

János Kemény¹: A new direction for Hamas's activities in Europe

Executive Summary

- According to law enforcement and counter-terrorism authorities in several European countries, Hamas's operational activity has increased in Europe since 2023.
- Hamas' activities were most prominent in Germany, where the German authorities arrested two groups and several intermediaries in a series of operations, and reported the existence of weapons caches in three European locations.
- According to the German authorities, Hamas intended to carry out a terrorist attack on European soil, a claim which Hamas denies.
- Over the past three months, Cypriot and Greek authorities have reported the arrest of suspected Hamas members, with the Greek authorities also raising the possibility of a terrorist attack.
- There is an interesting overlap in the operations of Iranian and Hamas cells that have come under scrutiny, in terms of their use of Scandinavian organised crime groups for their operations. There have been arrests in Denmark linked to Hamas in this regard.
- The Hamas leadership denies any connection between those arrested and the organisation.

Following the Hamas attack on 7 October 2023, the organisation's situation has fundamentally changed, and this also applies to its role on the international stage: in Europe, the organisation's room for manoeuvre has narrowed considerably, whilst in the Middle East its prestige has increased significantly. At the same time, the security services of several European countries have drawn attention to the fact that the terrorist organisation appears to have reassessed its strategy to date and is preparing to carry out attacks internationally against Israeli targets or cultural, religious sights. The aim of this analysis is to provide an overview of the known details of Hamas' failed operations to date, and of the context for these based on open-source information. To this end, we examine the cases in Germany, Denmark, Greece and Cyprus that have come to light since 2023.

The characteristics of Hamas, its economic background and Palestinian communities in Europe prior to 2023

Hamas was founded in 1987, emerging from the Muslim Brotherhood; it has carried out numerous terrorist attacks and has been designated as a terrorist organisation by the EU,² the United States,³ and numerous Western countries. Hamas has governed the

Gaza Strip since 2006⁴ and continued to do so until 2026,⁵ having ousted the Palestine Liberation Organisation from Gaza by military means, following its election victory. The organisation distinguishes between social, political, charitable and military spheres of operation, which mutually support each other. This means that funds raised for charitable purposes are also used to finance military or terrorist operations. Naturally, the organisation does not ensure transparency in this area either. The group has a multi-tiered leadership structure: its leadership in Gaza, on the West Bank and abroad, the latter traditionally representing the organisation internationally from a headquarters operated in Arab countries.⁶ Currently, Qatar is the most important host country, where the organisation's international office has been

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² [Sanctions against terrorism](#) [online], n.d. Source: consilium.europa.eu [21 July 2026]

³ [Designated Foreign Terrorist Organisations](#) [online], n.d. Source: state.gov [21 July 2026]

⁴ Devorah MARGOLIN and Matthew LEVITT: [The Road to 7 October: Hamas' Long Game, Clarified](#) [online], October 2023. Source: ctc.westpoint.edu [21 July 2026]. p. 2.

⁵ Wafaa SHURAF and Samy MAGDY: ['Hamas dissolves its government in Gaza to transfer power to a UN-backed committee'](#) [online], 2 July 2026. Source: apnews.com [21 July 2026]

⁶ MARGOLIN – LEVITT, Ibid.



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based since 2012.⁷ Since 2006, Hamas has been involved in numerous clashes and brief wars with Israel,⁸ but its attack on 7 October 2023 was a watershed moment that significantly altered the organisation's international, and particularly European, reputation.

Since its inception, Hamas has consistently sought to rely on Palestinians who had fled abroad, particularly when it comes to fundraising. A large number of Palestinians live in Europe, although their exact number cannot be determined. Some Palestinians in Europe have become citizens of their host country or are citizens of a third country; consequently, their Palestinian origin is often not recorded in official registers. Their immigration history and level of integration vary from country to country. Many Palestinians reside in Europe as refugees, and a significant proportion of them are stateless persons. (Respective European countries handle this differently, stemming from differing interpretations of the 1951 Geneva Convention.)⁹

From a financial perspective, Hamas has numerous sources of income. Since 2006, operating as a quasi-state in the Gaza Strip, it has derived revenue from taxation. It had various sources of funding from abroad, ranging from state aid to individual donors. According to a 2021 report by the US Department of State, Iran provided \$100 million in annual funding to Palestinian organisations, of which Hamas naturally also benefited.¹⁰ In addition, Middle Eastern countries, such as Qatar, provided financial support until 2023 with the consent and cooperation of the Israelis.¹¹ In 2022, the US Treasury Department imposed sanctions on Hamas' investment arm, which, according to US estimates, managed companies worth \$500 million in countries such as Sudan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Algeria and the United Arab Emirates.¹²

Hamas has also increased its revenue by exploiting charitable organisations. It has achieved this by frequently diverting donations from Palestinians and the wider Muslim diaspora – often illegally – due to the sanctions imposed on the organisation. One notable example is the action taken by the German authorities to ban Hamas' and other organisations' fundraising. In 2002, the Aachen-based *Al Aqsa e.V.* was banned; it had supported the families of suicide bombers, but also collected funds for Hamas.¹³ In 2010, the *Internationale Humanitäre Hilfsorganisation e.V.* (International Humanitarian Aid Organisation) was banned; it had also raised funds for Hamas.¹⁴ In 2021, the German authorities banned Düsseldorf-based *Ansaar International e.V.* and its subsidiaries, which, according to the authorities, raised funds not only for Hamas but also for the Somali al-Shabab and other radical organisations.¹⁵ No reliable information is available on the total amount raised in this way. One example is the Relief Fund for the Afflicted and Needy, which was banned in Canada and raised \$14.6 million between 2005 and 2009, not only for Hamas. It is assumed that the funds raised by these charitable organisations were used to cover the organisation's social costs.¹⁶

Keeping pace with modern financial trends, Hamas is also seeking to utilise cryptocurrencies. However, due to vigorous action by the Israeli authorities, the sums received in this way have been relatively low.¹⁷ Hamas has been using this method since at least 2019. According to one report, it managed to raise \$41 million between 2020 and 2023.¹⁸ Following the attack on 7 October, the Israeli authorities indicated that Hamas had launched a cryptocurrency fundraising campaign on social media, against which they took action.¹⁹ In some countries, such as Germany, it is difficult to trace cryptocurrency transactions under

⁷ [Why does Qatar host Hamas's political office?](#) [online], 9 September 2025. Source: aljazeera.com [21 July 2026]

⁸ For an overview up to 2018, see: Isabel DEBRE: ['Gaza timeline: Main events in years of Israel-Hamas clashes'](#) [online], 13 November 2018. Source: apnews.com [21 July 2026]

⁹ [Stateless Palestinians](#) [online], n.d. Source: euaa.europa.eu [19 July 2026]

¹⁰ [Country Reports on Terrorism 2021](#) [online], 2022. Source: state.gov [19 July 2026] 292.

¹¹ [Qatar, Iran, Turkey and beyond: Hamas's network of allies](#) [online], 14 October 2023. Source: france24.com [19 July 2026]

¹² [Treasury Targets Covert Hamas Investment Network and Finance Official](#) [online], 24 May 2022. Source: home.treasury.gov [19 July 2026]

¹³ [Bundesverwaltungsgericht gewährt verbotenem Verein AL-AQSA vorläufigen Rechtsschutz](#) [online], 23 July 2003. Source: bverwg.de [19 July 2026]

¹⁴ Martin LUTZ: [Innenminister verbietet Hamas-Spendenverein](#) [online], 13 July 2010. Source: welt.de [19 July 2026]

¹⁵ [Germany outlaws Islamist organisation Ansaar International](#) [online], 5 May 2021. Source: dw.com [19 July 2026]

¹⁶ Doloresz KATANICH: [From crypto to charity: Hamas funded by hundreds of millions of dollars](#) [online], 12 October 2023. Source: euronews.com [19 July 2026]

¹⁷ Hadeel Al SAYEGH, John O'DONNELL and Elizabeth HOWCROFT: [Who funds Hamas? A global network of crypto, cash and charities](#) [online], 16 October 2023. Source: reuters.com [19 July 2026]

¹⁸ [Terrorist Financing: Hamas and Cryptocurrency Fundraising](#) [online], 9 December 2024. Source: congress.gov [20 July 2026]

¹⁹ [Israel freezes crypto accounts seeking Hamas donations, police say](#) [online], 10 October 2026. Source: reuters.com [20 July 2026.]



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criminal law. Between 2016 and 2020, the German authorities initiated criminal proceedings in 156 cases, but charges were brought in only 12 of them. There are new cryptocurrencies designed to deliberately make it difficult to track financial transactions,²⁰ so it is not surprising that examples of such cases resurface.²¹

In light of this, Hamas has tended to view Europe primarily as a source of funding, supplies and a target for propaganda; there is no information to suggest that it has actively sought to carry out attacks, because this would have affected their strategic aims (securing social, political and financial support) negatively (negative social reactions, increasing political-diplomatic pressure, increased judicial, counter-terrorism and immigration-related initiatives).

Palestinians in the European countries concerned and their support for Hamas

Germany is home to the largest Palestinian community in Europe. It is estimated that around 200,000 Palestinians live in the country, having arrived in three major waves: in the 1960s as students, then as refugees following the Six-Day War (1967); in the 1980s, fleeing the Lebanese Civil War and Israeli intervention (1982); and in the period following 2011, fleeing the Syrian Civil War.²² No precise figures are available, as the German federal authorities do not keep records of ethnic minorities living in the country.²³ Compared with Germany, the Palestinian community in Greece is relatively small, estimated at 13,000 people.²⁴ No reliable data could be found for Denmark.

In light of the above, the German authorities pay considerable attention to monitoring the activities of supporters of radical Palestinian organisations. The German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (*Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz*, BfV) publishes estimated figures on the number of supporters of individual radical organisations in its annual reports. The table below summarises these figures in relation to Hamas: each report also includes data for the two years preceding the year in question and occasionally revises the figures from previous annual reports; accordingly, where multiple figures are shown, a later report has provided a different – in this case, higher – figure compared with an earlier report.

	Year							
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Estimated number of members/followers	300 ²⁵	320 ²⁶ 380 ²⁷	320 ²⁸ 450 ²⁹	450 ³⁰	450 ³¹	450 ³²	550 ³³	650 ³⁴

Table 1. Changes in the number of suspected Hamas members/followers in Germany

²⁰ [Islamist organisations: donations for terrorism](#) [online], 11 April 2025. Source: deutschlandfunk.de [20 July 2026.]

²¹ [Lithuania charges Kyrgyz national with financing Hamas](#) [online], 10 June 2026. Source: Irt.lt [20 July 2026]; [Bitcoin for Hamas: suspended sentence](#) [online], 11 September 2024. Source: vorarlberg.orf.at [21 July 2026]

²² [Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Clara Bünger, Nicole Gohlke, Dr. André Hahn, Gökay Akbulut, Anke Domscheit-Berg, Susanne Hennig-Wellsow, Jan Korte, Ina Latendorf, Petra Pau, Martina Renner, Dr. Petra Sitte, Kathrin Vogler und der Gruppe Die Linke](#) [online], 23 August 2024. Source: dserver.bundestag.de [19 July 2026], p. 1.

²³ [Nationale Minderheiten in Deutschland](#) [online], n.d. Source: bmi.bund.de [19 July 2026]

²⁴ John T. PSAROPOULOS: 'Diaspora Palestinians in Greece fear for relatives in Gaza, long for peace' [online], 22 November 2023. Source: aljazeera.com [21 July 2026]

²⁵ [Verfassungsschutzbericht 2020](#) [online], June 2021. Source: verfassungsschutz.de [17 July 2026]. p. 197.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ [Verfassungsschutzbericht 2021](#). [online], 7 June 2021. Source: verfassungsschutz.de [17 July 2026], p. 181.

²⁸ [Verfassungsschutzbericht 2020](#). [online], June 2021. Source: verfassungsschutz.de [17 July 2026] p. 197.

²⁹ [Verfassungsschutzbericht 2022](#). [online], 20 June 2023. Source: verfassungsschutz.de [17 July 2026], p. 187.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² [Verfassungsschutzbericht 2023](#). [online], 18 June 2024. Source: verfassungsschutz.de [17 July 2026], p. 210.

³³ [Verfassungsschutzbericht 2024](#). [online], 10 June 2025. Source: verfassungsschutz.de [17 July 2026], p. 204.

³⁴ [Verfassungsschutzbericht 2025](#). [online], 30 June 2026. Source: verfassungsschutz.de [17 July 2026], p. 228.

As Table 1 shows, the German authorities anticipate a growth in Hamas' support base and had already observed a significant increase even before the Hamas attack on 7 October 2023. On 2 November 2023, Hamas was banned in Germany.³⁵

The BfV's report for 2025 highlights that Hamas' 7. October 2023 attack was also capable of eliciting solidarity from representatives of other extremist groups in Germany, as well as from other groups, including those on the far left and far right, who drew some inspiration from the Middle East conflicts. Whilst the far left is prepared to express direct solidarity towards Palestinians, far-right actors exploit the escalation in the Middle East in their anti-immigration and anti-Israel rhetoric. A secular, pro-Palestinian group has also emerged on the far-left spectrum, which maintains links with banned Palestinian organisations.³⁶

According to the 2025 report by the German Federal Criminal Police Office (*Bundeskriminalamt*, BKA), the number of politically motivated crimes linked to the conflicts in the Middle East stood at 7,073, of which 880 were classified as being linked to Hamas. Of these, 469 were propaganda-related, 149 involved vandalisms, and 82 were threats to commit criminal offences. Six acts of violence were recorded, four of which were acts of resistance against police intervention.³⁷

Germany: the arrest of the first Hamas group

In December 2023, the German police arrested three Palestinians and one European national, placing them in pre-trial detention.³⁸ In November 2024, charges were brought against them: two Lebanese-born individuals, one Egyptian-born person and one Dutch national. In addition to being members of Hamas, they were accused of having close ties to leaders of the organisation's military wing, as well as of procuring and trafficking weapons in Europe. One of the suspects also set up a weapons cache in Bulgaria in 2019, which contained ammunition and, amongst other items, a Kalashnikov assault rifle. Another suspect smuggled a pistol into Germany from a weapons cache set up in Denmark. They also attempted to locate a weapons cache set up in Poland, but were unsuccessful, according to the German authorities.³⁹

The Hamas leadership denied that those arrested had any connection with the organisation, claiming that this was part of a smear campaign against it.⁴⁰ A statement issued by the Israeli Prime Minister's Office, however, referred to the arrests as a measure of preventing the killing of innocent people.⁴¹

During the investigation, the German Public Prosecutor General's Office indicated that Hamas had spent years setting up weapons caches in Europe, which could be used to carry out attacks. Based on images found on one of the suspects' mobile phones, the office indicated that the Israeli embassy in Berlin, the US air base at Ramstein, and the area around the disused Tempelhof Airport in Berlin were potential targets.⁴²

The German authorities have managed to piece together a relatively clear picture of the suspects' backgrounds and their links to Hamas. According to them, the group was led by Khalil al-Kharaz, deputy commander of Hamas's military wing in Lebanon.⁴³ Little public information is available about Kharaz; according to Israeli media, he was killed in an Israeli airstrike in Lebanon in November 2023.⁴⁴ Following

³⁵ Bundesinnenministerin Nancy Faeser spricht Verbote gegen die Terrororganisation HAMAS sowie das Netzwerk 'Samidoun' aus [online], 2 November 2023. Source: [verfassungsschutz.de](https://www.verfassungsschutz.de) [19 July 2026]

³⁶ Verfassungsschutzbericht 2025 [online], 30 June 2026. Source: [verfassungsschutz.de](https://www.verfassungsschutz.de) [21 July 2026], pp. 62 and 65–66.

³⁷ Bundesweite Fallzahlen 2025 Politisch motivierte Kriminalität [online], n.d. Source: [bka.de](https://www.bka.de) [21 July 2026] p. 32.

³⁸ Festnahme von vier mutmaßlichen Mitgliedern der ausländischen terroristischen Vereinigung „HAMAS“ [online], 14 December 2023. Source: [generalbundesanwalt.de](https://www.generalbundesanwalt.de) [17 July 2026]

³⁹ Anklage gegen vier mutmaßliche Mitglieder der ausländischen terroristischen Vereinigung HAMAS erhoben [online], 25 November 2024. Source: [generalbundesanwalt.de](https://www.generalbundesanwalt.de) [17 July 2026]

⁴⁰ Seven arrested in Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands over suspected terrorism plots [online], 14 December 2023. Source: [reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com) [17 July 2026]

⁴¹ Danish police arrest suspects over alleged Hamas plot against Jewish and Israeli targets [online], 14 December 2023. Source: [timesofisrael.com](https://www.timesofisrael.com) [17 July 2026]

⁴² Anklage gegen vier mutmaßliche Mitglieder der ausländischen terroristischen Vereinigung HAMAS erhoben [online], 25 November 2024. Source: [generalbundesanwalt.de](https://www.generalbundesanwalt.de) [17 July 2026].

⁴³ Matthew LEVITT: Hamas Plots in Europe: A Shift Towards External Operations? [online], October 2025. Source: ctc.westpoint.edu [20 July 2026], p. 2.

⁴⁴ Hamas commander in Lebanon eliminated in Israeli strike – report [online], 21 November 2023. Source: [jpost.com](https://www.jpost.com) [20 July 2026]



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Kharaz's death, one of the suspects travelled back to Lebanon, where he was confirmed to have attended the funeral,⁴⁵ whilst another suspect was related to him, according to the German authorities.⁴⁶

In 2026, the Berlin court hearing the case convicted the four defendants, who were sentenced to between four-to-six years' terms in prison. The court upheld the charge that the four men were members of Hamas operating from abroad.⁴⁷ However, the sentences handed down were shorter than those sought by the prosecutor, who had requested terms between five and seven years. Only one of the defendants admitted to the weapons-related charges, but portrayed the events as private arms dealing; the other defendants maintained their innocence.⁴⁸

The Danish case

In parallel with the German operation, the Danish authorities arrested three people, whilst the Dutch arrested one person. The Danish authorities accused those they had arrested of intending to commit a terrorist act, although they did not claim that the detainees were members of Hamas.⁴⁹ The Dutch authorities arrested the Dutch national at the request of the German authorities.⁵⁰ It was not until much later that the Danish authorities confirmed that those arrested were suspected, amongst other things, of procuring drones which they intended to use in a terrorist attack against an unknown target,⁵¹ and according to press reports, the number of suspects had risen to seven.⁵² According to a press release issued by the Danish authorities in May 2025, an individual – who was arrested at an unspecified time with the assistance of foreign partners – was a member of an organised criminal group who also maintained close ties with Hamas.⁵³

The initial reluctance on behalf of the Danish authorities regarding the question of attribution was likely due to the fact that the suspects were not directly affiliated with Hamas, but were members of an organised criminal group called 'Loyal to Familia' – which had grown out of a street gang – who had assisted Hamas members in acquiring drones.⁵⁴

The Swedish connection

In January 2024, the Israeli authorities accused Hamas of planning an attack on the Israeli embassy in Sweden and named a suspected Hamas member who was tasked with carrying out the attack.⁵⁵ Few details of the case have been made public, but overall, Sweden has been a key operational theatre in recent years for Iranian-backed operations against Israel.⁵⁶ Three attacks were carried out against the Israeli embassy building in the Swedish capital in 2024. These were:

⁴⁵ [Ermittlungen: Will die Hamas Anschläge in Deutschland verüben?](#) [online], 3 April 2024. Source: tagesschau.de [20 July 2026]

⁴⁶ Matthew LEVITT: [Hamas Plots in Europe: A Shift Towards External Operations?](#) [online], October 2025. Source: ctc.westpoint.edu [20 July 2026]. p. 5.

⁴⁷ [Kammergericht Berlin: Mehrjährige Haftstrafen für Hamas-Mitglieder](#) [online], 25 March 2026. Source: tagesschau.de [19 July 2026]

⁴⁸ [Urteil des Berliner Kammergerichts: Mehrjährige Haftstrafen wegen Hamas-Mitgliedschaft](#) [online], 25 March 2026. Source: zdfheute.de [19 July 2026]

⁴⁹ [Denmark expands terror investigation coinciding with arrests of alleged Hamas members in Germany](#) [online], 23 December 2023. Source: voanews.com [17 July 2026]

⁵⁰ [Rotterdam resident arrested in anti-terrorism operation on suspicion of being a Hamas member](#) [online], 14 December 2023. Source: nltimes.nl [17 July 2026]

⁵¹ [Man imprisoned in terrorism case with links to Hamas and criminal gangs](#) [online], 19 May 2025. Source: pet.dk [17 July 2026]

⁵² [Danish police say 7 arrested in December over foiled terror plot 'linked to Hamas'](#) [online], 12 January 2024. Source: timesofisrael.com [17 July 2026.]

⁵³ [Man imprisoned in terrorism case with links to Hamas and criminal gangs](#) [online], 19 May 2025. Source: pet.dk [17 July 2026]

⁵⁴ Matthew LEVITT: [Hamas Plots in Europe: A Shift Towards External Operations?](#) [online], October 2025. Source: ctc.westpoint.edu [20 July 2026]. pp. 3–4.

⁵⁵ [Israel accuses Hamas of planning to attack its embassy in Sweden](#) [online], 13 January 2024. Source: reuters.com [19 July 2026]

⁵⁶ See also: János KEMÉNY: [Iráni háttérű terrorista tevékenység az Irán elleni háború kitörése óta Európában](#) [online], 6–18 June 2026. Source: jli.uni-nke.hu [21 July 2026]



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- 31 January 2024: Swedish police bomb disposal experts defused a 'dangerous object' near the embassy.⁵⁷ (According to later reports, the dangerous object was a hand grenade.)⁵⁸
- 17 May 2024: The Swedish police launched an investigation after a police patrol reported that shots had been fired by unknown individuals near the Israeli embassy.⁵⁹
- 1 October 2024: a gun attack took place near the Israeli embassy.⁶⁰

The Swedish authorities suspected Iranian involvement in the first two attacks. According to the Swedish Security Service (SAPO), the Iranians used organised criminal groups operating in Sweden to carry out the attacks.⁶¹ The perpetrators of the October attack were also convicted for carrying out a hand grenade attack a day later in Copenhagen against the Israeli embassy there.⁶²

An interesting common feature between the alleged Iranian and Hamas approaches is the use of criminal groups in the preparation of the attacks and, in the Iranian case, in their execution.

Germany: the second Hamas cell exposed

In October 2025, three suspected Hamas members were arrested by the German authorities in Berlin; two of them were German nationals, whilst the third was of Lebanese origin. According to the charges, the three men had been tasked with procuring weapons for the execution of future Hamas attacks. A Kalashnikov assault rifle and several pistols were seized in connection with the case.⁶³ According to reports in the German press, the authorities ordered the arrests because they feared an attack might be carried out.⁶⁴ According to reports in the German press, the weapons were obtained from a Swedish organised crime group and transported to Germany via couriers through several countries. The German press did not name the organised crime group. Hamas denied having any connection with those arrested.⁶⁵

The German newspaper Die Zeit reported that one of the suspects was an undercover agent working for the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, through whom the authorities had been attempting to uncover financial transactions and personal connections; in this case, he played a role in the procurement of ammunition. This also complicates the legal situation, as the Hamas members were in need of ammunition; one of their couriers had thrown the 80 rounds of ammunition he was carrying into a river following an encounter with the police. Consequently, the Hamas group was in urgent need of ammunition, which the undercover agent undertook to provide. Had the aim been to carry out an assassination, this would have posed a major legal problem in the handling of the case, as the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (*Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz*, BfV) was indirectly involved in the preparations. According to press reports, the BfV denied that the undercover agent had carried out the ammunition purchase on its instructions.⁶⁶

At his annual press conference in 2026, Public Prosecutor General Jens Rommel stated, in relation to this case, that his office believed Hamas had been planning a terrorist attack to coincide with the second anniversary of the attack on 7 October 2023, which German and other European authorities had managed to prevent. Specifically, he highlighted that a video had been found on the electronic device of one of the arrested suspects, in which the organisation claimed responsibility for an as-yet-unexecuted attack that

⁵⁷ James FITZGERALD: [Swedish police destroy object outside Israeli embassy in Stockholm](#) [online], 31 January 2024. Source: [bbc.com/news](#) [19 July 2026]

⁵⁸ Jan M. OLSEN: [Stockholm accuses Iran of using criminals in Sweden to target Israel or Jewish interests](#) [online], 30 May 2024. Source: [apnews.com](#) [19 July 2026.]

⁵⁹ [Swedish police investigate shooting near Israeli embassy in Stockholm](#) [online], 17 May 2024. Source: [reuters.com](#) [19 July 2026]

⁶⁰ [Swede suspected of double embassy attack](#) [online], 5 February 2025. Source: [swedenherald.com](#) [19 July 2026]

⁶¹ OLSEN, Ibid.

⁶² [Swede suspected of double embassy attack](#) [online], 5 February 2025. Source: [swedenherald.com](#) [19 July 2026]

⁶³ [Festnahmen von drei mutmaßlichen Mitgliedern der ausländischen terroristischen Vereinigung HAMAS](#) [online], 1 October 2025. Source: [generalbundesanwalt.de](#) [17 July 2026]

⁶⁴ [Festnahmen in Berlin: Offenbar Hamas-Anschlag in Deutschland vereitelt](#) [online], 1 October 2025. Source: [tagesschau.de](#) [20 July 2026.]

⁶⁵ [Festnahme von Terrorverdächtigen: Waffen offenbar aus Skandinavien beschafft](#) [online], 2 October 2025. Source: [tagesschau.de](#) [19 July 2026]

⁶⁶ Holger STARK: [Geplanter Anschlag in Berlin: Mutmaßlicher Hamas-Terrorist war V-Mann des Verfassungsschutzes](#) [online], 25 April 2026. Source: [zeit.de](#) [20 July 2026]



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they had intended to carry out around 7 October 2025.⁶⁷ According to Israeli sources, the group was led by Mahmoud Naim, the son of a Hamas politician, and Hamas leader Khalil al-Hayya was responsible for the entire operation.⁶⁸

In November 2025, another suspect was arrested in connection with this case on the Czech-German border; he was suspected of having acquired an assault rifle, eight Glock pistols and 600 rounds of ammunition, and handing them over to one of his Berlin contacts who had been arrested in October.⁶⁹ According to reports in the German press, the weapons seized in connection with the arrests may have come from Scandinavia, as two of the suspects had links to organised crime groups in Denmark and Sweden.⁷⁰

In the same month, German authorities, with the assistance of their British counterparts, arrested a British national in London who, in the summer of 2025, had met a Hamas member in Germany and received weapons and ammunition from him to transport to Vienna for the purpose of carrying out future attacks.⁷¹ The Austrian authorities raided the weapons cache and seized several pistols, which they were able to link to an unnamed local Hamas sympathiser.⁷² According to German press reports, the Austrian authorities seized five handguns, ten magazines and an unspecified quantity of ammunition.⁷³ According to the Austrian media, the cache was a rented warehouse, and the weapons were hidden in a suitcase.⁷⁴

Also in November 2025 a man travelling by train from Denmark was arrested on suspicion of having taken delivery of an assault rifle, eight pistols and 600 rounds of ammunition, with the intention of passing them on to a contact in Berlin.⁷⁵

These arrests were followed by three further ones, about which only few details were made public:

- On 24 January 2026, the German Federal Public Prosecutor's Office reported the arrest of a Lebanese-born suspect.⁷⁶
- In March 2026, following a warrant issued by the German authorities, the Cypriot authorities arrested a suspect, who, according to the Germans, had acquired 300 rounds of live ammunition and passed them on to his contacts in Germany.⁷⁷
- At the end of May 2026, Danish authorities arrested a Danish national in Copenhagen under a European arrest warrant. According to the German prosecutor he handed over several pistols and an unspecified quantity of ammunition to a contact in Germany in July 2025.⁷⁸

Based on the available information, the above arrests were linked exclusively to the second group and, according to the limited information available, the individuals acted as couriers or liaisons.

The Greek and Cypriot cases

In June 2026, the Greek authorities arrested one person on the island of Crete, whilst the Cypriot authorities arrested two people suspected of being members of Hamas. The Greek authorities suspected the arrested individual of having received training from Hamas and of having attempted to procure

⁶⁷ [Hamas operatives planned European terror attack for the second anniversary of 7 October](#) [online], 16 June 2026. Source: jpost.com [20 July 2026]

⁶⁸ [Mossad unveils network of Hamas terror infrastructure across Europe](#) [online], 19 November 2025. Source: jpost.com [20 July 2026]

⁶⁹ [Festnahme eines weiteren mutmaßlichen Mitgliedes der ausländischen terroristischen Vereinigung HAMAS](#) [online], 12 November 2025. Source: generalbundesanwalt.de [17 July 2026]

⁷⁰ Florian FLADE and Reiko PINKERT: [Waffen offenbar aus Skandinavien beschafft](#) [online], 2 October 2025. Source: tagesschau.de [17 July 2026]

⁷¹ [Festnahme eines weiteren mutmaßlichen Mitgliedes der ausländischen terroristischen Vereinigung HAMAS](#) [online], 6 November 2025. Source: generalbundesanwalt.de [17 July 2026]

⁷² [Verfassungsschutzbericht 2025](#). [online], 2026. Source: dsn.gv.at [17 July 2026], pp. 106–107.

⁷³ [Mutmaßliches Hamas-Mitglied in London festgenommen](#) [online], 6 November 2025. Source: tagesschau.de [17 July 2026]

⁷⁴ [Der Hamas zugerechnete Waffen sichergestellt](#) [online], 6 November 2025. Source: wien.orf.at [17 July 2026]

⁷⁵ [Weitere Festnahme im Zusammenhang mit Waffenbeschaffungen für die ausländische terroristische Vereinigung HAMAS](#) [online], 13 November 2025. Source: generalbundesanwalt.de [17 July 2026]

⁷⁶ [Weitere Festnahme im Zusammenhang mit Waffenbeschaffungen für die ausländische terroristische Vereinigung HAMAS](#) [online], 24 January 2026. Source: generalbundesanwalt.de [17 July 2026]

⁷⁷ [Weitere Festnahme im Zusammenhang mit Waffenbeschaffungen für die ausländische terroristische Vereinigung HAMAS](#) [online], 10 March 2026. Source: generalbundesanwalt.de [17 July 2026]

⁷⁸ [Weitere Festnahme im Zusammenhang mit Waffenbeschaffungen für die ausländische terroristische Vereinigung HAMAS](#) [online], 28 May 2026. Source: generalbundesanwalt.de [17 July 2026]



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explosives whilst in Greece. During his interrogation, he admitted that he was in contact with individuals in Cyprus and intended to take part in attacks against Israeli targets. According to the Greek statement, the attack was still in the preparatory phase at the time of his arrest.⁷⁹ Prior to his arrest, he had been living in Crete for a year, working as an electrician.⁸⁰ Another press source added that the Palestinian suspect was registered as a refugee in Greece and, according to his own account, also had refugee status in Germany (although this has not been confirmed by the Greek authorities).⁸¹ According to reports in the Israeli press, the suspect was planning to carry out an attack against an Israeli pleasure boat.⁸² Later that same month, the Greek authorities brought charges in connection with the case.⁸³

In May 2026, the Cypriot authorities arrested two people on suspicion of terrorism-related offences. According to Reuters, one of the suspects claimed that his superiors were planning terrorist attacks, naming Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, Myanmar, Thailand and Malaysia as possible targets.⁸⁴ According to Greek media reports, one of the Cypriot suspects travelled to Southern Cyprus via Northern Cyprus.⁸⁵ Cypriot authorities have stated that one of the suspects had rented a holiday home, during a search of which local police discovered materials used in the manufacture of explosives. The authorities state that he received training in the manufacture of explosives in Malaysia in 2025. At the end of May, the Cypriot authorities arrested two further Cypriot citizens of Palestinian origin after they had received parcels containing materials that could be used to manufacture explosives.⁸⁶ One of the suspects was released on bail of 1 million euros by a Cypriot court, as the court did not consider the prosecution's case sufficiently convincing, and the suspect's four sons were serving in the Cypriot security forces.⁸⁷ However, the release on bail was overturned by an appeal court, and the man is once again in pre-trial detention. In July, the Cypriot authorities arrested a fifth man, who had previously lived in Indonesia, on suspicion of leading the group. According to Cypriot media sources, the local authorities have suggested that Hamas members in Greece and Cyprus were collaborating on the planning of an attack.⁸⁸

Conclusions

Although the Hamas leadership in Gaza has consistently denied that the group was preparing to carry out an attack anywhere abroad, the findings of law enforcement agencies in Germany and other European countries indicate that the group seeks to capitalise on the outcome of the Gaza war to create an opportunity for horizontal escalation. One key finding of the German authorities' investigation is that these efforts predate the 2023 Gaza war by a considerable margin, as weapons caches were established in Poland, Denmark and Bulgaria – the first as early as 2019 – and there was an older cache that had not been officially dated that was apprehended. The German court's ruling, which holds Hamas responsible, is certainly an important milestone in relation to the group's activities abroad. Israeli sources put the number of foiled Hamas attacks abroad at a much higher figure than that reported, though they do not provide any specific details.⁸⁹

It is unclear from the information available whether Hamas carried out the attacks on its own initiative or as part of deniable operations possibly initiated by Iran; nor is it clear to what extent the organisation outside Gaza coordinated with its counterpart inside Gaza on such matters. One interesting overlap is that

⁷⁹ [Alleged Hamas cell dismantled in Cyprus and Greece](#) [online], 9 June 2026. Source: cyprus-mail.com [17 July 2026]

⁸⁰ Costas KANTOURIS: [Greek police arrest a Palestinian man on suspicion of planning attacks](#) [online], 7 June 2026. Source: apnews.com [19 July 2026]

⁸¹ Yiannis SOULIOTIS: [More details emerge of Hamas cell terror plot](#) [online], 15 June 2026. Source: ekathimerini.com [19 July 2026]

⁸² [Greece arrests suspected Hamas operative said to be planning a terror attack on an Israeli cruise ship](#) [online], 7 June 2026. Source: timesofisrael.com [19 July 2026]

⁸³ [Greece charges Palestinian man over suspected Hamas links](#) [online], 8 June 2026. Source: reuters.com [19 July 2026]

⁸⁴ Yannis SOULIOTIS and Renee MALTEZOU: [Palestinian detained pending trial in Greece over suspected Hamas links](#) [online], 11 June 2026. Source: reuters.com [19 July 2026]

⁸⁵ [Alleged Hamas cell dismantled in Cyprus and Greece](#) [online], 9 June 2026. Source: cyprus-mail.com [17 July 2026.]

⁸⁶ Yiannis SOULIOTIS: [Arrests in Cyprus and Greece expose Hamas cell](#) [online], 9 June 2026. Source: ekathimerini.com [19 July 2026]

⁸⁷ [Larnaca terrorism suspect released on €1m bail as court cites weaknesses in the evidence](#) [online], 12 June 2026. Source: en.philenews.com [19 July 2026]

⁸⁸ Natasa CHRISTOFOROU: [Fifth suspect arrested over planned Cyprus terror attacks](#) [online], 5 August 2026. Source: philenews.com [12 August 2026.]

⁸⁹ [Mossad unveils network of Hamas terror infrastructure across Europe](#) [online], 19 November 2025. Source: jpost.com [21 July 2026]



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both Iran and Hamas appear to be seeking to prepare their own violent operations – and, in Iran’s case, to carry them out as well – by enlisting the help of Scandinavian organised crime groups with Middle Eastern roots.

The operational differences observed between the two groups are interesting. Whilst it is not yet known whether the first group used couriers, this appears to be a fairly common practice in the case of the second group. In terms of numbers (including the captured couriers), the second group was twice as large as the first, which may also be a sign of growing ambition. At the same time, this became a source of problems for the group. In the case of the second group, there was no such spectacular breach of discipline as in the case of the first, when one Hamas member travelled back for the funeral of the slain Lebanese commander; however, it is not certain that this can be attributed to a higher level of security discipline.

Although the Gaza War inflicted extremely heavy losses on the Hamas organisation, it also altered the group’s international reputation. Hamas’s rising status is illustrated, for example, by the fact that the Austrian authorities prevented a radicalised 21-year-old Austrian citizen from travelling abroad, as they suspected he intended to join the group.⁹⁰ This phenomenon has so far been clearly evident in the case of groups such as Islamic State or, before that, al-Qaeda. In the case of Hamas, this can currently be regarded as a unique, isolated incident.

Based on the information that has been made public to date, it can be concluded that the statement made in October 2025 by Martin Jäger, Director of the German Federal Intelligence Service (*Bundesnachrichtendienst*, BND) that the likelihood of potential attacks by Hamas in Europe is increasing,⁹¹ can be considered accurate. At the same time, the lack of success to date suggests that there are serious problems in the preparation and execution of Hamas’s operations abroad. The cases described demonstrate the intention. It cannot be ruled out that, in the future, having gained sufficient experience and utilising suitable personnel, Hamas will be able to carry out successful operations.

⁹⁰ [Constitutional Protection Report 2025](#) [online], 2026. Source: [dsn.gv.at](#) [17 July 2026]. pp. 111–112.

⁹¹ [Hamas in Germany: Safe Haven and Area of Operations](#), [online], 8 January 2026. Source: [deutschlandfunk.de](#) [18 July 2026.]



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