

Sinwar was a needle in Hamas' haystack.

Apparently, after a year of war this haystack has become much thinner.



FILE – Yahya Sinwar chairs a meeting with leaders of Palestinian factions at his office in Gaza City, April 13, 2022. (AP Photo/Adel Hana, File)

by Lev Tsitrin

I won't try to analyze what the death of Hamas leader portends for Gaza hostages and for the progress of war, but it makes one thing abundantly clear: Hamas of today is no longer the Hamas of a year ago. If Sinwar's killing – and especially, the manner in which he was killed – indicates anything, it is that the year of fighting greatly diminished Hamas' forces.

Among many news items [CNN stacked](#) in an eventful day, there is a report of how Sinwar got killed: "the Israeli military

detected 'suspicious movement' on the upper floor of a building in the early hours of Thursday morning, so fired at it with a tank. ... Later in the morning, Israeli Army Radio said, a drone scanned the area of the attack, and soldiers recognized the face of Sinwar in the rubble."

Put simply, this was a routine military engagement and not a result of some super-suspenseful targeted manhunt involving spies in high places and high-tech listening devices. The war in Gaza simply came to a point where the leader of Hamas was no longer giving orders to underlings from a well-fortified and well-equipped secret location, but was operating, essentially, as a common soldier.

Which speaks volumes about the shape Hamas is in: its ecosystem of controlled territory and tunnels greatly diminished, the leadership is no longer operating from on-high (or for that matter, from deep below.)

It highlights the contrast between two wars, in Lebanon against Hezbollah, and in Gaza against Hamas. Israel was prepared extremely well for the former, obtaining excellent intelligence and hitting the enemy in precise strikes, like in a suspense movie – to debilitating effect. On the other hand, Hamas' attack on October 7 caught Israel completely unawares, and unprepared – with the result that the Gaza war is a long slog with many casualties. And yet, even in Gaza the brute force did wonders, thinning the ranks of Hamas to the point where even its top leadership was reduced to a rank-and-file function of constantly seeking cover, of trying to shoot back while being on the run. Despite fighting from amidst human shields, despite being shielded by the so-called "progressive" part of so-called "international community," Hamas is being slowly ground down. The thinning of its ranks – which for a year hid and shielded Sinwar – has become obvious by how he died.

There is no doubt that after Sinwar's death we will hear calls

for Israel to pause fighting. I very much doubt that Israelis will be so foolish as to heed them. While the manner of Sinwar's death shows how much progress has been done, there is much work ahead, and Israel shouldn't stop before finishing the job of completely eliminating Hamas. Sinwar's death is a great step forwards, but his demise is not yet the defeat of his organization.

But progress is evident. And this is great news in the news of Sinwar's death.