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How did Hamas Overrun Israel's Gaza Division?

Al-Qassam Brigades' Battlefield Effectiveness and Obstacles to an Israeli Ground Operation

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Asymmetric War Between Israel and Hamas	1
The Qassam Brigade's Plan for the "Al-Aqsa Flood" Operation	3
A. Covering Fire	3
A. Short-Range Missiles	4
A. Long-Range Rockets	4
A. "Blinding the Enemy"	5
A. Opening the Gaps	5
A. Main Phase	6
How Fighters Were Mobilised	6
Obstacles Facing an Israeli Ground Operation	7
A. Mortar shells and close-range missiles	7
A. Anti-Aircraft Missiles	8
A. Reconnaissance and Attack Drones	8
A. Battle Tunnels: The Veins of the Resistance	9
A. Will and Determination Among Palestinian Fighters	9
Conclusion	10
Sources	10



Introduction

The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas, launched a lightning attack on Israeli targets near Gaza on 7 October 2023. Operation "Al-Aqsa Flood" delivered a profound shock to Israel. The main military targets were the headquarters of Israel's Gaza Division and related installations, but the fighters soon entered nearby kibbutzim. Despite facing an asymmetrical fight with the Israeli army, they captured dozens of soldiers and civilians and took them back to Gaza.

The attack highlighted the surprising combat performance of the Qassam Brigades despite the 17-year siege Israel has imposed on the Gaza Strip. The group has both developed its military capabilities and introduced new, home-made weapons into its arsenal. So what was the Brigades' operational plan? Furthermore, what military considerations could impose further costs on Israel in any ground operation it may carry out in the Gaza Strip?

Asymmetric War Between Israel and Hamas

Asymmetric warfare is a mode of military confrontation characterised by significant disparities between the adversaries in terms of strength, capabilities and training. In general, one side enjoys enormous military power, while the other party is relatively weak. This has applied to battles between the Israeli army and Palestinian forces throughout their history, most recently on 7 October. There is a major imbalance of power between the Qassam Brigades and the Israeli military in terms of capabilities, technology, resources and training.

In asymmetric wars, the weaker party often adopts unconventional tactics based on flexibility and adaptation, allowing it to change strategy quickly according to the nature of the battle. When attacking, it may resort to suicide attacks, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), rockets, homemade drones and other limited technologies that are available. When defending, it exploits its knowledge of the local environment, taking advantage of topographical and geographical features that enhance its defensive capabilities, and seeks to mobilise its fighters and bolster their commitment and morale.

Between 2003 and 2023, Israel carried out some 33 military operations in which the Gaza Strip was the main or exclusive target.¹ The most prominent of these, prior to 7 October, were in 2008-2009, 2012, 2014 and 2021. All these confrontations can be characterised as "asymmetric warfare",² given both the disparity between the belligerents in terms of their military capabilities and the tactics the Palestinian forces adopted in the face of Israel's brute force.

Despite Israel's military superiority (in terms of troop numbers, equipment and technology) and international political and media support (see Table 1), it has been unable to achieve decisive victories in

¹ For more on Israel's wars on Gaza, see: Majd Abuamer and Wadee Alarabheed, "The Israeli War on Palestinian Islamic Jihad", Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, Strategic Paper 6, 20/9/2022, 3-8, <https://www.dohainstitute.org/en/PoliticalStudies/Pages/the-israeli-war-on-islamic-jihad-in-palestine.aspx>.

² Rod Thornton, *Asymmetric Warfare: Threat and Response in the 21st Century* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007); Martin Van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: Free Press, 1991).

these battles. Nor has it achieved its stated goals of neutralising its adversary's infrastructure, weakening its capabilities or permanently deterring it from launching missiles deep into Israel. On the contrary, the Palestinian resistance in Gaza has grown in strength. Each instance of Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip has sparked a response from armed groups there, followed by a fragile truce mediated by regional states and world powers. The "Jerusalem Sword" battle of May 2021 marked a shift, however, as Palestinian forces in Gaza launched missile strikes in response to Israeli attacks on the city of Jerusalem.

Table 1: Disparities in Israeli and Palestinian Combatants' Military Capabilities

Area of Comparison	Israeli Soldier	Palestinian Fighter
Technology and Equipment	Advanced weapons (heavy and light machine guns, armoured vehicles, drones, helicopters, tanks, and advanced air defence systems). Israel's advanced missile defence system, the Iron Dome, ³ helps defend it from ballistic missiles.	Light and medium weapons: rifles, hand grenades, rocket systems and locally manufactured air defence systems. ⁴
Training, Expertise and Alliances	Israeli soldiers receive comprehensive, advanced training in modern tactics and techniques. The United States has sent two aircraft carriers, Iron Dome munitions, and F-15 and F-16 aircraft to support its current offensive. Britain has also sent two warships, a B-8 maritime patrol and reconnaissance aircraft, and a company of Royal Marines, while Germany sent two "Heron TB" drones. ⁵	Receive basic training, but not at the level of the Israeli army.
Logistical Support and Supplies	Has an extensive logistical structure and reliable supplies ensured by the state. In 2022, military spending topped 4.5% percent of Israel's Gross Domestic Product, amounting to some \$23.5 billion. ⁶	Struggles to obtain supplies and logistical support due to movement restrictions and limited resources.
Tactics and Strategies	Israel uses advanced military tactics in the air and on land and sea. It also has a network of international military alliances.	Unconventional, asymmetric warfare strategies that rely on flexibility and adaptation.
Organisational Structure	An army, navy and air force plus reserve forces numbering more than 300,000. ⁷	Armed groups that mimic regular armies, but whose capabilities cannot be compared to those of the Israel military.

³ Aisling Ní Chúláin, "The Iron Dome: How does Israel's Missile Defence System Work?" Euronews, 21/10/2023, accessed on 22/10/2023, at: <https://shorturl.at/iPS69>.

⁴ "Hamas' rockets: Qassam, Rantisi and Jaabari," Al-Jazeera, 10/7/2014, accessed 21/10/2023 (in Arabic), <http://bit.ly/2RNzJHj>.

⁵ "Germany to Support Israel in Its Defence Efforts with Two Drones, Minister Says," Reuters, 12/10/2023, accessed on 22/10/2023, <https://shorturl.at/adoKU>

⁶ Aaron O'Neill, "Israel: Ratio of Military Spending to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 2012 to 2022," Statista, 4/10/2023, accessed on 21/10/2023, at: <https://shorturl.at/fiNSO>

⁷ "Israel Drafts 300,000 Reservists as It Goes on the Offensive," Reuters, 9/10/2023, accessed on 20/10/2023, at: <https://shorturl.at/ntERZ>



The Qassam Brigades' unprecedented attack on the Gaza Division on morning of Saturday, 7 October, allowed the group to seize control of several military facilities and observation points around the Gaza Strip, whose main mission is to monitor and control Palestinian militants in Gaza. Palestinian gunmen also seized around 20 Israeli urban centres inside the Green Line.⁸ According to Israeli army statements, since October 7 the assault has killed 306 Israeli soldiers and officers, while Palestinian gunmen also captured 203 soldiers.⁹ In total, more than 1,400 Israelis were killed, including both civilians and soldiers.

The Qassam Brigade's Plan for the "Al-Aqsa Flood" Operation

The Qassam Brigades planned the Al-Aqsa Flood operation based on intelligence assessments, close study of the Israel military's formation, deployments and tactics in the "Gaza Envelope" area, along with analysis of the area and the effects that topography and the weather would have on the operation. The group also used deception at the strategic and operational levels by concealing its intentions, preparations and equipment as well as plans to mobilise its forces. This helped strengthen its operational posture and determine the most effective operational strategies.

The plan can be summarised as follows:¹⁰

Covering Fire

Palestinian fighters deployed rocket launchers at specific locations with the aim of pinning down military bases in the Gaza Envelope area, in order to support other operations by infantry and engineering forces. In the first stage of the operation, it fired some 3,500 rockets and missiles at Gaza Division installations, as well as hitting the Hatzor, Hatzerim, Tal Nof and Palmachim air bases. It also fired around 1,000 missiles at logistical support bases and used another 1,000 as covering fire for its forces as they attacked the Gaza Division headquarters.¹¹ It also used various air defence systems to protect its infantry forces as they moved in.

The Qassam Brigades were able to make use of advanced missile capabilities they had built up over the past two decades through local manufacture and smuggling, despite a suffocating siege on the Gaza Strip. These include:

⁸ "Al-Aqsa Flood Offensive: Israeli Strategic Failures in Gaza," Situation Assessment, Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 12/10/2023, <https://www.dohainstitute.org/en/PoliticalStudies/Pages/al-aqsa-flood-offensive-israeli-strategic-failures-in-gaza.aspx>.

⁹ "Israel Says Number of its Soldiers Killed Rises to 306 Since October 7," Al-Hurra, 19/10/2023 (in Arabic), <https://shorturl.at/kntG4>.

¹⁰ Details on the operation plan have been drawn from data and statements by The Qassam Brigades' commander Muhammad Al-Deif and its military spokesman Abu Obeida, as well as video recordings published by The Qassam Brigades via their official channels.

¹¹ "Statement by the Military Spokesman for the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades on the Course of the 'Al-Aqsa Flood' Battle," Al-Jazeera, 12/10/2023, <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2023/10/12/%D8%A3%D8%A8%D9%88-%D8%B9%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%AF%D8%A9>.

Short-Range Missiles

The manufacture and use of the Qassam 1 and Qassam 2 rockets, which were launched from both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank between 2002-2005, marked a major shift in the conflict between the Qassam Brigades and Israel. These missiles lacked guidance systems, were unable to reliably hit specific targets and inflicted only limited human and material damage on the Israeli side. Yet they had significant psychological impacts on residents of the settlements around the Gaza Strip. Official Hamas sources have not made public any technical information on these missiles, but a reference book on artillery missiles, published by the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI) in 2010, provided a table showing basic information about them, as follows:

Table 2: Successive Generations of Locally Made Qassam Missiles

	Qassam 1	Qassam 2	Qassam 3
Diameter(mm)	60	150	170
Weight (kg)	5.5	32	90
Length (cm)	79	180	>200
Range (km)	3	3-8	10
Explosive payload (kg)	1/2	10-20	10

At the start of the Al-Aqsa Flood operation, Hamas fighters used close-range Qassam missiles extensively, in continuous bursts targeting towns around the Gaza Strip. The group's commander, Muhammad Al-Deif, said that "the first strike on the positions of the Israeli occupation army and its airports, during the first 20 minutes of the operation, amounted to about 5,000 rockets and shells,"¹² mostly Qassams. The group also used Iranian-made Fajr-5 surface-to-surface rockets, which were first launched during the 2012 Gaza war. The Fajr-5 was designed in the 1990s and had a range of 40km, but by May 2006, the Iranian Aerospace and Aerospace Industries Company had developed a new generation with a range of 68 - 75 km. Hamas used these in battles with Israel in 2021 and 2023.

Long-Range Rockets

Hamas rocket-fire into Israel has not been limited to short-range projectiles. The group also launched large numbers of long-range rockets, many of which are symbolically named after Hamas leaders assassinated by Israel. They include:

¹² "Audio Recording of Qassam Commander Launching 'Al-Aqsa Flood' Operation," Al-Jazeera, 7/10/2023, <https://shorturl.at/kzV18>.



- M75: A rocket named for Ibrahim Al-Maqadma, who was assassinated in 2003. It has a range of 75km, and an explosive warhead weighing 70kg.
- R160: A rocket in memory of Abdel Aziz Al-Rantisi, who was briefly head of Hamas after the assassination of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin in March 2004 but was also killed by Israel the following month. The rocket has a range exceeding 120km and a payload weighing 45kg.
- J80: A rocket that commemorates the commander of the Qassam Brigades, Ahmed Al-Jaabari, who was assassinated in 2012.

The Qassam Brigades unveiled a new series of long-range missiles during the "Sword of Jerusalem" battle of 2021 and during Operation Al-Aqsa Flood. They are:

- The Al-Attar Rocket: named after the Qassam Brigades chief Raed Al-Attar. With a range of 120km, it carries a highly destructive warhead. It was first used to bomb towns on the outskirts of Jerusalem on May 10, 2021, in response to Israel's bombardment and destruction of residential towers in the Gaza Strip. It was then used against Tel Aviv and its suburbs.
- SH85: Named after senior Qassam military figure Muhammad Abu Shamala, assassinated in 2014, the SH85 has a range of 85km. The Qassam Brigades have used it against Tel Aviv and Ben Gurion Airport.
- Ayyash 250: This is the latest long-range rocket to be announced by Hamas, and the movement's longest-range yet. It is attributed one of the Brigades' most prominent militants, engineer Yahya Ayyash. It was first launched in the current confrontation on October 13, towards the northern Israeli town of Safed, some 211km from the Gaza Strip.

"Blinding the Enemy"

This phase of the operation consisted of neutralising Israeli surveillance towers, transmission towers, communications and jamming systems. This was achieved with drones, sniper fire, machine guns, anti-tank weapons and cyberattacks, rendering Israel unable to monitor Hamas fighters advancing towards the separation wall. It also helped to disrupt communications and coordination between different Gaza Division units, hindering their ability to send and receive orders and information, while compounding the elements of shock and surprise. This placed Israel on the back foot and made it difficult for it to counter the attack effectively, due to the sense of fragmentation and chaos arising from poor communications. The Qassam Brigades achieved all this largely thanks to defensive and offensive drones they had developed themselves.

Opening the Gaps

In this part of the operation, Hamas engineers punched gaps in Israel's separation wall to allow infantry forces to pass through. This created weak points in Israel's defences, helped break up its defensive formations and weakened its capacities. It also reduced the losses on the attacking side

in the early hours of the offensive, while Israel was still reeling with shock, making it difficult for the army to analyse the situation and implement an effective response.

It is worth noting that the steel wall is a highly fortified barrier equipped with state-of-the-art technology including radar systems, surveillance cameras and underground sensors. Israel built it along the armistice line with Gaza between 2018-2021, at a cost of some \$1 billion, using some 140,000 tonnes of iron and steel. It includes an underground concrete section one meter thick and dozens of metres deep to prevent any intrusion by Gaza militants digging tunnels. Yet all this was easily penetrated by the Qassam Brigades.¹³

Main Phase

Now, Qassam fighters advanced to achieve their main military objectives. These included storming military installations, engaging in gun battles with Israeli forces, clashing with Israeli soldiers and taking hostages back into Gaza, in a way that allowed fighters to move rapidly between locations and overcome obstacles. This phase of the operation was mainly carried out by land and sea forces, as well as a glider squadron.

The Qassam Brigades' ability to use gliders to land fighters behind Israeli army lines in the Gaza Envelope constituted a major intelligence failure. Moreover, despite being concentrated around the Gaza Strip, Israel's Iron Dome air defence system failed to intercept and shoot down these gliders before they reached their targets, largely because it is not calibrated to shoot down such aircraft flying at low altitudes.¹⁴ The operational plan included cutting off Israel forces' supply and assistance lines, and this phase included targeting Israeli reinforcements through drones and anti-armour weapons. It also included plans for communications, logistical support, media and operational command and control.

How Fighters Were Mobilised

Qassam deployed some 3,000 combat troops during the main phase of the operation, along with a further 1,500 fighters in support roles. They were mobilised in an organised and timely manner, and absolute secrecy right up until zero hour, when Al-Deif issued the order to start the operation. From the start, the operation was executed smoothly. All of the Gaza Division's 15 military positions were destroyed,¹⁵ and the ground attack extended throughout southern Israel.

¹³ Mayeul Aldebert, " Hamas Attack Against Israel: The Surprising Failure of the 'Iron Wall' Between Gaza and the Hebrew State," *Le Figaro*, 9/10/2023 (in French): <https://www.lefigaro.fr/international/attaque-du-hamas-contre-israel-la-faillite-etonnante-du-mur-de-fer-entre-gaza-et-l-etat-hebreu-20231009>

¹⁴ Saleh Al-Naami, "Gliders, a surprise attack tool of the Palestinian resistance: How did they evade the Iron Dome?," *Al-Araby Al-Jadid*, 8/10/2023, (in Arabic), <https://shorturl.at/fGLNU>.

¹⁵ "Statement by the Military Spokesman," *Al-Jazeera*.

Obstacles Facing an Israeli Ground Operation

The Hamas attack on the Gaza Envelope left Israel reeling, mourning major loss of life and the humiliation of its army and security establishment. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that Israel was in a state of war. The defence ministry called up more than 300,000 reserve forces in preparation for a war on the Gaza Strip, as well as mobilising forces on the northern border with Lebanon in anticipation, and to deter, another military escalation with Hezbollah.

An emergency government was formed in Israel as its forces pounded Gaza with zero regard for international law. Israel has targeted the civilian population of Gaza on land and at sea in a retaliatory operation that has killed thousands of people wounded many thousands more, mostly women and children. Entire neighbourhoods have been destroyed and the territory's health sector has collapsed, heralding a humanitarian catastrophe in the Gaza Strip.¹⁶ According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), one million people have been forced to flee their homes.¹⁷ Israel has mobilised a huge force around Gaza City in preparation for what Israeli political and military officials have indicated is the most likely scenario: a ground invasion of the Strip to wipe out Hamas. This raises questions over the obstacles that may hinder a successful ground operation, or at the very least, inflict a high material and human cost on the Israeli army.

Mortar shells and close-range missiles

Mortar shells and short-range rockets have posed a major challenge to Israeli forces in all their previous confrontations in Gaza and played a key role in the most recent battle, especially as the Israeli army does not have effective warning system against them. They also constitute a security threat to forces deployed near kibbutzim in the Gaza Envelope¹⁸ and residents who have been displaced from these areas *en masse* or are confined to shelters. Putting an end to mortar shelling would require a ground military operation to detect and target mortar positions. Such an operation would be risky and militarily costly to the Israeli army.¹⁹

Anti-Aircraft Missiles

Another factor increasing the complexity of ground operation is the Qassam Brigades' possession of "SA-7" anti-aircraft and anti-helicopter missiles, a lightweight, shoulder-fired, low-altitude surface-

¹⁶ "The Most Violent Night in Gaza... Dozens of Martyrs and Wounded in Unprecedented Israeli Bombing," 23/10/2023, <https://shorturl.at/vBCFP>.

¹⁷ "Situation Report 6 on The Gaza Strip & the West Bank," UNRWA, 16/10/2023, <https://shorturl.at/gJY07>.

¹⁸ Kibbutzes are Israeli agricultural and military settlements made up of Jewish farmers and workers in a cooperative residential gathering, with residents numbering between 40 and 1,500.

¹⁹ Ahmed Qasem Hussein, "The Qassam Brigades and the 'Sword of Jerusalem' battle: Possibilities for Relative Deterrence in Asymmetric Warfare," Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, Strategic Paper, 24/6/2021, (in Arabic), <https://www.dohainstitute.org/ar/PoliticalStudies/Pages/AlQassam-Brigades-and-the-Sword-of-Jerusalem-Battle-Possible-Retaliatioin-in-Asymmetric-Warfare.aspx>.

to-air Soviet missile system. It also has Rocket-Propelled Grenades (RPGs) and various munitions it obtained from Libya after the collapse of Moamer Gaddafi's regime,²⁰ as well as Kornet missiles²¹ which it first used in the Battle of Al-Furqan in 2008 and gave Palestinian fighters a comparative advantage in countering any ground attack. Militants in Gaza have demonstrated great skill in using the Kornet, a Russian-made portable anti-tank guided missile.²² The Qassam Brigades also in October unveiled the "Mutabbar 1" system, an air defence system.²³

Reconnaissance and Attack Drones

The Qassam Brigades' success in using locally made drones, even with standard capabilities, reflects the extent of effort they put into preparation for this battle. This enabled the group to combine its military efforts, political moves and psychological warfare against the Israelis, despite its own difficult circumstances. The Brigades have manufactured three versions of their own unmanned aerial vehicle, "Ababil 1". Their production was overseen by Tunisian engineer Muhammad Al-Zawari, who was assassinated on December 17, 2016. The models and their functions are as follows:

- A1A: Reconnaissance.
- A1B: Offensive (dropping missiles).
- A1C: Offensive ("suicide drone").

The Qassam Brigades' announcement that new types of drones had entered service, with advanced technological features, was a turning point in the "Jerusalem Sword" battle. Of course, these drones are not comparable to those that Israel produces and exports around the world. However, given the asymmetric military balance between the Palestinian resistance and Israel, they reflect the continuous efforts the Qassam Brigades has made to modernise and develop its capacities despite the stifling siege of the Gaza Strip.

The group has named its reconnaissance drone "Al-Zawari" and published aerial photos it took during reconnaissance flights over targets and sites including gatherings of Israeli forces and military vehicles inside Israel, before returning safely to base. Attack drones also bearing the name "Al-Zawari" entered service during the Al-Aqsa Flood assault, as did locally made "Shahab" attack drones, which targeted a gas platform off the coast of Gaza. These drones are launched from a type of catapult

²⁰ "The Head of Shin Bet Claims Hamas Has 8,000 Rockets and 15,000 Fighters," Palestinian Information Center, 2/6/2012, <https://rb.gy/km3h1>.

²¹ The Kornet is an anti-armor missile used against targets such as tanks, light armored vehicles, fortifications and low-flying air targets. It is made and developed by Russian arms firm KBP. It is laser-guided and semi-automatic. The shooter aims the missile at the target and directs the missile's aiming mark until impact. See: "Kornet-E 9M133 AT-14 Spriggan Antitank Guided Missile System," Army Recognition, 25/7/2018, accessed on 1/2/2020, at: <https://bit.ly/2vg44pf>.

²² "Al-Qassam Brigades Airls Video of Targeting of a Group of Israeli Soldiers with a Guided Missile," Al-Jazeera, 20/5/2021 (in Arabic), <https://bit.ly/3wE7c9n>.

²³ "Watch: Qassam Reveals Air Defence System in Service for the First Time," 9/10/2023, <https://shorturl.at/izAT0>.



platform which throws them into the air. They then fly in the direction of a pre-programmed target, finally hitting it and detonating their explosive warhead in a kamikaze mission.²⁴

Battle Tunnels: The Veins of the Resistance

The network of tunnels under Gaza has provided major protection to Palestinian fighters in Gaza, which has faced intense bombardment since the start of the war. They are no longer simply a means for carrying out combat operations behind enemy lines, but also an impenetrable fortress that helps protect Hamas political and military leaders and their operations room. The tunnels have reduced human losses among the Palestinian factions and helped avoid all but minor damage to their military infrastructure. According to the head of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Yahya Sinwar, by the end of the Sword of Jerusalem battle in 2021, there were more than 500km of offensive and defensive tunnels in Gaza, and they had only sustained around five percent damage.²⁵

The network of combat tunnels is an important consideration in any ground invasion by the Israeli army. The Qassam Brigades have demonstrated their ability to use these tunnels to carry out operations within Israeli urban centres. The tunnels also allow fighters to infiltrate behind the lines of invading forces, meaning they could attack them from the back during Israeli military operations against Gaza. The tunnels could also be used to take more soldiers hostage. The large, complex network underneath Gaza City would allow the Qassam Brigades to launch a counterattack in event that Israel launches ground operations in the Strip, as well as allowing its military and political leadership to manage the battle from a fortified, impregnable location.

Will and Determination Among Palestinian Fighters

Members of the Palestinian armed resistance are fighting on, and for, their land. While Gaza is a flat territory provides few of the advantages of other countries that have witnessed asymmetric wars, such as Afghanistan, Vietnam, and southern Lebanon, the fighters there know it well. They will try to harness that knowledge in their defensive operations by drawing Israeli forces into a "zero distance" fight in residential neighbourhoods, an extremely dangerous and complex operation for a traditional army facing non-state armed groups. Psychological and spiritual factors will also play an important role. Palestinians are fighting for their land, and they have no other. They are prepared to die for their homeland. Israeli soldiers are fighting to stay alive throughout the ground invasion, which also means that the psychological pressures on them mount every time the decision to launch such an operation is postponed.

²⁴ "Locally Made 'Shahab' Suicide Drone Brought into Use by Qassam in 'Sword of Jerusalem' Battle," Al-Jazeera, 13/5/2021 (in Arabic), <https://bit.ly/3zF1BI5>.

²⁵ "Sinwar: We warn the Occupation that the Decision to Remove it Depends on Whether Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa are Harmed," Al-Jazeera, 26/5/2021 (in Arabic), <https://bit.ly/3zvKu56>.

Conclusion

While the Israeli army and the Palestinian resistance are in a highly asymmetrical fight, Palestinian armed groups have accumulated enough experience to develop their own military and offensive capabilities. They achieved a major military victory in the early hours of the October 7 attack, in accordance with their operational plan. However, it is necessary to examine the weaknesses of this plan, particularly two major issues that led to confusion on the Palestinian side after the Israeli army absorbed the shock and prepared to expand its military action against the Gaza Strip:

Firstly, the entry of civilians from Gaza into Israeli kibbutzim, which sparked chaos and led to the detention of a number of civilians after Al-Qassam had taken control of parts of the Green Line area. The group may not have taken this possibility into account when developing its albeit elaborate military plan.

Secondly, the detention of a number of civilian hostages from the kibbutzim, as well as other hostages of various foreign nationalities. This now constitutes a military and moral burden on Hamas, which showed its confusion in the early days of the war until the Qassam Brigades' spokesman withdrew a promise to execute a civilian hostage were Israel to bomb Gaza without warning. Palestinians realise the power of Israeli propaganda, which focuses on demonising their struggle and linking the actions of Palestinian armed groups to the terrorist violence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS). Western media is heavily influenced by the Israeli narrative.

The resistance has sought to remedy this by showing willingness to release the hostages. It quickly released two American citizens through Qatari mediation. It also released two Israeli detainees (Yokheved Lifshitz and Nurit Yitzhak) for humanitarian reasons, after the Israeli occupation had previously refused to receive them via Qatari and Egyptian mediation. Accordingly, the release of civilian hostages may be a step in the right direction for military reasons. The resistance may however seek to leverage the soldiers it is holding, in any form of negotiation that could take place within the framework Israel's military actions and the Palestinian armed groups' management of the battle.

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