

# 'The Son of Gaza', a narrative of Ismail Haniyeh

## International Desk

Hamas Politburo Chief Ismail Haniyeh was assassinated in Tehran in the wee hours of Wednesday, with Palestinians now calling him "The son of Gaza" over his sacrifices for the besieged enclave amid a chorus of grief and anger.

He is the second high-profile Hamas leader to be assassinated by the Israeli regime since Operation al-Aqsa Storm on October 7, 2023 after Salah al-Arouri's assassination in southern Beirut on January 2. Haniyeh was killed in an Israeli strike in Tehran along with a bodyguard early on Wednesday. The former Palestinian prime minister was in Tehran to attend the inauguration of Iran's new president, Masoud Pezeshkian, on Tuesday.

The Hamas leader had emerged as a major force in the Palestinian liberation movement and, like his colleagues and earlier generations of Palestinian politicians and activists, had long been in Israel's crosshairs.

Hamas announced his death on Wednesday, saying in a statement, "Brother, leader, mujahid Ismail Haniyeh, the head of the movement, died in a Zionist strike on his residence in Tehran after he participated in the inauguration of the new (Iranian) president."

Considered a pragmatist within Hamas and known for his calm demeanor, Haniyeh was born in 1963 in Gaza's al-Shati refugee camp to a family that had fled Ashkelon, several kilometers north of the occupied territory, during the creation of Israeli regime 15 years earlier.

As a young man, Haniyeh was a student activist at the Islamic University in Gaza City, where he studied Arabic literature. While at university

in 1983, he joined the Islamic Student Bloc, an organization widely seen as the forerunner of Hamas.

As a Palestinian uprising broke out in December 1987 against the Israeli occupation, known as the first Intifada (uprising), Haniyeh was among the youth taking part in protests. That was also the year Hamas was founded, with Haniyeh among its younger members. Intifada lasted until 1993.

During that time Haniyeh was imprisoned by Israel at least three times and then expelled to south Lebanon for six months. In 1992, after serving his longest sentence, a three-year stint, he was expelled to south Lebanon for six months along with hundreds of other members of Hamas, including senior leaders Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi and Mahmoud Zahhar, and members of other Palestinian resistance groups. He returned to Gaza in 1993 after the signing of the first Oslo Accord by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Negotiator Mahmoud Abbas. Haniyeh became a close confidant of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, Hamas's spiritual leader and founder.

After Israel released Yassin from prison in 1997, Haniyeh was appointed as his assistant. Haniyeh, then, became a target for assassination.

In September 2003, Haniyeh and Yassin survived an assassination attempt together, emerging alive from a house on which an Israeli aircraft had dropped a bomb. Yassin was killed a year later.

Haniyeh's prominence within the Palestinian movement increased in 2006 when Hamas participated in the Palestinian legislative elections for the first time since its founding.



In a surprising outcome, the group secured the most votes, dealing a setback to Fatah and elevating Haniyeh to the position of prime minister of the Palestinian Authority (PA).

The outcome caught the United States, which had called for the elections, unprepared.

Unhappy with Hamas' central role in Palestinian governance, Western governments halted aid to the PA, placing the body under severe financial strain. The US and many other Western governments view Hamas as a "terrorist" organization. Amid Western pressure and heightened tensions between Hamas and Fatah, PA President Mahmoud Abbas dismissed Haniyeh and dissolved his government. This resulted in an independent Hamas-led

government in Gaza in 2007, headed by Haniyeh.

As Hamas took over the government of Gaza, Israel, in cooperation with neighboring Egypt, imposed a siege on the enclave, which has continued for 17 years.

Appointed as head of Hamas's political bureau in 2017 and replacing Khaled Meshal, Haniyeh led Hamas' diplomacy from a number of locations, including Turkey and the Qatari capital, Doha. He served as a negotiator in ceasefire talks or engaged in talks with Iran, a key supporter of Palestinian liberation.

After the October 7 attacks on southern Israel, the Israeli regime made it clear that senior Hamas leaders were effectively on its hit list. Many

of Haniyeh's close relatives have been killed in Gaza since then. In April, three of his sons were killed in an Israeli airstrike that targeted their vehicle. Four of his grandchildren were also killed – three girls and a boy. In total, Haniyeh stated that 60 of his relatives have died in the past 10 months.

"All our people and all the families of Gaza residents have paid a heavy price with the blood of their children, and I am one of them," Haniyeh said in an interview.

Haniyeh's assassination marks the latest killing of a senior Hamas leader. Most recently, senior Hamas official Saleh al-Arouri was killed in January in an Israeli drone strike in Beirut.

## Political message of ...

Therefore, both the recent Iranian presidential election and the

Page 1 >

victory of a moderate president advocating dialogue and cooperation, coupled with the potential triumph of Kamala Harris in the US elections, have heightened concerns for Benjamin Netanyahu and his hardline cabinet.

As anticipated, Netanyahu will likely voice dissatisfaction and resentment regarding the establishment of a national unity government in Iran. Ongoing internal conflicts and daily disputes in Iran would present the most favorable scenario for Israel. It is natural for the US Democrats to undermine the campaigning efforts of Kamala Harris while bolstering those of the pro-Republican camp and Donald Trump.

Accordingly, the assassination of Haniyeh in Tehran, only hours after the presidential inauguration, should be evaluated within

this framework. Each time, Israel crosses a red line to keep Iran entangled in domestic discord and provoke a reciprocal reaction from Tehran, ultimately drawing the US into confrontation. In this context, the Democrats' position in the US elections is also weakened, paving the way for Donald Trump, who is closely aligned with Netanyahu.

It is known that the possibility of Haniyeh's assassination existed in other parts of the world, including Qatar. Even if the intention was to assassinate him in Iran, the question arises as to why this action was not taken in previous visits and instead occurred at the onset of the new government's term? In response, it should be said that the objective or message of the assassination of Haniyeh in Iran at this juncture was a political message, not necessarily a mere assassination. Tel Aviv sends this message to Iran that it is capable of such ac-

tions in the capital of Iran, disregarding all international laws, norms of international relations, and even political considerations. Tel Aviv expects Iran to respond seriously and reciprocally to this crime, diverting public attention and political forums from Gaza's atrocities towards Iran and somehow dragging the US into a confrontation with Iran.

The reality is that Israel has crossed Iran's red lines, and thus, these actions cannot and should not go unanswered. The crucial issue is that this response should not align with Netanyahu's calculations and objectives. It is also evident from the positions of Iranian authorities and officials that they are attentive to this matter. Therefore, it is anticipated that Iran's reciprocal action, as necessitated by security and political assessments, will occur at an appropriate time and place. Undoubtedly, Iran will not play in Israel's game.

## A breach of security



By Syed Ali Hassan

Iran Daily's correspondent in Pakistan

### PERSPECTIVE

The assassination of Ismail Haniyeh, the head of Hamas's political bureau and a key figure in ceasefire negotiations, in Tehran is a significant blow to global politics and diplomacy. It is widely believed that Israel, with the collaboration of Mossad, CIA, and MI6, executed this assassination. Planning for the assassination of Haniyeh and other key Hamas leaders has been ongoing for several years, and the Israeli regime's targeted killings were a major reason behind Operation al-Aqsa Storm on October 7, 2023.

Attempts to target Hamas leadership were previously made in Turkey, but Ankara's security system thwarted these efforts and arrested both local and foreign agents. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had warned Israel that any attempt to target Hamas lead-

ers on Turkish soil would result in severe consequences for Israel. Despite such warnings, Mossad agents continued to plot assassinations in Turkey, which were again foiled by local authorities. Israel has also targeted resistance movement members in Lebanon, Syria, and Qatar. On October 17, 2023, Israel's special forces attacked the home of Haniyeh's family in Gaza, killing 14 people, including his brother and nephews, while they were sleeping. On April 17, 2024, during Eid al-Fitr, Israeli troops conducted a covert operation in Gaza's al-Shati camp, killing Haniyeh's three sons, Hazem, Amir, and Muhammad, as well as his three granddaughters and one grandson.

In a Facebook post, Haniyeh's eldest son confirmed the deaths of his brothers and expressed gratitude for their martyrdom. Hamas and Islamic Jihad displayed similar resilience following Haniyeh's assassination, vowing that Israel's cowardly attacks would only strengthen their resistance.

The killing of Haniyeh, considered as one of the best Palestinian diplomats, will impact cease-

fire negotiations and escalate tensions, for which Israel will have to face the consequences. This assassination, alongside the killing of a senior Hezbollah commander in southern Lebanon, highlights Israel's relentless targeting of resistance leaders.

The Israeli media have reported on the success of the secret operation, but the incident exposes a significant breach of Tehran's security. This breach poses a severe challenge to Iran's security system, which must address the flaws in its air defense systems and counter the collaborative efforts of Israel, the US, and Europe. Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei vowed to deliver a severe response to Israel for Haniyeh's killing. He stated that Israel's actions indicate its desire to expand the war, which could lead to devastating consequences for Tel Aviv. Ayatollah Khamenei affirmed that avenging Haniyeh's blood is a duty as he was martyred on Iranian soil and that Iran will ensure retribution for this grievous act.