



By: *Tomorrow's Affairs Staff*

# Qatar's withdrawal from the peace process—maintaining influence as an important negotiator



Qatar's decision to withdraw from its mediation role has increased uncertainty in the search for peace in the Gaza Strip and undoubtedly decreased the likelihood of a truce in the near future.

Qatar's **withdrawal** from the peace process seems quite understandable, considering that the previous efforts have not yielded significant results. Moreover, Doha's decision to deny its long-standing hospitality to the Hamas leadership means that Qatar has well calculated its own interests in ending the Gaza crisis.

Doha's decisions do not definitively end its mediation services, but they clearly indicate its intention to enhance the efficiency of the process. At the same time, with these moves, Qatar seeks to further strengthen its diplomatic position towards all involved actors, especially toward the US, its traditional ally.

That is why this manoeuvre can bring Qatar the expected diplomatic fruits, although it is not devoid of political risks, both in terms of relations with allies and Arab partners in the region.

## Increasing pressure on the parties to the conflict

By withdrawing from the negotiating troika, which also includes the US and Egypt, Qatar primarily wants to increase pressure on the parties to the conflict, Israel and Hamas.

In this way, Qatar aligns with American efforts to ensure a cease-fire as soon as possible and the return of Israeli hostages from Gaza, who were abducted in a terrorist attack by Hamas on 7 October last year.

One of the numerous diplomatic **sources** who have been conveying Doha's views since Saturday said that Qatar does not want to accept "being subjected to political exploitation aimed at gaining political leverage at Qatar's expense while misleading public

perception."

**“Qatar will resume efforts with its partners when the parties show their willingness and seriousness to end the brutal war” - Qatari Foreign Ministry**

"The Qataris have concluded that there is insufficient willingness from either side, with the mediation efforts becoming more about politics and elections rather than a serious attempt at peace."

However, this determination of Doha, even a reprimand addressed to the conflicting parties, is not definitive and may be reconsidered if a true intention to continue the process appears.

“Qatar will resume those efforts with its partners when the parties show their willingness and seriousness to end the brutal war and the ongoing suffering of civilians caused by catastrophic humanitarian conditions in the [Gaza] Strip,” said Mohammed Al Ansari, spokesman for the Qatari Foreign Ministry.

## Concessions to America

The decision to deny Hamas' leadership hospitality, which has been in Doha since 2012, when it moved out of Damascus due to conflicts, is another concession to America.

Regardless of the fact that Doha claims it is their independent decision, there is no doubt that it was made under pressure from the government in Washington.

That pressure has existed for a long time, but it has always been a concession to Qatar to keep Hamas leaders in its capital in order to maintain a channel of communication with them. Until now.

## When the Hamas leadership departs Qatar may lose some of its reputation with Arab partners and negotiating power

According to a US official, Washington became adamant for Qatar to expel Hamas leadership after the killing of US-Israeli hostage Hersh Goldberg-Polin in late August, as well as Hamas's persistent rejection of multiple ceasefire proposals.

When the Hamas leadership departs, which is not a time-bound event, Qatar may lose some of its reputation with Arab partners and negotiating power.

However, the US's interest in maintaining strategic relations has prevailed, leading to an intensified demand for the expulsion of the Hamas leadership from Doha.

## Turkey is facing a dilemma

At the moment, it is not clear where the expelled Hamas leaders could find a new refuge, with Turkey, Iran, and Iraq being the most frequently mentioned.

Turkey **hosted** the now-deceased Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh and his delegation last April and arranged a meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Istanbul.



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The Turkish leader then addressed the inevitable question of whether his meetings with the Hamas leadership could potentially lead to their relocation from Qatar to Turkey. However, at the time, he rejected this possibility.

"The sincerity they (Qatar) have towards them (Hamas), their stance towards them, has always been like a member of the family. In the coming period, I absolutely do not think it is possible for them to change this approach," President Erdoğan said at the time.

Obviously, the situation has completely changed; Hamas must leave Doha, but given that Washington specifically requested this move, it seems unlikely that Turkey can now replicate the hospitality it displayed half a year ago.

At the same time, the US reiterated that its allies should not host Hamas leaders. At a time when the peace process has stalled, the Turkish president would face more problems than benefits if he resists such a request.

## The process is waiting for Trump's team

On the other hand, Israel is **satisfied** with Qatar's decision to expel the Hamas leadership and believes that no country should provide hospitality to the terrorist group. This decision further complicates the functioning of Hamas, both due to the decimation of its potential in Gaza and the murder of its leaders. Collectively, these developments render Israel's adversary an increasingly vulnerable negotiator.

Qatar's withdrawal from mediation in the conflict, though it leaves the door open, means any progress will have to wait.

## The Qatari leadership sends a firm commitment to Trump's team that they can count on Qatar's mediation services in resolving the Middle East conflict as soon as they take office

Doha's manoeuvre may also indicate that we shouldn't expect US President Joe Biden's outgoing administration to achieve a peaceful breakthrough in the Middle East crisis by the time he leaves office in January.

Given that the Doha decisions came just days after Donald Trump won the presidential election, it is quite certain that Qatar wants the peace process to continue in full capacity with the arrival of the new administration in Washington.

In this way, the Qatari leadership sends a firm commitment to Trump's team that they can count on Qatar's mediation services in resolving the Middle East conflict as soon as they take office in January.