



The price Gazans pay for criticizing Hamas

November 18, 2023

Overview¹

- ▶ Since the beginning of the fighting in the Gaza Strip, and especially since the entry of IDF forces, the pressure on the civilian residents of the Gaza Strip has increased significantly. They are trying to cope with the price they have been forced to pay and to internalize the extent of the destruction caused by the IDF's massive attacks. A significant part of the public was forced to leave their homes, either to shelters or to the south of the Gaza Strip, and the number of casualties increases daily.
- ▶ While so far, the majority of the public does not dare to openly criticize the Hamas leadership, it has recently become evident that the Gazans are slowly realizing that **the Hamas leadership cares about itself and its image and does not care about the public's situation or fate**. In addition, **a number of senior terrorists have made statements denying responsibility for the condition of the local population**. The fact that a large part of the Hamas leadership is not in the Strip and does not experience the events clarifies the realization.
- ▶ So far, only a budding public protest can be discerned, and for the time being, it has no expression in establishment media. There are mainly unofficial statements from individuals, mostly on social networks, mainly by parties identified with Fatah in the Gaza Strip and the extent to which they have been circulated more widely is not clear.
- ▶ Nevertheless, the continuation of the ground maneuver in the Gaza Strip, the high level of casualties, the heavy damage to the infrastructure, the exposure of the use of the population by Hamas and other organizations as human shields and the weakness of Hamas, may lead the public in the Gaza Strip to understand the price of losing the war, and **criticism may gain momentum and even reach public expressions from authorized and influential sources**.

¹ Click <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en> to subscribe and receive the ITIC's daily updates as well as its other publications.

Further Information

Hamas' disgraceful activities

► Since the beginning of the IDF's ground maneuver in Gaza and the entry of IDF forces into the city centers in the northern Gaza Strip, **the familiar Hamas methods of using the civilian population as human shields have been revealed again.**² Hamas makes military-terrorist use of civilian and medical facilities such as hospitals,³ schools, churches and mosques while endangering Gazan civilian lives. In addition, Hamas tried to prevent the evacuation of residents from the north of the Gaza Strip to the south, refused to receive fuel to operate wards at the Shifa Hospital and there were rumors that Hamas operatives stole fuel from UNRWA which had been intended for the benefit of the Gazan public.

► Moreover, and in contrast to the situation in the Gaza Strip, the public **is exposed to the life of luxury led by the Hamas leadership abroad**, many of whom live in Qatar, Lebanon and Turkey, compared with the high price they force the Gazans to pay in the war. In addition, the Hamas leadership has made several statements which reinforce the feeling that the movement's leaders are shirking their responsibility for the population's welfare and care only about the military campaign. All of the above only serve to increase the public's feelings of having been abandoned and raise the level of criticism and anger towards Hamas.



Cartoons published in Arab media condemning Hamas for exploiting children as human shields and using Shifa Hospital for military purposes (azdy's Twitter account, November 11, 2023)

² For further information see the November 17, 2023 report, "[Hamas use of the civilian population as human shields and Gaza's civilian facilities for terrorism.](#)"

³ For further information see the July 2014 report, "[Hamas and the Other Terrorist Organizations in the Gaza Strip Use Medical Facilities and Ambulances for Military-Terrorist Purposes.](#)"

Statements by senior Hamas officials disclaiming Responsibility for the residents

►Interviewed by the BBC in Arabic, **Musa Abu Marzouq, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, was asked to comment on the fact that Hamas fought from a "vast and fortified" network of tunnels while the residents of the Gaza Strip stayed out in the open. In response, Abu Marzouq stated that the tunnels were built to fight Israel and asked the interviewer, “**Do you expect me to house 2.5 million people inside the tunnels?!**” (BBC website in Arabic, November 7, 2023).



Musa Abu Marzouq (BBC website in Arabic, November 7, 2023)

►Interviewed by the Newsmaker program (Russia Today website), he was asked whether Hamas was not responsible to protect the Gazan civilians, and why whoever built 150 kilometers (about 93 miles) of tunnels did not build places of refuge for civilians so they could hide from attacks. Abu Marzouq answered **they had built the tunnels to protect themselves from the airplane attacks and they fought from the tunnels. However, 75% of the residents of the Gaza Strip were refugees, and the responsibility for their protection rested with the United Nations.** He also claimed Israel was responsible for them, because according to the Geneva Conventions, Israel, as the “occupier,” had to provide them with services. Hamas' responsibility, he claimed, was to fulfill the wishes of the Palestinians and obtain their rights (Russia Today website, October 27, 2023).



Musa Abu Marzouq in an interview (Russia Today website, October 27, 2023)

Public Criticism of Hamas

►The Gazan public has begun showing signs of criticism, but only by a few individuals who dare to share their feelings here and there, mainly on social networks, without a wide public response:

►**Iyad al-Buzum, spokesman for the ministry of the interior in Gaza**, held a press conference at Shifa Hospital, when a Palestinian with a bandaged hand walked behind him and shouted "Allah will settle accounts with Hamas. I will complain about you to Allah, Hamas" (al-Arabiya TV X account, November 7, 2023). Al-Buzum stopped speaking for a moment but did not acknowledge the outburst.



Iyad al-Buzum's press conference, with the protestor waving his bandaged hand behind his head (Al-Arabiya TV X account, November 7, 2023)

►During a funeral held in Gaza, the mother of the deceased blamed Hamas for his death and shouted, "All this because of Hamas, [who are] dogs." The image of the woman was blurred when it was tweeted to X (Abd al-Aziz al-Khamis' X account, November 1, 2023).



A Palestinian woman blames Hamas for her son's death (Abd al-Aziz al-Khamis' X account, November 1, 2023)

► In another video which was uploaded to the X network, Gazans were recorded evacuating from the north to the south. One of the women in the group of evacuees said, "We have escaped death, thank Allah." Another man, introduced as Abu Hamza from the al-Shati refugee camp, who walked with the evacuating civilians, also criticized senior Hamas figures, saying "Abu al-Abd [Ismail Haniyeh] destroyed Gaza. You are the enemy agent, you and Mashaal are enemy agents" (OrientNews account X , November 9, 2023).



Sharp criticism of Hamas and its leaders from civilians evacuating to the southern Gaza Strip (OrientNews X account, November 9, 2023)

► A girl from the Gaza Strip was interviewed on Hezbollah-affiliated al-Mayadeen TV, and was asked: "What do you want to say to the Palestinian "resistance" [Hamas and the other terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip]?" She replied: "They are underground in the tunnels and we, the civilians, are victims. Young people, children and women." The segment was broadcast live but al-Mayadeen did not publish it on the social networks (Avihai Edri's X account, November 10, 2023).



A girl from Gaza condemns Hamas (Avichai Adrai's X account, November 10, 2023)

► On November 14, 2023, al-Jazeera TV showed a video of one of its correspondents interviewing a Gazan in the Shuhadaa al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir al-Balah. The Gazan criticized Hamas saying, "**Why are they hiding among civilians? Let them go to hell and hide there.**" The correspondent immediately took the microphone away from him (Amjad Taha's X account, November 14, 2023).



A Gazan criticizes Hamas to an al-Jazeera correspondent (Amjad Taha's X account, November 14, 2023)

► **After a speech by Ismail Haniyeh**, Muhammad Yahya, a Fatah supporter from Rafah, whose Twitter handle is "wounded by the lie of return," wrote that "there is a difference between standing firm and being forced to live in such a situation. People are afraid to speak, Mr. Ismail Haniyeh..." (X account of @Mohamedyahy1998, 26 October 2023).

► He later wrote, "How easy it is to talk about patience when the disaster is not yours" (@Mohamedyahy1998's X account, Nov 10, 2023). After Haniyeh's speech someone else wrote, "From the heart of the genocide... Garbage and slime on anyone who wants to speak on our behalf and does not live the genocide with us, he, his children and his wives (Kareem Jouda's Facebook page, October 26, 2023).

► A Fatah-identified tweeter published a video showing people lining up in the street to fill jerrycans with water. At the end of the video a man is seen holding a stick or a club and

threatening several boys. The tweeter wrote, “In addition to being the reason people are killed and the Gaza Strip is being destroyed, they carry clubs and beat people who are looking for a drop of water to drink!!” (X account of @Haniialhasn1999, November 12, 2023).



Pictures from the video (@Haniialhasn1999's X account, Nov 12, 2023)

►Another X account associated with Fatah wrote on the same topic, “Even during destruction and killing, Hamas members attack the displaced with clubs while they try to collect drinking water (X account @marasel_marasel, November 12, 2023).

►**Bassel al-Sharafi, coordinator of Fatah's Shabiba faction at the Islamic University in Gaza, had several thousand followers. Before his death on November 12,** he wrote on his X account, "Our vast nation is the real flood that will drown everyone. Anyone who trafficked it, and disregarded its right to life, and brought it to oppression, humiliation and death, will not be forgotten and will not be forgiven. We will reckon with the people close by [i.e., Hamas] before [we reckon with] the occupation" (Account X of Bassel al-Sharafi, November 8, 2023). On the day he was killed, a post appeared on his X account that read "The Oslo [Accords] returned 750,000 Palestinians to their homeland. Your Hamas displaced them. Abu Ammar [Yasser Arafat] restored Gaza. Your “resistance” brought the occupation back to Gaza. You have sentenced yourselves to death because you follow Khamenei and traffickers in your people" (Account X of Bassel al-Sharafi, November 12, 2023). This tweet, the last one before his death, received considerable criticism from people apparently affiliated with Hamas, to which Fatah activists replied.

►“Ghattas” responded to Michal, wife of Israeli President Yitzhak Herzog, who said one of her sons was fighting in Gaza, and wrote, "Isn't it a shame that her son is in Gaza and the children

of Haniyeh and Mashaal are in the Cevahir mall in Istanbul?" (X account of @Moraqeb2020, November 13, 2023) .

►In another tweet, he posted an aerial photo of the Gaza Strip before the war and wrote, "Imagine all this, which the people of Gaza dedicated their lives to building, went down the drain for a photo [taken] at Kissufim, a veiled threat from Muhammad Deif, a Muslim Brother driven by the desire to avenge his wife and children, hollow speeches from a veiled man who does not dare to reveal his face [Abu Obeida], and a third who is hiding and we have not heard from him for 37 days" (X account of @Moraqeb2020, November 13, 2023).



The photograph that accompanied the tweet (X account of @Moraqeb2020, November 13, 2023)

►In another tweet he wrote: "It doesn't matter if Netanyahu is lying or telling the truth, what is important is that he and his ministers go out every day to answer the public's questions themselves. Why? Because, quite simply, they have consideration for their people, while the one who carried out the [attack] on October 7, we haven't heard his voice since then, and the one who called himself the leader of Gaza even stopped speaking in the hotels. [That's] the painful truth" (X account of @Moraqeb2020, November 11, 2023).

►After a speech by Abu Obeida, spokesman for Hamas' military-terrorist wing, "Doha" wrote, "I was hoping Abu Obeida would apologize to the two million people who are bombed, destroyed, displaced and hungry, I hoped he would apologize to us and console us for what has been happening to us, and that he was sorry for dragging us into the war without providing us with the basic necessities of life. I'm from Gaza, and I don't care about victory at the cost of our blood, houses, money and lives. A video [documenting the activities of the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades] does not reassure me" (@Jo0Doha's X account, November 8, 2023) .

►Hani al-Hassan published an excerpt from a press conference held by Osama Hamdan in Beirut, and tweeted, "The world is being reassured that the state of the "resistance" is good.

But who protects the people and who meets their needs? Who takes care of them?" (X account of @Haniahasn1999, Nov 14, 2023).

►The price the Gaza Strip would pay for a POW deal was also criticized:

◆ Kareem Jouda wrote, "I wish for an exchange deal that would return 4,500 children to their childhood!! Return 3,500 women to their homes and their femininity! Return 4,000 teenagers to their youth, their dreams and their future, and return 2,000 men to their families!! Restore whole neighborhoods to us, with their residents sitting in their homes... Give us back a life that no longer exists...!! Please bring us back! There is nothing more important than bringing us back!" (Kareem Jouda's Facebook page, November 1, 2023).

◆ **Bassel al-Sharafi, coordinator of Fatah's Shabiba faction at the Islamic University in Gaza, who was killed on November 12**, wrote: "The Gazan people are not a commodity in the hands of anyone... and if the issue is prisoners... we don't want prisoners... ." (Account X by Bassel al-Sharafi, November 10, 2023).

◆ "Abu Kanaan" wrote, "Because of 5,000 prisoners, the lives of 2.3 million people in Gaza were destroyed!!! Give them back their prisoners and stop the war now. Al-Aqsa does not belong only to Gaza, and 5,000 prisoners are not worth more than 2.3 million people. We are dying and no one cares about us. Haniyeh and Mashaal are in a Qatar eating [delicacies], and I go out in the morning to look for water to drink" (X account of @hassanemad01, November 13, 2023).

◆ "Ghattas" wrote, "Haniyeh is hinting at a deal where a hundred Israeli women and children will be released in exchange for the release of all the Palestinian women and children, who number about 190. Does this man know that after the [reckless] adventure on October 7 there are now 2,070 prisoners in the West Bank alone?! Does he know that the number of dead in Gaza has exceeded 12,000?! Does he know that his [reckless] adventure is a failure and suicide by any standard?!" (X account of @Moraqeb2020, November 10, 2023).

◆ In another tweet, he wrote, "A simple Palestinian woman staying at Shifa Hospital appeals to Abu Obeida with a request to release the captives and stop the fighting. That is how the innocent in Gaza perceive the issue. As for the absent, the veiled Abu Obeida, who is also afraid to reveal his face after the death of 13,000 innocents, is the holy of

holies, and he speaks of it as if he does not believe in Allah and Judgment Day" (X account of @Morqeb2020, November 11, 2023).