



Hamas Beyond Gaza: The Strategic Significance of the Greece-Cyprus Case

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The investigation into a suspected Hamas network operating across Cyprus, Greece, and several other countries highlights a dimension of the Hamas threat that deserves greater attention. Hamas has repeatedly demonstrated an ability to adapt its organizational structure to changing circumstances. As Israel continues to dismantle Hamas's military infrastructure and weaken its territorial control in Gaza, the terrorist organization may become increasingly reliant on its external networks. For Israel, Greece, and Cyprus, this possibility requires closer attention to cross-border intelligence cooperation, terrorist financing, and the infrastructure that allows Hamas to regenerate beyond its traditional territorial base.

For years, Hamas was viewed mainly through the lens of Gaza. Its leadership governed the Strip, much of its military infrastructure was built beneath it, and the threat it posed to Israel was largely associated with that territory. But the investigation now unfolding in Cyprus and Greece suggests that we may need to look beyond Gaza.

What began with arrests in Cyprus in May 2026 has since developed into a much wider investigation. Cypriot authorities allege that a network was preparing attacks against Israeli interests in Cyprus and Greece, with

connections reaching Turkey, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Germany. Five defendants have since been committed for trial in Cyprus on terrorism-related and other serious criminal charges.

The case also needs to be understood within a broader European context. Hamas is designated as a terrorist organization by the European Union, and since October 7, European authorities have investigated individuals and networks with suspected links to Hamas in a number of countries. These cases have raised concerns not only about Hamas's support and logistical infrastructure in Europe, but also about the potential use of European territory for operational activity against Israeli and Jewish targets. The developments in Greece and Cyprus should not be viewed in isolation but as part of a wider European security challenge.

The allegations remain before the Cyprus courts, and the intended targets have not been publicly confirmed. Still, the international character of the case is difficult to ignore. Investigators have examined suspected explosives procurement in Cyprus, explosives-related training allegedly received in Malaysia by a [Palestinian suspect](#) arrested in Crete, meetings involving Hamas members that have occurred in Istanbul, and Hamas connections to Germany. (The suspect arrested in Greece denies belonging to Hamas or intending to participate in an attack.) In addition, an alleged senior figure in the network was arrested in Indonesia under a Cypriot warrant and extradited to Cyprus in July.

What matters here is not any single arrest, but the way the different pieces appear to connect across borders: alleged recruitment in one country, training in another, meetings elsewhere, and financial and communication links stretching across multiple jurisdictions. Viewed separately, these activities may not appear particularly significant. It is only when the pieces are brought together that the broader network begins to emerge.

To understand why this cross-border structure matters, it is useful to look at how Hamas has evolved over time. Hamas has never been a static organization. Its origins lie in the Muslim Brotherhood's social and religious infrastructure in Gaza, which preceded the formal establishment of Hamas in 1987. Gradually, it evolved from a social-religious movement into an armed organization,

entered Palestinian electoral politics, seized control of Gaza, and developed increasingly sophisticated military and intelligence capabilities.

This adaptability was not limited to Gaza. Hamas also developed an important external dimension, with its leadership moving among Amman, Damascus, Doha, Istanbul, and Beirut as regional circumstances changed. Along the way, it built political relationships and financial networks that allowed it to maintain an organizational presence beyond its territorial base.

This pattern of adaptation is particularly relevant after October 7. Israel's campaign dealt major blows to Hamas's leadership and military capabilities. Yahya Sinwar, Mohammed Deif, Ismail Haniyeh, Saleh al-Arouri and other senior figures who shaped the organization in recent years are now gone.

Hamas's history shows that eliminating its senior leadership does not necessarily mean eliminating the organization itself. However, these operations clearly matter. The loss of experienced commanders creates uncertainty within the remaining leadership, leaves important positions difficult to fill, and forces the terrorist organization to spend time and resources rebuilding its command structure. This challenge is particularly acute following the loss of Sinwar, Deif, Marwan Issa, and Izz al-Din Haddad, who represented years of accumulated military experience and organizational knowledge. Individual commanders can be replaced, but rebuilding that level of experience takes time.

Still, Hamas has faced major leadership losses before. It survived the killings of its founder, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, in 2004, and his successor, Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi, only weeks later. Other figures once considered indispensable, from Yahya Ayyash to Ahmed Jabari, were eventually replaced as well. The individuals changed; the organization adapted.

The question, therefore, is what Hamas's next adaptation might look like if it permanently loses its ability to govern Gaza. Territorial control provided Hamas with enormous advantages after 2007: taxation, administrative institutions, physical infrastructure, military production, and the ability to construct a vast subterranean system. Yet governance also imposed responsibilities and constraints.

A Hamas without ministries does not necessarily mean a Middle East without Hamas. The organization existed before it governed Gaza, and the loss of its territorial base could alter its center of gravity without eliminating the organization itself. If Gaza becomes less viable as the center of Hamas's military and political power, the movement could become less visible and more decentralized, relying increasingly on external leadership, financial networks, facilitators, and smaller compartmentalized cells operating across borders.

The Cyprus-Greece investigation does not prove that such a transformation has already occurred, but it illustrates the type of security challenge that a more externalized Hamas could present. If Hamas becomes more reliant on external networks, the challenge will extend well beyond Israel. For European authorities, the concern is not limited to the networks that provide financial, logistical, or political support. There is also a risk that growing pressure on Hamas and the erosion of its senior leadership could increase the importance of its networks outside the Middle East, including as a means of targeting Israeli or Jewish interests abroad.

There is historical precedent for violence linked to conflicts in the Middle East extending far beyond the region. Hezbollah's attacks against the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires in 1992 and the AMIA Jewish community center in 1994 demonstrated the vulnerability of Israeli and Jewish targets abroad. These cases are relevant when considering the possibility that sustained pressure on Hamas could increase the importance of its external networks.

The Cyprus-Greece case points to a broader difficulty for European security services: security institutions remain primarily organized along national lines, while the networks they monitor increasingly operate across them. Political activity, fundraising, communications, recruitment, logistical facilitation, and operational planning may take place in different jurisdictions and may not appear connected until intelligence is shared across borders. The task, then, is not simply to identify individual operatives, but to trace the broader networks that connect and sustain their activities across borders.

Within this broader European challenge, Greece and Cyprus deserve particular attention because their strategic importance to Israel has grown considerably. They are no longer simply neighboring European destinations but increasingly

important nodes in Israel's Eastern Mediterranean architecture, with growing ties in defense, energy, connectivity, investment, and diplomacy. Their position at the intersection of Europe and the Middle East also places them more directly within Israel's broader security environment.

As this relationship deepens, security cooperation will inevitably become a more important component. Unlike Israel's heavily securitized environment, Israeli interests in Greece and Cyprus operate within open European societies characterized by extensive tourism, commercial activity, and cross-border movement. Closer intelligence coordination with Israel and European partners, greater attention to terrorist financing, and faster cross-border information sharing should develop alongside these growing strategic ties.

The same logic applies to the broader campaign against Hamas. If the organization is capable of adapting, decentralizing, and relying more heavily on networks beyond Gaza, weakening its territorial base cannot be the only measure of success. The question for Israel is not only how much of Hamas's infrastructure in Gaza has been dismantled, but whether the organization retains the ability to reorganize and regenerate elsewhere.

Hamas is not merely a collection of leaders. It is an organizational system built over decades, combining ideology, recruitment, financing, external relationships, and operational knowledge. Destroying its military infrastructure and territorial base in Gaza is just one part of the challenge. Preventing the wider networks that sustain the organization from regenerating or shifting elsewhere is another.

The investigation in Cyprus and Greece may ultimately reveal a limited network rather than provide evidence of a broader organizational transformation. The courts will determine what can be established about the individuals involved. Strategic analysis must, however, also consider what the case might indicate about the environment in which Hamas will attempt to survive.

Israel's challenge after October 7 is not only to prevent Hamas from rebuilding in Gaza but also to anticipate how the organization might adapt if rebuilding there becomes increasingly difficult. Its future may depend less on territorial

control and more on its ability to preserve networks, relationships, and operational knowledge across borders.

For years, the central question was what Hamas was building beneath Gaza.

The next one may be what it is building beyond it.

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