar's identity became clear only after his body was discovered and that it had not been a targeted killing.
- ▶ Only a day later did Hamas confirm the death of al-Sinwar, who was appointed head of the political bureau at the beginning of September 2024 after the elimination of Isma'il Haniyeh. The movement's announcements praised al-Sinwar's role in leading Operation al-Aqsa Flood (the October 7, 2023 attack and massacre) and his death in a clash with IDF forces, adding that they would continue their "resistance" and would not change their conditions for ending the war in the Gaza Strip and releasing the hostages.
- ▶ The Palestinian Authority and the other Palestinian terrorist organizations condemned the killing, stating he was a symbol of the "resistance" and claiming he had been killed while facing the "enemy."
- ▶ Iran and the rest of the "resistance axis" stated that al-Sinwar was a "fighter" and a symbol of the "resistance," and promised to continue their support for the Palestinian "resistance." Hamas and "resistance axis" supporters on the social networks praised al-Sinwar as having stood up to the "enemy" until the last minute, while Hamas opponents did not hide their satisfaction at his death.
- ▶ **In ITIC assessment, his death might increase the importance of the "external" leadership in Qatar, but it is possible that Hamas will not reveal the name of the new leader to make it difficult for Israel to eliminate him or exert pressure on him in the negotiations. Al-Sinwar's most likely successors are Khaled Mashal, who previously headed the political bureau; Khalil al-Haya, who was al-Sinwar's deputy in the political**

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

bureau in the Gaza Strip and leads the negotiations on behalf of Hamas for an agreement on a ceasefire and the release of the hostages; Muhammad Darwish, head of the Hamas-affiliated Shura Council; Musa Abu Marzouq, also previously head of the political bureau; and Muhammad Nazzal, one of Hamas' founders and its main spokesman.<sup>2</sup> In ITIC assessment, al-Sinwar's brother, Muhammad al-Sinwar, is expected to fill his place in the leadership of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, both at the "political" and the military level (after the elimination of Muhammed Deif, the commander of Hamas' military wing, in July 2024).

► In ITIC assessment, in the near future the Hamas leadership will not change its positions regarding negotiations to end the war in the Gaza Strip, which are demands for a complete halt to the fighting, a complete withdrawal of IDF forces from the Strip, and the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli prisons, especially the prisoners with blood on their hands, in exchange for the release of the hostages. However, if the "external" Hamas leadership becomes the dominant actor, it may be possible to exert sufficient pressure to achieve flexibility regarding the details of the deal and the future leadership in the Gaza Strip.

## The Elimination of Yahya al-Sinwar

► On the evening of October 17, 2024, the IDF spokesperson announced that Yahya al-Sinwar, head of Hamas' political bureau, was killed by IDF forces in Rafah. According to the announcement, on October 16, 2024, IDF forces identified three suspicious figures moving between buildings in the Tel al-Sultan neighborhood in Rafah. After the force shot at the suspects, one of them entered a building and a tank shot at him. A drone entered the building through a window and identified an armed, masked suspect, sitting wounded inside the building; another tank shell was fired, killing him. On the morning of October 17, when the forces entered the building, they saw the dead terrorist looked like al-Sinwar, and forensic tests confirmed his identity (IDF spokesperson, October 17, 2024).

► The IDF spokesperson also reported that 40,000 shekels in cash (a little less than \$11,000), a fake passport, a gun and a vest were discovered in al-Sinwar's possession. He also reported

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<sup>2</sup> For further information about the remaining Hamas leaders and al-Sinwar's possible successors, see Appendix 2.

that al-Sinwar had stayed in the underground tunnel where six Israeli hostages were executed at the end of August 2024 (IDF spokesperson, October 17-18, 2024 ).



**Right: The wounded al-Sinwar photographed by an IDF drone before the tank fire that killed him (IDF spokesperson, October 17, 2024). Left: Items found on al-Sinwar's body (IDF spokesperson, October 17, 2024)**

## Hamas Reactions

► For more than a day Hamas did not respond to the IDF spokesperson's updates and reports in the Israeli media about Yahya al-Sinwar's death, even after the items found with his body were made public. Hamas-affiliated Telegram channels claimed he was not dead, and that the IDF's announcements were "enemy psychological warfare " (Gaza Now Telegram channel, October 17, 2024). Only on the day after his death did Hamas admit he had been killed and began to praise him, claiming he had been "killed in battle" and that his death would not change the path or determination of the Hamas movement in its "struggle" against Israel:

- ◆ Senior Hamas figure Bassem Na'im was the first to comment on the killing of al-Sinwar. He did not specifically mention him by name, but admitted that "it is painful and depressing to lose extraordinary leaders." He claimed that in the past Hamas had become stronger after each leader had been killed and the movement was confident of its final victory in "the struggle for the freedom of the Palestinian people" (CNN, October 18, 2024).
- ◆ On the afternoon of October 18, 2024, Khalil al-Haya, deputy chairman of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip (who lives in Qatar), officially announced the death of al-Sinwar, aka Abu Ibrahim. He praised him as someone who had dedicated his life to the defense of "Palestine" and the holy places, claiming that he was a capable commander who led the battle in the field. He compared al-Sinwar to Hamas' past leaders, including Ahmed Yassin, Abd al-Aziz Rantisi, Ibrahim al-Maqadmeh, Saleh al-'Arouri and Isma'il Haniyeh, who led the movement until their deaths, and said that

Hamas would continue the struggle until the establishment of a Palestinian state "on all the land of Palestine, with Jerusalem as its capital." He warned that the hostages would not return to their homes unless the "occupation forces" withdrew from the Gaza Strip, the war ended and the Palestinian prisoners were released from prisons (Sama Agency, October 18, 2024).

◆ Later, Hamas issued an official notice of al-Sinwar's death, expressing pride for "his fall on the battlefield [sic]," fighting for the defense of al-Aqsa, the rights of the Palestinian people and the liberation of "Palestine." Hamas praised him as a commander who led the "resistance" movement in the Gaza Strip to a series of achievements, culminating in Operation al-Aqsa Flood. Hamas said the enemy was wrong if it thought the elimination of "resistance" leaders such as al-Sinwar, Haniyeh and Nasrallah would put out the fire of the "resistance," adding that the Palestinian "struggle" would continue until its "legitimate goals" had been achieved (al-Mayadeen, October 18, 2024).

◆ Izzat al-Rishq, a member of Hamas' political bureau, claimed al-Sinwar had been killed "standing in front of the enemy, he did not retreat, he carried his weapons and confronted the occupation army at the front of the fighters, moving between battle positions." He praised al-Sinwar's "honorable and heroic" biography and said that the October 7, 2023 attack led by him was "a blow that exposed the fragility of the Zionist enemy's security and the weakness of its foundations." He stated al-Sinwar's death "would only increase the strength and determination of our people and the resistance to continue on their path" (Izzat al-Rishq's Telegram channel, October 18, 2024).

◆ The Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military wing, claimed "it is a matter of pride for our movement that its leaders go before its soldiers, leading the procession of our people's shaheeds who sacrificed their souls and blood for the sake of Allah on the road to the liberation of Palestine." According to the Brigades, al-Sinwar's leadership had caused a "qualitative transformation" in the political and military campaign [against Israel] which culminated in Operation al-Aqsa Flood. They claimed their jihad would not end "until all of Palestine is liberated and the last Zionist has been expelled," adding that the "fire of the resistance" would not be extinguished despite the killing of its leaders (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, October 18, 2024).

◆ "A source close to Hamas" said the killing of Yahya al-Sinwar was a severe blow for the movement. According to the source, Hamas had lost most of the hawkish leaders who led the movement recently, which might make it review its policy but not necessarily change it immediately. He said possible consequences might be the restoration of decision-making to the "external" leadership and making concessions that were difficult to make under al-Sinwar (al-Sharq al-Awsat, October 18, 2024).



**Right: Hamas' mourning notice for the death of al-Sinwar (Hamas website, October 18, 2024). Center: Hamas movement notice for the death of "the great national commander, the brother, the jihad shaheed, Yahya al-Sinwar (Hamas in Judea and Samaria Telegram channel, October 18, 2024). Left: The Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades mourning notice for al-Sinwar (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, October 18, 2024).**

◆ Hamas also announced the death of Mahmoud Hamdan, aka Abu Yusuf, commander of the Tal al-Sultan Battalion in Rafah. According to the announcement, he was killed while "confronting the occupation army in the Tel al-Sultan neighborhood, together with the leader of the flood [Operation al-Aqsa Flood], Yahya al-Sinwar" (Hamas Telegram channel, October 18, 2024). Following the announcement, the IDF spokesperson reported that the September 10, 2024, announcement of Hamdan's death had been a mistake, and that he was killed in a clash with IDF forces on October 18, 2024, about 200 meters from where al-Sinwar had been killed (IDF spokesperson, October 18, 2024).

## Reactions in the Palestinian Arena

► The elimination of Yahya al-Sinwar was condemned in the Palestinian arena, including by the Palestinian Authority (PA), which has repeatedly criticized Hamas and al-Sinwar for the attack on October 7, 2023. Al-Sinwar was praised for his role in the "resistance" against Israel and his death "in battle:"

## Palestinian organizations and the PA

- ◆ The PLO's Executive Committee offered its condolences for the death of al-Sinwar, claiming the Israeli government did not comply with the international resolutions due to "the continuation of the massacres and the genocidal war against the Palestinian people and the Arab nation in Palestine and Lebanon." The Executive Committee called for ranks to be closed within the PLO to "confront all enemy attempts to eliminate the national goal" (Wafa, October 18, 2024).
- ◆ Abbas Zaki, a member of Fatah's Central Committee, said that al-Sinwar had chosen "an exit worthy of his heroism and the heroism of his people" and "did not hide underground or behind the front lines, he carried his weapon and fought like any [member of the "resistance] in the field." He called al-Sinwar "a great patriot who died in greatness as he had lived in greatness, and it was an end suitable for such a person" (Sama Agency, October 18, 2024).
- ◆ Fatah described his end as "honorable" for every Palestinian. The movement praised him for choosing "to leave the world in a manner befitting his heroism and the heroism of the Palestinian people, bearing the task of defending the righteousness of the Palestinian cause" (Gaza Now Telegram channel, October 18, 2024).



**Fatah movement poster for the "hero," Yahya al-Sinwar  
(Gaza Now Telegram channel, October 18, 2024)**

- ◆ Ziyad al-Nakhalah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) secretary general, praised al-Sinwar for his contribution to the Palestinian "struggle" and his leadership in the battle for al-Aqsa Mosque. He claimed al-Sinwar was "a tireless fighter who led the struggle for the liberation of "Palestine" and was considered a hero by the Palestinians." Al-Nakhalah said the spirit of the "resistance," led by al-Sinwar, would continue to throb, and that his death would not break the "struggle" but would only strengthen their determination to



continue fighting until the "liberation" of Jerusalem and the entire land of "Palestine" (Ziyad al-Nakhalah's Telegram channel, October 18, 2024).

- ◆ The al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades praised al-Sinwar as a brave warrior who "fell in battle, leading the warriors at the front until his last moments," adding that his death was a symbol of the Palestinian "resistance" and would not weaken its spirit but would strengthen the determination to continue the "struggle" for the liberation of the Palestinian lands "from the river to the sea." The al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades also claimed that the elimination of Palestinian leaders would not deter the "resistance," but would strengthen its determination to fight until the national goals had been achieved (Sama Agency, October 18, 2024).

- ◆ The Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine's military wing, claimed al-Sinwar was a prominent symbol of the Palestinian "struggle", a national commander, an "uncompromising fighter who led the ranks of the conflict." The Brigades emphasized that his loss would only strengthen the determination and stability to continue in the path of the martyrs in the struggle and the battle "until the complete liberation and the removal of the occupation from all our lands" (al-Mayadeen Telegram channel, October 18, 2024).

- ◆ The Resistance Committees in Palestine described him as "a jihad fighter and an inspired leader who fell on the fighting front after always being at the forefront of the confrontation with Israel." The announcement claimed that his death while holding a weapon and wrapped in a kaffiyeh was a message that blood and fire were the way to victory, and that al-Sinwar would remain a symbol of "resistance" and the defeat he inflicted on Israel and its allies (Sama Agency, October 18, 2024).

## The Palestinian public

► Despite Hamas' call to the Palestinian residents of Judea and Samaria to hold a general strike and hold protest marches, there was little to no response. However, surfers on the social media who were affiliated with Hamas claimed that al-Sinwar had fought until his last breath:

- ◆ The Telegram account of the Qalandiya refugee camp claimed al-Sinwar "rejected all the temptations of the world so that one day he would meet Allah as honorable, as a mujahid with a gun, and he might be hungry, not like the traitors who live in luxury in Ramallah; he hoped for this end." According to another post, al-Sinwar "lived as a leader

carrying a weapon against his enemies, the end that every honorable person wants" (Qalandiya and Kafr 'Aqab's Telegram channel, October 17, 2024).

- ◆ Bilal Nizar Ryan, the son of former senior Hamas Nizar Ryan, who was killed in a targeted counterattack during Operation Cast Lead in 2009, wrote that al-Sinwar was killed in the most dangerous place, the Tel al-Sultan neighborhood in Rafah. He said al-Sinwar was neither in the tunnels nor among the displaced, but "in a most honorable battle and on the battlefield above ground, fighting and not retreating" (Bilal Nazar Ryan's X account, October 17, 2024).
- ◆ Fayez Abu Shamala, a political commentator from Khan Yunis, wrote that the photo of al-Sinwar published by Israel, in which he appears to be carrying his weapons, testified that "this is how the great die." He said al-Sinwar did not hide in the tunnels and "did not use the Israeli captives [sic] as shields, as the Zionists claim, and he did not run away from the confrontation," but rather appears to be a man fighting the enemy, who is at the head of the "resistance" fighters (Fayez Abu Shamala's X account, October 17, 2024).



**Right: Alaa' al-Laqta cartoon captioned, "The Most Honorable End" (Alaa' al-Laqta's X account, October 17, 2024). Left: Alaa al-Laqta cartoon captioned, 'It is my staff...and [I] have other uses for it " (Qur'an Sura 20, verse 18, regarding the staff of Moses) (Palestine Telegram channel online, October 18, 2024)**

## Reactions in Iran and the "Resistance Axis"

### Iran

- The Iranian leadership expressed sorrow over al-Sinwar's death and said they were confident the Palestinian "resistance" would continue fighting against Israel:



◆ Iranian leader Ali Khamenei said Hamas [still] lived and would continue to live and the "resistance" would not stop in the slightest, just as it did not stop after the death of its previous leaders Ahmad Yassin, Fathi Shqaqi, Abd al-Aziz Rantisi and Isma'il Haniyeh. He called al-Sinwar's stance against the "oppressive and aggressor enemy" a "miracle," adding that he was a prominent symbol of the "resistance" and delivered "the blow to the enemy on October 7<sup>th</sup> with wisdom and courage." Khamenei said Iran would continue to stand by the "combatants." The site also published photographs from a meeting of al-Sinwar and Khamenei in February 2012 in Tehran, a few months after al-Sinwar's release from Israeli prison (Ali Khamenei's website, October 19, 2024).



**Khamenei and al-Sinwar in 2012 (Ali Khamenei's website, October 19, 2024)**

◆ Masoud Pezeshkian, president of Iran, stated that although the death of the shaheed al-Sinwar was painful for all "freedom seekers," especially for the Palestinian people, it proved that the "crimes of the Zionist regime" could not be stopped. He claimed al-Sinwar had fought bravely until the last moment of his "glorious life" (Fars, October 18, 2024).

◆ Hossein Salami, commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps, said that al-Sinwar's name would shine alongside the names of other Palestinian fighters, including Ahmed Yassin and Isma'il Haniyeh, who were killed on the way to the "liberation of Jerusalem," and that his death would ignite the "fire of rage of the anti-Zionist resistance." He said al-Sinwar had been a symbol of the "struggle and resistance" to Zionism in the Islamic nation and the Arab world, and that his "revolutionary spirit" and his "successful command" at the strategic and operational level, especially in Operation al-Aqsa Flood, gave the Zionist society a disastrous strategic surprise. He added that al-Sinwar died a martyr's death, not in the depths of the secret tunnels of the Gaza Strip,

but "in battle against the Zionists, in combat uniform and while leading the resistance fighters" (Tasnim, October 18, 2024).

◆ Abbas Araghchi, Iranian foreign minister, claimed al-Sinwar was not afraid of death but sought martyrdom in the Gaza Strip and fought on the battlefield until the end. He called al-Sinwar's fate a source of inspiration for all "resistance" fighters in the region, and that the goal of liberating "Palestine" from occupation was alive today more than ever (Abbas Araghchi's X account, October 18, 2024).

## Hezbollah

► Hezbollah's leadership issued a mourning notice calling al-Sinwar "commander of Operation al-Aqsa Flood" and claimed he had been a "jihad fighter" who received the "flame of leadership" in order to complete the path of resistance, giving and sacrifice together with the jihad fighters. The mourning notice claimed the leadership of Hezbollah faced "criminal Zionist aggression" together with the Lebanese people, they emphasized their standing at the side of the Palestinians and said they had complete faith in the divine promise and victory for the true believers (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, October 18, 2024).

► Hezbollah's mourning notice called al-Sinwar a "martyr on the way to Jerusalem," together with the commander Mahmoud Hamdan (Abu Yusuf). It called al-Sinwar a "resistance fighter" from the founding generation and who had been in [an Israeli] prison for more than 20 years, and had led Operation al-Aqsa Flood, which was "one of the most humiliating actions in the history of the Israeli occupier." It claimed [falsely] that he had been killed in a face-to-face battle with "occupation" soldiers. According to the notice, the death of al-Sinwar, along with the deaths of other commanders from the "resistance axis," would strengthen their determination to continue the struggle for the liberation of "Palestine" (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, October 18, 2024).

## Other terrorist organizations

► The Nobles' Movement (al-Nujaba') in Iraq issued several mourning notices for al-Sinwar. One called him a "holy shaheed" killed fighting at the head of the camp and not someone who had fled for his life. According to another notice, "the pure blood [of Sinwar and the other shaheeds] paves the way for liberation from the oppressive occupation." The movement also said it would continue to stand by Hamas (Noble's Movement X account, October 18, 2024).

►Abu Hussein al-Hamidawi, secretary general of the Iraqi Hezbollah Brigades, told Hamas they "will continue the path of the martyr commander al-Sinwar with you, to return all of 'Palestine to its inhabitants" (Kaaf TV Telegram, October 18, 2024).



**A Hezbollah Brigades' notice in memory of al-Sinwar (Kaaf TV Telegram channel, October 18, 2024)**

►Qais al-Khazali, secretary general of Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, Iraq, called al-Sinwar "a great man of the resistance," a man of "faith and courage." He said the militia under his leadership undertook to continue the "resistance to the Zionist occupation until victory is achieved" and the "liberation of all Palestinian lands" (Qais al-Khazali's X account, October 18, 2024).

►Abd al-Malek al-Houthi, leader of the Houthi movement in Yemen, expressed sorrow at the death of al-Sinwar, whom he called "the leader of the shaheeds," but welcomed "the good end of his path of jihad and giving." He said al-Sinwar "fought in the fiercest conflict together with the brothers in the Gaza Strip, facing the barbaric Israeli aggression, in very difficult circumstances of siege, great suffering, general destruction and painful abandonment by the Arab and Islamic community. Despite all this, they were and still are patient and steadfast." He claimed that the death of al-Sinwar would not bring about the collapse of the "great jihad front in the proud Gaza Strip" (al-Masirah, October 18, 2024).

►The Houthis' supreme political council congratulated al-Sinwar "on his martyrdom after a long journey full of jihad and giving." According to the announcement, "the martyrdom of this great leader and his pure and noble blood will be the fuel that will burn the Zionists, and will increase the determination, dedication and steadfastness of the mujahideen in Palestine to continue following the path of the martyrs until the promised victory is achieved." The council also said that Yemen would continue to stand by the Palestinians and support them "with all our abilities and means" (Houth media information X account, October 18, 2024).

►Muhammad al-Bakhiti, a member of the Houthis' political bureau, said that al-Sinwar caused the "Zionist enemy" pain while he was alive and as a shaheed. He added that "your pure blood

ignited the flame of jihad in the souls of the people of the [Muslim] nation and qualified them to give birth to millions like you" (Muhammad al-Bakhiti's X account, October 18, 2024).

►The al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah movement, the branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in Lebanon and affiliated with Hamas, expressed sorrow over the death of al-Sinwar, who was killed "when he was looking forward and not retreating" (al-Shabab Telegram channel, October 18, 2024).

## Reactions in the Arab World

►There were mixed reactions in the Arab world to the elimination of al-Sinwar. On the one hand, he was praised as leading the "resistance" against Israel and it was pointed out that he had not been killed in a tunnel but trying to "resist" until the last moment, and on the other hand, there was satisfaction at his death:

- ◆ The al-Azhar Institute in Egypt, its most important Sunni academic institution, expressed sorrow for "the shaheeds of the heroic Palestinian resistance who were harmed by the criminal Zionist hand." The Institute called them "real resistance fighters who frightened their enemy, and not terrorists as the enemy tries to portray them" (al-Azhar website, October 18, 2024).
- ◆ The SSNP (Syrian socialist-national Party) offered its condolences to the al-Sinwar family and the Hamas movement, and said his death would be a motivation for the fighters in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria to continue to "defend their land and strive for its liberation" (al-Medan Telegram channel, October 18, 2024).



**Right: Al-Sinwar holds a Palestinian flag, a cartoon by "resistance axis" supporter Kamal Sharaf (Kamal Sharaf's X account, October 17, 2024). Left: "The resistance" parts from al-Sinwar, a cartoon by Khaled Salah (al-Masry al-Youm, October 19, 2024).**

►On the other hand, media outlets and social media surfers in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States did not hide their satisfaction at the killing of al-Sinwar, who had accused their countries of supporting Israel because of the process of normalization [of diplomatic relations]:

- ◆ The Saudi Arabian daily newspaper Okaz published the photo of IDF soldiers standing over the body of al-Sinwar on its front page with the headline, " Hamas has no head" (Okaz, October 18, 2024).



**The front page of the Saudi Arabian Okaz (October 18, 2024)**

- ◆ The TV channel MBC broadcast a report in which it called al-Sinwar and other senior figures in Hamas and Hezbollah "terrorists." Following the broadcast, hundreds of [pro-Iranian] Iraqi militia operatives attacked the channel's studios in Baghdad and the government revoked the channel's license (Noor News, October 20, 2024).

## Reactions in the International Arena

►Leaders in the Western world welcomed the death of Yahya al-Sinwar and expressed hope that it would help promote an agreement to end the war in the Gaza Strip and release the hostages:

- ◆ American President Joe Biden, said the death of al-Sinwar was a moment of relief for the Israelis and a good day for the United States and the world, and emphasized Israel's right to attack the Hamas leadership and its military wing. He called al-Sinwar an obstacle which could not be overcome on the way to removing Hamas from power in the Gaza Strip, and now the obstacle no longer existed (White House website, October 17, 2024). Biden also discussed with Prime Minister Netanyahu using the opportunity to advance the release of the hostages and end the war (White House website, October 17, 2024).
- ◆ Kamala Harris, United States Vice President and the Democratic presidential candidate, said that justice had been served with the killing of al-Sinwar and noted that he also had American blood on his hands. She said it was an opportunity to end the war

in the Gaza Strip and release the hostages, and time to start "the day after" without Hamas in power (White House website, October 17, 2024).

- ◆ Keir Starmer, British prime minister, said no one should mourn the death of al-Sinwar and that he was responsible for the death of many Palestinians. Starmer called for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, the unconditional release of all hostages, the introduction of humanitarian aid to the Strip and the promotion of the two-state solution (Keir Starmer's X account, October 18, 2024).

- ◆ Emmanuel Macron, president of France, issued a message in Hebrew reading, "Yahya al-Sinwar was the main person responsible for the terrorist attacks and the barbaric acts on October 7<sup>th</sup>. I think today with pain about the dead, including 48 of our countrymen, and their loved ones. France demands the release of all the hostages still held by Hamas" (Emmanuel Macron's account X, October 18, 2024).

- ◆ Josep Borrell, the EU foreign minister, said that the killing of al-Sinwar opened a "new perspective" regarding a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and the release of the remaining hostages (Reuters, October 19, 2024).

- ▶ Mikhail Bogdanov Russia's deputy foreign minister and Putin's envoy to the Middle East, called the elimination of al-Sinwar an "assassination." He called it a dramatic event, but thought it would not be a turning point (RIA Novosti, October 18, 2024).

## Appendix 1 – Portrait of al-Sinwar<sup>3</sup>

- ▶ Yahya Ibrahim Hassan al-Sinwar, aka Abu Ibrahim, was born on October 19, 1962 in the Khan Yunis refugee camp to a family that was deported from the city of al-Majdal (now the southern Israeli coastal city of Ashqelon) to the Gaza Strip in 1948. After graduating from the high school for boys in Khan Yunis he studied at the Islamic University in Gaza, where he received a BA in Arabic language studies and led the Islamic Bloc at the university. In 1983, he participated in establishing Hamas' first internal security mechanism, al-Majd ("honor"), headed by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin (al-Watan TV, February 13, 2017).

- ▶ Al-Sinwar was involved in planning a series of attacks in which Israelis were murdered. He was also responsible for the murder of many Palestinians on suspicion of collaborating with Israel. In 1988 he was sentenced to five life sentences after being convicted of murdering Palestinians suspected of collaborating with Israel. In prison, he was nicknamed "Abu Tanesh"

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<sup>3</sup> For further information, see the August 2024 ITIC report, "[Yahya al-Sinwar Named Head of Hamas Political Bureau: Reactions and Significance.](#)"



(the father of the twelve) because of his involvement in the murder of 12 suspected collaborators, although he was convicted of murdering five. While in prison he was the leader of the Hamas prisoners and learned fluent Hebrew and was interviewed in Hebrew on Israeli television. While in prison he was diagnosed with brain cancer. He was operated on in a hospital in Israel and his life was saved.

► In 2006, the soldier Gilad Shalit was abducted, an operation in which al-Sinwar's younger brother, Muhammad al-Sinwar, also participated. In October 2011, Yahya al-Sinwar, the longest-serving prisoner, was released in the Gilad Shalit exchange deal, after having been imprisoned for 23 years, including four in solitary confinement.



**Yahya al-Sinwar upon his release in the Gilad Shalit exchange deal in 2011  
(Karama Press, February 14, 2017)**

► Released from prison, he took a senior position in Hamas' military wing and liaised between the military and political wings. He was elected to the political bureau in 2012, and in 2017 he was elected head of the political bureau in the Gaza Strip. He was re-elected to in 2021.

► Al-Sinwar was very close to Muhammed Deif, the commander of Hamas' military wing, who was killed in an Israeli strike on July 13, 2024, and they were the architects of the Hamas terrorist attack and massacre in Israeli on October 7, 2023, which led to the outbreak of the Operation Iron Swords, the Gaza Strip War. On December 14, 2022, al-Sinwar presented his plan for the occupation of Israel and the "liberation" of Jerusalem (Hamas website, December 14, 2022).

► On August 6, 2024, the Hamas movement announced that after "extensive and in-depth consultations" in the movement's institutions, Yahya al-Sinwar had been chosen to head the political bureau in place of Isma'il Haniyeh, who was killed in Tehran on July 31, 2024. According to the announcement, Hamas was confident that under al-Sinwar's leadership

Hamas would complete the journey of Haniyeh and the previous leaders and preserve the legacy of "jihad and struggle, until liberation and return" (Hamas website, August 6, 2024).

## Appendix 2 – The Remaining Hamas Leaders

►After the elimination of Isma'il Haniyeh and Yahya al-Sinwar, the two heads of the political bureau of Hamas, the following are the most prominent figures in the leadership of the movement today, from among whom the new head of the bureau may be chosen:

- ◆ **Khaled Mashal:** Currently head of the "external" Hamas leadership. Served as head of the Hamas political bureau from 1996 to 2017. He lives in Qatar.
- ◆ **Musa Abu Marzouq:** Was the first head of the Hamas political bureau from 1992 to 1996. Currently a member of the political bureau. He lives in Qatar.
- ◆ **Muhammad Darwish:** Head of the Hamas Shura Council. Considered a shadow figure and appeared for the first time in public only after the death of Haniyeh at the end of July 2024. In recent weeks he led Hamas delegations to policy meetings, including with the president of Iran. He lives in Qatar.



**Muhammad Darwish (right) shakes the hand of the President of Iran (IRNA, October 3, 2024)**

- ◆ **Khalil al-Haya:** Deputy head of the political bureau of Hamas in the Gaza Strip under al-Sinwar and is considered closest to him. Heads the Hamas team for negotiations on a ceasefire in the war in the Gaza Strip and the release of the hostages. He lives in Qatar.
- ◆ **Muhammad Nazzal:** Member of the Hamas political bureau since 1996 and one of the movement's most prominent spokesmen.
- ◆ **Zaher Jabarin:** Member of the Hamas political bureau since 2021 and in charge of the Judea and Samaria for Hamas since the killing of Saleh al-'Arouri in January 2024. Also involved in the movement's international economic activities. He lives in Turkey.