



Hamis names Yahya Sinwar as new overall leader

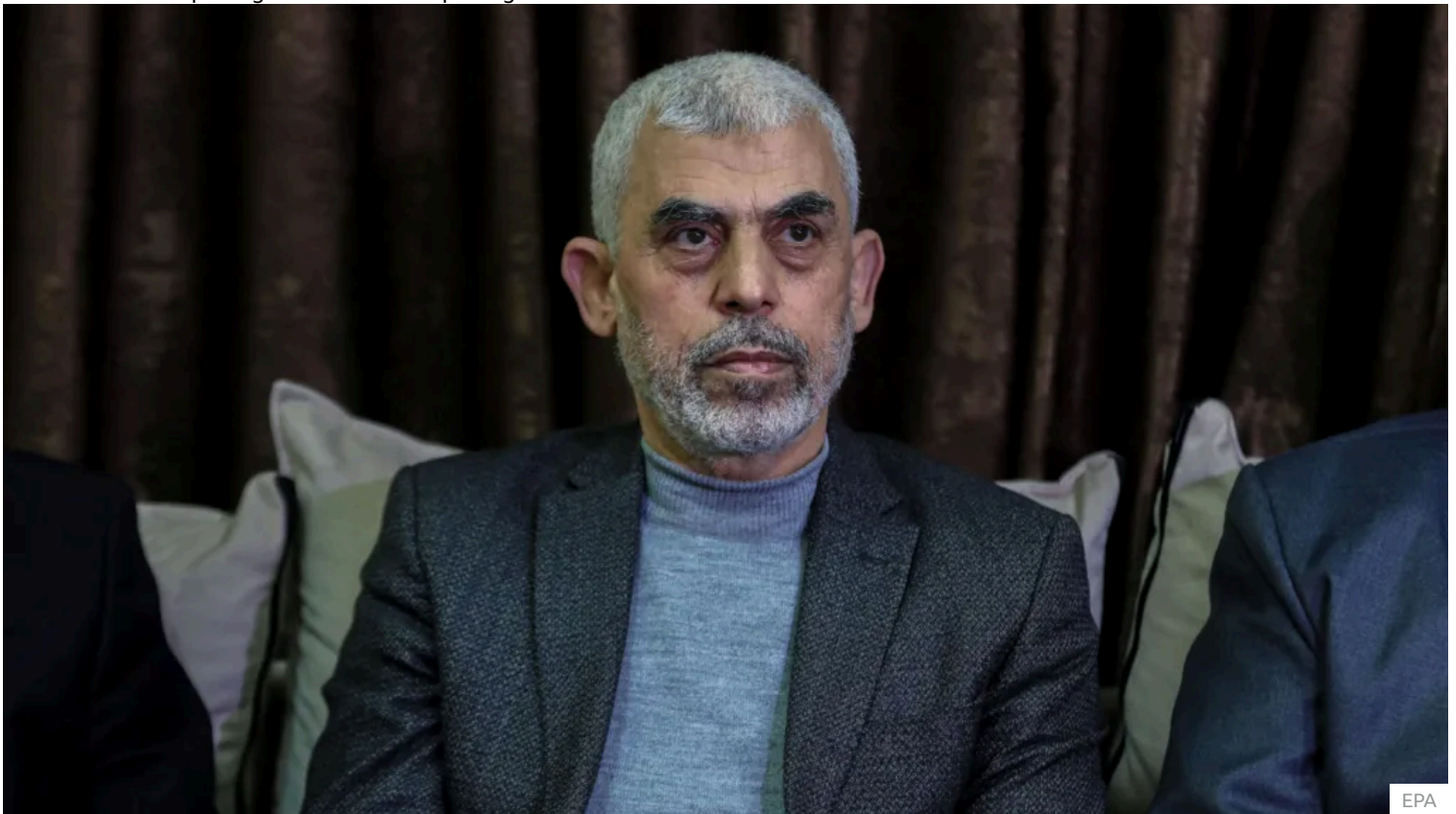
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EPA

Yahya Sinwar has served as Hamas's leader in Gaza since 2017

After two days of lengthy negotiations in Doha, Hamas has named Yahya Sinwar as its new overall chief, replacing Ismail Haniyeh who was assassinated in Tehran last week.

Since 2017, Sinwar has served as the group's leader inside the Gaza strip. He will now become leader of its political wing.

The Hamas leadership unanimously chose Sinwar to lead the movement, a senior Hamas official told the BBC.

The announcement comes at a moment of soaring tensions in the Middle East, as Iran and its allies threaten retaliation for the killing of Haniyeh, which they blame on Israel. Israel has not commented.

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Over the course of two days in Doha, intensive meetings involving Hamas's leading figures hammered out the options for the group's next chief.

Many scenarios were discussed, but ultimately, just two names were put forward: Yahya Sinwar, and Mohammed Hassan Darwish, a shadowy figure who heads the General Shura Council, a body that elects Hamas's Politburo.

The council voted unanimously to choose Sinwar, in what one Hamas official described to the BBC as “a message of defiance to Israel”.

“They killed Haniyeh, the flexible person who was open to solutions. Now they have to deal with Sinwar and the military leadership,” the official said.

Prior to his death, Ismail Haniyeh was viewed by regional diplomats as a pragmatic figure compared to others in Hamas - a key driver of the group's political outreach.

Yahya Sinwar, on the other hand, is viewed as one of Hamas's most extreme figures.

Sinwar currently tops Israel's most-wanted list. Israel's security agencies believe he masterminded the planning and execution of the 7 October 2023 attacks, which left over 1,200 people dead and 251 taken back into Gaza as hostages.

The 61-year-old has not been seen in public since the attacks in October, and is believed to be hiding “10 storeys underground” in Gaza, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in June.

Sinwar was born in Khan Younis refugee camp in Gaza in 1962.

In the late 1980s, Sinwar founded the Hamas security service known as Majd, which among other things targeted alleged Palestinian collaborators with Israel.

He has spent much of his life in Israeli jail - and after his third arrest in 1988 he was sentenced to four life terms in prison.

However, he was among 1,027 Palestinian and Israeli Arab prisoners released by Israel in the 2011 exchange for Gilad Shalit, the Israeli soldier held captive for over five years by Hamas.

Sinwar was appointed head of the group's political bureau in the Gaza Strip in 2017, a position he served in until now.

The US includes Sinwar on its blacklist of "international terrorists".

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