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ISMAIL HANIYEH

ASSASSINATED IN TEHRAN

CONFLICT ESCALATION REPORT

OVERVIEW:

The assassination of Ismail Haniyeh, the political bureau chief of Hamas, in Tehran marks a significant escalation in the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict. This development occurs amid heightened regional tensions and international diplomatic efforts to address the conflict.

INCIDENT SUMMARY:

- **Date of Assassination:** Early Wednesday, July 31, 2024.
- **Location:** Tehran, Iran.
- **Circumstances:** Haniyeh was in Tehran to attend the inauguration of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard confirmed the assassination but did not provide details on the method or exact circumstances of the attack. The attack is currently under investigation.

ISMAIL HANIYEH:

Haniyeh was born in a refugee camp near Gaza City in 1962, joining Hamas in the late 1980s during the First Intifada, or uprising.

The 62-year-old served as prime minister of the Palestinian Authority between 2006 and 2007, after Hamas won a majority of seats in the Palestinian legislative elections at the time.

After the establishment of a Hamas-led administration in the Gaza Strip, as a result of Hamas' spat with rival Fatah faction, Haniyeh served as the leader of the de facto government in Gaza in 2007-2014.

In 2017, he was selected to replace Khaled Meshaal as Hamas's political bureau chief.

Haniyeh left Gaza in December 2019, living in Turkiye and Qatar, and building up his authority to represent Hamas abroad.

His most notable previous visits included the funeral of Qassem Soleimani, a top commander of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) who was killed by a US drone strike in 2020, and the inauguration of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in 2021.

In April of this year, Israeli airstrikes killed three of Haniyeh's sons and four of his grandchildren, with Haniyeh making clear at the time that their deaths would not affect the ceasefire, and the hostage talks that were under way back then.

SUSPECTED PERPETRATOR:

- Primary Suspect: Israel. Israel has previously vowed to target Haniyeh and other Hamas leaders in response to the deadly Hamas attack on October 7, 2023, which resulted in 1,200 deaths and approximately 250 hostages taken. Although no official confirmation has been made by Israeli authorities, suspicion immediately fell on Israel. Israeli responses to such incidents are often characterized by a policy of non-comment. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has ordered his cabinet ministers to not comment on Haniyeh's assassination.

CURRENT CONTEXT:

- Diplomatic Efforts: The assassination comes at a critical juncture when the U.S. administration under President Joe Biden is actively working to mediate a temporary cease-fire and negotiate a hostage release deal between Hamas and Israel. CIA Director Bill Burns and White House Coordinator Brett McGurk have been engaged in high-level discussions with officials from Israel, Qatar, and Egypt in recent days.

- **Regional Impact:** Analysts on Iranian state television have quickly attributed the attack to Israel. The timing of the assassination adds to the tension and uncertainty in the region, potentially undermining ongoing diplomatic efforts and increasing the risk of further violence.
- **West Bank:** West Bank cities of Al-Dhaheri, al-Khalil, Nablus, Tulkarem have called for a comprehensive strike and mobilization spreading fears of an intifada.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES:

- **Iran:** No immediate details on the investigation have been provided. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard has announced that the attack is under investigation. The incident has prompted an emergency response from Iranian officials, including a meeting of the Supreme National Security Council. Iranian authorities claim that an attack on Haniyeh means an attack on Iranian sovereignty which necessitates a response.

- **Hamas:** Hamas has condemned the assassination, blaming Israel and vowing retaliation. The group's leadership views this as a declaration of war and is expected to respond in kind.
- **USA:** The White House has acknowledged that they are aware of the reports. Secretary of Defence Austin has said that the US will defend Israel if it is attacked.
- **Russia:** The assassination of Haniyeh is a completely unacceptable political crime and will lead to further escalation of tensions in the region.
- **Turkey:** Turkey has said that the events show that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu is not ready to negotiate peace.

RESPONSE FROM AXIS OF RESISTANCE:

- Islamic Jihad: Enemy's crime will not stop us from continuing the path of resistance. Ismail Haniyeh was one of the symbols of Palestinian nation.**
- Ansarullah from Houthis: Assassination of Ismail Haniyeh is 'a terrorist crime and a clear violation of all laws.**
- Palestinian Authority: Ismail Haniyeh was a martyr for the Palestinian cause. It is time for Palestinians to stand up in unity.**

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

- Haniyeh's assassination follows a pattern of high-profile targeted killings by Israel, which has previously aimed to eliminate Hamas leaders in response to ongoing conflicts. The attack on Haniyeh, like those on previous leaders Ahmed Yassin and Abdel Aziz Rantisi in 2004, is likely to provoke significant reactions from Hamas and its allies.**

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS:

The assassination of Ismail Haniyeh on Iranian soil just does not complicate the already complex hostage negotiations but will also ignite the entire Axis of Resistance in the region. The event marks the biggest escalation since 7th October 2023.

Israel is anticipating an Intifada in the West Bank while the Iranian authorities are investigating the entire assassination event.

The assassination of Ismail Haniyeh is a critical development in the Israel-Hamas conflict, with the potential to significantly escalate regional tensions and complicate diplomatic efforts.

The situation remains fluid, with potential for further developments and responses from the involved parties.



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