

Hamas Chief Assassinated in Tehran: Implications for Middle East and Global Politics

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Why in News?

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh was assassinated in the Iranian capital Tehran early on July 31. The 62-year-old leader, who had been managing Hamas's political operations from exile in Qatar, reportedly died in what Hamas described as an Israeli "strike" on his residence.

The Israeli military has not commented on the incident so far.

What is Hamas?

• About

- Hamas is the largest Palestinian militant Islamist group and one of the two major political parties in the region.
- Currently, it governs more than two million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.
- The organisation, however, is also known for its armed resistance against Israel (more on this later).
- Hamas as a whole, or in some cases its military wing, is designated a terrorist group by Israel, the United States, the European Union, the United Kingdom, and other countries.

• Background

- The group was founded in the late 1980s, after the beginning of the **first Palestinian intifada**, or uprising, against Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
- Hamas is essentially the internal metamorphosis of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood.

• Reasons for its creation

- The main reason for Hamas' creation was a deep sense of failure that had been set within the Palestinian national movement by the late 1980s.
- This primarily happened after the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) — involved in the armed struggle against Israel from the mid-1960s to 'liberate Palestine' — made two massive concessions.
 - The PLO recognized Israel and its right to exist — thereby, relinquishing its goal of liberating Palestine.
 - Two, it also dropped the armed struggle as a strategy, for the sake of a negotiated settlement.
- Hamas gained prominence after it opposed the Oslo Peace Accords signed in the early 1990s between Israel and the PLO.

• India's stand on Hamas

- So far, **India has not declared Hamas as a terrorist organisation.**
 - New Delhi neither recognizes Hamas nor describes it as a terrorist group but pursues a delicate balance between its support for the Palestinian cause and opposition to terrorism.
- After the 7 October attack, PM Modi expressed deep shock and solidarity with Israel. However, he did not mention Hamas or Palestine.
- Since then, India has spoken of the need for a two-state solution to the wider Israel-Palestine conflict.

Key takeaways from assassination of Hamas chief

• Ismail Haniyeh, the Qatar-based public face of Hamas, killed in Iran

- Ismail Haniyeh was assassinated in Iran in what might mark a defining moment in the ongoing war between Israel and the Palestinian militant group.

- Haniyeh was killed in Tehran, where he had gone to attend the inauguration of the newly-elected Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian.
- Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari is also in Tehran at the moment for Pezeshkian's inauguration.
- As a result, Iran has vowed to avenge the killing.
- This also signals that Hamas leaders are not safe in Iran and in Iran's protection.
 - In April this year, Iran and Israel had exchanged a round of missile and drone attacks at each other.
 - Temperatures had cooled since then, but this assassination has the potential to trigger further hostilities.

• **Wider conflict in the Middle East**

- The killing, hours after an Israeli strike on the Lebanese capital Beirut, heightens fears of wider conflict in the Middle East.
 - Hezbollah had confirmed that its commander Fuad Shukr was killed in that strike.

• **For Israel - a success**

- On October 7, 2023, Hamas killed at least 1,200 Israeli civilians and military personnel, and took about 250 hostages.
- Since then, the Israeli military has pounded Gaza with air strikes and ground operations, with the stated aim of going after Hamas leaders.
- From the Israeli point of view, this is a major victory in its mission to neutralise Hamas — a stated objective behind launching the Operation Swords of Iron.
- Haniyeh is the most highly placed Hamas figure to have been killed so far.

• **For Hamas - a provocation**

- From Hamas' perspective, however, this is a major provocation since Haniyeh was the head of its political bureau, based in Qatar.
- He was the public face of Hamas, and was negotiating the terms of the hostages deal and the ceasefire.
 - Yahya Sinwar is the military leader who was responsible for the October 7 attacks.

• **Pressure on Newly elected President of Iran**

- Within Iran and Hamas, there will now be calls for avenging Haniyeh's death.
- These are certain to put pressure on the newly-elected moderate President Pezeshkian.
- The president's election campaign focussed on beginning negotiations with the West, primarily for economic reasons given how damaging Western sanctions have been for Iran. He would have hoped to restart dialogue with Europe, to begin with.
- But, with Haniyeh's assassination, Pezeshkian will be under pressure from the IRGC and the hardliners in the Iranian establishment to respond in kind.

• **West Asia a tinderbox**

- For the region as a whole, the assassination is not good news, especially if Iran and Hamas escalate. Such an escalation will impact all of West Asia.
- Qatar, Turkey, and the Yemeni Houthis have already condemned the assassination, and the top regional players like Saudi Arabia, UAE are watching the events closely.

- **India to carefully frame its response**

- India is cautious about responding to the situation involving Hamas leaders due to the complexity of a targeted assassination on foreign soil.
 - New Delhi's primary concern is maintaining peace and stability in the region, which hosts about nine million Indian expatriates and supplies almost two-thirds of India's crude oil.
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Q.1. What is Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)?

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is a political and paramilitary organization founded in 1964, representing the Palestinian people. It aims to establish an independent Palestinian state and has been involved in diplomatic efforts, negotiations, and armed resistance.

Q.2. What is What is two-state solution to the wider Israel-Palestine conflict?

The two-state solution proposes creating an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel, with both states coexisting peacefully. This approach aims to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict by addressing key issues such as borders, security, and the status of Jerusalem, with the goal of achieving lasting peace and mutual recognition.

Source: [Hamas chief assassinated: Why this will rattle the region and worry Delhi](#) | [Economic Times](#) | [Financial Express](#) | [BBC](#)

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