

The Cat Who Lost His Ninth Life - An End to Mohammed Deif's Reign of Terror

Mohammed Diab Ibrahim al-Masri, more commonly known as Mohammed Deif, was a Hamas terrorist who is credited for being the mastermind behind the October 7th Hamas terrorist attacks. Deif is a figure synonymous with terror and violence and served as the leader of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades (IQB) which is the military wing of Hamas.¹ Deif orchestrated numerous attacks against Israel, leaving a trail of destruction and loss in his wake.

Deif's tenure as the head of the al-Qassam Brigades, which began in 2002, was characterized by a series of deadly attacks.² Even prior to gaining this position, Deif masterminded several suicide bombings in 1996 that killed over 50 Israelis civilians. Since his reign of terror began, he was instrumental in developing Hamas' capabilities, including rocket attacks and tunnel warfare.³ His strategies took the brutal, inhumane, and despicable atrocities being committed by Hamas to an even more dangerous level.

Deif's ability to evade capture and assassination earned him the nickname "the cat with nine lives." Since 1995, he had been the top target on Israel's most wanted list, surviving at least seven targeted

¹Bassam, Laila, and Samia Nakhoul. "Who Is Mohammed Deif, the Hamas Commander behind the Attack on Israel? Reuters, 11 Oct. 2023, www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/how-secretive-hamas-commander-masterminded-attack-israel-2023-10-10/.

² Miller, Elhanan. "Is Prime Israel Target Muhammad Deif Overseeing Hamas's Strategy? | The Times of Israel." The Times of Israel, 23 July 2014, www.timesofisrael.com/is-prime-israel-target-muhammad-deif-overseeing-hamass-strategy/.

³ "Suicide Bombings and Underground Attack Tunnels: Who Is Mohammed Deif?" Israel Defense Forces, 15 Oct. 2023, www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/hamas-israel-war-24/all-articles/suicide-bombings-and-underground-attack-tunnels-who-is-mohammed-deif/.

killing attempts.⁴ Despite sustaining severe injuries, including the loss of an eye, Deif evaded death and continued to lead Hamas' military operations from the shadows.⁵

In recent developments, there were allegations that Mohammed Deif may have been killed in an Israeli airstrike. On July 12th, 2024, Israeli fighter jets targeted a compound in the Al-Mawasi/Khan Younis area which was believed to be housing Deif and other high-ranking Hamas officials. While Israeli authorities had indicated "increasing signs" that Deif was killed in the operation, Hamas denied the claims and there was no definitive proof. Just over a week later, the IDF confirmed on July 21st that Deif was in fact killed in the attack.⁶

Deif's actions did not go unnoticed on the international stage. Prior to his death, he had been designated a Specially Designated Global Terrorist by the U.S. Department of State and added to the European Union's terrorist blacklist.⁷ In May 2024, the International Criminal Court (ICC) applied for arrest warrants for Deif and other Hamas leaders, citing charges of extermination, murder, and other war crimes.⁸

⁴ Aderet, Ofer. "Mohammed Deif, Hamas Leader Who Survived at Least Seven Israeli Assassination Attempts." Haaretz.Com, Haaretz, 14 July 2024, www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-07-14/ty-article/.premium/mohammed-deif-hamas-leader-who-survived-at-least-seven-israeli-assassination-attempts/00000190-ae33-dda3-adf9-ee775b8f0000.

⁵ "IDF Reveals New Undated Photo of Shadowy Hamas Commander Mohammed Deif | The Times of Israel." The Times of Israel, 6 Jan. 2024, www.timesofisrael.com/idf-reveals-new-undated-photo-of-shadowy-hamas-commander-mohammed-deif/.

⁶ Julian, Hana Levi. "Confirmed: Gaza's Hamas #2, Mohammed Deif Is Dead." The Jewish Press JewishPress.com, 21 July 2024, www.jewishpress.com/news/eye-on-palestine/hamas/confirmed-gazas-hamas-2-mohammed-deif-is-dead/2024/07/21/.

⁷ "Mohammed Deif." The Counter Extremism Project, www.counterextremism.com/extremists/mohammed-deif. Accessed 23 July 2024.

⁸ "Statement of ICC Prosecutor Karim A.A. Khan KC: Applications for Arrest Warrants in the Situation in the State of Palestine." International Criminal Court, 20 May 2024, www.icc-cpi.int/news/statement-icc-prosecutor-karim-aa-khan-kc-applications-arrest-warrants-situation-state.

Mohammed Deif's legacy is one of relentless violence and strategic terrorism. His actions caused immense suffering and have perpetuated the cycle of violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The unfortunate reality of the situation is that Deif's death simply means he will be replaced by another terrorist as hateful and dangerous as him. As long as figures like Deif remain in positions of power, the prospects for peace in the region remain bleak. His story is a stark reminder of the devastating impact of Hamas's heinous and barbaric crimes. The ongoing struggle for stability and security in the Middle East will only continue without a unified front opposing terrorism and extremism.

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