Turkey: Center for Hamas Leadership and Coordination

July 23, 2026

Overview[1]

► Since 2003, the ties between Hamas and Erdoğan's Turkey have grown stronger and have been manifested by Turkey's hosting senior movement figures, political and diplomatic support and economic and humanitarian assistance. **Hamas turned Turkey into an important foothold from which it directs attacks on Israeli targets and raises funds to finance terrorist activities.**

► In July 2026, it was reported that the **Hamas leadership had begun transferring its organizational activity from Qatar to Turkey.** That followed the attempted Israeli attack on senior Hamas figures in Doha in September 2025 and pressure on Qatar to expel the movement's leadership, in addition to the growing tension between the Qatari authorities and Hamas representatives because of the war in Iran.

► The Hamas branch in Turkey, headed by the so-called "West Bank headquarters," continued establishing networks for attacks and transferring funds to finance terrorist activities against Israel, in addition to operating training camps for Hamas terrorists in Turkish territory.

► Turkey's involvement in the ceasefire agreement for the war in the Gaza Strip in October 2025 made it one of the mediators and guarantors of the agreement, along with the United States, Egypt and Qatar. **Coordination between the Hamas and the Turkish leaderships increased** regarding the continued implementation of the agreement, including the issues of the IDF's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Hamas' disarmament, in addition to formulating a joint position regarding the so-called "Israeli violations."

► **Turkish aid organizations, headed by the Turkish IHH, which led the violent *Mavi Marmara* flotilla in 2010, play a central role in the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip**, particularly in the establishment of educational and healthcare institutions. IHH also launched

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

two international flotillas with dozens of vessels "to break the siege" of the Gaza Strip, but the Israeli Navy prevented them from reaching land.

► **In the assessment of the Amit Terrorism and Intelligence Research Institute, the transfer of Hamas' headquarters from Qatar to Turkey, even if only partially, along with their ongoing coordination regarding the negotiations over the ceasefire agreement and the end of the war in the Gaza Strip, underscore the strategic importance the movement attaches to its relations with Erdoğan's Ankara. The election of Khalil al-Hayya as chairman of the Hamas political bureau is also expected to further strengthen the relations because of his ties with the Turkish leadership. Moreover, the de facto immunity granted by the Turkish government to members of the movement residing in the country enables Hamas to continue exploiting Turkish territory to plan attacks on Israel and possibly on Israeli targets in Europe, as long as the government in Ankara continues to display anti-Israeli and antisemitic positions without interference from the United States, particularly in view of the warm relations between Erdoğan and the American president. Moreover, the involvement of Turkish organizations in the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip ensures the Ankara regime a foothold even if and when the Palestinian administrative committee assumes control of Gaza, thereby also ensuring Hamas' continued influence over civilian activity in the Strip.**

Background[2]

► Turkey, under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, first as prime minister (from 2003) and subsequently as president (from 2014), is one of Hamas' most important strategic allies. It does not designate the movement as a terrorist organization and hosts senior Hamas figures, some of whom also received Turkish citizenship, political, diplomatic and ideological support and economic and humanitarian assistance.

► The close ties with the Turkish leadership enabled Hamas to establish one of its most important footholds abroad, founded initially on prisoners released in the 2011 Gilad Shalit exchange deal, headed by Zaher Jabarin, who leads the Hamas branch in Judea and Samaria. The movement uses Turkey as a base for planning attacks and transferring funds to finance terrorist activity inside Israel, in Judea and Samaria and the Gaza Strip, as well as for raising

[2] See the February 2025 ITIC report, **Turkey as a Center for Hamas Activity**.

funds and laundering money for Hamas terrorist activity, including the October 7, 2023 terrorist invasion and massacre.

► The close relationship between Turkey and Hamas was also reflected during the Gaza Strip War, when Erdoğan's Turkish government did not condemn Hamas for the October 7, 2023 terrorist invasion and attendant atrocities and massacre, and harshly criticized Israel's activity, at times with antisemitic rhetoric, with accusations similar to those of Hamas. Throughout the fighting, political coordination continued between Erdoğan and senior Turkish officials and the Hamas leadership, including regarding the negotiations with Israel, along with humanitarian assistance. Turkey also received some of the Palestinian terrorists who were released from Israeli prisons and deported abroad as part of the agreements for the release of the hostages held in the tunnels in the Gaza Strip.

► Hamas documents brought back from the Gaza Strip by IDF forces during the war contained evidence of the close relationship between Hamas and Turkey and showed how Hamas used Turkey for terrorist activity against Israel. One of the documents presented a Hamas plan to establish a security branch in Turkey which would coordinate activity against Israel abroad, including assassinations of military personnel and attacks on Israeli vessels.

► Musa Akari, the Hamas representative in Turkey since 2023, told a Turkish TV interviewer that after he was released from an Israeli prison as part of the Gilad Shalit exchange deal and deported to Egypt, he went to Turkey with nine released Hamas prisoners aboard a government aircraft sent by Erdoğan. He said they received a warm welcome upon their arrival and Erdoğan himself promised them that "just as we protect our children, we will protect you and care for you in the same way." Akari also praised Erdoğan for his support for Hamas and said the Turkish president's positions had helped weaken international support for Israeli narratives, including regarding the October 7, 2023 terrorist attack. The title of the interview was "Zionist torture methods" and Akari was presented as the president of the Palestine center for diplomacy, a Hamas-affiliated organization (Akit TV YouTube channel, May 11, 2024).

Right: Akari during the interview. Left: Akari promoting a booklet published by Hamas to mark the 35th anniversary of the movement's founding, which includes articles by senior Hamas figures and calls for attacks on Israel (Akit TV YouTube channel, May 11, 2024)

► Since the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip went into effect in October 2025, Turkey has strengthened its status as a base of operations for the Hamas external leadership and as a center for directing attacks in Judea and Samaria and inside Israel, along with playing a significant role in efforts to advance the implementation of the ceasefire agreement and the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip.

Turkey as a Base for Hamas Activity

The Hamas Leadership Moves from Qatar to Turkey

► On September 9, 2025, Israel attacked a building belonging to the Hamas leadership in Doha, Qatar, where a meeting of the ceasefire negotiating team led by the head of the political bureau in the Gaza Strip, Khalil al-Hayya, was being held.[3] Hamas reported that none of the movement's senior leaders had been harmed, but al-Hayya's son, the director of al-Hayya's office, three of the movement's security guards and a Qatari security officer were killed in the strike.[4]

► The outbreak of the war between the United States/Israel and Iran at the end of February 2026 (Operation Lion's Roar) posed a challenge for Hamas. On the one hand, Iran, Hamas' economic and military backbone for many years, was under attack, and resulted in the elimination of leader Ali Khamenei. On the other, Tehran responded with numerous missile and UAV attacks on targets in the Persian Gulf, including Qatar, where the Hamas leadership was based. Hamas said Iran had the right to respond to the aggression by all available means in

[3] On July 20, 2026, Hamas announced Khalil al-Hayya had been elected head of the its political bureau. See the July 2026 Amit Institute report, **Khalil al-Hayya Elected to Chair Hamas political bureau – Insights and Reactions**.

[4] See the September 2025 ITIC report, **Israel Attacks the Hamas Leadership in Doha**.

accordance with international law, but also called on it not to harm neighboring countries (Hamas Telegram channel, March 14, 2026).

► Hamas' weak condemnation did not reassure the Qatari authorities. According to an unverified report, Qatar informed the United States that it intended to expel the Hamas leadership because of the movement's refusal to condemn the attacks against Qatar and the Gulf states (N12, March 12, 2026). Hamas sources claimed that Qatar had taken measures against several well-known figures in the movement because of their support for the Iranian attacks (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, March 22, 2026). Sa'id Ziyad, a Hamas-affiliated Palestinian political commentator who had often appeared on Al Jazeera, was detained for several days because of his posts supporting the Iranian attacks (Gaza 24 X account, March 19, 2026; Podium Plus Facebook page, March 20, 2026).

► Qatar did not formally announce the expulsion of the Hamas leadership and senior movement figures continued to hold meetings in Doha, including the condolence events held after another of Khalil al-Hayya's sons was eliminated in the Gaza Strip in May 2026 (Hamas in Judea and Samaria Telegram channel, May 8-9, 2026). However, Hamas began to use Turkey as the center of its leadership's activity. In July 2026, Hamas abroad sources stated that in recent months the movement had transferred a significant part of its organizational activity to Turkey, where senior movement figures held meetings, discussions on ceasefire issues and the internal elections for the chairmanship of the political bureau. According to the sources, the majority of the movement's senior leaders stayed in Turkey for extended periods, including leaders whose families lived in Qatar. They claimed it did not reflect a break with Qatar but rather an attempt to ease the pressure on the emirate caused by American and Israeli demands to expel the movement's leaders. In addition, Turkey was considered safer after the Israeli attack on the Hamas leadership in Doha because Israel's options for targeting senior Hamas figures on Turkish territory were more limited (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, July 9, 2026).

A Center for Orchestrating Attacks and Financing Terrorism

► Along with the transfer of Hamas' political activity, the Hamas branch in Turkey continued orchestrating attacks in Judea, Samaria and Israel and financing terrorist activity, with no public response from the Turkish authorities:

- The Israeli security forces disclosed documents showing Hamas operates a clandestine money-changing network in Turkey composed of exiles from the Gaza Strip. According to the documents, the money changers operate in cooperation with the

Iranian regime and transfer enormous sums of money to Hamas and its senior leaders. Documents seized by the IDF recorded transfers amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars, although that represented only a small fraction of the activity. The documents identified three Gaza-based Hamas operatives active in Turkey: Tamer Hassan, a senior figure in the Hamas finance office in Turkey operating under the head of the political bureau in the Gaza Strip, Khalil al-Hayya, and the money changers Khalil Farwana and Farid Abu Dair (Avichay Adraee's Arabic IDF Spokesperson Telegram channel, December 7, 2025). Hamas sources denied the Israeli announcement and claimed the movement had "its own methods of transferring funds." They claimed Hamas frequently encountered difficulties in transferring money from abroad to the Gaza Strip, and likewise to Judea and Samaria because of the "persecution" by Israel and the Palestinian Authority security forces, although they said the situation there was better than in the Gaza Strip regarding the transfer of funds from abroad (al-Sharq al-Awsat, December 18, 2025).

◆ In December 2025, the Israel Security Agency (ISA) exposed a terrorist network operated from Turkey by Mahmoud Radwan, a Hamas terrorist operative who had been released as part of a hostage-release agreement and deported to Turkey in January 2025. Radwan, who had been serving a prison sentence in Israel since 2001 for the murder of an Israeli civilian, recruited two young men from the village of Azzun in Samaria, Raif Shallo and Nasser Salim, for terrorist activity. The investigation revealed that during December 2025, Radwan met the two men at a restaurant in Turkey, where he described his ongoing military activity in both Turkey and Judea and Samaria. Radwan said he was in contact with individuals in Judea and Samaria, expressed his desire to die as a shaheed and offered the two men the opportunity to join his activities; they accepted. At the conclusion of the investigation, indictments were filed against Shallo and Salim (ISA Spokesperson, March 30, 2026).

◆The United States Treasury Department imposed sanctions on four associations operating in Turkey and Indonesia which acted as front organizations for financing the Hamas military wing under the guise of humanitarian activity. The associations were part of an international financing network which transferred resources, equipment and funds to projects in the Gaza Strip which directly benefited Hamas, and assisted Hamas terrorists and the movement's institutions. The Treasury Department noted that the

measures continued previous sanctions against Hamas' fake charitable networks (United States Treasury Department, March 12, 2026).

◆ In June 2026, the identities of key operatives in Hamas' West Bank network, which operates from Turkey to advance terrorist activity in Judea and Samaria, were revealed. They were Ayman al-Sharawna, who recruited operatives and promoted terrorist activity; Muhammad al-Mallah, originally from the Tulkarm area, who divides his time between Turkey and Qatar and assisted in transferring funds for terrorism; Majed al-Jaba, who helped smuggle the weapons used in the attack at the Tunnel Checkpoint in November 2023; Walid Abu Nasser, who financed a terrorist network in Bethlehem; and Salam Yaish, who recruited terrorist operatives for attacks. According to reports, during the previous year dozens of attacks directed by operatives from the West Bank network, who operate from Turkish territory without interference, had been prevented. Their activities included recruiting operatives to carry out attacks, transferring weapons and funds for terrorist operations and holding meetings with terrorist operatives from Judea and Samaria (IDF and ISA Spokespersons, June 21, 2026).

Hamas West Bank network operatives in Turkey
(IDF and ISA Spokespersons, June 21, 2026)

► It was also reported that Turkey served as a venue for military training for Hamas. Palestinian sources stated that Hamas operatives used Turkish territory for training in the use of small arms and the operation of UAVs. According to the report, under civilian cover the operatives, regularly participated in training at public civilian shooting clubs and underwent training and obtained licenses to operate UAVs. In addition, Hamas planned to transfer the operatives to Lebanon, Jordan or Judea and Samaria, fronts viewed as potential arenas for future confrontation with Israel (Elior Levy, head of the Palestinian affairs desk at Israeli TV Channel Kan 11's X account, May 7, 2026). In response, the communications directorate of the Turkish presidency rejected the claims that various groups were receiving weapons and UAV

training in Turkey (Center for countering disinformation, communications directorate of the Turkish presidency's X account, May 8, 2026).

Turkish Involvement after the Ceasefire in the Gaza Strip

Hamas-Turkish Coordination in the Negotiations

► On October 10, 2025, the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas went into effect, suspending the war in the Gaza Strip which broke following Hamas' terrorist attack in Israel on October 7, 2023, with its attendant atrocities and massacre. Throughout the indirect negotiations, the Turkish leadership maintained close contact with the Hamas leadership and received regular updates on the progress of the talks.[5] Khalil al-Hayya, speaking on the evening before the ceasefire entered into effect, noted the movement's appreciation for "our brothers, the mediators, in Egypt, Qatar and Turkey" (Hamas Telegram channel, October 9, 2025).

► At the peace summit convened in Sharm el-Sheikh on October 13, 2025, whose objective was to support the American plan for implementing the ceasefire, Turkey was granted the status of a guarantor state of the agreement, along with the United States, Egypt and Qatar (White House website, October 13, 2025). UN Security Council Resolution 2803 of November 17, 2025, which granted international approval to the American plan, also noted the "positive role" of the four countries in promoting the ceasefire.[6]

► Despite their status as guarantors of the agreement and mediators, and even as members of the Board of Peace established to oversee the ceasefire and the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, officials in Turkey did not conceal their positions, which were close to those of Hamas. For example, when Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan was asked what mechanisms could deter Israel from "violating Palestinian rights" if Hamas disarmed in accordance with the demand of the United States and Israel, he was quick to emphasize that Hamas had never been a deterrent against Israel, and that although Hamas "resisted the occupation," it did not deter it. At best, it could be a "disruptive factor" for Israel. He claimed that Hamas' security forces had also been "good enough to administer all of Gaza and provide security and policing," without mentioning the violent suppression of the movement's opponents (Al Jazeera English, January 29, 2026).

[5] See the February 2025 ITIC report, **Turkey as a Center for Hamas Activity**.
[6] See the November 2025 ITIC report, **UN Security Council Resolution 2803 for the Future of the Gaza Strip – Positions of Power Actors**.

► Since the beginning of the ceasefire and the negotiations over the implementation of the agreement, coordination has continued between senior Hamas figures and the Turkish leadership, particularly with Foreign Minister Fidan and intelligence chief Ibrahim Kalin. The objective of the bilateral talks, which were held frequently, was primarily to coordinate positions before meetings of the Hamas delegation in Cairo with the mediators from Egypt, Qatar and the United States and with representatives of the Board of Peace and the armed Palestinian "factions,"[7] as well as to provide updates after the talks in Cairo. The talks generally focused on the disputed issues, primarily the IDF's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, Hamas disarmament and humanitarian aid, as well as the public expression of a joint position regarding the "Israeli violations:"[8]

- At a meeting in Doha between a Hamas delegation led by Shura council chairman Muhammad Darwish, Fidan and Kalin, held 11 days after the beginning of the ceasefire, Darwish praised the efforts of Turkey, under Erdoğan's leadership, and of the mediators to stop the war against the Gazans, as well as Turkish support for the Palestinian people and their "just cause." He also accused Israel of delaying the implementation of the agreement because of the "violations" and claimed the movement was committed to the ceasefire and to safeguarding "the legitimate rights" of the Palestinians. Fidan and Kalin noted Turkey's "firm support" for the Palestinian people and its activity to alleviate the suffering the Gazans, and called for forcing Israel to implement the agreement (Hamas Telegram channel, October 21, 2025).

Meeting of the Hamas delegation (right) with the senior Turkish officials (Hamas Telegram channel, October 21, 2025)

- A Hamas delegation headed by Khalil al-Hayya met with the Turkish foreign minister in Istanbul and presented him with a detailed memorandum on the "Israeli violations" of

[7] Terrorist organizations.

[8] See the ITIC (since May 2026, the Meir Amit Institute) weekly reports, “Spotlight on Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.”

the agreement. The delegation said an independent committee had to be appointed to administer the Gaza Strip, complete the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and fulfill all the accompanying commitments, including increasing aid and shelter ahead of winter (Hamas website, November 1, 2025). The delegation also met with the head of Turkish intelligence and discussed political developments and the continued "Zionist violations" of the agreement. Al-Hayya thanked Turkey for its role in formulating the agreement, noted the importance of its continued support for the Palestinian people in all areas of "occupied Palestine," particularly the Gaza Strip, and called on the mediators and international actors to exert pressure to stop the [alleged] "Israeli violations" against Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons (Hamas Telegram channel, November 6, 2025). Hamas also welcomed the decision of the Turkish chief prosecutor to issue arrest warrants against 37 senior Israeli officials, including Prime Minister Netanyahu, Defense Minister Katz and his predecessor Gallant and Chief of Staff Zamir, for events in the Gaza Strip (Hamas Telegram channel, November 7, 2025).

◆In January 2026, a delegation headed by Khalil al-Hayya met in Istanbul with the head of Turkish intelligence, Ibrahim Kalin, to discuss the second stage of the ceasefire agreement and the completion of the requirements of the first stage. They reportedly agreed to continue consultations and joint coordination to end to the "suffering of Gazans," begin the activity of the technocrat committee, open the Rafah Crossing in both directions, and bring in aid. The delegation also thanked the Turkish president for his efforts in achieving the agreement to end the war (Hamas Telegram channel, January 24, 2026). The Hamas delegation subsequently met with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan in Ankara to discuss the negotiations for the second stage (Reuters and Shehab Agency, January 26, 2026).

◆In March 2026, a Hamas leadership delegation headed by Nizar Awadallah, a member of the political bureau and of the movement's leadership council, met in Istanbul with the head of Turkish intelligence. According to reports, they discussed developments in the Palestinian arena, primarily the fighting in the Gaza Strip, the "Israeli violations" and measures in Judea, Samaria and East Jerusalem, particularly the [alleged] ongoing attempts to undermine the status of al-Aqsa Mosque, including its closure during the month of Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr for the first time since 1967. They also discussed the steps required to complete the implementation of the first stage of the ceasefire

agreement and progress toward the second stage, while noting the need for an immediate halt to all forms of "aggression" and an acceleration of the entry of humanitarian aid, medical equipment and infrastructure requirements into the Gaza Strip (Hamas Telegram channel, March 23, 2026).

◆In May 2026, the Turkish foreign minister paid a condolence call on Khalil al-Hayya in Qatar following the elimination of al-Hayya's son in the Gaza Strip, during which Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan also telephoned to express his condolences. Erdoğan reportedly noted his solidarity with al-Hayya, his family and the Palestinian people, while Fidan praised the steadfastness, sacrifice and patience of the Palestinians. Al-Hayya thanked him for the visit and for Erdoğan's telephone call, and added that "the Zionist enemy's" actions against the Palestinians only strengthened their determination to uphold their rights and principles [*sic*] (Hamas Telegram channel, May 11, 2026).

Fidan's condolence visit to al-Hayya (Hamas Telegram channel, May 11, 2026)

◆ Ahead of a round of talks in Egypt in early June 2026, with the participation of Hamas, the other Palestinian terrorist organizations, the representative of the Board of Peace, Nikolai Mladenov, and representatives of the mediators, a senior Hamas leadership delegation arrived for a meeting with the head of Turkish intelligence in Ankara. The delegation was led by Shura council chairman Muhammad Darwish and included the leader of Hamas abroad, Khaled Mashal, the head of the political bureau in the Gaza Strip, Khalil al-Hayya, and the Hamas leader in Judea and Samaria, Zaher Jabarin. They discussed the Israeli escalation in the Gaza Strip, the Hamas claim that Israel was evading its commitments under the ceasefire agreement and the failure to complete the implementation of the first phase of the agreement. The senior Hamas figures reviewed the agreement's course and warned that daily "violations," attacks and killings prevented progress to the subsequent phases, but noted the movement's commitment to the ceasefire and its appreciation for the efforts of the mediators in Turkey, Egypt and Qatar.

They also raised the issues of Jerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque, settler violence in Judea and Samaria, the situation of the prisoners and Israel's inclusion on UN lists of sexual violence in conflict zones. The senior Hamas figures thanked President Erdoğan for his country's efforts to end the fighting in the Gaza Strip (Hamas Telegram channel, June 1, 2026).

- Reportedly, in Cairo at the beginning of July 2026, a Hamas delegation led by Zaher Jabarin submitted the Palestinian terrorist organizations' response to the amendments presented by Mladenov to the road map for implementing the ceasefire agreement. The response was submitted following a meeting in Ankara which had not previously been publicized, attended by the head of Turkish intelligence, Ibrahim Kalin; the head of Egyptian General Intelligence, Hassan Rashad; Khalil al-Hayya and the head of Hamas abroad, Khaled Mashal (aljazeera.net, July 2, 2026).

► The congratulations from Turkey following Khalil al-Hayya's election as chairman of Hamas' political bureau indicated that the coordination was expected to continue. Al-Hayya received congratulatory telephone calls from intelligence chief Kalin and Foreign Minister Fidan, who emphasized Turkey's support for the Palestinian people and their "legitimate rights." Al-Hayya expressed his appreciation for the Turkish positions and their strong bilateral relations and noted the continuation of communication and consultations to achieve the Palestinians' goals and aspirations (Hamas Telegram channel, July 21-22, 2026).

Turkish Involvement in the Reconstruction of the Gaza Strip

► After the ceasefire went into effect, Turkish aid organizations, most of them linked to the government in Ankara, increased their involvement in the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip. Most of the activity focused on establishing educational and healthcare institutions, whose objective was to ensure a Turkish foothold in the Gaza Strip even after Hamas transferred control to the Palestinian committee for the administration of Gaza in accordance with the ceasefire agreement. The most prominent Turkish organization involved in reconstruction activities in the Gaza Strip is the radical Islamist IHH, which has been outlawed in Israel and other countries because of its involvement in terrorist activity, including organizing the violent *Mavi Marmara* flotilla in 2010:[9]

[9] See the October 2025 ITIC report, **The Turkish IHH, which led the Mavi Marmara flotilla, operates in the Gaza Strip and is involved in its reconstruction**.

◆ Immediately after the beginning of the ceasefire, IHH announced the launch of a project in the northern Gaza Strip to clear rubble and open blocked roads, part of the reconstruction efforts following the ceasefire. The organization presented documentation of tractors and other heavy engineering equipment during the activity, flying IHH and Turkish flags (IHH X account, October 17, 2025).

◆In January 2026, the Muradiye School was opened in Jabalia al-Nazla in the northern Gaza Strip, intended to provide an educational framework for approximately 3,000 boys and girls living in tents in the area. Reportedly, the opening of the school, which was described as a "tent education campus," was made possible by cooperation between the Hamas ministry of education and two Turkish organizations active in the field of education (Shehab and Quds news agencies and the Turkish daily *Yeni Şafak*, affiliated with the ruling party, January 5, 2026).

◆In February 2026, Mahmoud Matar, deputy minister of the Hamas ministry of education, and representatives of the Turkish al-Sanabel charity organization, inaugurated the al-Sanabel School in western Gaza City (West Gaza education directorate Facebook page, February 10, 2026). In addition, the Turkish Diyanet Foundation inaugurated three new mosques in the Gaza Strip ahead of the month of Ramadan, including a mosque named after Abdullah Azzam, the Palestinian preacher considered the mentor of al-Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden (TRT Arabic, February 15, 2026). IHH also began an operation to distribute baskets of fresh vegetables to displaced families in shelters and camps (IHH Gaza Facebook page, February 16, 2026).

◆In May 2026, the West Gaza education department inaugurated the Mavi Marmara 3 School, which was established on the site where the Suleiman Sultan School had stood, in cooperation with the Turkish Mavi Marmara Foundation. Those attending the ceremony included education department director Jawad al-Sheikh Khalil and a delegation from the Turkish foundation led by Director General Ma'mun Odeh. Khalil said education in the Gaza Strip continued despite the challenges and noted that they would continue working with various partners to support the educational process (West Gaza education department Facebook page, May 2, 2026).

◆In June 2026, the East Gaza education department, with support from IHH, inaugurated the Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Musaqqat al-Tuffah School after it was reconstructed on the ruins of the school destroyed during the war. It was reportedly constructed of wooden boards

and tents and currently had more than 1,000 students (East Gaza education department Facebook page, June 17, 2026; aljazeera.net, June 17, 2026).

Inauguration of the school (East Gaza education department Facebook page, June 17, 2026)

Organizing International Flotillas to the Gaza Strip

► Turkish involvement was also prominent in the attempt to launch large international flotillas to the Gaza Strip to "break the siege." IHH continued as the dominant organization leading the campaigns along with other Hamas-affiliated organizations which had been responsible for launching flotillas under humanitarian cover to the Gaza Strip since 2007:[10]

◆ At the end of February 2026, the Turkish organizers of the Freedom and Steadfastness Flotilla announced they planned to launch a flotilla of 100 to 200 vessels to the Gaza Strip from Spain and other countries in April 2026. The organizers, led by IHH, claimed they expected "thousands of activists from 150 countries to participate," and that in addition to humanitarian aid, they would also attempt to bring medical personnel, educators, ecological construction experts, lawyers and war crimes investigators into Gaza. IHH chairman Bülent Yıldırım announced that in addition to the flotilla, they planned to launch land convoys to the Rafah Crossing at the same time. He said he was confident that the vessels would disrupt the order established after the Second World War [*sic*], stating "We will mobilize the squares, we will mobilize the Mediterranean Sea and we will break the siege by land and by sea." His press conference included propaganda inciting violence against Israel. Salman Esmerer, president of the Association of Industrialists and Businesspeople of the New World, said, "The free peoples of the world will defeat these murderous Zionists. We will not stop until Palestine is liberated, until al-Aqsa Mosque is liberated, until a free Palestine is established" (IHH website, February 25, 2026). The

[10] See the September 2025 ITIC report, **The Global Sumud ("Perseverance") Flotilla in the Service of Hamas**.

flotilla departed from Spain and Italy with about 50 vessels. On the night of April 29, 2026, Israeli Navy forces stopped the vessels approximately 1,000 kilometers from Israel, near Crete, and took control of more than 20 vessels carrying more than 170 activists, who were transferred to Greece (Israeli media and the Israeli Foreign Ministry Facebook page, April 29-May 4, 2026).

◆Despite the interception of the flotilla, on May 14, 2026, IHH launched another flotilla with more than 50 vessels that sailed from the port of Marmaris in Turkey (IHH website, May 14, 2026). On May 18, 2026, the Israeli Navy halted the vessels without resistance in international waters hundreds of kilometers from Israel, and all 430 activists were transferred to Israel and held for approximately one day in Ketziot Prison before being deported from the country on flights to Turkey. No humanitarian aid of any kind was found aboard the vessels (Israeli media, May 18-22, 2026).