

Hamas Gaza chief to Israel: Don't test us again, next barrage will hit Tel Aviv

Yahya Sinwa brandishes handgun with silencer he says was taken from Israeli special forces; warns next time IDF troops enter Strip, they'll return only for 'thousands of prisoners'



In this November 16, 2018 image, Hamas's Gaza chief Yahya Sinwar holds up a handgun with a silencer he says was captured from Israeli special forces during a firefight in the Gaza Strip on November 11 (YouTube screenshot)

Hamas's leader in the Gaza Strip Yahya Sinwar on Friday warned Israel "not to test us again," saying the next rocket barrage from the territory would target Tel Aviv and other central cities with a potency that would "surprise" Israel.

He also warned that the next time Israeli soldiers entered the Strip, they would only return through a prisoner exchange for "thousands of prisoners."

Speaking at a ceremony honoring the seven gunmen killed during a firefight on Sunday with Israeli undercover special forces, Sinwar pulled out a handgun with

a silencer which he said belonged to one of the special forces troops.

One Israel soldier, identified only as Lt. Col. Mem, was killed and another injured in the fight.

Sinwar mocked Israel for assuming its decision to allow fuel and Qatari funds into Gaza before the latest flareup — as part of Egyptian-mediated efforts to achieve a long-term truce — would prevent his group from launching a large-scale attack against the Jewish state.

“What did the Israeli leadership think when it allowed in fuel and Qatari funds? ... That we would sell out our blood for diesel and dollars? They’ve been disappointed, and their goals have failed,” he said.

He said he had spoken to the leader of Hamas’s military wing the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Muhammad Deif. “Deif asked me to say that Tel Aviv and Gush Dan [the greater Tel Aviv area] are next. The first barrage to hit Tel Aviv will surprise Israel.”

Hamas military wing commander Muhammad Deif (courtesy)



Sunday’s raid gone awry led on Monday and Tuesday to an unprecedented barrage of rockets and mortar shells fired by Hamas and other terrorist groups from the Strip that brought the region to the brink of another war.

“Our hands are on the trigger and our eyes are open,” Sinwar said. “Whoever tests Gaza will find only death and poison. Our missiles are more precise, have a greater range and carry more explosives than in the past.”

Following the special forces operation, over 460 rockets and mortar shells were fired at southern Israel over the course of around 24 hours. The Iron Dome

missile defense system intercepted over 100 of them. Most of the rest landed in open fields, but dozens landed inside Israeli cities and towns, killing one person, injuring dozens and causing significant property damage.

In response, the Israeli military said it targeted approximately 160 sites in the Gaza Strip connected to the Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad terror groups, including four facilities that the army designated as “key strategic assets.”



Palestinians walk amidst rubble of a building that was destroyed in an Israeli air strike in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on November 13, 2018. (SAID KHATIB / AFP)

The fighting ended on Tuesday after a Hamas-announced ceasefire took effect, though this was not officially confirmed by Israel.

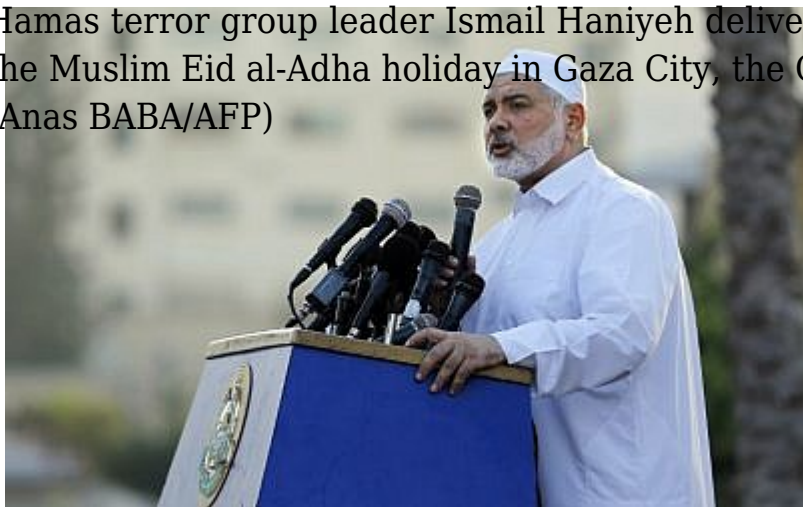
The decision to halt attacks on Gaza was criticized by many in Israel and was cited by Avigdor Liberman in his decision Wednesday to resign as defense minister, a move expected to bring early elections for the Knesset.

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh cheered Liberman’s resignation Wednesday, saying it marked an “admission of defeat” by Israel. Haniyeh also boasted that Hamas “achieved a military victory against this odious occupier in less than a week.

“A military victory occurred with the heroic performance of the Palestinian

resistance factions who responded to the occupier's crime and aggression with a response commensurate with its aggression," he said.

Hamas terror group leader Ismail Haniyeh delivers a speech on the first day of the Muslim Eid al-Adha holiday in Gaza City, the Gaza Strip, August 21, 2018. (Anas BABA/AFP)



The Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the second-largest terrorist organization in the Strip, similarly claimed the defense minister's sudden departure as a victory.

"Behold the political slaughter dealt to leaders of the occupation who aren't capable of dealing with Gaza," the organization's spokesperson said in a statement.

In his resignation, the defense minister decried the decision to accept a ceasefire from Hamas on Tuesday, rather than launch a larger counter strike, saying it was a "capitulation to terror."

He brushed off the arguments made by some defense analysts that the government refrained from conducting a campaign against Hamas in Gaza because it preferred to focus the military's intentions on threats in Iran, Syria and Lebanon. "It's all excuses," he said.

Source: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-gaza-chief-to-israel-dont-test-us-aga-in-next-barrage-will-hit-tel-aviv/>

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