

# Hamas May Be Cheering, But It Is Writhing in Pain

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**All the talk of Hamas emerging from the war with the upper hand contradicts the realities on the ground, where the group has lost its military capabilities, has no hope of substantial outside help, and has failed to ignite the West Bank.**

**T**he signs of Hamas's regret at having started this war on October 7 are already visible. The group's highest-ranking military official in the Gaza Strip to have survived the war—Gaza City Brigade Commander Izz al-Din Haddad—has already begun to lie without batting an eye, saying that Hamas did not have any choice but to deliver a preemptive strike on Simchat Torah because of intelligence it had obtained from Unit 8200 indicating that Israel was about to attack Gaza with full force immediately after the Sukkot holiday. In other words, he said it wasn't that Yahya al-Sinwar and Muhammad Deif had dreamt of making history in the grip of delusions of grandeur, but rather that they had been forced to attack first. He knows that no one, even within Hamas, is going to believe that.

All the stories about how Hamas has swiftly recovered, replenished its depleted ranks with new recruits, and resumed governing should all be taken with a grain of salt. It has not renewed any of its military capabilities and, for the time being, has not yet reformed its battalions. Nor has it resumed rocket production or tunneling work. The new recruits in the displaced persons camps have not been given any real training. Yes, Hamas has sent its police officers into the streets, continued to rob some of the humanitarian aid trucks, and shot its opponents, but its civilian apparatuses, including the municipalities, are operating on a very limited scale only.

Importantly, the local population has learned that it can both hate Israel and despise Hamas. Countless tweets and videos show that to be the case, and foreign aid workers have similarly reported this. Several clans in southern Gaza have formed armed gangs that are prepared to clash with Hamas operatives.

The [challenges Hamas is likely to face \(https://www.mako.co.il/news-military/2025\\_q1/Article-29f08efb5ce9491026.htm\)](https://www.mako.co.il/news-military/2025_q1/Article-29f08efb5ce9491026.htm) further down the road are formidable. The group may have a large amount of money, but

it has gotten that money by scalping goods at the civilian population's expense. Everyone knows this. It is clear to Hamas officials that no serious sum of money is going to be given to rebuild the devastated Gaza Strip as long as they remain in control of the enclave. They have been practically begging Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas to assume responsibility for administering Gaza, but the PA won't enter unless Hamas first disarms. Without the PA's involvement, neither the Emiratis nor the Saudis will open their wallets, and Israel isn't about to let Qatar sneak its way in. Hamas has no military option, and it is clear to them that the Israel Defense Forces will continue to hunt them down even after Israel withdraws. The Rafah border crossing will be under the strict supervision of an American company, and the Egyptians will be very cautious there.

Hamas officials have been asking themselves how they are going to cope with such impossible tasks, and they haven't come up with any answers yet. Iran won't swoop in to help, and Hezbollah is mired in its own troubles. The new regime in Syria didn't even issue a statement in response to the declared ceasefire in Gaza, and it hasn't had a single kind thing to say about Hamas.

Considering all the above, it is no wonder that Hamas's leadership overseas has begun to drown in a whirlpool of disagreements, under an all-but-unknown temporary leader (Muhammad Darwish) and a second-tier director of operations (Zaher Jabarin) who is plotting to force the old-timers out in order to succeed them. Their hope of setting the West Bank on fire has been met with staunch refusal from their supporters in the Hebron hills, and with vigorous counterterrorism operations by the IDF Central Command, complemented by PA security arrests.

Succinctly put: for those Israelis who have already begun to weep bitterly because Hamas survived and supposedly emerged with the upper hand, they should think again.

*Ehud Yaari is The Washington Institute's Lafer International Fellow and a Middle East commentator for Israel's Channel 12 television. This article was originally published in Hebrew [on the N12 News website](https://www.mako.co.il/news-columns/2025_q1/Article-3a5de1e2431a491026.htm) ([https://www.mako.co.il/news-columns/2025\\_q1/Article-3a5de1e2431a491026.htm](https://www.mako.co.il/news-columns/2025_q1/Article-3a5de1e2431a491026.htm)) and translated into English by Israel News Today. ❖*

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