



Israel claims senior Hamas commander Marwan Issa killed in Gaza strike

Description

WORLD : Israel's military spokesman says Hamas deputy military commander Marwan Issa was killed earlier this month in an Israeli attack on the Gaza Strip.

A senior Hamas official told Al Jazeera on Tuesday that the group's political bureau has not yet received evidence regarding the death of Issa, as Israel's war on Gaza nears six months.

"Everyone knows since day one, the Israelis have been saying they want to target [the] Qassam Brigades and other commanders. However, in the absence of an official statement confirming the martyrdom, one cannot confirm such information," Hamdan said from Beirut, Lebanon.

Earlier, Israel's Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari had said: "We have checked all the intelligence. "Marwan Issa was eliminated in the strike we carried out around two weeks ago," he said.

Izzat al-Rashq, a Hamas politburo member, said there should be no confidence in the Israeli statements and that confirmation could only come from the Qassam Brigades.

The Israeli military had previously said they had targeted Issa in an air strike on an underground compound in central Gaza on March 9-10. Issa was a deputy to Mohammed Deif, the longtime leader of Hamas's military wing the Qassam Brigades.

Hamas's top leader in Gaza, and the alleged mastermind of the October 7 attack that triggered Israel's latest assault on Gaza, is Yahya Sinwar.

Israel has vowed to kill both Sinwar and Deif in Gaza. Israel says it has killed more than 13,000 Hamas fighters since the start of the war but has not provided any evidence to support its claims.

Al Jazeera's Hamdah Salhut, reporting from occupied East Jerusalem, said Israeli officials have been saying since the beginning of their offensive that they are going to "find and kill all Hamas leadership and every single Hamas fighter on the ground".

“It wasn’t just going to be in Gaza. It was going to be all over the world,” Salhut said.

The Israeli claim comes a day after the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and amid growing calls for Israel to halt its nearly six-month assault on the besieged enclave, which has killed more than 32,000 people.

More than 90 percent of Gaza’s 2.3 million residents have been internally displaced while Israel’s severe restrictions on food, water and other aid supplies have pushed the enclave to the brink of famine, according to the UN.

Israel has killed several senior leaders of Hamas over the years, only to see them quickly replaced, with little apparent impact on the group’s operations.

Al Jazeera’s senior political analyst Marwan Bishara said every time Israel “declared victory by assassinating one Hamas leader, dozens stepped up to take his place”.

“The idea of declaring victory because one or two, or several Hamas leaders were killed, has proven to be more of a facade,” Bishara said.

“[A]t the end of the day, Hamas has proven more than capable of producing more and more leaders,” he added. If the Israeli claim is accurate, Issa would be the highest-ranking Hamas leader to have been killed in Gaza since the start of the Israeli assault in October.

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