



## Reactions to the killing of Saleh al-'Arouri

January 7, 2024

### Overview<sup>1</sup>

► On the evening of January 2, 2024, an explosion occurred in the Musharrafia area of the Dahiyeh, a southern suburb of Beirut. According to reports, the attack was carried out by an aircraft and targeted a building where a meeting of senior Hamas terrorists was being held. The attack killed Saleh al-'Arouri, deputy head of Hamas' political bureau and responsible for the movement's terrorist activities in Judea and Samaria. Six other terrorists were killed with him, two of them senior commanders of Hamas' military-terrorist wing in Lebanon.

► Hamas, Hezbollah and other members of the Iranian-led "resistance axis"<sup>2</sup> accused Israel and published notices condemning the killing, attacking Israel and calling for revenge. Hamas warned that Israel would be held responsible and officially reported it had decided to suspend the negotiations for a ceasefire and the release of the hostages. The Fatah movement also joined in the condemnation and announced a general strike as a sign of mourning. **Hassan Nasrallah, secretary general of Hezbollah, warned Israel and said that if Israel wanted to wage war with Lebanon, Hezbollah's response would be "unlimited."** The Lebanese government began preparing a complaint for the UN Security Council against Israel regarding the incident.

► Apparently, killing al-'Arouri in the heart of Hezbollah's stronghold embarrassed the organization, which sponsored the senior Hamas terrorist responsible for Hamas' ties with Hezbollah and Iran, and perhaps gave it reason to be concerned about the welfare of its senior terrorist operatives, who are also concentrated in the district.

### Further Information

► On the evening of January 2, 2024, an explosion occurred in a building and a car in the Musharrafia area of the Dahiyeh, a southern suburb of Beirut, mostly Shi'ite Muslim and a

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

<sup>2</sup> Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinian terrorist organizations, the Shi'ite Houthis in Yemen and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq.

Hezbollah stronghold. The explosion had apparently been caused by an aircraft attack and killed seven people. Hamas reported the assassination of seven "activists" [terrorist operatives] at the hands of "the Zionist enemy" [Israel], claiming it was "an act of terrorism in every sense of the word," a violation of Lebanon's sovereignty, and an expansion of Israel's circle of "aggression" against the Palestinians and the Islamic nation, adding that Israel would bear responsibility for the consequences (Shehab Telegram channel, January 2, 2024).

►The dead were:

- ◆ **Sheikh Saleh al-'Arouri** (Abu Muhammad), deputy head of Hamas' political bureau and in charge of the movement in Judea and Samaria.<sup>3</sup>
- ◆ **Samir Fendi** (Abu Amer), from the al-Rashidieh refugee camp (al-Rashidieh Facebook page, January 2, 2024). He was a commander in Hamas' military-terrorist wing and in charge of its activities in Lebanon (Arabic Post, January 2, 2024; Watan New Agency, January 2, 2024).
- ◆ **Azzam Hasni al-Aqra**, aka Abu Abdullah (Abu Amar), a commander in Hamas' military-terrorist wing from the village of Qublan in the Nablus district. A released prisoner and one of those deported to Marj al-Zahour in December 1992, he held Hamas' military[-terrorist] portfolio "abroad" (Arabic Post, January 2, 2024; Watan News Agency, January 2, 2024).
- ◆ Also killed were **Mahmoud Zaki Shahin, Muhammad Bshasha, Muhammad al-Rees and Ahmed Hamoud**.



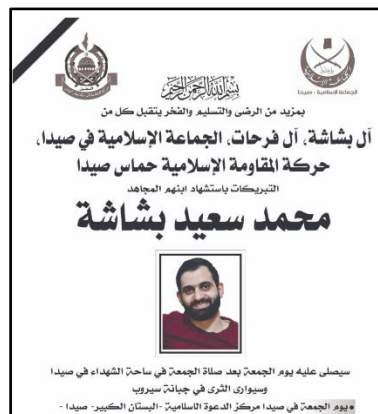
**Killed in the targeted attack: Top row, right to left: Azzam al-Aqra, Saleh al-'Arouri, Samir Fendi. Bottom row, right to left: Mahmoud Shahin, Muhammad Bshasha, Muhammad al-Rees, Ahmed Hamoud (Palinfo, January 2, 2024).**

<sup>3</sup> For further information about Saleh al-'Arouri, see the November 2023 ITIC report, "[Profile of Saleh al-Arouri, a Senior Hamas Terrorist](#)."



**Mourning notice issued by Hamas for Saleh al-'Arouri (center), Samir Fendi (right) and Azzam al-Aqra (left) (Saoud al-Nabhani's X account, January 3, 2024).**

►The al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyya movement, which the branch of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Lebanon,<sup>4</sup> announced that two of the dead, Mahmoud Shahin and Mahmoud Bshasha, were movement "activists." According to reports, Mahmoud Shahin was a commander, and Lebanese and Palestinians were part of the cortège (al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyya website, January 4, 2024). Al-Jazeera TV quoted a commander in the Jama'ah al-Islamiyya in Lebanon as saying that they and Hamas were "two sides of the same coin" vis-à-vis Israel (al-Jazeera website, January 4, 2024). Bshasha's death was jointly announced by his family, al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyya and Hamas. The logos of Hamas al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyya appeared at the top of the announcement (saidaonline.com, January 4, 2024).



**The announcement of Bashasha's death, with the logos of Hamas (top left) and al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyya (top right) (saidaonline.com, January 4, 2024)**

►Photos and videos of the explosion were published by the media and social networks. A video aired on al-Jazeera TV showed the attack from a distance of several hundred meters

<sup>4</sup> As Hamas is its Palestinian branch.

(al-Jazeera TV, January 2, 2024). Other media published photos and videos of the building where the attack occurred (RAMALLAH MIX website Facebook page, January 2, 2024; al-Manar, January 3, 2024).



**Right: From a video documenting the moment of the explosion (al-Jazeera, January 2, 2024).  
Left: The building where the attack occurred (January 2, 2024; al-Manar, January 3, 2024)**

## Palestinian Reactions

### Hamas

► Hamas issued a formal statement condemning the killing of al-'Arouri and warning that Israel would pay the price. The announcement emphasized that the "resistance" [Palestinian terrorism] would not stop, it would increase. The Hamas movement, which announced the death of the seven the same evening, claimed the operation was a "cowardly act of assassination carried out by the Zionist enemy" and "a crime that once again proves that its blood-soaked war [targeted] the Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank and everywhere." The announcement called the attack "terrorism in every sense of the word, a violation of Lebanon's sovereignty, and the expansion of Israel's circle of 'aggression' against the Palestinians and the Islamic nation" and said Israel would bear responsibility for its consequences. The announcement added that Israel would not break the will of the Palestinians "to stand firm and resist" [continue attacking Israel]. It also stated that "Hamas sacrifices its leaders and founders for the sake of the honor of the Palestinians, the Islamic nation will never be defeated and assassinations will increase its strength, toughness and determination" (Shehab Telegram channel, January 2, 2024).

► On January 3, 2024, several hours after the event, **the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing**, announced the deaths of al-'Arouri and the other terrorists, calling it a "cowardly Zionist assassination operation." The announcement emphasized the diligent efforts of al-'Arouri and his "brothers," which had become "a thorn in Israel's throat and a

genuine threat." The announcement claimed that "Operation al-Aqsa Flood is only the latest expression of the blessed efforts of al-'Arouri and his brothers," emphasized that killing him on Lebanese soil confirmed the "enemy" posed a danger to the Islamic nation and added that the battlefield was open. It was also noted that fighting and deterring Israel would be the duty of Muslims in all arenas and on all fronts "until the cancer is eradicated from the land of Palestine and the [Islamic] nation is free of its evil. That is what Saleh al-'Arouri and his brothers strove to achieve, and [their activities] began to bear fruit" (Shehab Telegram channel, January 3, 2024).

► **Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip and threats of revenge:** A "source" in Hamas said that after Saleh al-'Arouri's death had been announced, the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military wing, launched a barrage of rockets at Tel Aviv, adding that Israel had to know that the response of the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades and the "resistance" [terrorist organizations] would arrive and be equivalent to the assassination of "great leader Saleh al-'Arouri" (FRANCE 24, January 2, 2024). No rockets were actually launched at Tel Aviv.

► **Suspending the negotiations for a hostage-release deal:** "Exclusive sources" told al-Arabiya TV that after the assassination, Hamas informed the mediators that it was freezing the talks on a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip or on the exchange of prisoners until further notice. The sources claimed al-'Arouri had recently been in contact with the mediators to reach an understanding regarding a major ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and a hostage deal. He was supposed to meet with mediators the following week, bringing Hamas' demands for a ceasefire. Hamas tasked the mediators with informing the Israeli side that any future negotiations would be preceded by a commitment to stop the targeted killings. The "sources" said that the mediators were now working to stop the potential escalation and had contacted Israel, which informed them it would not stop carrying out additional countermeasures, and that it refused to stop its operations in exchange for a ceasefire (al-Arabiya, January 2, 2024). Despite the announcement about suspending the negotiations, senior Hamas terrorists admitted that in order to stop the aggression in the Gaza Strip they would have to return to the negotiating table and were acting in the interests of the Palestinians:

- ◆ Asked about the effect the event would have on efforts to reach a hostage exchange deal and the "cessation of the aggression," **Osama Hamdan a senior Hamas terrorist in Lebanon**, claimed that **Hamas did not act impulsively, but rather with**

"awareness and maturity" based on the interests of the Palestinians. He added that they wanted the hostilities to end but Israel could not be trusted and the mediators had to take into consideration. He also emphasized that Israel had "committed a crime," and it was natural that the Palestinians and the "resistance" would respond in an "appropriate manner" (al-Arabi TV, January 3, 2024):

◆ **Senior terrorist Muhammad Nizal, a member of the Hamas political bureau,** said that given the killing of al-'Arouri, it made no sense for them to enter into negotiations and it would currently be impossible to return to indirect negotiations, but it was possible that in the coming days they would reassess the situation. He stated that they had conveyed their views to the mediators and were waiting for a response from Israel and the United States (al-Jazeera Mubasher YouTube channel, January 4, 2024).

## Senior Hamas terrorists

► **Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau,** called the killing a "cowardly act of assassination" carried out by Israel, which once again proved the "murderous manner" in which it operates. He called al-'Arouri "a great patriotic commander-brother, a jihad fighter," and called carrying out the assassination on Lebanese soil "an act of terrorism in every sense of the word and a violation of Lebanon's sovereignty." He also claimed it was an act of hostility against the Palestinian people and promised that **"the Zionist occupation" would bear responsibility and the Palestinian "resistance" would not end but would continue more forcefully** (al-Hadath, January 2, 2024).



**Isma'il Haniyeh announces al-'Arouri's death (al-Hadath, January 2, 2024)**

► **Osama Hamdan, a senior Hamas terrorist in Lebanon,** warned that all their options were open after al-'Arouri's assassination and the Palestinian people and the "resistance" would provide an appropriate response. He called on the Western countries to stop the "crimes of the occupation" against the Palestinian people and accused the United States of backing the



IDF's activities in the Gaza Strip and the killing of al-'Arouri. He said Washington's argument, that it had not been aware of al-'Arouri's killing, was an attempt to avoid legal and political responsibility which not succeed (al-Arabi TV, January 3, 2024).

► **Senior Hamas terrorist Sami Abu Zuhri** said that the assassination of Saleh al-'Arouri and the leaders of the "resistance" would not break the will of the Palestinians or restore respect to Israel, and what happened on October 7, 2023 would not be erased by "cowardly assassinations." He added that the shahada (death as a martyr for the sake of Allah) was an honor and that the blood of the heroic leaders was one of the Palestinian people's sacrifices. He claimed the "crime" was an expression of Israel's desire to expand the circle of conflict, and all members of the [Islamic] nation had to prepare for an open conflict (Sami Abu Zuhri's X account, January 2, 2024).

► **Senior terrorist Zaher Jabarin, Hamas deputy commander for Judea and Samaria**, called on the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria to continue their attacks on the "occupation," adding that the Palestinians would avenge al-'Arouri's death (Hamas Telegram channel, January 3, 2024).

► **Senior terrorist Yusuf Hamdan, Hamas representative in Algeria**, said that the killing of al-'Arouri would only increase the "resistance's" determination and adherence to its path. He claimed Israel had tried to eliminate Hamas "leaders" in the past but it had not affected the movement's path or the growth of its power. He claimed it was a flagrant attack on Lebanon and would expand the "circle of fire" far beyond the borders of the Gaza Strip. He also stated that the assassination reflected Israel's failure to achieve anything on the battlefield in "Palestine", and therefore it chose to seek targets beyond its borders. **He warned that Hamas would avenge the blood of al-'Arouri, his "brothers" and all the dead, and Israel would pay the price for its crimes** (al-Masdar website, Algeria, January 2, 2024).

► Alaa' al-Laqta, a Hamas-affiliated Palestinian cartoonist, published a cartoon of two blood-stained hands reaching out to each other, one representing the Palestinians "outside" and the other "inside" under the caption "One Blood" (Alaa' Al-Laqta's Facebook page, January 2, 2024). Another cartoon showed al-'Arouri's picture on the background of a map of West Bank and the caption "Sheikh of the West Bank, go to peace" (Alaa' Al-Laqta's Facebook page, January 3, 2024).



Cartoons by Alaa' al-Laqta (Alaa' al-Laqta's Facebook page, January 2-3, 2024)

## The Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)

► **Ziyad al-Nakhalah, PIJ secretary general**, published mourning notice eulogizing al-'Arouri and calling him "a unique and loyal leader of the Palestinian people and whom they had lost him when they desperately needed his presence. He was a leader who spread confidence and calmness among those around him and whom he worked. They lost him as a leader and as a person who believed in the righteousness of the Palestinian people's jihad until martyrdom, reflected today in the jihad and heroism of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, in Judea and Samaria, throughout Palestine and also outside it." Ziyad al-Nakhalah also spoke on the phone with Isma'il Haniyeh and offered his condolences for the death of al-'Arouri and those killed with him, emphasizing the unity of the ranks among the Palestinian organizations working against Israel and the central role played by Hamas and the PIJ in the "resistance" (PIJ media information bureau Telegram channel, January 2-3, 2024).

► **Senior terrorist Muhammad al-Hindi, deputy PIJ secretary general**, said that thanks to "the cowardly missiles," Saleh al-'Arouri had turned from a Hamas leader to a "great symbol of the Palestinian people and the entire [Islamic] nation." He claimed Israel was "delusional" if it believed for a moment that killing the leaders of the "resistance" [terrorist organizations] could weaken it, on the contrary, their blood only increased its power (PIJ media information bureau Telegram channel, January 2, 2024).

► **Senior terrorist Haitham Abu Ghazlan, responsible for PIJ relations in Lebanon, said that the organization promised to respond to his killing**, as the "crime" did not affect only Hamas, but all Palestinians. He added that the consequences of the "crime" would boomerang and Israel would pay the price. The Palestinian "organizations" called on all Palestinians in Judea and Samaria to "resist" Israel and attack the settlers everywhere. He



claimed the Palestinian "resistance," which succeeded in proving itself on the ground and caused the IDF loss of life and property, would set the conditions to end the war, and targeted killing would not stop it. He reiterated that the Palestinian [terrorist] organizations were in a state of open war with Israel, adding that he expected the fighting in the Strip to intensify in the coming days in light of al-'Arouri's killing (Arab World Press news agency (AWP), January 3, 2024).

## The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)

► **Maher al-Taher, responsible for PFLP international relations**, said that the killing of Saleh al-'Arouri was a crime that would not go unpunished, the "resistance" would react to it with all its might, and Israel would know it made a mistake for which it would pay a high price (PFLP in Lebanon media information website, January 2, 2024).

## The Palestinian Authority (PA)

► **Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesman for Mahmoud Abbas**, said they considered the killing of al-'Arouri a serious escalation, and it would not bring peace and security to Israel. He said that the targeted attacks carried out by Israel in the past, such as killing Ahmed Yassin and other Palestinians, had failed to bring peace and security to Israel. He also noted that the current war was not only in the Gaza Strip but "everywhere," and the entire [Middle East] was facing unimaginable hell (AWP Agency, January 3, 2024).

► **PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh** condemned the killing of al-'Arouri and claimed it was a "crime that matched the identity of those responsible for it," and warned of its possible risks and consequences. He offered his condolences to the Palestinians, the al-'Arouri family and Hamas (Muhammad Shtayyeh's Facebook page, January 2, 2024).

► **Jibril Rajoub, Fatah secretary**, said his death willed them to end the internal Palestinian schism (al-Arabi YouTube channel, January 2, 2024).

► **The al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades**<sup>5</sup> in the Balata refugee camp in Nablus described al-'Arouri as "the instigator of the revolution in the West Bank and the architect of the Operation al-Aqsa Flood" (Shuhadaa al-Aqsa Brigades Telegram channel, January 3, 2024).

► **Dr. Safian Abu Zayda, a Palestinian political commentator and expert on Israeli issues**, stated that the attack was a direct message to Hezbollah and Hamas, since it was carried out in the center of Hezbollah's stronghold in Beirut and not in south Lebanon or on the Beirut-Damascus road. He said it proved that Israel did not hesitate to carry out such operations

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<sup>5</sup> Fatah's military-terrorist wing before it split from the movement in 2007.

despite all the risks involved, and that without a doubt there would be a response against Israel from Hamas, the other Palestinian [terrorist] organizations and Hezbollah (al-Ghad TV, January 2, 2024).

►The east Jerusalem daily al-Quds, which is affiliated with the PA, published a meme of al-'Arouri looking up and a paraglider, indicating that he had been involved in the terrorist attack and massacre on October 7, 2023, and the launching of the paragliders into Israeli territory (al-Quds, January 3, 2024).



**The al-Quds meme (al-Quds, January 3, 2024)**

►**Demonstrations and a general strike in Judea and Samaria:** "Rage marches" were held in Judea and Samaria on January 2, 2024 during the evening and night. Young Palestinians gathered in front of al-'Arouri's house in the village of 'Aroura, where he was born, and chanted condemnations of his killing and calls to avenge his death. A procession was held in the Jenin refugee camp, and clashes broke out in the al-Aroub refugee camp north of Hebron following a procession that reached the entrance to the camp (al-Araby al-Jadeed, January 2, 2024; Wafa, January 2, 2024; al-Jazeera TV YouTube channel, January 3, 2024).



**Right: A mass march in Ramallah (al-Araby al-Jadeed, January 2, 2024). Left: A procession in the Jenin refugee camp (Safa's X account, January 2, 2024)**



**Right: The gathering in front of the al-'Arouri family home in 'Aroura (al-Qastel website X account, January 2, 2024). Left: The mass march in the village (Palestinian TV Telegram channel, January 2, 2024)**

►The Fatah movement in Judea and Samaria announced a general strike on January 3, 2024 as a sign of mourning (al-Ghad TV channel, January 2, 2024). The Palestinian organizations called for igniting the ground under the feet of the "occupation" in response (Shehab website, January 2, 2024).

►The Palestinian "resistance" [terrorist] organizations issued a joint statement emphasizing that the "resistance" continued. A national day of mourning and a general strike were declared. It was further claimed that the assassination was an attack on the entire Arab and Islamic nation, not only against Lebanon and "Palestine," and that the Arab countries had to take a decisive position immediately. The "organizations" called for a response in all arenas and on all fronts and called on the Arab and Islamic nation everywhere, especially in Judea, Samaria, Jerusalem and the cities of Israel, to set the land on fire. They stated that the killing of al-'Arouri would not break or weaken the "resistance," rather it only strengthened the "resistance" and the Palestinian people (Telegram channel C\_Military1, January 3, 2024).



**Right: General strike in Nablus. Left: General strike in Ramallah (QudsN X account, January 3, 2024)**

## Hezbollah

► Hezbollah's response revealed the organization's **embarrassment, since al-'Arouri and the others were killed in its power center in Beirut, proving its stronghold was not impregnable.** Moreover, the assassination provided further evidence of the close ties between Hamas and Hezbollah, which hosted senior Hamas terrorists in its stronghold in the Dahiyeh. It further strengthened the assessment of the close coordination between the organizations both during the current war and in general. Hezbollah also faces a dilemma over how to respond. **So far, its threat of revenge has been vague and general, and mainly refers to increasing "resistance axis" attacks.**

► Hezbollah issued an official statement of condolences to Hamas, accused Israel of the killing and warned it would take revenge. Israel's targeted attack, according to the statement, was a dangerous development in the war it was waging against the "resistance axis," which would will only increase the attacks from Lebanon and the other fronts (Hezbollah combat information Telegram account, January 2, 2024).

► In his January 3, 2024, speech **Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah secretary general**, called the killing "cowardly." He said it was very dangerous, especially since it took place in the southern suburb of Beirut [the Dahiyeh]. He stated that it could not be ignored but it was unnecessary to talk about it, it would not go without a response and punishment would come. He pointed out that until now, every action they took on the fighting front had been precisely calculated, which was why they were paying a high price in the lives of their young men, but if Israel thought about waging war with Lebanon, then their fighting would have no reservations or limitations (al-Manar, January 3 2024).

► **Hussein Jishi, a Hezbollah member of the Lebanese Parliament**, said that Hezbollah would respond to the killing, as Nasrallah had previously stated.<sup>6</sup> He added that Hezbollah was trying to keep the conflict within the "rules of engagement" but Israel was pushing its borders (al-Araby al-Jadeed Telegram account, January 2, 2024).

► The Hezbollah-affiliated Lebanese daily al-Akhbar wrote in its front-page story that **"Israel decided to break the rules of confrontation with Lebanon and crossed the red line**

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<sup>6</sup> On August 28, 2023, Nasrallah gave a speech warning Israel not to carry out targeted attacks on Lebanese soil and threatened that Hezbollah would react strongly to any Israeli attempt to harm Lebanese, Iranians, Palestinians, or Syrians;



**established by Nasrallah several months ago.**" That enabled [sic] them to respond differently from the way which had been accepted so far (al-Akhbar, January 2, 2024).

►Hezbollah "sources" claimed that Israel was dragging Hezbollah into a war it did not want, but would achieve its goal. A "source in the Hezbollah command" stated that "after the killing, Hezbollah's actions in the border area will be powerful. However, they will be 'calculated,' because Hezbollah does not want Israel to achieve its goal of dragging the organization into war" (al-Araby al-Jadeed, January 3 2024).

## Other Lebanese Reactions

►**Najib Mikati, the prime minister of the interim government in Lebanon,** () called the al-'Arouri's killing "a new Israeli crime," which he claimed was intended to bring Lebanon into a new conflict after the ongoing daily attacks in the south which caused a large number of dead and wounded. Mikati pointed out that Israel was infringing on Lebanon's sovereignty while Lebanon itself was committed to implementing Resolution 1701 (Lebanese prime minister's office X Account, January 2, 2024). Mikati instructed the Lebanese foreign ministry to file a complaint following the "Israeli aggression in the Dahiyeh." **Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdullah Bou Habib** instructed Lebanon's representatives at the UN and in Washington to hold the necessary contacts to submit the complaint (Lebanese foreign ministry X account, January 3, 2024).

►Interviewed by CNN, **Abdullah Bou Habib** said the Lebanese government was trying to convince Hezbollah not to escalate the situation to a war with Israel, but Hezbollah would decide by itself whether or not to respond. He said he hoped there would be no response from Hezbollah and no similar Israeli operation in Lebanon. He said the Lebanese government was in continuous contact with Hezbollah, but could not tell it what to do, it could only try to convince it (CNN, January 3, 2024).

►The Amal movement claimed the killing of al-'Arouri was evidence of the depth of Israel's "distress," the result of the [actions of the military-terrorist] wings of the "resistance in Gaza" (al-Mayadeen TV X account , January 3, 2024).

►Dr. Sami Nader, director of the Levant Institute for Strategic Affairs in Beirut, said killing al-'Arouri was a dangerous development in the war in the Gaza Strip, which was spilling into the Lebanese arena. The killing of a senior Hamas figure on Lebanese soil brought Lebanon closer to a direct confrontation with Israel (al-Ghad TV, January 2, 2024).

## Iranian Reactions

► **The Iranian regime blamed the United States for the killing, claimed that Israel had carried out an "act of terrorism" and achieved nothing, and said the "resistance" [anti-Israel terrorist attacks] would only increase and tension in the region would rise.**

► **Ebrahim Raisi, the president of Iran**, sent a letter of condolence to Ismail Haniyeh, stating that al-'Arouri's blood had not been shed in vain but would strengthen the "tree of resistance" and help free Palestine "from the clutches of the Zionists" (IRNA, January 3, 2024).

► **Hossein-Amir Abdollahian, the Iranian foreign minister**, claimed that "the hostile activity of the Zionist regime's terrorist machine in other countries constitutes a real threat to regional peace and security." He claimed that such "terrorist" actions "proved" that Israel had not achieved any of its goals after weeks of "war crimes, massacre and destruction in Gaza and the West Bank" despite the direct support of the United States (IRNA, January 3, 2024).

► **Mohammad-Reza Ashtiani, the Iranian defense minister**, claimed the United States was responsible for killing al-'Arouri, had upset the regional balance and would suffer the consequences. He stated that such actions would lead the regional countries to consolidate their stance against American Middle East policy, adding that such strategic mistakes would cause the tension in the region to increase and the "smoke that rose would reach the eyes of the Americans" (Tasnim, January 3, 2024).

► **Nasser Kanaani, spokesman for the Iranian foreign ministry**, claimed al-'Arouri's blood would increase "the 'resistance' and the motivation to fight against the Zionist occupiers, not only in 'Palestine' but in the region and among all lovers of freedom around the world." He also claimed that the "Zionist regime" had once again proved that it was based on "terrorism and crimes" and that the [killing of al-'Arouri] was the result of "a serious failure against the Palestinian 'resistance organizations" in the last three months" (Fars, January 2, 2024).

► **Ali Akbar Velayati, advisor to Iranian leader for international affairs**, published a letter of condolence in which he wrote that the "barbaric actions and crimes testify to the weakness and desperation of the Zionist regime, which has failed on all fronts in the face of the 'resistance' of the fighting groups and the brave Palestinian people, especially since



Operation al-Aqsa Flood." He claimed that the actions and "martyrdom" of Palestinian fighters and commanders [Palestinian terrorist operatives] would only strengthen the current of Islamic "resistance." He added that the United States and its allies, who were the main perpetrators of regional crimes, should know that the "resistance groups" [terrorist organizations] and the Palestinian people would provide a fitting response (Fars, January 2, 2024).

► The **IRGC** strongly condemned Israel's "barbaric action," stating that "the elimination of al-'Arouri will result in a more forceful entry of the Palestinian fighters in the West Bank into the jihad arena." The IRGC added that the killing proved the "continuation of the madness and cruelty of the Zionists with the support of the terrorist government of the United States," adding that the "Zionist regime" would not be able to correct the failure wreaked upon it by Operation al-Aqsa Flood through "terrorism and crimes," saying in conclusion that the "Zionist regime's war machine" had no way out except to "submit to the will of the Palestinian fighters" and the "holy jihad fighters" (Tasnim, January 3, 2024).

► A billboard commemorating al-'Arouri was erected in the center of Tehran on behalf of the Iranian regime. It read in Hebrew, "Kill us, our nation becomes more alive," with the Arabic translation below. Its objective was to glorify "martyrdom" for the sake of Islam and to send a message to Israel that the "resistance" [terrorism against Israel] would continue despite attacks on its leaders (Quds Network, January 3, 2024).



**Billboards commemorating al-'Arouri in the center of Tehran (Quds Network, January 3, 2024)**

## The Reactions of the Pro-Iranian Militias

### Iraq

► The Nobles Movement (Nujaba), the pro-Iranian militia in Iraq, also reacted to al-'Arouri's death, calling it "another death on the path of the great battle against the Zionist and

American enemy." It added that they would continue to fully support all the goals of the Palestinians, especially Hamas (Nujaba Telegram channel, January 2, 2024).

## Yemen

► **Muhammad Abdel Salam, the spokesman for the Houthi movement**, condemned the "occupation's killing of al-'Arouri," and calling a "cowardly act" that constituted "treacherous aggression" against Lebanon. He said they would continue to support the "Palestinian and Lebanese resistance" [Palestinian terrorist organizations and Hezbollah], and offered his condolences to Hamas (Muhammad Abdel Salam's Telegram channel, January 2, 2024).

## The Arab-Islamic world

► A correspondent for the al-Araby al-Jadeed website reported that in response to the killing of al-'Arouri, Egypt had suspended its mediation regarding a hostage-release deal and an agreement for a ceasefire, and that an Israeli security delegation had ended its visit to Cairo (al-Araby al-Jadeed, January 2, 2024).

► A support demonstration was held in al-Zarqa in **Jordan**, with demonstrators calling al-'Arouri a "holy shaheed," chanting anti-Israel slogans and waving Hamas and Palestinian flags (al-Fajr, January 2, 2024).



**Demonstration of support for Hamas and al-'Arouri in al-Zarqa in Jordan  
(al-Fajr, January 2, 2024)**

## The Discourse on Social Networks

► On the social networks there were calls for strikes and demonstrations as well as calls for revenge, referring to Nasrallah's speech from last August, in which he said that killing senior figures on Lebanese soil would prompt a strong reaction. Some social networkers claimed that the silence maintained by Hamas before it officially reported the news of his death

indicated they were planning "something big" in response (Muhammad Shoeib al-Farra's X account, January 3, 2024). Gazans spread fake news about rockets' being fired at Tel Aviv and Haifa.

►Some of the social networkers compared the killing of al-'Arouri to that of Qassem Soleimani, commander of the IRGC's Qods Force, four years ago. The two were represented as "heroic commanders" and "good friends." There were also posts stating that Lebanon did not want war and that this killing was no different from the recent killing of Sayyed Reza Mousavi in Syria.

►There were also conspiracy theories in the social media regarding Hezbollah's involvement in the killing, and claims were made that Hezbollah had cooperated with Israel and thereby betrayed Hamas.

►For example:

◆ **Hassan al-Aliq, a Lebanese journalist**, whose X account has 221,000 followers, noted that the reaction to the "crime of elimination" of "commander" Saleh al-'Arouri had two parts: first, a reaction to the elimination itself and second, to the damage to the southern suburb of Beirut. The first, he said, was the responsibility of all "resistance forces, led by the Palestinian resistance." The second was Hezbollah's responsibility (Hasan al-Aliq's X account, January 3, 2024).

◆ **Anouar Malek, an Algerian journalist** who lives in France and whose X account has 602,000 followers, wrote that the killing of one of the highest-ranking Hamas leaders, Saleh al-'Arouri, and those who were killed with him in the southern suburb of Beirut, in a secure place which was difficult to access, revealed the fragility of Hezbollah's security and raised question marks regarding why Israeli intelligence had avoided killing Hassan Nasrallah for so many years (Anouar Malek's X account, January 2, 2024).

◆ **Mustafa Kamal**, an Iraqi journalist whose X account has 70,000 followers, stated that the "crime" of killing Saleh al-'Arouri would not have been possible without the participation of Hezbollah's security apparatus. It was carried out in Hezbollah's "security quarter" in the heart of the southern suburb of Beirut, which is under the close and direct supervision of the IRGC (Mustafa Kamal's X account, January 2, 2024).

◆ **Hael al-Bakkali, a Yemeni journalist** whose X account has 20,000 followers, pointed out that Israel's inability to kill senior Hamas figures in the Gaza Strip, while it was able

to kill al-'Aroui in Lebanon, proved that Hezbollah worked for Israel and had been established for that purpose (Hael al-Bakkali's X account, January 2, 2024).

◆ Gazans spread fake news about rocket fire that allegedly targeted Tel Aviv and Haifa to raise morale and provide a response for the expectation of revenge (Shaheed 115 Telegram channel, January 3, 2024).