



By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

Is it too late to thwart Hamas' attempt to weaponise the Gaza hospital tragedy?



The bombing of the Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza is one of those events that could mark a turning point in the war. Israel and Hamas, and their allies, know this well.

The stakes surrounding the tragedy in which hundreds of civilians and patients died are huge for both warring parties. However, their motives regarding the consequences of this bombing are diametrically different.

Hamas and its sponsors want to weaponise this event so that the conflict from the south of Israel spreads into the region and destabilises Western countries and Israel's allies.

Israel wants to prevent this and understandably has the support of its Western partners. But it also wants to prevent the loss of the moral advantage with which it entered the confrontation with Hamas.

Hamas's propaganda trap

Hamas took the lead in this race because it was the first to broadcast its "truth" about the event. In the crucial first moment following the explosion, many of the biggest global media outlets served as transmission devices for the Hamas version of the hospital bombing.

Because of this, some of them will have to explain to their audience how they allowed themselves to be drawn into the Hamas's propaganda trap, because they did not do the fundamental task of their profession - check the facts.

Israel's highly sophisticated disinformation defence system, developed over decades of conflict, saw that the Gaza hospital tragedy and the initial advantage gained by Hamas posed a threat to the entire military campaign.

The fact that the civilians at the Al-Ahli hospital were murdered by "friendly fire" a missile misfired from an Islamic Jihad position in Gaza came to light quite rapidly and with evidence from the Israeli side.

Israel takes over creating the narrative

"While we continue to collect information, our current assessment, based on analysis of overhead imagery, intercepts and open-source information, is that Israel is not responsible for the explosion at the hospital in Gaza yesterday", stated Adrienne Watson, NSC spokesperson. This was one of the first allied confirmations of Israel's claims, which led to the turning point in the opposite direction of which Hamas wanted.

US President Joe Biden, who was caught off guard by the news of the bombing of a hospital in Gaza while preparing for a flight to Tel Aviv, confirmed Israel's claims upon arrival: "Based on the information we've seen today, it appears as a result of an errant rocket fired by a terrorist group in Gaza".

At the same time, confirmation was given by the Democratic and Republican chair and vice-chair of the Senate Committee on Intelligence, Mark Warner and Marco Rubio in Washington, when they stated they "feel confident that the explosion was the result of a failed rocket launch by militant terrorists and not the result of an Israeli airstrike".

The Israeli version, supported by evidence, rapidly took over the narrative in the principal global media and amortised the initial advantage of Hamas's story.

That Hamas was losing was confirmed by their spokesman Fawzi Barhoum, who said they were still gathering evidence regarding Israel's guilt and that they "will present it to international jurisdictions". He did not provide a time frame. However, it was already too late.

Consequences that cannot be eliminated

It is too late for Israel to fully repair the damage done to its war operation, even though the evidence of the guilt of Palestinian extremists arrived quickly and was detailed and convincing.

The first significant consequence was the cancellation of the meeting of US President Biden with the leaders of Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinian Authority, planned for Thursday. The US needed to persuade its Arab partners in the region that it would take every precaution to safeguard civilians during the Israeli operation.

Additionally, the Amman meeting was supposed to establish the framework for the post-conflict stabilisation of the region and eliminate the threat of an escalation in the neighbouring countries.

Radicalisation in the capitals of countries that support Israel inflicted equally substantial harm, as Hamas and its allies had anticipated. Just a few hours after the Gaza hospital bombing, there were violent protests in Turkey, Germany, and other parts of Europe, including attacks on American and Israeli facilities.

The European members of the Schengen Agreement began effectively to cancel it, and introduce border controls between them to prevent the possible movement of Islamic extremists.

Day of rage

In the Islamic world, Lebanon's pro-Iranian Hezbollah's call for a "day of rage" was successful, with hundreds of thousands of people taking to the squares of capitals across the Middle East to protest the casualties at the Gaza hospital, often with calls for all-out war against Israel and revenge.

These people are not interested in evidence of who actually bombed innocent civilians and patients in Gaza. Their anger has already started an avalanche of spreading the conflict to the region, which was one of the more desirable outcomes for Hamas' principal sponsors, primarily Iran.

Israel needs to continue its operation against Hamas much more cautiously: slower and less successful, even if it mostly managed to escape responsibility for the attack on the Al-Ahli hospital.

This will burden the country's political and military leadership as the nation continues to demand swift and total retaliation against the terrorists who committed one of the worst crimes against the Jews since the Holocaust.

Even though all the partner governments accepted Israel's evidence regarding the guilt of Palestinian extremists, a stain will remain in their public opinion on the moral correctness of the decision to start the conflict and eliminate Hamas.

These same Western partners will be under even greater pressure from violent protests by Hamas supporters and anti-Semitic incidents, creating a reluctance to support Israel at the expense of their own conformity.