The Gaza Strip Following the Killing of Yasser Abu Shabab

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December 8, 2025

Overview[1]

- On December 4, 2025, the death of Yasser Abu Shabab was reported. He headed the Popular Forces, a militia in Rafah which receives Israeli support and is considered Hamas' most prominent rival in the Gaza Strip. According to the militia, he was killed while trying to resolve a family dispute and it denied Hamas' claim of responsibility for the elimination of Abu Shabab, the most senior wanted operative in the Strip.
- Abu Shabab's deputy, Ghassan al-Dahini, was appointed the militia's new commander and said they would continue the campaign against Hamas. Leaders of other militias in the Strip that had cooperated with Abu Shabab also said they were committed to continuing in his path.
- In areas of the Strip under Hamas control, Abu Shabab's death was celebrated with the distribution of pastry and candy. Hamas and the "resistance factions"[2] claimed his death would be the fate of every "collaborator with the occupation." Hamas' ministry of the interior announced that it was granting all "collaborators" a ten-day period for "repentance" to turn themselves in.
- **In ITIC assessment, Abu Shabab's death will encourage Hamas to consolidate its security governance in the Gaza Strip, and may affect the motivation of some operatives of the Popular Forces and other militias opposed to Hamas. However, the genuine fear of Hamas revenge and the execution of anyone who turns himself in, despite Hamas' promises of "leniency," is expected to deter many operatives from surrendering to the "resistance." In ITIC assessment, the militias will continue to operate as long as Israel controls the area of the Yellow Line and provides them with room to maneuver, and as long as there is a chance that international pressure will force Hamas to disarm, even though Hamas will seek to disrupt the militias' activity and attack their operatives, especially militia leaders.**

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

The Death of Yasser Abu Shabab

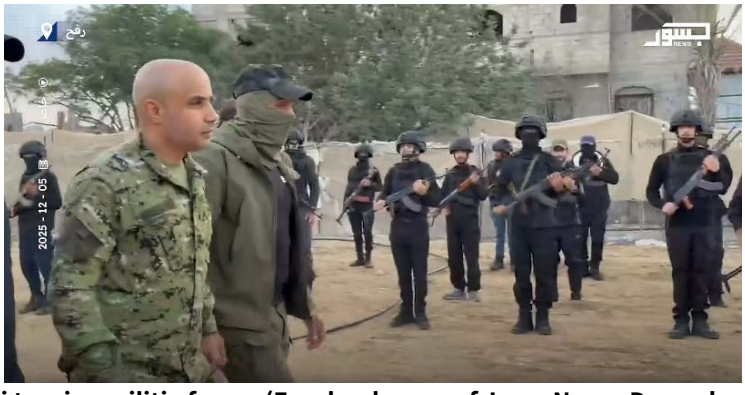
- On December 4, 2025, the death of Yasser Abu Shabab was reported. He was the leader of the Popular Forces militia operating in Rafah and was considered one of the most prominent power centers opposing the continuation of Hamas rule in the Gaza Strip. "Palestinian sources" said he was killed during a clan clash in the al-Shuka area in eastern Rafah, during an attempt to reach an understanding between militia members and members of the Abu Sanima family and to defuse tensions (Telegram channel of the Sahm Unit, December 4, 2025). The mukhtar of the Abu Sanima tribe, Hajj Attiya Ouda Abu Sanima, confirmed that members of the family confronted Yasser Abu Shabab and his group and killed him, thereby "recording a new chapter of pride and honor for Palestine" (Telegram channel of Hamas' al-Sayyad channel, December 4, 2025).

Yasser Abu Shabab (Abu Shabab's Facebook page, May 19, 2025)

- "Israeli security sources" said Abu Shabab was killed in a mass brawl that broke out between several factions within the clan due to a dispute over leadership and the division of geographic areas, and that he had been beaten and not shot or stabbed (Israeli media, December 4, 2025).
- The Popular Forces militia announced of the death of the "heroic shaheed," Yasser Abu Shabab. The militia denied that Hamas operatives had attacked Abu Shabab and stated that he was caught in the crossfire while he attempting to resolve a dispute within the Abu Sanima family. According to the announcement, militia members were committed to continuing his course of action "until the last terrorist disappears from the land of Gaza and until a bright and safe future is built for our people who believe in peace" (Facebook page of Abu Shabab's Popular Forces, December 4, 2025).

The funeral ceremony held for Abu Shabab (Shehab News Agency, December 4, 2025)

- Abu Shabab's widow said that he was killed while trying to resolve a dispute within the Abu Sanima family and said he "did not leave for battle, but on a mission of peace." She added that her husband left behind an organization capable of continuing the national journey and his path would continue after his death (Facebook page of the Popular Forces, December 5, 2025).
- The militia then announced that Ghassan al-Dahini, who had served as Abu Shabab's deputy, was appointed the new commander of the Popular Forces. He was photographed visiting his forces and encouraging them to continue the fight against Hamas (Facebook page of the Popular Forces, December 5, 2025). Photographs were also published of al-Dahini next to the bodies of Hamas operatives who were killed after barricading themselves in tunnels in Rafah (Telegram channel of Prof. Azzam Abu al-Ads, November 6, 2025). Al-Dahini said he was not afraid of Hamas and the Forces were continuing the campaign against terrorism and working to prepare the ground for the establishment of a demilitarized zone (Telegram channel of journalist Isma'il Abu Amar, December 5, 2025).



Al-Dahini touring militia forces (Facebook page of Jasor News, December 5, 2025)

- Al-Dahini, 39 years old, belongs to the al-Tarabin Bedouin tribe, as did Abu Shabab. He served as an officer in the Palestinian Authority (PA) security forces until Hamas' takeover of the Gaza Strip in 2007. Subsequently, he was a commander in the Army of Islam, a small organization

identified with Salafi jihadist in Gaza, and was apparently involved in the kidnapping of BBC journalist Alan Johnston and other journalists.[3] Al-Dahini was imprisoned by Hamas for several years. His brother, who was active in the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), was arrested by Hamas and committed suicide or was killed in prison (Telegram channel of activist Hamza al-Masri, December 6, 2025).

- Leaders of militias which cooperated with Abu Shabab rushed to state that they would continue the fight against Hamas. Ashraf al-Mansi, who heads the Popular Army – Northern District, expressed his condolences for the death of Yasser Abu Shabab, who he claimed was killed by a stray bullet while trying to stop a dispute between two families in Rafah. He said that despite his death, the forces would continue to advance his national vision and act against terrorism, and he called on young Gazans to join the struggle (Facebook page of the Popular Army – Northern District, December 5, 2025). Hossam al-Astal, who heads a militia in the Khan Yunis area, said Abu Shabab's death would not affect the activity of the gangs in the Gaza Strip. He said al-Dahini was determined to continue the same path. Al-Astal added that he still believed that militias receiving weapons from the IDF and operating in coordination with it were capable of defeating Hamas, and said "Hamas' end is near" (Israeli KAN Bet, December 7, 2025). Rami Halas, who operates a militia in Gaza City, also announced that his forces would continue the struggle (Facebook page of Abu Zuheib, December 5, 2025).[4]

Reactions from Hamas and the "Resistance"

- As soon as the first reports of Abu Shabab's death were issued, Hamas security forces and media outlets rushed to claim responsibility for killing the most senior wanted operative. According to claims, Abu Shabab and many other militia operatives were killed in an action "in cooperation with fighters of the resistance factions" (Telegram channel of Filastin al-'An, December 4, 2025). Another report claimed that he was killed in a "resistance" battle in eastern Rafah (Telegram channel of al-Maghazi [exiles and displaced persons], December 4, 2025). It was also claimed that one of the clan members who had joined Hamas several days earlier was the one who killed Abu Shabab (al-Sayyad channel of Hamas' Sahm Unit, December 4, 2025).
- Hamas claimed that Yasser Abu Shabab was a collaborator with Israel, but did not say that the movement was behind his killing. Hamas said it was the inevitable fate of anyone who

[3] For further information, see the August 2012 ITIC report, **Profile of The Army of Islam, a Salafist organization affiliated with the global jihad operating in the Gaza Strip.**

[4] For further information on the militias, see Appendix B.

betrayed his people and agreed to serve as a tool of the "occupation." Hamas praised the families, tribes and clans that had disowned Abu Shabab and stripped him of social and tribal cover. It further claimed that Israel used socially and morally "failing" gangs to implement "failed projects" in the Gaza Strip, which according to Hamas reflected weakness in the face of the steadfastness of the public and the "resistance." Hamas warned that anyone who attacked society's security and served the "enemy" would find himself ostracized and humiliated, adding that Palestinian social unity was the central line of defense against attempts to undermine its internal fabric (Hamas Telegram channel, December 4, 2025).

- The Hamas ministry of the interior called on all those in "criminal groups" to turn themselves in to the security forces. It claimed that it would handle the cases of those who surrendered themselves and reduce judicial measures against them. The ministry added that "the terrorist gangs established by the occupation are isolated and will meet their end" (Al Jazeera, December 5, 2025). "A senior source in resistance security" said that a ten-day window had been opened for "repentance" for agents belonging to Israel-backed militias, and they had a short time to turn themselves in to "resistance" security bodies (Telegram channel of Filastin al-'An, December 5, 2025).

Right: A notice from the "resistance security's" Rada Unit. The Arabic reads, "As we told you: Israel will not protect you" (Telegram channel of the Rada Unit, December 4, 2025). Left: A Rada Unit notice calling on "clients" affiliated with "occupation-backed" militias to take advantage of the "door of repentance." The Arabic reads, "Time is running out" (Telegram channel of the Rada Unit, December 6, 2025)

- According to the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades the Gaza Strip and the "resistance" do not tolerate collaboration with Israel, and anyone who assists the "enemy" becomes a traitor whose fate is predetermined. The Brigades said Yasser Abu Shabab chose a dangerous path of social, historical and moral turpitude, and that his group created suffering in the Strip (Telegram channel of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades' military media, December 5, 2025).

▶ The Palestinian al-Mujahideen Movement represented the death of Yasser Abu Shabab and his men as the inevitable end of anyone who betrayed his people and collaborated with Israel. The movement also claimed that Abu Shabab's men had been involved in the killing of the movement's senior figure, Muhammad Abu Mustafa, who was shot dead by a gunman riding a motorcycle on November 2, 2025. According to its statement, Israel's use of local groups was evidence of its failure and weakness in the face of public steadfastness and the "resistance" (Telegram channel of I'lam Gaza, December 5, 2025).

▶ The Popular Resistance Committees said that Abu Shabab belonged to gangs and mercenaries serving the agendas of the IDF, and that his death was a message to anyone considering cooperation with the IDF. The Committees added that Abu Shabab's death in an area protected by the IDF proved the Israeli army was unable protect its collaborators and mercenaries, and the fate of anyone who collaborated with Israel would be death, disgrace and shame (Shehab News Agency, December 5, 2025).

"The traitors' end" (X account of Hamas' in-house cartoonist, Alaa al-Laqta, December 4, 2025)

Reactions on the Gazan Street

▶ The al-Tarabin tribe in the Gaza Strip, to which Yasser Abu Shabab belonged, issued a statement noting that the tribe stood with the Palestinian people and the "resistance," and disavowed anyone who collaborated with Israel or tried to drag the tribe into "projects of division and militias." The tribe represented Abu Shabab's death as the final word of a "black page" which did not represent its history and values, and said it would not allow the use of the tribe's name for the benefit of groups acting against Gazan society. It called on other families and tribes to maintain social and national unity and to note that there was no place for betrayal and collaboration in the Strip (al-Sayyad Telegram channel, December 4, 2025).

▶ The Hamas-affiliated National Union of Palestinian Tribes, Clans and Families represented Abu Shabab's death as a message to anyone who collaborated with Israel. According to its statement, the actions attributed to Abu Shabab and his men did not represent the Palestinian

people or social fabric, and even their families had disowned them. The union called on collaborators to turn themselves in through their families and to return to the "embrace of the people and the land" (Izz al-Din Brigades combat information Telegram channel, December 5, 2025).

- The announcement of Abu Shabab's death was met with outbursts of joy in areas controlled by Hamas. Hamas-affiliated media outlets published footage of residents distributing candy and pastries in the streets (Telegram channels of al-Risalah, al-Sayyad, and Quds News Agency, December 4, 2025). The reports themselves gloated over his fate. For example, a "security affairs expert" quoted by Hamas' Shehab News Agency was quick to state that "this is the natural end of anyone connected to the enemy." He added that it was not just another security incident but "proof of the failure of the occupation's strategy to find alternatives [for Hamas] inside the Strip" (Shehab News Agency, December 4, 2025).

Right: Distributing of pastry in Khan Yunis. Left: Baklava trays with Abu Shabab's picture (Quds News Agency, December 4, 2025)

- Posts and videos appeared on social media welcoming Abu Shabab's death with rejection and hatred of him, especially after images from his funeral ceremony were circulated. Zuhair Ubaid said he hoped Abu Shabab had gone to hell; Zahra al-Madanan said "it is forbidden to pray for him, because he betrayed his religion and his homeland, and I thank Allah he is no longer around;" Faisal Sanousi claimed that he had been "a traitor and a rebel" and that according to sharia his body should not have been washed, he should not have been given a shroud and he should not have been buried in a Muslim cemetery, rather, his body should have been thrown to animals; others mocked those praying for him and claimed they were "filthier than he" and that their prayers were "a donkey's braying over an impure dog." Other commenters were furious that Abu Shabab was wrapped in a Palestinian flag and claimed he should have been wrapped in an Israeli flag or thrown in the trash; meanwhile, Manal Jarrara

declared, "let those who pray for him die as well… enemy brothers and a band of traitors" (Facebook page al-Sharq Palestine News, December 4, 2025).

Right: Abu Shabab called "Abu Flip-Flop." Left: "In the trash can of history"
(X account of cartoonist Mahmoud Abbas [no relation], December 4, 2025)

Appendix A: Abu Shabab's Popular Forces Militia

- The Popular Forces militia, founded by Yasser Abu Shabab and operating in the al-Sufi neighborhood of Rafah, numbers about 1,500 members, including about 600 armed men, and is considered one of the main power centers opposing Hamas in the Gaza Strip. In June 2025, Israel confirmed that it was arming the militia (Israeli media, June 5, 2025).
- Yasser Abu Shabab, a Bedouin from the Tarabin tribe in southern Gaza with a criminal past, was imprisoned several times for drug offenses. He reportedly had indirect ties to ISIS used for smuggling. On October 7, 2023, during the Hamas' attack and massacre in Israel, he was imprisoned in Rafah, but shortly after the outbreak of the war he was released (Israeli media, June 8, 2025; Associated Press, June 7, 2025).
- Abu Shabab's name first appeared as a militia leader in the southern Gaza Strip toward the end of 2024, when according to claims his men were responsible for looting aid trucks entering the Strip and were operating on Israel's behalf (Al Jazeera, December 4, 2025). Abu Shabab denied that they attacked the truck drivers but admitted that they looted the trucks, although he claimed they did not take food, tents, or supplies for children. In his defense, he argued that their activity was a result of desperation because Hamas "left us with nothing, and their gunmen come from time to time and shoot at us." He added that "Israel does not need us" (*Washington Post*, November 18, 2024).

Right: Abu Shabab (al-Jazeera Mubasher, July 7, 2025). Left: The militia emblem (May 30, 2025)

- When reports emerged that Abu Shabab enjoyed Israeli support, he said the militia under his leadership operated against Hamas, following the killing of his brother and dozens of others by Hamas gunmen after protests against the movement's rule in early 2025. He published an article in which he said, "if we remain silent now, we will never be free," and "what prevents most Gaza residents from expressing their real anger toward Hamas is the absence of a viable alternative." He said that in the area under their control in eastern Rafah, they had prevented the entrance of Hamas and other "armed organizations,"[5] and local residents had access to shelter, food, water and basic medical services without fear of attacks or chaos. He also presented his vision for liberating the Strip, which included financial aid to prevent Hamas from returning, urgent humanitarian assistance and the establishment of "safe corridors" to enable Gazans to move from location to location freely. He also proposed that Hamas members leave the Strip as part of a hostage-release agreement (Wall Street Journal, July 27, 2025). Hamas' "revolutionary court" accused Abu Shabab of treason and collaboration with hostile elements, establishing an armed gang and armed rebellion, and demanded that he turn himself in (Facebook page of the Hamas ministry of the interior, July 2, 2025). Hamas security forces pursued Abu Shabab's militia operatives during the war and exchanged fire with them before and after the ceasefire, claiming that many of his men were killed or turned themselves in.[6]
- Abu Shabab's men were allegedly involved in several military actions under Israeli auspices. Tasnim al-Hams, the daughter of Marwan al-Hams, director general of hospitals in the Strip who is imprisoned in Israel, claimed that Yasser Abu Shabab's men kidnapped her in the Khan

[5] Terrorist organizations.
[6] For further information, see the weekly ITIC reports, "Spotlight on Terrorism and the Israel-Palestinian Conflict."

Yunis area and transferred her to Israel (al-Sayyad Telegram channel, November 30, 2025). Abu Shabab's operatives were also allegedly responsible for the death of the head of the Abu Musab clan (al-Sayyad channel, September 24, 2025), and a group identified with Abu Shabab allegedly broke into a hospital in Gaza, under cover of Israeli air activity, and shot at civilians to accelerate their departure from the hospital and from the city (Telegram channel al-Maghazi Refugee Camp News, September 14, 2025).

Appendix B: Other Militias

In addition to the Popular Forces militia, several other militias opposing Hamas operate in the Gaza Strip:

- **A militia led by Hossam al-Astal:** Al-Astal, aka Abu Sun, a former officer in the PA security services, was sentenced to death in 2022 by the Hamas government on charges of involvement in the assassination of Hamas-affiliated scientist Fadi al-Batsh in Malaysia in 2018. In September 2025, al-Astal announced the establishment of a militia which he called a "strike force against terrorism," and according to estimates has about 40 armed members. The militia's center of activity is in Qizan al-Najjar, a depopulated village near Khan Yunis, and according to al-Astal, his militia receives food, water, shelter equipment and supplies from Israel (Times of Israel, September 22, 2025). A "senior commander in Yasser Abu Shabab's militia" confirmed that the two groups were in contact and described al-Astal's force as part of the Popular Forces. He added that the groups sought to create a "control belt " under their protection through Khan Yunis and Rafah, in coordination with Israel (Times of Israel, September 22, 2025).

Al-Astal with his men. The Arabic reads, "There is no room for Hamas dogs" (Facebook page of Hossam al-Astal, September 17, 2025)

- **A militia led by Rami Halas:** The Halas clan is a large, influential clan affiliated with Fatah in the al-Shuja'iyya neighborhood of Gaza City. After Hamas' takeover of the Gaza Strip in 2007, violent clashes broke out between Hamas security forces and clan

members.[7] Rami Halas, a Fatah activist from Tel al-Hawa, reportedly enjoys assistance and protection from Israeli security forces (Ynet, July 3, 2025). According to Hamas, the Halas militia carries out surveillance, attacks and kidnappings under the supervision of an Israeli intelligence officer (Palestinian Press Agency, September 22, 2025).

- **A militia led by Ashraf al-Mansi:** The Popular Army – Northern District militia operates in the Jabalia refugee camp and Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip and in the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood of Gaza City, and cooperates with the Popular Forces. Hamas accused al-Mansi of operating a network on behalf of Israeli intelligence and claimed he had about 20 members with criminal backgrounds at his disposal for sabotage and espionage missions (Telegram channel of the Rada Force, September 15, 2025; Palestine Online, September 16, 2025). The al-Sayyad channel, affiliated with the Sahm Unit of Hamas' ministry of the interior, claimed that al-Mansi and his men were responsible for an attack on a medical team at the Sheikh Radwan clinic and for killing three civilians in northern Gaza City (Telegram channel of al-Sayyad, September 26, 2025). After the ceasefire, the militia announced it was beginning work to widen roads and clear land for construction in areas under its control to absorb residents of the northern Strip. The militia also called on Gazans to register for the military courses it conducted and to volunteer to join its ranks in various civilian and humanitarian fields (Facebook page of the Popular Army – Northern District, November 8–15, 2025).

Ahmed al-Mansi and militia members (Facebook page of Yasser Abu Shabab, September 26, 2025)

- **The militia of Shuki Abu Nasira:** In November 2025, Shuki Abu Nasira, a former senior officer in the PA security forces who had been imprisoned in Israel, announced the establishment of an armed militia which would operate against Hamas in eastern

[7] For further information, see the August 2008 ITIC report, "Fatah suppressed in the Gaza Strip: Violent Fatah-Hamas confrontations lead to the flight of 180 Fatah operatives to Israel. The operatives were transferred to the Palestinian Authority."

Khan Yunis (X accounts of Mustafa Asfour and Yassin Izz al-Din, November 22, 2025). Abu Nasira said the decision to establish the militia arose from the need to protect the people from Hamas' crimes, after the killing of three PA intelligence officers, and publicly criticized the October 7, 2023 attack and massacre. He said his group numbered more than 30 fighters, all of whom left their homes and families "after becoming fed up with the movement's injustices and repression" (Jasor News, November 23, 2025). The Abu Nasira clan quickly distanced itself from Shuki Abu Natsira's actions (Shehab Telegram channel, November 23, 2025). The Fatah spokesman in the Strip, Munther al Hayek, also said the movement had no connection whatsoever to individuals or groups involved in establishing armed gangs which commit crimes against the Palestinian people (alresala.net, November 23, 2025).

Abu Nasira addressing his fighters (X account of Mustafa Asfour, November 22, 2025)

Map of militias operating in the Gaza Strip following the withdrawal of IDF forces (Filastin al-'An Telegram channel, October 26, 2025)

Militias Which No Longer Act Against Hamas[8]

- **The al-Majayda clan:** According to Hamas, the militia operated in Khan Yunis, cooperated with Israel and Abu Shabab's Popular Forces militia and engaged in violent clashes with Hamas. Following the withdrawal of IDF forces from the area where it is located, the clan announced that it was disarming and transferring its weapons to Hamas (Gaza Now News, October 13, 2025).
- **The Yasser Hanideq militia**: The militia operated in the Khan Yunis area and clashed with Hamas forces at Nasser Hospital in June 2025. Hanideq denied reports he was operating in cooperation with Israeli security forces and claimed that his activity was solely an act of revenge for the killing of two of his brothers by another clan (Quds News Agency, July 3, 2025; *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, July 17, 2025).
- **The Dughmush clan**: One of the most important and powerful clans in the Gaza Strip, with its center of power in Tel al-Hawa and the Sabra neighborhood of Gaza City. Some members were previously identified with Salafi-Islamist organizations, primarily the Army of Islam, and engaged in armed clashes with Hamas security forces, although there were also instances of cooperation between them, such as the abduction of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. Following the withdrawal of IDF forces from Gaza, fighting broke out between clan members and Hamas, during which Hamas killed about 33 of them, including eight who were publicly executed by Hamas after turning themselves in (al-Arabiya, October 19, 2025).
- **The Abu Khumash and Abu Museib clans**: Two clans from Deir al-Balah which began operating in the first half of 2025, with their main activity focusing on seizing aid trucks and transferring them to areas under IDF control east of Deir al-Balah. The looted aid was reportedly later sold on the black market at exorbitant prices (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, July 17, 2025).

[8] For further information, see the October 2025 ITIC report, **Hamas Activity to Restore Security Governance in the Gaza Strip after the Ceasefire**