



Khaled Mashal, Hamas' "external" leader, is a controversial figure, as documented in documents found by the IDF in the Gaza Strip

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Overview

- ▶ Khaled Mashal, who has headed the Hamas “external” leadership since April 2021, is one of the founders of the movement, was head of its political bureau for 21 years. Nevertheless, he is considered a controversial figure who symbolizes the tension between the “external” leadership, which resides in luxury hotels abroad and moves freely between Arab states, and the “internal” leadership in the Gaza Strip, which deals with the daily challenges of governance and the consequences of military confrontations with Israel.
- ▶ Hamas documents found by the IDF during the war in the Gaza Strip provided evidence of power struggles in the movement’s upper echelons. The documents described how the “internal” leadership, led by Yahya al-Sinwar, sought to weaken Mashal’s influence in the Hamas decision-making centers, especially during the promotion of military plans to implement the vision of “the destruction of Israel” after Operation Guardian of the Walls in May 2021.
- ▶ The documents also showed Mashal was perceived as an obstacle to strategic relations with Iran, by both al-Sinwar and Ismail Haniyeh, and by Mohammad Saeed Izadi, head of the “Palestine branch” of Iran’s Qods Force, who even confronted Mashal directly.
- ▶ Mashal is also seen as responsible for Hamas’ expulsion from Syria because of his support for the rebels against the Assad regime at the start of the Syrian Civil War in 2011. The documents showed that the “internal” leadership and Iran worked to isolate Mashal during the reconciliation process with Syria as part of strengthening the “resistance axis.”¹
- ▶ With Ismail Haniyeh and Yahya al-Sinwar eliminated, Hamas is now led by a temporary committee of five senior figures, including Mashal. Elections for the senior positions in the movement’s leadership are expected to take place only after the end of the war in the Gaza Strip. However, in light of the eliminations of many members of the “internal” civilian and

¹ Iran, Hezbollah, the Palestinian terrorist organizations operating in Lebanon, the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria, and the Houthis in Yemen.

military leadership, the importance of the “external” leadership is expected to increase, particularly that of Mashal, who has lost his main rivals in the movement’s upper echelons. In addition, Iran’s regional weakening and the downfall of the Assad regime in Syria may also reduce opposition to Mashal’s power.



Khaled Mashal (Telegram channel of the Shehab News Agency, March 21, 2025)

Internal Hamas Criticism of Khaled Mashal

► Khaled Mashal, known as Abu al-Waleed, was born in a village near Ramallah. He was among Hamas' founders and has been a member of its political bureau since its inception, including as its head for 21 years. Since April 2021, he has led the Hamas "external" leadership and is responsible for matters such as political strategy, procurement of weapons and the movement’s foreign relations.² Despite his achievements, for years he has been considered a controversial figure, as since childhood he has lived only in Arab countries (Kuwait, Jordan, Syria and Qatar), unlike other senior figures in the movement who came up through the ranks in the Gaza Strip, many of whom took part in armed “resistance” against Israel and served prison terms in Israeli jails.

► Mashal symbolizes the ongoing tension between the movement’s “external” leadership and the “internal” leadership in the Gaza Strip.³ Despite dialogue and cooperation within the movement’s decision-making mechanisms of the Shura Council and the political bureau, there are significant disagreements between the “internal” leadership, which faces the daily challenges of governance in Gaza amid hardship and Israeli military pressure, and the

²For biographical information, see the Appendix.

³The “internal” leadership is based in the Gaza Strip and includes representatives from Judea and Samaria and from Hamas prisoners in Israeli prisons. The “external” leadership is currently based in Qatar with additional headquarters in Turkey and Lebanon. Representatives of the “internal” and “external” leaderships cooperate within Hamas’ decision-making bodies, the General Shura Council and the political bureau.

“external” leadership, which lives in luxury far from the front lines and travels freely between Arab countries while working to maintain the movement’s foreign ties.

► The gap between them has been particularly obvious after military confrontations in the Gaza Strip, when Gazans have to cope with the consequences of Israeli attacks while “external” leaders, headed by Mashal, are seen as unaffected. For example, when Mashal said on October 7, 2024, in a speech marking the first anniversary of the "al-Aqsa Flood" campaign, that the loss of life in the Gaza Strip was “only tactical,” Gazans, grappling with unprecedented destruction and death, were outraged. According to one response, “Mashal is the Pharaoh of our time, Gaza has been utterly destroyed, and of course he doesn’t care, since he is staying in a five-star hotel with his family, receiving a monthly salary from the Muslim Brotherhood and following Iran’s instructions to serve its agendas while betraying the Palestinian people and cause under the pretense of resistance” (al-Arabiya, October 7, 2024).⁴

► Hamas documents found during the war in the Gaza Strip provided evidence of power struggles in the movement’s leadership between the “internal” leadership, led by Yahya al-Sinwar,⁵ and the “external” leader, Khaled Mashal, particularly in view of al-Sinwar’s efforts to promote military plans to achieve the vision of “the destruction of Israel” following the Operation Guardian of the Walls in May 2021.⁶

► In a letter from Yahya al-Sinwar to Ismail Haniyeh on July 23, 2021,⁷ he addressed several issues concerning appointments within the movement’s political bureau, from which it is possible to infer an attempt to block Mashal’s influence within the movement’s executive body. Al-Sinwar said the Hamas Lebanon branch should be given one or two members representing the “external” area. He suggested that Abu Osama (Khalil al-Haya) speak with the “Brothers” in Lebanon to reach understandings that would ensure the continuation of the “path of resistance, liberation and return” to keep Hamas from becoming “a movement of offices, hotels and airplanes.” He also stressed the need to appoint Saleh al-Arouri⁸ as Haniyeh’s sole deputy

⁴ For further information, see the December 2024 ITIC report, [The Mood in Gaza on the First Anniversary of the Gaza Strip War](#)

⁵ Appointed head of the Hamas political bureau in August 2024 and killed by the IDF on October 16, 2024.

⁶ For further information, see the ITIC report, [Operation Guardian of the Walls as a watershed moment in Hamas’ strategy for the “destruction of Israel,” as reflected in documents found by the IDF in the Gaza Strip](#)

⁷ Haniyeh was eliminated by Israel on July 30, 2024.

⁸ A senior Hamas terrorist who was in charge of the Hamas military wing in Judea and Samaria and was deputy head of the political bureau. He lived permanently in Lebanon and died in a targeted killing in the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut on January 2, 2024.

since in a situation with three deputies, “our colleague” [i.e., Mashal] could be expected to exploit it and provoke crises and disputes.

Perhaps we have now secured the matter of the chairman, but as you know, as long as the position of deputy chairman is not guaranteed for Sheikh Saleh [al-Aroui], and our colleague fills it, or if the situation remains with three deputies, then our colleague will take advantage of it and begin to act as if he is the chairman of all chairmen, and we will find ourselves throughout his term [of office] in crises, [with] irregularities and endless disputes.

****** لعلنا الان قد أمنا موضوع الرئيس ولكن كما تعلم فما لم يتم تأمين نائب الرئيس للشيخ صالح وشغله صاحبنا أو تم ترك الأمر (ثلاثة نواب) فسوف يستغل صاحبنا ذلك ويبدأ بالتحرك وكأنه رئيس الرؤساء كلهم وسنجد أنفسنا طيلة الدورة في أزمات وتعديات ومزاحمات لا تنتهي.

Document 1: Letter from al-Sinwar to Haniyeh, July 23, 2021⁹

► In a letter al-Sinwar sent to Haniyeh on September 5, 2021, he addressed the issue of portfolios in the Hamas political bureau. Al-Sinwar referred to Haniyeh’s meeting with Mashal, where it became clear that the “external” leadership demanded the finance portfolio and the Arab-Islamic relations portfolio as a condition for holding any position in the bureau. Al-Sinwar stated that he was willing to give them the finance portfolio, but he wanted Khalil al-Haya (Abu Osama),¹⁰ his deputy in the political bureau in the Gaza Strip, to hold the Arab-Islamic relations portfolio because “it is not right that your foreign minister should be loyal to someone [meaning Mashal] other than you.”

► Moreover, al-Sinwar, who had already begun working to transform the vision of “the destruction of Israel” into a practical plan following the [so-called] “victory” of the “Jerusalem Sword” campaign (Operation Guardian of the Walls in May 2021), did not hide his anger at the “external” leadership headed by Mashal and warned that their demands could hinder the advancement of the “project,” especially in terms of fundraising. He also threatened that if the “external” members refused to accept the portfolios offered to them, they would be taken by

⁹ For the original document click [\[Document 1\]](#). The translated section is marked in red.

¹⁰ Khalil al-Haya currently [May 2025] serves as the acting head of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip and is responsible for the indirect negotiations with Israel regarding a ceasefire and a hostage deal.

“internal” figures from the Gaza Strip or Judea and Samaria, and the “external” leadership might be left out.

We have many tasks, obligations, and challenges ahead of us, and our Brothers “on the outside” must understand that we will not wait for them much longer. They must realize that the ship will sail with or without them. We prefer with them rather than without, but we will not disrupt our departure toward realizing strategic moves because of their attempts to interfere and turn issues into personal matters. If they persist in refusing to take the portfolios offered them, they will soon regret it and begin to withdraw one by one when they see that the ship has already sailed and left them behind, without regard for their hesitation and blackmail.

إن اماننا الكثير من المهمات والواجبات والتحديات، ويجب أن يفهم الاخوة في الخارج اننا لن ننتظرهم طويلاً، ويجب أن يعرفوا جيداً أن السفينة ستقلع بهم أو بدونهم، نحن نفضل أن يكون بهم وليس بدونهم، ولكننا لن نعطل إقلاعنا نحو تحقيق النقلات الاستراتيجية امام تعطيلهم وشخصنة الأمور، وهم إن أصروا على موقفهم برفض حمل الملفات المعروضة عليهم سيندمون بعد حين وسيبدؤون بالتراجع واحد تلو الآخر حين يرون ان المركب قد انطلق وقد تجاوزهم ولم يلتفت لترددهم وابتزازهم.

Document 2A: Letter from al-Sinwar to Haniyeh, September 5, 2021¹¹

Regarding the Arab and Islamic relations portfolio, there is no room for concession, and it can only be handed over to Abu Osama, Dr. Khalil [al-Haya], because it is not right for your foreign minister’s loyalty to be to someone else, otherwise all our efforts will be in vain. That is because Izzat [political bureau member Izzat al-Rishq] and Abu al-Waleed [Mashal] will empty most of the activity of its content, especially regarding relations and financial matters. You surely noticed Izzat’s arrangements for the meeting with [Turkish President] Erdoğan, when he did not include Sheikh Saleh [al-Arouri], the deputy head of the movement, in his arrangements, and this will gradually extend to the head of the movement as well. You know, and we all know, that Izzat will act only according to the agenda, instructions and policy of Abu al-Waleed, and then we will find ourselves facing a serious problem.

¹¹ For the original document click [\[Document 2\]](#). The translated section is marked in red.

الجود ، ولا اعتقد أن في ذلك مشكلة ، أما ملف العلاقات العربية والاسلامية فلا مجال للمعاملة فيه ولا يمكن إلا أن يسند لأبو أسامة د . خليل ، حيث لا يصح أن يكون وزير خارجيتك ولاؤه لسواك ، حينها سنكون قد صدق علينا المثل / يا ريتك يا أبو زيد ما غزيت ، حيث سيفرغ عزت وأبو الوليد غالبية العمل خاصة في موضوع العلاقات ، وما يرتبط به من الموضوع المالي من محتواه ، وقد لاحظت ترتيبات عزت للقاء أردوغان حيث استثنى في ترتيباته الشيخ صالح نائب رئيس الحركة ، وهو ما سيتدرج تدريجياً لاستثناء رئيس الحركة ، وأنت تعرف ، وكلنا نعرف أن عزت سيعمل فقط وفق اجندة وتوجهات وسياسات أبو الوليد ، وسنجد أنفسنا آنذاك امام مشكلة كبيرة ، لذلك لابد من حسم هذا الامر الآن ، ومرة أخرى فإن

Document 2B: Letter from al-Sinwar to Haniyeh, September 5, 2021¹²

► In a letter sent by Ismail Haniyeh to Yahya al-Sinwar on January 28, 2022, he wrote that he had met with Mashal and made it clear to him that his appointment as the head of the Hamas “external” leadership had caused problems, including in appointments within the movement’s leadership and even in relations with Iran. Moreover, due to concerns over Mashal’s growing influence, Haniyeh urged al-Sinwar to monitor members of the leadership in the Gaza Strip who accepted the “external” leadership’s position.

¹² For the original document click [[Document 2](#)]. The translated section is marked in red.

Abu al-Waleed sat with me and spoke about the matter. He mentioned their proposal, which recognizes the decision and the representation of the Brothers, but on the basis of equality. I emphasized our position and the need to respect the wording of the Shura [Council]'s decision exactly as written, and I repeated what you and I had proposed to him, that he should distance himself from the matter and not take it upon himself. He replied that the entire region supported the position. On a related matter, I pointed out to him that within the movement's circles and beyond people were saying his return had caused problems and obstacles which emerged during the elections for the chairman, the deputy and the advisory group, and in relations with Iran. I made it clear to him that it was eroding his credibility and damaging both his history and what he symbolized. In general, he said he would call you and the Sheikh [al-Aroui] regarding the advisory group and would then get back to me.

(3) أبو الوليد جلس معي وتحدث في الموضوع مشيراً إلى اقتراحهم الذي يقر بالقرار وتمثيل الأخوة ولكن على أساس التساوي، وقد أكدت عليه موقفنا وضرورة احترام قرار الشورى كما جاء في نصه وأعدت عليه ما نصحناه وإياك بأن يبتعد عن الموضوع وألا يتبناه ورد أن كل الإقليم مع هذا الموقف. وفي حديث متصل أشرت له ما بدى من كلام في أوساط الحركة وغيرها بأن عودة أبو الوليد أدت إلى مشاكل وانسدادات ظهرت في انتخابات الرئيس ثم النائب ثم العشرة ثم العلاقة مع إيران موضعاً له بأن ذلك يأكل من رصيده ويمس تاريخه ورمزيته، عمومًا هو قال بأنه سيجري اتصال معك ومع الشيخ بشأن العشرة ثم يعود لي. لكن أود أن تنتبه بأن هناك أصوات من غزة تدعوا إلى قبول اقتراح الخارج وتحدثوا مع أبو عمر حسن في ذلك وعليه الأمر يحتاج طرفكم إلى متابعة.

Document 3: Letter from Haniyeh to al-Sinwar, January 28, 2022¹³

Khaled Mashal as Disrupting Hamas-Iran Relations

► The violent takeover of the Gaza Strip by Hamas in 2007, while Khaled Mashal was head of the movement's political bureau, marked the starting point of the strategic relationship between Hamas and Iran. Hamas viewed Iran as a strategic pillar which would assist in its military buildup to continue the armed "struggle" against Israel, and support it politically and diplomatically to consolidate its rule in Gaza. Iran saw it as an opportunity to increase its

¹³ For the original document click [\[Document 3\]](#). The translated section is marked in red.

involvement in the Palestinian arena and establish a proxy on the front line of the conflict with Israel.¹⁴

► In December 2009, on the occasion of the 22nd anniversary of Hamas' founding, Mashal visited Tehran at the head of a Hamas delegation, a visit which officially cemented the Hamas-Iran relationship. In his meetings with senior Iranian officials headed by leader Ali Khamenei, Mashal expressed deep appreciation for Iran's support of the "resistance in Palestine" and pledged that Hamas would respond if Israel attacked Iran.¹⁵

► Mashal's praise for his hosts was not only intended to express the movement's gratitude for Iran's support, but also an attempt by the head of the Hamas political bureau to calm Iranian anger over remarks he had made a few weeks earlier. In a speech delivered in early October 2009 by Mashal to mark the conquest of Jerusalem by Salah al-Din, he used the term "Arab Gulf" instead of "Persian Gulf." Senior Iranian officials and media outlets sharply criticized him, with the reformist website Fararu publishing a headline: "Khaled Mashal repaid Iran for its love" (Fararu, October 3).

► Relations between Hamas and Iran were damaged after the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War in 2011, when Mashal expressed support for opponents of the Iranian-backed regime of Bashar al-Assad. As a result, the Hamas leadership was expelled from Damascus, with some, including Mashal, relocating to Qatar, while others settled in Lebanon and Turkey.¹⁶

► The IDF's Operation Protective Edge in the summer of 2014 presented Iran with an opportunity to rebuild its relationship with Hamas, which once again needed Iranian support after the blows it sustained during the operation and the fall of the Muslim Brotherhood regime in Egypt in the summer of 2013. The election of Ismail Haniyeh as head of the Hamas political bureau and Yahya al-Sinwar as head of the political bureau in the Gaza Strip in 2017 helped strengthen ties between the movement and Iran, as both men saw the strategic importance of increasing relations with Tehran and with members of the "resistance axis." That view was opposed by Mashal, who led the faction which sought to reduce Iranian influence over Hamas' decision-making.

¹⁴ For further information, see the November 2024 ITIC report, [Captured Documents Show Iranian Support for Hamas in the Gaza Strip](#)

¹⁵ For further information, see the December 2009 ITIC report, [Khaled Marshal, Chief of Hamas' political bureau, visits Tehran](#)

¹⁶ For further information, see the December 2011 ITIC report, [Hamas evacuates its Syrian external headquarters: overview and initial analysis](#)

►The Hamas documents show how the leadership, particularly al-Sinwar and Haniyeh, regarded Mashal as someone who could harm the strategic relationship with Tehran and disrupt the flow of Iranian funds. In a letter Haniyeh sent to al-Sinwar on February 1, 2022, he reported that the Iranians were unwilling to send funds for use by the Hamas “external” leadership and were willing to direct money only to Hamas' military wing. That came after they pointed to Mashal’s having led a smear campaign against Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah and Mohammad Saeed Izadi (Haj Ramadan), head of the "Palestine branch" of the Qods Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps.

I previously sent you a copy of my letter to Brother Abu Jawad [Maher Salah, member of the political bureau and former leader of the Hamas “external” leadership], and I also forwarded it to the Sheikh [Saleh al-Arouri] and to Abu al-Waleed [Mashal]. I also spoke with Abu Jawad and said that the Brothers in Iran were not interested in sending any funding to the “external” leadership, since from the outset their decision was to support the “resistance.” And as an exception, out of respect for the movement’s leadership, they agreed to deposit the money in the [movement’s] center. However, after what happened during the visit to Lebanon, the attack on them and on Sayyed Hassan [Nasrallah],¹ raising the issue of sectarianism, and the attack on Iran, the Shi’ites and on Haj Ramadan [Izadi] himself, they told us they found it unacceptable to continue funding people who, in return, cursed them and organized hostile campaigns against them. They [the Iranians] were referring to the “external” leadership, headed by Abu al-Waleed, as they know he is the one managing the campaigns and incitement against them.¹

كنت أرسلت لكم نسخة من رسالتي للأخ أبو جواد وكذلك أوصلتها لكل من الشيخ وأبو الوليد وأردفت بالحديث مع أبو جواد بأن الأخوة في إيران لم يكونوا في وارد أن يرسلوا للخارج أي تمويل لأن قرارهم بالأساس هو دعم المقاومة وتجاوزاً واحتراماً لرئاسة الحركة وافقوا على وضع المال مركزياً ولكن ما جرى في زيارة لبنان والتهمج عليهم وعلى السيد حسن واستدعاء الطائفية والهجوم على إيران والشيعة وعلى الحج رمضان نفسه أبلغونا بأنهم لا يمكن أن يستمروا في تمويل الناس ليشتموهم وينظموا حملات العداة لهم ويقصدون بذلك الخارج وعلى رأسه أبو الوليد فهم يعلمون بأنه هو من يدير الحملات ويحرض عليهم.

Document 4: A letter from Haniyeh to al-Sinwar, February 1, 2022¹⁷

¹⁷ For the original document click [\[Document 4\]](#). The translated section is marked in red.

►Concerns over Mashal’s involvement in relations with Iran intensified during the critical stages of preparing to advance the vision of “the destruction of Israel.” On March 6, 2023, al-Sinwar sent a letter to Haniyeh with points to be discussed at a planned Hamas delegation visit to Iran, part of preparations for the “campaign of liberation, return and destruction of the entity.” Given the importance of the visit, al-Sinwar recommended that to ensure its success no representative from the “external” leadership should be included in the delegation, stating that they “make a lot of noise,” particularly Mashal and Musa Abu Marzouq. Al-Sinwar went further and made it clear that Iran should be asked for a monthly sum of \$15 million for the years 2023–2024, stating that the Iranians had to promise that none of the funds would go to the “external” leadership or to any activity not directly related to the “resistance,” jihad or the needs and consequences of the armed “struggle.”

Therefore, I believe that for the visit to achieve the desired success, we must try not to include any of the loud voices from the external leadership in the delegation, not Abu al-Waleed [Mashal], not Dr. Musa [Abu Marzouq], not [Muhammad] Nizal, not al-Abed Salah. If someone must be taken, let it be Abu Jawad [Maher Salah], though it would be preferable that none of them come at all. And there must be no discussion about Abu al-Waleed or any attempt to repair the relationship with him. Any conversation about that period must be based on the logic that that stage is over and there is no need to even mention it. Raising the issue, by you or by any member of our delegation, will reduce the chances of the visit’s success by at least 60%.

-وعليه فإنني أرى، انه لكي يتحقق النجاح المطلوب للزيارة فيجب أن نحاول ألا يكون في الوفد أحد من الاخوة الصاخبين من الخارج لا أبو الوليد ، ولا الدكتور موسى ، ولا نزال ، ولا أبو العبد صلاح وإن كان من الضروري أخذ أحد فليكن أبو جواد والأفضل ألا يكون أحد منهم مطلقاً ، وألا يتم التطرق لموضوع أبو الوليد أو السعي لإصلاح علاقتهم به ، وأي حديث من تلك الحقة يجب أن يكون بمنطق أن تلك مرحلة خلت ولا داعي حتى للحديث عنها ،، إثارة هذا الأمر من طرفك أو طرف أحد أعضاء وفدنا يفقد الزيارة ما لا يقل عن 60 % من فرص النجاح المطلوب .

Document 5: Letter from al-Sinwar to Haniyeh, March 6, 2023¹⁸

¹⁸ For the original document click [\[Document 5\]](#). The translated section is marked in red.

►The documents reveal how Izadi himself did not conceal his aversion to Mashal and sought to distance him and his supporters from Hamas' decision-making centers, so as not to obstruct Iranian influence over the movement. For example, in a letter dated July 12, 2021, Izadi informed al-Sinwar that he had raised the issue of Mashal in a conversation with Haniyeh. According to Izadi, Mashal was responsible for many failures and problems within the “resistance axis” and in practice had taken sides, creating a major problem for the “resistance,” for Hamas and for Iran. Izadi noted that he had done everything he could to reconcile with Mashal and had met with him several times, and even Qods Force commander Qassem Soleimani had met with him in Turkey, but to no avail. Izadi also praised Haniyeh for not hesitating to exclude Mashal from the Hamas delegation that went to Lebanon for meetings. Izadi accused Mashal of giving an interview on Radio Idlib, affiliated with the Syrian rebels, precisely when President Bashar al-Assad had sent positive signals toward Hamas, and also of giving an interview to al-Arabiya in which he “begged” for relations with Saudi Arabia despite its opposition to the “resistance,” thereby distorting the positive attitude of the Houthis and damaging the solidarity within the “resistance axis.”

My dear Brother,

Allow me to take this opportunity to speak with you about another matter which I previously discussed with our Brother Abu al-Abed [Haniyeh], and that is regarding our Brother Abu al-Waleed. I would like to state and clarify my position so that you are directly updated by us. Unfortunately, Brother Abu al-Waleed and his misguided policy are responsible for many of the failures and problems which occurred within the resistance axis because he did not fulfill his role and did not take advantage of his leadership and influential position. On the contrary, in practice, he chose a side and caused a major problem for the resistance, for Hamas and also for us as allies, supporters, helpers and loyal to him. Nevertheless, it is natural that there must be an atmosphere of forgiveness to address problems within the Islamic nation and within the Islamic house. To overcome the problems, remove the disagreements and address the disputes that greatly harmed the resistance axis, it is our duty to approach him and extend our hand to him.

أخي العزيز،

إسمح لي أن أنتهز هذه الفرصة للتكلم مع حضرتك بموضوع آخر سبق وتكلمت فيه مع أخينا أبو العبد وهو حول الأخ أبو الوليد حيث أريد أن أقول وأوضح وجهة نظري كي تكونوا على إطلاع وبطريقة مباشرة مننا. فمع الأسف الأخ أبو الوليد وسياساته الخاطئة فهو يتحمل مسؤولية الكثير من الإخفاقات والمشاكل التي حصلت في محور المقاومة لأنه لم يقدّم بدوره ولم يستفد من موقعه القيادي والمؤثر في عدة أطراف مختلفة في المنطقة، بل بالعكس فهو عمليا اتخذ طرف وسبب إشكال كبير للمقاومة وحركة حماس وايضا لنا كحليف وداعم ومساند ومخلص له، ولكن من الطبيعي ومن أجل معالجة الإشكالات داخل الأمة الإسلامية وداخل البيت الإسلامي فلا بد من وجود روحية للمسامحة، ومن أجل تجاوز الإشكالات ورفع الخلافات ومعالجة التباينات التي أضرت كثيرا بمحور المقاومة فمن الواجب علينا أن نتقدم منه ونمد أيدينا وهذا ما

Document 6A: Letter from Izadi to al-Sinwar, July 12, 2021¹⁹

► In the same letter, Izadi also made it clear that although an agreement had been reached to establish a Hamas military force in Lebanon, the Iranians did not allow Mashal to be responsible for it because they did not trust him. They wanted the Hamas military wing in the Gaza Strip to take charge of the Lebanese force. He even requested that al-Sinwar, along with Muhammad Deif, commander of the Hamas military wing in the Gaza Strip, and his deputy, Marwan Issa, be involved in handling the dispute with Mashal over control of the military force in Lebanon, and not only Ismail Haniyeh.

¹⁹ For the original document click [[Document 6](#)]. The translated section is marked in red.

My dear Brother,

Previously, an agreement was reached with the military Brothers in the “external” leadership that there would be a Hamas force, whether defensive or offensive, especially at this current stage and following the consequences of the Jerusalem Sword campaign, which demonstrated the need for this project more than ever before. However, our position is that we cannot accept a situation in which this force is under the command of Abu al-Waleed, as he is responsible for the “external” arena, due to the reasons mentioned and also reasons we chose to ignore and did not mention in this letter. We will not accept a situation in which the leadership of this group is handed over to a person with whom we have previous experience and again current experience of his poor positions and decisions, which caused us distress. We cannot trust him. I updated Abu al-Abed on this matter and proposed that the group be under the command of the al-Qassam Brigades in Gaza and managed by them, and that they appoint a commander and person in charge from their side to handle all the details. We did not speak with the Brothers in the field and left the resolution of the matter to the leadership.

الأخ الحبيب،

سابقاً حصل إتفاق مع الاخوة العسكر في الخارج بأن يكون هناك تشكيل لحماس سواء دفاعي أو هجومي وخاصة في هذه المرحلة الأخيرة وبعد تداعيات حرب سيف القدس التي بينت ضرورة لهذا المشروع أكثر من السابق بولكن عندنا موقف بأنه لا يمكن أن نقبل أن يكون هذا التشكيل تحت أمره أبو الوليد كونه هو مسؤول إقليم الخارج لما ذكرنا من أسباب وتغافلنا عن عديدة وكثيرة-لن نتطرق لذكرها في هذه الرسالة، فنحن لا نقبل أن نسلم قيادة هذه المجموعة الى جهة جربناها وجربت في الأونة الأخيرة بمواقفها وقراراتها السيئة التي أدخلتنا في مأزق ولا يمكن أن نسلم رقيبنا اليه، وأنا أبلغت جناب الأخ أبو العبد بهذا الموضوع وقدمت له إقتراحاً أن تكون هذه المجموعة تحت قيادة القسام في غزة وتتم إدارتها من طرفهم وهم يعينون مسؤول ومعني من طرفهم، ولكي نراعي الخصوصيات فلم نتكلم مع الإخوان في الساحة وتركنا معالجة الإشكالية الى القيادة.

Document 6B: Letter from Izadi to al-Sinwar, July 12, 2021²⁰

► Mashal sent a letter to Marwan Issa (Abu al-Baraa'), the deputy commander of Hamas' military wing, on May 22, 2022, updating him on a recent conversation he had with Saeed Izadi in

²⁰ For the original document click [\[Document 6\]](#). The translated section is marked in red.

Lebanon regarding organizing Hamas military activity in Lebanon. Mashal wrote that Izadi and Hezbollah had expressed strong interest in the project, but their voices became louder when it came to the central dispute over who would control the military activity in Lebanon. Mashal reported that Izadi strongly opposed his own candidacy or that the Hamas “external” leadership taking charge of the military activity and vetoed the involvement of Samir Fandi (Abd al-Aziz),²¹ and demanded that responsibility be placed with the leadership of the military wing in the Gaza Strip. According to Mashal, Izadi even threatened to shut down the project if his demand were not accepted.

9. Regarding the task, he [Izadi] said: I heard from you that you were appointed as the project coordinator [sic], and that means you will be the contact person between me and the committee. My position is clear: this formula is completely unacceptable. Sitting with them directly is better for me than with a mediator who puts pressure on me and on them. I know them well and know how to deal with them. I don't want a mediator. I want a commander who will lead the project on the ground and report to us, and you have agreed on an internal arrangement regarding your own relations. I told him that the idea of a commander from the “external” leadership on the ground is very sensitive and many people could find it unacceptable. He said: This is a project, and you must balance between the importance of the project and people's sensitivities. We discussed this matter at length, and he said: Don't pressure me. It's clear that you came very well-prepared. I will not accept a formula that doesn't state that the person appointed to command the entire project will be under the authority of the al-Qassam Brigades.

10. Regarding Brother Abd al-Aziz, he justified his refusal to discuss matters with him as a commander or key figure for the project by saying: There are two reasons. One is that Abd al-Aziz wants to build a force for Abu al-Waleed, and I find that unacceptable. The second reason is that Abd al-Aziz is, from a professional standpoint, inherently problematic. His military understanding is shallow and the project requires someone with a military background.

²¹ Samir Fandi was responsible for the operations of Hamas' military wing in Lebanon. He was eliminated along with Saleh al-Arouri in an Israeli attack on the Dahiyeh al-Janoubia in Beirut on January 2, 2024.

9. بخصوص التكليف: قال لقد سمعت منك أنك مكلف بأن تكون منسقاً للمشروع، بمعنى أن تكون حلقة اتصال بيني وبين اللجنة. كلامي واضح، هذه الصيغة مرفوضة تماماً، أن أجلس معهم مباشرة أفضل لي من وسيط يضغط عليّ ويضغط عليهم، أنا أعرفهم جيداً، وأعرف كيف أتعامل معهم، أنا لا أريد منسقاً، أنا أريد قائداً يقود المشروع في الساحة يكون مسئولاً أمامنا، وأنتم تتقنون على صيغة داخلية لعلاقتكم.

قلت له فكرة القائد من خارج الساحة فيها حساسية عالية جداً، وقد لا تكون مقبولة على نفسية الناس. قال: هذا مشروع، ويجب أن توازنوا بين أهمية المشروع ونفسيات الناس. تناقشنا في هذه النقطة كثيراً، فقال لي لا تضغطني، واضح محضر حالك كويس، أنا لن أقبل بصيغة لا تحمل معنى (أن الشخص المكلف قائد للمشروع كله) طبعاً في إطار مرجعية القسام.

10. بخصوص الأخ عبد العزيز برر رفضه التعامل مع مكافئ أو مرجعية للمشروع بالقول: هناك سببين، السبب الأول أن عبد العزيز يريد بناء قوة لأبو الوليد، وهذا غير مقبول عليّ، والسبب الثاني أن عبد العزيز أصلاً رجل من الناحية المهنية لديه مشكلة، فهمه العسكري ضحل، وهذا المشروع يحتاج لشخص لديهم فهم عسكري.

Document 7: Letter from Mashal to Marwan Issa, May 22, 2022²²

- The issue of Hamas' relations with Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria was one of the main points of contention between Khaled Mashal and the leadership in the Gaza Strip, as well as with the Iranian Qods Force. When the uprising in Syria began in 2011, the Hamas leadership in Syria, under Mashal, found itself caught between its ideological identity, aligned with the Muslim Brotherhood, which was persecuted in Syria and supported the uprising, and the fact that Syria was a Hamas center of support and activity. After Mashal criticized the Assad regime and refused to condemn the protests against it, the movement's leadership was expelled from Damascus and Mashal and other leaders were forced to relocate their activity and headquarters to Qatar and Turkey.
- The election of Ismail Haniyeh as head of the Hamas political bureau and Yahya al-Sinwar as head of the political bureau in the Gaza Strip in 2017 helped strengthen the movement's ties with Iran, as both viewed fostering relations with Tehran and members of the "resistance axis," including Syria, as strategically important. The desire to move closer to Syria became stronger after the "Jerusalem Sword" campaign in the context of measures to realize the vision of "the destruction of Israel."

²² For the original document click [\[Document 7\]](#). The translated section is marked in red.

► Saeed Izadi, head of the Palestine branch, led the reconciliation efforts between Hamas and the Syrian regime as part of consolidating the “resistance axis.” In a letter Izadi sent to Haniyeh on June 8, 2022, he warned against Hamas members attempting to sabotage reconciliation with Syria and cautioned that improper conduct could set the situation back years.

I warned the Brothers that there are some Brothers who agreed with you or were not firm when you made this decision in your discussion, but there are signs and examples indicating that there is a group of Brothers concerned that the matter will not be accepted smoothly. It is natural that there will be compliments and words meant to assist and reassure the leadership and the Syrian public sector that supports the regime, who hold a strict position on this issue based on evidence and proof confirming the involvement and presence of Hamas elements in fighting against the regime. I also reminded the Brothers that we made efforts, cleared the mines and paved the way, but from now on everything depends on you and how you handle this file, because with goodwill and the correct statements you will be welcomed by them, and matters will proceed smoothly and lead us to the desired outcome in the best possible way. But if the conduct is dry and unpleasant, it will not satisfy the regime and will set us back by years.

وأيضاً ذكرت للأخوين الحاج "أبو أسامة" والحاج "أبو حمدان" بأن الموضوع يحتاج إلى دراسة ودراية ودقة عالية من طرفكم بالتعامل أو بالتعاطي سواء في الرسائل أو الخطابات من المؤيدين والممهدين للطريق أو من الأشخاص الذين سيكونوا يصدون تخريب هذا الوضع، وقد حذرت الأخوة بأنه هناك البعض من الأخوة ممن وافقوكم أو لم يتشددوا عندما أخذتم هذا القرار في جلستكم ولكن هناك مؤشرات ونماذج بأنه هناك مجموعة من الأخوة معينين بعدم ترك الموضوع يمر على خير، ومن الطبيعي أن يكون هناك مجاملات وتعابير تساعد وتبعث بالطمأنينة عند قيادة وكوادر الشعب السوري المؤيد للنظام الذي عنده موقف متشدد من هذا الملف مستنداً على أدلة وإثباتات تؤكد التدخل والحضور لبعض العناصر من حماس في محاربة النظام.

كما أنني ذكرت للأخوة أيضاً بأننا سعيينا وتوقفنا في تفكيك الألغام وتمهيد الطريق، ولكن من الآن كل شيء يعود لكم ولطريقة تعاملكم مع الملف حيث أنه بالملاطفة والتعابير المناسبة من طرفكم تسبب القبول والترحيب من طرفهم وتمر الأمور على خير ونستطيع الوصول إلى النتيجة المطلوبة بأحسن طريقة ممكنة، وإذا كان هناك تعامل جاف وغير لطيف فيمكن أن لا يرضي النظام وأن يرجعنا سنوات إلى الخلف.

Document 8: Letter from Izadi to Haniyeh, June 8, 2022²³

²³ For the original document click [\[Document 8\]](#). The translated section is marked in red.

► Haniyeh responded to Izadi that they were indeed aware of “internal and external forces” trying to influence the movement’s relationship with Syria, but assured him that they would take action to create the “appropriate atmosphere” for making the decision to renew relations.

In light of what was stated in your kind letter, and considering that we are aware of the internal and external factors surrounding the relations, we will indeed make great efforts to build the appropriate atmosphere for the decision. We will always need to consult and cooperate on this matter, and we appreciate the efforts made by His Excellency al-Sayyid [Nasrallah] and the Syrian people, which contributed to creating a positive climate and openness for this relationship.

سعيد نصر الله
وأخذين بالاعتبار ما جاء في رسالتكم الكريمة، وحيث أننا ندرك العوامل المحيطة داخلياً وخارجياً حول العلاقة هذه، وبالتأكيد أننا سنبدل جهداً كبيراً لبناء البيئة الملائمة لهذا القرار. وسنكون دوماً بحاجة إلى التشاور والتعاون حول ذلك مقدرين الجهد الذي بذله سماحة السيد وأنتم مع الدولة السورية والذي اسهم في توفير المناخ الإيجابي والقابلية لهذه العلاقة.

Document 9: Letter from Haniyeh to Izadi, June 10, 2022²⁴

► Despite Haniyeh’s assurances, it became clear that the Hamas leadership struggled to contend with Mashal’s opposition to measures for reconciliation. In a letter Haniyeh sent to al-Sinwar on September 24, 2022, he stated that there was significant support within the movement for reconciliation with Syria, but he noted that Mashal and his camp opposed the move toward rapprochement and that the political bureau had to approve the decision to neutralize the objections of Mashal and his camp. Haniyeh stated that the majority of the Hamas leadership was on their side and that they would be the ones to determine the decisions and confirm their legitimacy to both the “internal” and “external” leaderships. He further noted that they knew how to deal with those who fomented trouble, and that he understood Mashal’s opposition to be personal, not ideological, claiming that the moment the Syrians opened the

²⁴ For the original document click [\[Document 9\]](#). The translated section is marked in red.

door to him, “he would run toward them.” Haniyeh also stated that Musa Abu Marzouq should be kept outside of Mashal’s influence, as he tended to be influenced by him.

In implementing the decision [reconciliation with Syria], we are relying on the following:

A. To ensure that the political bureau adopts the procedural steps of the decision in order to maintain institutional support and eliminate excuses from Brother Abu al-Waleed [Mashal] and his group. Although we know that the members of the “external” political bureau will oppose the steps, the majority is with us, and therefore we are the ones making the decisions and affirming their legitimacy in the eyes of internal and external parties.

B. There are those who repeatedly foment unrest and we know that they must be held to account. We understand that Abu al-Waleed’s opposition is personal, not principled, and that if the Syrians were to open the door for him, he would run toward them. Nevertheless, the current priority is to implement the decision and complete the step of the meeting with the Syrian president, in accordance with the proposal presented by His Eminence al-Sayyid [Hassan Nasrallah].

ونعتمد في تنفيذ القرار نعتمد على المحددات التالية:

أ. الحرص على اعتماد (ل ت) الخطوات الإجرائية للقرار وذلك لاستمرار الاسناد المؤسسي، وسحب الذرائع من الأخ أبو الوليد ومجموعته، ومع علمنا بأن أعضاء (ل ت) لإقليم الخارج سيعارضون كل الخطوات إلا أن الأغلبية معنا وبذلك نحسم كل القرارات، ونؤكد على قانونيتها أمام الجهات الداخلية والخارجية.

ب. هناك من يشاغب ونعرف أنه بحاجة إلى محاسبة وندرك بأن معارضة أبو الوليد هو موضوع شخصي وليس مبدئي ولو فتح السوريون له الباب فسوف يهول تجاههم، ولكن الأولوية الآن هي لتنفيذ القرار وإتمام خطوة اللقاء مع الرئيس السوري وفق الاقتراح الذي قدمه سماحة السيد.

Document 10: Letter from Haniyeh to al-Sinwar, September 24, 2022²⁵

Appendix: Portrait of Khaled Mashal

Biography

► Khaled Abd al-Rahim Ismail Abd al-Qader Mashal, known as Abu al-Waleed, was born on May 28, 1956, in the village of Silwad near Ramallah, then under Jordanian control. At the age of 11, following the Six-Day War and the occupation of Judea and Samaria, he fled with his family to

²⁵ For the original document click [\[Document 10\]](#). The translated section is marked in red.

Jordan and they later moved to Kuwait, where his father had worked as a farmer since 1957 and was also an imam in a mosque.

► He completed his elementary education at a school run by the PLO, with other Palestinians who had fled because of the war. According to him, that environment shaped the revolutionary-nationalist aspect of his personality. He then studied at a government-run middle school, and said he chose to remain in school rather than join his friends who left Kuwait to join armed Palestinian organizations in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon because he did not want to compromise his studies, as he was “an exceptional student.”

► During middle school, Mashal began to strengthen his religious awareness, and in 1971 he joined the Palestinian Islamic movement, the local branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. While studying at Kuwait University he founded the Islamic Justice List representing the Islamic movement, but claimed the student union elections were repeatedly postponed to prevent their participation. As a result, they established the Islamic League of Palestinian Students, which operated outside the official student union and gradually set up branches around the world.

► After graduating with a degree in physics in 1978 he taught physics for six years, leaving teaching to devote himself full-time to the Islamic Movement’s “project,” which officially became Hamas in December 1987. Mashal was among the first members of the new movement’s political bureau.

► The Palestinians were expelled from Kuwait in early 1991 because they supported Iraq after its invasion of Kuwait and during the Gulf War, and Mashal moved to Jordan. He was appointed deputy to Musa Abu Marzouq, who headed the Hamas political bureau, and after Abu Marzouq was arrested in the United States in 1996, Mashal was appointed as the bureau’s new head.



**Mashal with Hamas founder and leader Ahmad Yassin (bottom left), undated
(Facebook page of Al Jazeera – Palestine, December 14, 2021)**

► On September 25, 1997, the Mossad attempted to poison Mashal in Amman in response to a Hamas suicide bombing in Jerusalem. However, two Mossad agents were arrested by Jordanian police and were released only after the Mossad provided the antidote to save Mashal's life, and Israel released Ahmad Yassin, the founder and leader of Hamas, from prison. The event transformed Mashal from an obscure figure, despite his senior position in Hamas, into a well-known personality throughout the Arab world.

► After King Abdullah of Jordan expelled the Hamas leadership in 1999, Mashal and the Hamas "external" leadership relocated to Damascus. He remained in Syria under the protection of the Assad regime until the movement was expelled in 2011 because it supported the rebels in the Syrian Civil War. Since then, Mashal has resided in Qatar. According to unofficial estimates, his net worth is approximately \$5 billion (Globes, October 26, 2023).



Right: Mashal playing table tennis (Salam TV, March 4, 2013). Left: Cartoon of Mashal fleeing with sacks of money following the Sudanese authorities' decision to confiscate Hamas assets (Facebook page of Debanka Radio, Sudan, September 25, 2021)

► In 2004, after the assassinations of Hamas founder and leader Ahmad Yassin and his successor Abd al-Aziz al-Rantisi, Mashal became Hamas' de facto leader. He continued to head the political bureau until 2017, when Ismail Haniyeh was elected to the position. Mashal remained a member of the political bureau, and in April 2021 was elected head of the "external" leadership. Following Haniyeh's assassination in late July 2024, Mashal's name was mentioned as a potential candidate to return to the movement's top position. In the meantime, a joint Hamas leadership was appointed, led by Shura Council head Muhammad Darwish, and including Mashal, Khalil al-Haya, Hamas leader in Judea and Samaria Zaher Jabarin, and political bureau member Nizar Awadallah. The leadership body currently makes decisions and represents the movement in visits across the Arab world. Mashal is on the sanctions lists of the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. In September 2024, the United States

Department of Justice filed an indictment against Mashal and other senior Hamas terrorists for their involvement in the October 7, 2023 terrorist attack and massacre.



Milestones in Mashal's career (al-Risala, August 5, 2021)

- ▶ According to Mashal, since leaving his birthplace he returned for only a single two-month visit while he was a university student in 1975. He said that aside from the village of Silwad, he visited Jerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque, Nablus, Jenin, Nazareth, Haifa and Jaffa, but was unable to visit the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ On December 7, 2012, Mashal visited the Gaza Strip for the first time. He was received by senior Hamas figures in the Strip and honored with a military ceremony held by the Hamas military wing. The highlight of his visit was participation in a mass rally marking the 25th anniversary of Hamas' founding. Nearly a decade later, Mashal said that during the visit he had met with Muhammad Deif, commander of the Hamas military wing in the Gaza Strip, and even visited Hamas' tunnel system (Al Jazeera, August 14, 2022).



Right: Mashal kissing the ground upon entering Gaza at the Rafah Crossing (Hamas Forum, December 7, 2012). Left: Mashal with Ismail Haniyeh at the reception in Gaza (Al Jazeera, December 8, 2012)

Notable remarks

►An examination of Khaled Mashal’s statements over the years shows that his rhetoric changes to fit the occasion. On the one hand, he employs extreme and at times inflammatory language that emphasizes the concept of armed “resistance,”²⁶ typically when addressing Arab audiences. On the other hand, in interviews with Western media his rhetoric is more moderate to downplay or obscure Hamas' Islamist ideology and strategy aimed at the elimination of the State of Israel, presenting Hamas as pragmatic in an attempt to market the idea of a long-term truce and portray the Palestinians as perpetual victims of Israeli “aggression” and of “regional and international forces:”

◆In November 2009, at a meeting with several senior officials participating in the Arab Parties Conference in Damascus, Mashal said Hamas would continue to pursue the path of “resistance,” and that the movement’s main effort in the Gaza Strip was focused on military preparations, as Hamas was devoted to “resistance.” His comments were made during the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip after Operation Cast Lead” (December 2008–January 2009), which was progressing slowly, reflecting the Hamas leadership’s priority for its military buildup (Filastin al-Aan, November 12, 2009).



**Khaled Mashal at the Arab Parties Conference in Damascus
(Filastin al-Aan, November 12, 2009)**

◆In an interview with The New York Times in May 2009, tailored for Western audiences, Mashal presented Hamas as pragmatic, noting the movement’s [alleged] policy of “restraint” with regard to rocket fire from the Gaza Strip (New York Times, May 4, 2009). Yet only days later, in a speech commemorating two senior Hamas figures killed during Operation Cast Lead, he stressed that “resistance” had been and would remain Hamas'

²⁶ Anti-Israeli terrorism.

strategic alternative for reclaiming “Palestinian rights,” and that Hamas would make no concessions on the matter of “resistance” (al-Aqsa TV, May 7, 2009).

◆ In May 2011, during an attempted reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah, Mashal said the Palestinians were giving Israel a “final chance.” He called on Palestinians and the Arab world to formulate a new strategy, not a declaration of war against Israel, but rather adding “bargaining chips” (available to the Palestinians). Among the “bargaining chips” he listed were “resistance” (i.e., terrorism), “popular action,” opposition to the border security fence, conducting activities against Israel everywhere and using boycotts. He said the Palestinians had “a golden opportunity to pursue hostile Israel, the enemy of peace” (al-Sharq al-Awsat, May 9, 2011).

◆ Interviewed by Al Jazeera, Mashal emphasized that “resistance” in all its forms, especially armed “resistance,” was the Palestinians’ “right,” although he added that in the era of the Arab Spring there was a preference for “popular resistance” (Al Jazeera, December 26, 2011).

◆ During his first visit to the Gaza Strip in December 2012, he spoke at a Hamas rally celebrating the Palestinian “victory” in Operation Pillar of Defense and emphasized that Hamas would never recognize Israel. He also stated that “resistance”²⁷ was the path to “liberating Palestine” and that there should be no concession “on a single inch of the land of Palestine or on the [principle of] right of return.”²⁸ He called on Arab states to provide the Palestinians with weapons, financial support and political and public backing (al-Aqsa TV, December 8, 2012).

► On October 7, 2023, the day of the Hamas terrorist attack and massacre, Mashal was filmed with political bureau head Ismail Haniyeh and other Hamas leaders celebrating the massacre and holding a prayer of thanksgiving. Since then, Mashal has frequently given interviews to Arab media and delivered incendiary speeches calling for attacks on Israel:

◆ In his first interview after the attack, he claimed that Hamas and its military wing had acted because Arab regimes had “failed to defend al-Aqsa” from the actions of Israeli politicians Smotrich and Ben-Gvir. He further claimed that most of the hostages, over 200, were officers and soldiers, and that the number was sufficient to empty Israeli

²⁷ Terrorism and violence.

²⁸ The “right” of the Palestinians to return to their pre-1948 homes.

prisons of nearly 10,000 Palestinian prisoners. He added that Hamas had no interest in holding civilians, including those with foreign citizenship (al-Arabiya, October 19, 2023).

◆ In August 2024, in a speech in Turkey, he called for the renewal of suicide bombings. He said Hamas wanted to return to “self-sacrifice operations” because Israel was conducting an “open confrontation” with the Palestinians “on all fronts.” He called on everyone to participate in the “true resistance to the Zionist entity.” He accused the United States of being complicit in the “aggression” against the Palestinians, claiming it was calling for a ceasefire for electoral reasons and out of fear of being drawn into a regional war, while continuing to supply weapons to Israel (Hamas website, August 28, 2024).

◆ In a speech in Malaysia on October 7, 2024, marking the first anniversary of the war in the Gaza Strip, Mashal thanked Iran, the Houthis, Hezbollah and the Iraqi militias for supporting the war effort against Israel. He called on Muslims to wage jihad themselves with weapons and to open additional fronts against Israel. He called on the Arab states to provide financial support for Gazans “to ease their suffering,” claiming that the losses suffered by the Palestinians, especially the loss of life, were “tactical” only, while “the losses inflicted on the enemy were strategic” (Al Jazeera, October 7, 2024). Mashal’s remarks about “tactical losses” sparked outrage among Gazans and senior Fatah figures.



Mashal delivering a speech marking the first anniversary of the October 7, 2023 attack and massacre (Hamas in Judea and Samaria Telegram channel, October 7, 2024)

◆ In an interview with Reuters, Mashal said Hamas had lost some of its weapons but was continuing to recruit young Gazans and to produce a significant portion of its weapons independently. He said, “There are stages in which we sacrifice martyrs and lose part of our military capability, but the Palestinian spirit will rise again, like a phoenix.” He added that although Israel had managed to eliminate senior figures and achieve gains that may have restored its deterrent image, which had been eroded over the past year of fighting

in Gaza, in the end, “Israel will lose, and the image of victory will belong to Palestine, Lebanon and the resistance” (Reuters, October 8, 2024).

◆ In an interview with The New York Times, Mashal said that Hamas had the upper hand, that its leaders were not rushing into a ceasefire with Israel and they would not give up their demands for ending the war and an Israeli withdrawal. He said that at the beginning of the war, President Biden took a position similar to Israel’s prime minister, calling for the elimination of Hamas, but that Biden no longer spoke of eradicating the movement. Both the United States and Israel were now participating in indirect negotiations with Hamas, which, according to Mashal, proved that America recognized that Hamas was not going anywhere (New York Times, September 17, 2024). Later, Hamas released a statement expressing regret over the “distortion” of Mashal’s comments about the negotiations and blamed the Israeli government for “sabotaging” the negotiation process, calling on the media to avoid promoting Israel’s “false narrative.”

◆ Khaled Mashal delivered a eulogy after the death of Hamas political bureau head Yahya al-Sinwar in September 2024, claiming that the process al-Sinwar began on October 7, 2023, would continue until “the elimination of the entity [i.e., Israel],” and that he left behind only a physical vacuum. Mashal said the movement would not abandon his legacy and would continue to work toward a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip (Hamas Telegram channel, October 21, 2024). In another statement, Mashal said, “The enemy wanted al-Sinwar to have a bad end, but Allah chose for him a great end, he lived as a great man and died as a great man,” adding that the “Jerusalem Flood” campaign launched by al-Sinwar “shook the entity [Israel] with an earthquake that will destroy it” (Quds News Agency, October 20, 2024).

◆ In a speech delivered by Mashal at a reception in Egypt for Palestinian prisoners released from Israeli prisons as part of a hostage deal, he described the “Jerusalem Flood” campaign as “an earthquake that swept the region and gave life to humanity,” calling it “a flood of struggle and politics.” He added that the campaign proved that “the Zionist era is over” and called on Arab and Muslim states to join the “liberation project” (Hamas in Judea and Samaria Telegram channel, January 29, 2025).



**Mashal at a reception in Egypt for prisoners released in a deal with Israel
(al-Aqsa TV, January 29, 2025)**