

Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya (HAMAS)



OVERVIEW

AS OF FEBRUARY 2025

HAMAS is the largest and most capable militant group and largest political party in the Palestinian territories. HAMAS is committed to the armed resistance against Israel and to the creation of a Palestinian state. The most recent armed engagement between HAMAS and Israel began on 7 October 2023, when HAMAS launched a surprise attack in Israel, killing nearly 1,200 people. Since the attack, Israeli operations have partially degraded HAMAS's military capabilities in Gaza.

HAMAS emerged in 1987 during the first Palestinian uprising, or intifada, as an outgrowth of the Muslim Brotherhood. HAMAS has been the de facto governing body in the Gaza Strip since 2007, when it ousted the Palestinian Authority. Although HAMAS amended its charter in 2017 to remove a call for Israel's destruction, it does not recognize Israel as a state and continues to advocate all forms of resistance against the country. The group benefits from Iranian support, such as monetary donations.

Operating Area

Primarily in the Gaza Strip; also maintains a presence in the West Bank; Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon; and other regional countries, including Egypt, Qatar, and Turkey

Members

HAMAS had 20,000 to 30,000 fighters before October 2023. Israeli press estimates that 16,000 to 18,000 fighters remain.

Tactics And Targets

HAMAS uses improvised explosive devices, short- and long-range rockets and mortars, small arms, RPGs, MANPADS, antitank missiles, and unmanned aircraft systems and has an extensive system of tunnels within Gaza to advance attacks against Israeli military forces and civilians. The group also engages in cyber espionage, computer network exploitation, and kidnapping operations. HAMAS uses hostage exchanges to gain concessions from the Israeli Government, including the release of high-value Palestinian prisoners from Israeli prisons.

Terrorist Group Designation

The US State Department designated HAMAS as a foreign terrorist organization in October 1997.



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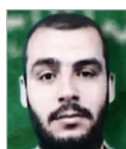
KEY LEADERS

**Khaled Mesh'al**

Political Bureau External Region chief since early 2021; Political Bureau chief from April 1996 to May 2017

**Khalil al-Hayyah**

Gaza Political Bureau chief and key interlocutor in ceasefire negotiations for the Israel-HAMAS conflict that began in October 2023

**Muhammad Sinwar**

HAMAS Military Wing commander

**Yahya al-Sinwar** [DECEASED]

Political Bureau chief from July 2024 until his death in October 2024; previously served as Gaza Political Bureau chief

NOTABLE ATTACKS

18 AUGUST 2024

Tel Aviv

A person carrying an explosive device detonates the device before he can reach his intended target, killing himself and injuring a passerby. HAMAS issues a joint press statement with Palestine Islamic Jihad claiming responsibility and threatening future attacks in Israel.

7 OCTOBER 2023

Israel's border along the Gaza Strip

Hundreds of HAMAS fighters launch a surprise attack supported by rockets and armed drones, killing nearly 1,200 people and kidnapping at least 240. Along with Israelis, the victims include citizens of the United States and more than 30 other countries—almost all with dual Israeli citizenship.



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NOTABLE ATTACKS *(continued)*

29 APRIL 2022

West Bank

HAMAS's military wing, al-Qassam Brigades, claims responsibility for shooting an Israeli guard in the West Bank. Other Palestinian militants also claim responsibility for the attack.

MAY 2021

Gaza Strip and Israel

HAMAS launches more than 4,000 rockets at Israel during 11 days of hostilities; Israel responds with widespread air and artillery strikes on HAMAS targets in Gaza. The conflict results in 260 deaths in Gaza and 13 deaths in Israel.

1 OCTOBER 2015

Near Palestinian village of Beit Furik, West Bank

Near Palestinian village of Beit Furik, West Bank

