

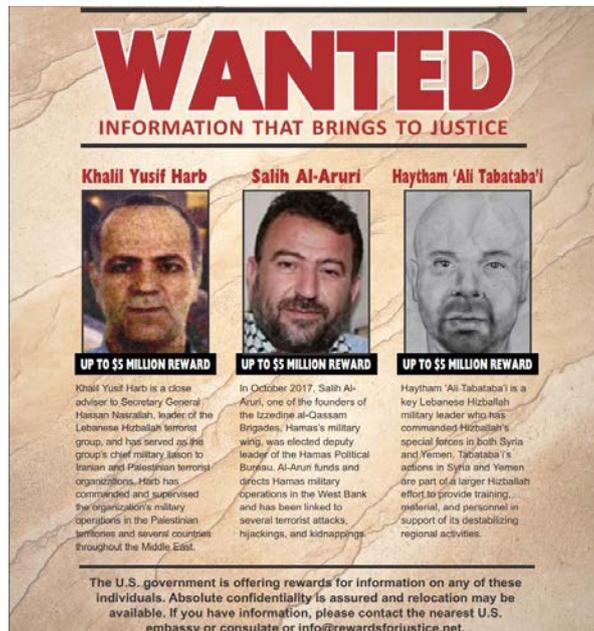


The American State Department offers a reward for information about senior Hamas figure Saleh al-'Arouri

November 27, 2018

Overview

The American State Department recently offered a reward of up to \$5 million for information that would lead to the identification or location of Saleh al-'Arouri, deputy head of Hamas' political bureau, and two senior Hezbollah military operatives. Saleh al-'Arouri is well known to the ITIC because of his senior position and extensive activities: he carries out ongoing political activity, recently meeting with Egyptian General Intelligence as part of the efforts to reach an arrangement and an internal Palestinian reconciliation; he is a key figure in forming ties between Hamas and Iran and Hezbollah, and deals with the construction and handling of Hamas terrorist infrastructures in Judea and Samaria. His central role in handling the Hamas terrorist networks in Judea and Samaria has often been shown by the exposure of Hamas networks by the Israeli security forces.



The State Department's Wanted poster, showing Saleh al-'Arouri and two Hezbollah operatives (rewardsforjustice.net, November 13, 2018).

► **Ali Baraka**, Hamas representative in Lebanon, claimed the American reward offer would not influence Saleh al-'Arouri's daily life or residence. That raises the question of **whether and to what extent the American offer will affect al-'Arouri's ability to conduct his**

extensive political and operational activity. In ITIC assessment the act of offering a reward, and the media coverage accompanying the announcement, are liable to raise certain difficulties for Saleh al-'Arouri in his daily life, and may induce him to raise the level of his security. However, **in ITIC assessment, it will not significantly affect his place of residence (Lebanon) or the way he conducts his activities,** for the following reasons:

- ◆ Saleh al-'Arouri's covert operational activities, including the handling of Hamas terrorist squads in Judea and Samaria (accompanied by the smuggling of funds and secret meetings with operatives), are **mainly carried out in Lebanon and Turkey.** In Lebanon, where he lives today, **he operates under the sponsorship of Hezbollah with no interference from the Lebanese government,¹ while in Turkey the authorities ignore his activities and those of Hamas² (because Turkish President Erdogan is sympathetic to the Hamas cause).** Therefore, there will probably be no fundamental change in the way Lebanon and Turkey relate to the activities of Saleh al-'Arouri, who in any case was designated as a global terrorist by the United States in 2015 (although both countries may try to downplay his activities and lower his media profile).
- ◆ **In ITIC assessment, al-'Arouri's connections with Iran and Hezbollah will not be affected.** On the contrary, the reward offered by the American administration may **raise his prestige in the eyes of his sponsors, Iran and Hezbollah.**

¹ Lebanon (with Hezbollah sponsorship) serves as the home and place of activity **for other senior Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) figures,** such as **Ali Baraka,** Hamas representative in Beirut; **Ziyad al-Nakhalah,** PIJ secretary general; and **Ihsan Ataya,** PIJ representative in Lebanon.

² In the past Turkey reject Israel's accusations that terrorist activities were being launched from its territory. However, the interrogations of terrorist operatives who were detained in Judea and Samaria **repeatedly indicated the central role of Hamas operatives in handling them from Turkey.**



Right: Saleh al-'Aroui meets with Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah (al-Mayadeen, November 1, 2018). Left: Saleh al-'Aroui (middle) with Ali Akbar Velayati, the Iranian advisor to the supreme leader for international affairs. The picture was taken during a visit to Iran where al-'Aroui attended a ceremony marking the tenth anniversary of the killing of Imad Mughnieh, senior Hezbollah terrorist operative. Also present was Qassem Soleimani, commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps' Qods Force (YouTube channel of Lebanese OTV, February 15, 2018).

◆ Al-'Aroui's visits to the axis countries, Iran and Syria, to meet and coordinate with senior figures, **will not be significantly affected**. In addition, in all probability **he will continue to visit Egypt and from there, through Rafah, to enter the Gaza Strip for talks about an arrangement agreement and the internal Palestinian reconciliation** (and later, for talks about other political issues on the agenda). A recent example was **his arrival in Cairo from Beirut on November 21, 2018, as head of a Hamas delegation** that met with Egyptian General Intelligence.



Saleh al-'Aroui (fourth from left), head of the delegation to Cairo. The picture was taken before they left the Gaza Strip (al-Quds Twitter account, November 24, 2018).

Reward Offered for Information about Saleh al-'Arouri

- ▶ On November 13, 2018, the American State Department held a press briefing where a **\$5 million reward was offered** for anyone who had information that would lead to the identification or location of **senior Hamas figure Saleh al-'Arouri** (and two senior Hezbollah figures, **Khalil Yusif Mahmoud Harb, and Haytham Ali Tabatabai**³).



The State Department press briefing where the reward was offered (State Department website, November 13, 2018).

- ▶ The State Department said the following about the terrorist activity of Saleh al-'Arouri: "After a brief split early in the Syria conflict, Hamas and Iran have rebuilt their relationship. Iran is once again providing Hamas with much-needed funding. Salih al-Aruri has been a major player in the Hamas-Iran relationship, serving as one of Hamas's key liaisons with Iran and playing an important role in the reconciliation between the two sides. As has been widely reported, Aruri is currently living freely inside Lebanon, where Hizballah's leadership has welcomed him with open arms."⁴
- ▶ According to the Wanted poster, "In October 2017, Salih Al-Aruri, one of the founders of the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas's military wing, was elected deputy leader of the Hamas

³ According to the State Department, **Khalil Yusif Mahmoud Harb** "is a close advisor of Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Lebanese Hizballah, and has served as the group's chief military liaison and Palestinian terrorist organizations. Harb has commanded and supervised Lebanese Hizballah military operations in the Palestinian territories and several countries throughout Middle East..." **Haytham Ali Tabatabai** "is a key Lebanese Hizballah military leader who commanded Hizballah special forces in both Syria and Yemen..." (<https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2018/11/287337.htm>.)

⁴ (<https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2018/11/287337.htm>.)

Political Bureau. Al-Aruri funds and directs Hamas military operations in the West Bank and has been linked to several terrorist attacks, hijackings, and kidnappings. In 2014, al-Aruri announced Hamas's responsibility for the June 12, 2014 terrorist attack that kidnapped and killed three Israeli teenagers in the West Bank, including dual U.S.–Israeli citizen Naftali Fraenkel. He publicly praised the murders as a 'heroic operation.' In September 2015, the U.S. Department of the Treasury designated al-Aruri as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) pursuant to Executive Order 13224..."⁵

► **Hamas and Hezbollah receive weapons, training and funding from Iran Saleh al-'Arouri is one of the founders of Hamas' military wing**, and today is deputy chairman of the movement's political bureau. **He lives in Lebanon and collaborates with Qassem Soleimani, commander of the IRGC's Qods Force**, and enlists funds and directs Hamas' military-terrorist activities in Judea and Samaria. He has been linked to several terrorist attacks, including abductions.

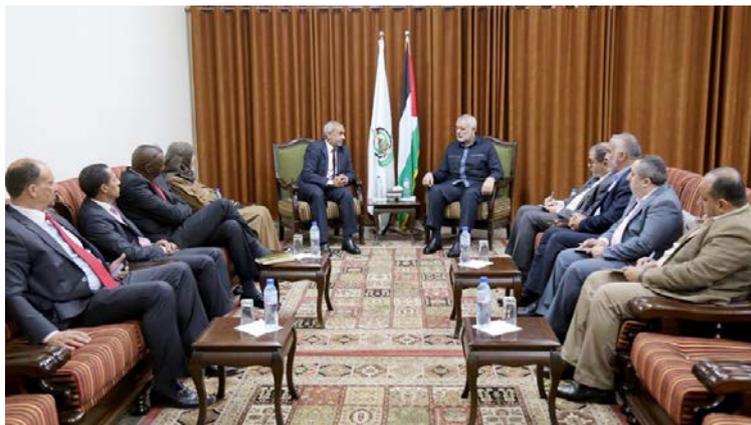
Palestinian Reactions

► Spokesmen for Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) condemned the American announcement and some of them claimed it was a green light for Saleh al-'Arouri's assassination. The Palestinian Authority (PA), as far as is known to the ITIC, preferred not to respond, while **a Fatah spokesman** condemned the United States and called on it not to interfere in internal Palestinian affairs.

► The main reactions were the following

- ◆ **Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau**, condemned the American announcement and warned that **any attack on al-'Arouri would change regional conditions**. He was speaking at a meeting held in the Gaza Strip with the South African ambassador to the PA (Hamas website, November 18, 2018).

⁵ https://rewardsforjustice.net/english/salih_al_aruri.html



Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau meets in the Gaza Strip with the South African ambassador to the PA (Hamas website, November 18, 2018).

- ◆ **Ali Baraka, Hamas representative in Lebanon**, said the American offer of a reward **would not influence al-'Arouri's daily life, positions or resident**. He said the offer was a green light for Israel and the United States to kill al-'Arouri (alresala.net, November 19, 2018).
- ◆ **Senior Hamas figure Isma'il Radwan** called on the international community to condemn United States' support for Israel (Palinfo, November 14, 2018).
- ◆ PIJ spokesman Da'ud Shehab condemned the American announcement, claiming that "al-'Arouri is a national symbol who does his duty for the Palestinian people" (Dunia al-Watan, November 14, 2018).
- ◆ **Muneir al-Jaghoub, head of the information office of Fatah's bureau of mobilization and organization (in effect, Fatah's spokesman)**, said the United States had become a rival of the Palestinians and based its actions on the needs of Israel. He called for a distancing from American policy and to fortify the internal Palestinian front so that the United States would not be able to interfere in internal Palestinian affairs (Dunia al-Watan, November 15, 2018).

Appendix

Milestones in the Career of Saleh al-'Arouri



Salah Muhammad Suleiman al-'A'rori (<http://www.imemc.org/>, June 20, 2014)

- ▶ Saleh al-'Arouri was born in the village of 'Aroura (Ramallah area) in 1966. He was **one of the founders of Hamas' military wing in Judea and Samaria during the 1990s**. He was detained by Israel in 1992 and sentenced to five years in jail for membership in a terrorist organization. Since then he has served additional jail terms. **He was released from an Israeli jail on March 30, 2010**, in an agreement signed with him after he had been in jail for 18 years. He was then expelled from Israel. **He went first to Jordan and then to Syria.**
- ▶ Once in **Syria he returned to terrorist activities**. In addition, once there he was elected to Hamas' political bureau and received the "prisoners' portfolio." **Thus he was involved in the negotiations that led to the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange deal.**
- ▶ When the Hamas leadership left their headquarters in Damascus, and after the Syrian Civil War broke out, **al-'Arouri went to Turkey and lived in Istanbul, where he opened an alternative Hamas political bureau**. In Turkey he continued his activities to establish, fund and strengthen the Hamas infrastructure in Judea and Samaria. His office in Turkey has gained strength and status as Hamas' legation in Turkey, primarily because of Turkish President Erdogan's favorable attitude to Hamas (article by Shlomi Eldar, Al-Monitor, December 1, 2014). **Under cover as Hamas' representative in Turkey al-'Arouri also operated as head of Hamas' Judea and Samaria external headquarters abroad. Within that framework he dealt with covert operations, especially establishing terrorist networks and handling them to carry out terrorist attacks.**

► On August 20, 2014, Saleh al-'Arouri gave a speech at the fourth conference of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, held in Turkey. **He admitted that Hamas' military wing was behind the abduction and murder of the three Jewish boys in Gush Etzion** (June 12, 2014). He was reading his statement from a notice written by Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal. He did not know he was being recorded, but the recording was uploaded to YouTube and widely covered. **It was the first time Hamas admitted its involvement in the boys' abduction and murder.**

► Before the signing of the reconciliation between Israel and Turkey (June 2016) **al-'Arouri was asked to leave Turkey.** He went to Qatar for a short time but was obliged to leave at the end of 2016 because of the crisis between Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States. Al-'Arouri went from Qatar to Lebanon with several dozen Hamas operatives, received sponsorship from Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, and settled in the Shi'ite southern suburb of Beirut (the Dahiya, Hezbollah's stronghold in Lebanon). **Following his move to Lebanon he became Hamas' main liaison with Iran and Hezbollah** (article by Yoni Ben-Menachem, The Marker, Haaretz, January 21, 2018).

► **Even after al-'Arouri was expelled, Hamas continued handling terrorist operatives in Judea and Samaria from Turkey (most probably with Saleh al-'Arouri's involvement).** For example, in April 2018 the Israel Security Agency thwarted terrorist attacks in Israel orchestrated by Hamas operatives in the Gaza Strip. Two of the handlers visited Hamas operatives in Turkey in 2017, where one of them received thousands of dollars. In February 2018 Israel detained Hamas operatives. During their interrogation it was learned that in 2012 one of them was asked to assist other Hamas operatives who had moved to Turkey. Another Hamas operative from the Gaza Strip received hundreds of thousands of euros from his handlers in Turkey for Hamas' military-terrorist infrastructure, and hid the money in Judea and Samaria (Jerusalem Institute for Strategic Studies, policy paper by Omer Dostri, "Hamas activities in Turkey against Israel," August 3, 2018).

► **On October 9, 2017,** Hamas announced at a meeting of its Shura Council that **Saleh al-'Arouri had been elected deputy head of Hamas' political bureau** (Hamas movement website, October 9, 2018). He replaced Musa Abu Marzouq, who according to the movement's bylaws could not be elected for a second consecutive term. **Thus al-'Arouri became the senior Hamas "external" figure as part of his position. He plays a central role in the talks with Egypt about the reconciliation with Fatah and an arrangement with Israel.**



Right: Saleh al-'Arouri (Hamas website, October 17, 2017). Left: Hamas announcement of his appointment to the position (Hamas movement website, November 9, 2018).

Infographic prepared by Hamas of al-'Arouri CV according to media reports



Hamas' newspaper al-Risalah prepared an infographic of Saleh al-'Arouri's CV (alresala.net, November 19, 2018). Under the picture it says, "Saleh Mahmoud al-'Arouri (Abu Muhammad). Washington put al-'Arouri on its list of terrorists and offered \$5 for information about him."

1966 – Born in the village of 'Aroura in the Ramallah district

BA in Islamic law from Hebron University

1985 – Was head of the Islamic bloc at the university

1991-1992 – The most important founder of the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades in the West Bank

Eighteen years in Israeli prisons

2010 – Released and expelled to Syria

2010 – Elected to Hamas' political bureau

Played a key role in completing the Gilad Shalit deal

2014 – IDF forces destroyed his house in Ramallah

2017 – Elected deputy head of Hamas' political bureau

ITIC note: The infographic does not mention al-'Aroui's central role as a handler of Hamas terrorist networks in Judea and Samaria, or his stay in Lebanon and his handling of terrorist operatives in Judea and Samaria from Turkey.