

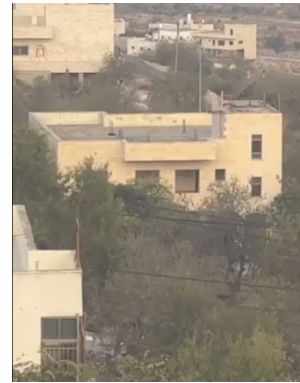


Profile of Saleh al-Arouri, a Senior Hamas Terrorist

November 3, 2023

Overview

▶ On the morning of October 31, 2023, in the village of 'Arura (north of Ramallah), Israeli security forces demolished the home of Saleh al-Arouri, deputy chairman of Hamas' political bureau and in charge of the Hamas terrorist activity in Judea and Samaria. Palestinians rioted during the activity, throwing rocks and IEDs at the forces, who responded with riot control measures. Al-Arouri has not lived in the house for the past 15 years. After the Israeli forces left, residents came carrying Hamas flags to express their solidarity and see the destroyed house up close (QudsN Twitter account, October 31, 2023).



(Right to left): Saleh al-Arouri's house. Center: the house being blown up. Left: Local residents with Hamas flags come to visit the ruins of the house (QudsN Twitter account, October 31, 2023)

▶ **Saleh al-Arouri is considered number two in Hamas.** He serves as deputy chairman of Hamas' political bureau and is responsible for Hamas' terrorist activity in Judea and Samaria. Al-Arouri is responsible for Hamas' military buildup, its entrenchment in Lebanon, and the strengthening of the movement's ties with Iran. He is known for his militant statements against Israel, in which he often called for the killing of IDF soldiers and settlers in Judea and Samaria. He is also known for encouraging the escalation of terrorist activity in Judea and Samaria and was behind many terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria, including

the abduction of the three youths in June 2014.¹ At the same time, he conducts political activity, including contacts with Egyptian General Intelligence. Since 2018, al-Arouri has also been wanted by the American State Department.

► In recent years, al-Arouri has been staying regularly in Beirut, in the southern suburb (al-Dahiya), which serves as Hezbollah's stronghold. By virtue of his stay in Beirut, he maintains and cultivates relations with Hezbollah and Iranian officials. Before the beginning of the Iron Swords War, he met several times with Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah, and it is not inconceivable that they discussed the details of the October 7 terrorist attack.

► Since the beginning of the war in the Gaza Strip, al-Arouri has continued to be interviewed by the media, especially al-Manar TV and al-Jazeera. He stressed Hamas' determination to wage a prolonged war against Israel. He said they were surprised by the IDF's response on the day of the attack. He also stresses the continuous coordination between Hamas and Hezbollah and other organizations. In a joint meeting he held with Hassan Nasrallah on October 25, 2023, together with Ziyad al-Nakhalah, secretary general of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, it was agreed to hold a daily and continuous update between them.

Who is Saleh al-Arouri



Saleh al-Arouri (al-Araby al-Jadeed, October 31, 2023)

► Saleh al-Arouri was born in 1966 in the village of 'Arura (north of Ramallah). He was one of the founders of **Hamas' military wing in Judea and Samaria in the 1990s**. He was arrested

¹ For further details, see the ITIC's Information Bulletin from August 24, 2014, "Saleh al-Arouri, Turkey-based senior Hamas operative who handles military-terrorist networks in Judea and Samaria, admitted that Hamas was behind the abduction and murder of the three Jewish youths from Gush Etzion."

by Israel in 1992 and sentenced to five years in prison for membership in a terrorist organization. Since then, he had served various prison terms. **He was released on March 30, 2010**, as part of an agreement signed with him after an 18-year prison term and deported from Israel. He **moved to Jordan and from there to Syria**.

▶ After he arrived in Syria, **Saleh al-Aroui resumed terrorist activity**. Upon his arrival in Syria, he was elected a member of Hamas' political bureau and received the "prisoners' portfolio," in which he took part in the negotiations that led to the **Gilad Shalit exchange deal**.

▶ When the Hamas leadership left its headquarters in Damascus after the outbreak of the civil war (2011), **al-Aroui arrived in Turkey and settled in Istanbul, where he established an alternative Hamas political office**. He continued to establish, finance, and strengthen Hamas' military infrastructure in Judea and Samaria. Since he arrived in Turkey, the office has gained power and status as Hamas' representation in Turkey, mainly because of Turkish President Tayyip Erdoğan's sympathetic stance towards Hamas (Shlomi Eldar's article, al-Monitor, December 1, 2014). **Under the guise of a Hamas representative in Turkey, alongside his activity in Turkey, al-Aroui also acted as head of the Judea and Samaria region at Hamas headquarters abroad, engaged in clandestine activity, mainly the establishment of terrorist networks and their operation in Judea and Samaria**.

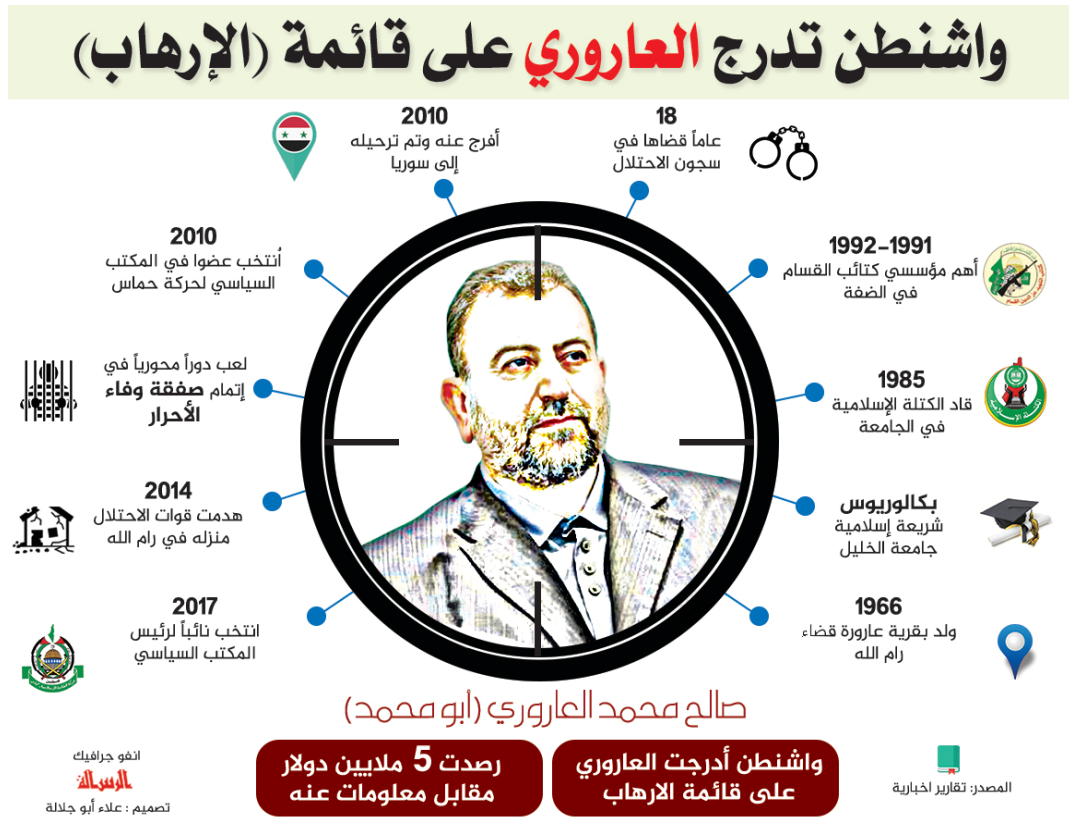
▶ On August 20, 2014, Saleh al-Aroui addressed the fourth conference of the World Union of Muslim Scholars held in Turkey, admitting that **Hamas' military wing was behind the abduction and murder of the three youths in Gush Etzion** (June 12, 2014). His remarks were read from a page in the name of Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal. They were apparently recorded without al-Aroui's knowledge, uploaded to YouTube, and received much attention. **It was the first time Hamas admitted involvement in the abduction and murder of the youths**.

▶ Prior to the signing of the reconciliation agreement between Israel and Turkey (June 2016), **al-Aroui was asked to leave Turkey**. He moved to Qatar for a short period but was forced to leave it (late 2016) due to the crisis between Qatar and Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. He arrived in Lebanon with several dozen Hamas operatives. He obtained the support and sponsorship of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and settled in the southern (Shiite) suburb of Beirut (the Dahiya, Hezbollah's stronghold in Lebanon). As a result, **al-Aroui**

became Hamas' main liaison with Iran and Hezbollah (Yoni Ben Menachem's article, Haaretz, January 21, 2018).

► **On October 9, 2017**, Hamas announced that during a meeting of the Shura Council, **Saleh al-Arouri had been elected deputy chairman of Hamas' political bureau** (Hamas movement website, October 9, 2017). Al-Arouri replaced Musa Abu Marzuq, who, according to the movement's regulations, could not be elected for a second consecutive term. **Thus, al-Arouri became Hamas' senior figure operating "abroad."** As part of his position, **he played a central role in the talks with Egypt on the reconciliation with Fatah and the lull arrangement with Israel** (until the start of the war on October 7, 2023).

► On November 13, 2018, at a press conference, the American Department of State announced the allocation of a cash reward of up to \$5 million to anyone who provided information leading to the identification and location of Saleh al-Arouri, deputy chairman of Hamas' political bureau, and two senior Hezbollah military operatives.²



Infographic published by Hamas' Alresalah newspaper detailing Saleh al-Arouri's resume (alresalah.net, November 19, 2018). The text underneath his picture reads, "Saleh Muhammad al-Arouri (Abu Muhammad). Washington put al-Arouri on the terror list and offered \$5 million in exchange for information about him."

² For further details, see the ITIC's Information Bulletin from November 28, 2018, "The American State Department offers a reward for information about senior Hamas figure Saleh al-Arouri"

► In August 2023, at a cabinet meeting, the Israeli prime minister threatened to assassinate senior Hamas figures, including Saleh al-Arouri, in light of the escalation in Judea and Samaria. In response to the prime minister's threats, Hamas issued an official statement stressing that the Israeli prime minister's threats to assassinate Saleh al-Arouri, deputy chairman of Hamas' political bureau, and the leaders of the resistance were hollow threats that did not and would not succeed in weakening the "resistance," and that Saleh al-Arouri and all his brothers and the Palestinians who stand firm "continue with determination and certainty to resist the occupation until all the legitimate rights of the Palestinians are restored, first and foremost the liberation of Jerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque" (Hamas website, August 27, 2023). At the same time as the Hamas announcement, social networks posted photos of Saleh al-Arouri talking on the phone in his office, dressed in military uniform and with an M-16 rifle on his desk. In the ITIC's assessment, these photos were intended to show Israel that he was not afraid of the threats to harm him.



Photos of Saleh al-Arouri in uniform with an M-16 rifle on his desk, published in response to the Israeli prime minister's threat (Shehab, August 27, 2023)

Relations with Iran and Hezbollah

► By virtue of his stay in Beirut, al-Arouri maintained and cultivated relations with Hezbollah and Iranian officials. A few weeks before the Iron Swords War, he met several times with Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah. It is possible that during these meetings the planning of the October 7 terrorist attack was also discussed. For example, on September 2, 2023, the two met. The participants in the meeting reportedly reviewed the latest political developments, particularly in "Palestine," and conducted a joint assessment of the situation in Judea and Samaria and the escalation of resistance there, as well as of the recent Israeli threats. It was also reported that the meeting stressed the **consistent and stable position of all the forces of the "axis of resistance" against Israel and the importance of daily and**

constant coordination and contact between the resistance movements, especially in "Palestine" and Lebanon, to monitor all political, security, and military developments and make the appropriate decision when necessary (Hezbollah's combat media arm, September 2, 2023).



Hassan Nasrallah meets with Ziyad al-Nakhalah and Saleh al-Arouri (Hezbollah's public relations website, September 2, 2023)

► On August 31, 2023, the Hamas leadership in Beirut, headed by Saleh al-Arouri, and the PIJ leadership, headed by Ziyad al-Nakhalah, met with **Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian**. The meeting was reportedly held behind closed doors. At the end of the meeting, the Iranian foreign minister stressed Tehran's adherence to its strategy of supporting the Palestinians, their resistance, and liberating the land. He mentioned Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's declaration of the need to support Judea and Samaria, and assured both leaderships that Iran would not back down from its choices in the Palestinian sphere and would continue to support the resistance forcefully. The senior Palestinian officials, for their part, stressed their adherence to the "resistance" as a strategic option for the Palestinians, a top priority at that stage (al-Mayadeen TV website, August 31, 2023).



The Iranian foreign minister meets in Beirut with the Hamas and PIJ leaderships. Al-Arouri sits on the right side of the picture (Twitter account of Hazem Kallas, head of AlarabyTV's Tehran office, August 31, 2023)

◆ **Also on October 25, 2023**, at the height of the war in Gaza, al-Aroui and PIJ Secretary General Ziyad al-Nakhalah met with Hassan Nasrallah, who reportedly reviewed the recent events in the Gaza Strip and on the Lebanese border. An assessment was carried out of the positions taken in the world and in the region. The three also discussed what the elements of the "axis of resistance" had to do at this stage to achieve a real victory for the resistance "in Gaza and Palestine." It was agreed to continue coordination and constant monitoring of developments on a regular daily basis (Twitter account of al-Manar TV correspondent Ali Shoeib, October 25, 2023).



Al-Aroui and Al-Nakhalah meet with Hassan Nasrallah (Twitter account of al-Manar TV correspondent Ali Shoeib, October 25, 2023)

► It should be noted that on October 7, 2023, the Hamas leadership “abroad” stayed together, apparently in Qatar, and received regular updates and reports on the attacks carried out by Hamas in the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip. The media released a photo showing them saying a prayer of thanksgiving (Hamas' Telegram channel, October 7, 2023).



The Hamas leadership, headed by Haniyeh and al-Aroui, celebrates the results of the attack on October 7, 2023, with a prayer of thanksgiving (Hamas' Telegram channel, October 7, 2023)

Saleh al-Aroui's statements and activity during the Iron Swords War

► Since the beginning of the war, al-Aroui has given numerous interviews and statements to the media. From his statements, it can be understood that he is very involved

in the moves, including the issue of abductees. He repeatedly called on the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria to join the campaign. Following are his main statements and activities since the beginning of the war:

◆ **In a telephone interview with al-Jazeera TV on October 7**, he reported that they had many Israeli abductees, including senior officers. He also noted that the number of abductees might increase as the campaign continued, stressing that the freedom of the Palestinian prisoners was very close and that Israel had to understand that there were red lines that should not be crossed. According to him, the al-Aqsa Storm was a response to the Israeli attacks against al-Aqsa Mosque, and the "resistance" preceded Israel in the operation, since it had information indicating Israel's intention to start a war against the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria after the Jewish holidays. He stressed that they were willing to pay the price of the campaign to gain freedom and defend the holy places. Al-Arouri stressed that they had a plan for every stage of the campaign, and if Israel wanted to stop, they had demands, and if Israel wanted to continue escalating, they knew how to act at all the expected stages (al-Jazeera TV website, October 7, 2023; Hamas' Telegram channel, October 7, 2023).

◆ According to him, the scenario of the IDF entering the Gaza Strip would be the best scenario for the "resistance" to decide the battle. He warned that the scenes of the storming of army camps and settlements would be nothing compared to what could happen to IDF soldiers if they entered Gaza. **Al-Arouri also called on the "resistance" fighters in Judea and Samaria to participate in the campaign and attack the settlers, stressing that Israel should not be sure that they would not confront it anywhere. He said he was sure resistance would escalate in Judea and Samaria against the settlers and the army.** He also stressed that Israel was right in its fear of the Lebanese front, because it was occupying part of Lebanon's territory, and that front might be active against it (al-Jazeera TV website, October 7, 2023; Hamas' Telegram channel, October 7, 2023).

◆ **In a telephone interview with al-Jazeera on October 12, 2023**, he claimed that the operation of Hamas' military wing was organized and the instructions within it were to attack the Gaza division, which is responsible for "crimes against the Palestinians." He said the operatives of Hamas' military wing were surprised that the IDF collapsed in less than three hours, faster than they expected. Al-Arouri ridiculed the IDF, saying that the

Israeli military did not even intervene to protect civilians in the "settlements.". According to him, 1,200 operatives of Hamas' military wing entered the communities and took over the Gaza division within a short time. Referring to Israel's attacks in the Gaza Strip, he claimed that "the occupation does not harm the military infrastructure of the resistance, but rather civilian areas and residential neighborhoods." He reiterated that the discourse regarding the abductees would take place only after the end of the fighting (al-Jazeera, October 12, 2023).

◆ In an interview with al-Manar TV on October 25, 2023, he said **they met on an ongoing basis and maintained continuous contact and deep and thorough coordination with all the "resistance" forces, with the brothers in Hezbollah and Hassan Nasrallah at their head, and the brothers in Hezbollah were involved in the campaign at all levels, military and political, and were an integral part of the campaign.** He said it was Hezbollah's campaign and that of the entire Arab and Islamic nation, just as it was Hamas'. He added that not all meetings with Hezbollah were held in public and that meetings were held at all levels. They met with Hassan Nasrallah on the first day of the war.

◆ Referring to the ground incursion (before it was carried out), he said the "resistance" was always preparing for worst-case scenarios, including the ground offensive, and even if Israel was superior in the air, it knew that if it carried out a ground incursion, a glorious new page would be written for the "resistance" and the Palestinians. The resistance fighters were prepared so that this would be the last page in this campaign, in which Israel would suffer an unprecedented defeat in the history of the conflict. He also said the Palestinians' desire to resist in Judea and Samaria would be expressed and they would settle accounts with Israel. He called on the "resistance" in Judea and Samaria to escalate its activity by all means. Regarding the issue of the abductees, al-Arouri said the foreigners detained with them were guests, but the Israeli prisoners would be exchanged for the Palestinian prisoners (al-Manar TV website, October 25, 2023).

◆ Al-Arouri called on the Yemeni people to continue acting in light of the escalation, noting that attacking American bases in Iraq and Syria was part of the campaign since the United States was a partner in the crimes committed by the enemy. Iran also stood by Palestine in word and deed (al-Manar TV website, October 25, 2023).