

Hamas After October 7: Is It Heading Towards Hezbollah's Fate?

Hamza Hassan | May 7, 2024



Following this agreement, expected to be approved by Israel, Hamas appears to be entering a new phase that could make its structure and function closer to the model of Hezbollah in Lebanon, albeit under different circumstances and contexts.

The cost of the recent war has been very high for the movement. While it entered the battle with objectives it described as tied to the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, the outcomes were largely unexpected. When it launched its attack on October 7, 2023, the operation revealed unforeseen gaps in Israeli security, as some key sites

appeared less fortified than observers had anticipated. This allowed Hamas to control several positions and take more prisoners than initially expected. However, Israel responded with extensive military operations lasting eight continuous months, resulting in tens of thousands of civilian casualties in Gaza, as part of a strategy to impose deterrence and restore the image of the Israeli military, amid declared international support and limited formal condemnations.

This scenario recalls the 2006 Lebanon war, when Hezbollah faced a large-scale military confrontation that ended with significant human and material losses, and a decline in its popularity both in Lebanon and across the Arab world over time, particularly after its later involvement in the Syrian conflict alongside the Assad regime. Even Hassan Nasrallah's subsequent statements, expressing regret over the kidnapping of the Israeli soldier, were seen as an acknowledgment of the cost of the action.

The situation for Hamas may follow a similar trajectory. Its human and military capabilities have declined significantly, and the Gaza Strip will require reconstruction subject to regional and international arrangements imposed by Arab parties in coordination with Israel. On a societal level, Gaza's population is likely to face pressures similar to, or even greater than, those experienced by the Lebanese after the 2006 war, considering the scale of destruction and massacres. The movement is also expected to face an escalating media and political campaign, alongside increasing restrictions from

certain Arab regimes that have historically offered political support, potentially pushing it further into Iran's sphere of influence.

Conclusion:

Hamas, which entered this war as a de facto authority in Gaza, will emerge from it transformed. In the best-case scenarios, it may evolve into an entity resembling Hezbollah, relying on limited regional support, focusing primarily on managing internal affairs, while its strategic maneuverability is constrained by the new restrictions imposed by the conflict.