



## Killing of Quds Force head in Syria escalates conflict with Iran, Hezbollah

Amos Harel

The death on Monday of Hassan Mahdavi (also known as Mohammad Reza Zahedi), the commander of the Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force in Syria and Lebanon, brings Israel's confrontation with Iran and Hezbollah to a new pinnacle. This may be the most dangerous development on the northern front since the war in Gaza began almost six months ago. Mahdavi

particularly close to Hezbollah's Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah, serving as the liaison between him and Tehran, and as someone who was very knowledgeable about Hezbollah operations. Like other senior figures in the Quds Force, he belonged to the generation that participated in Iran's Islamic revolution at the end of the 1970s and the war with Iraq in the '80s. Later, he and his associates tried to export the revolution to the Arab and Muslim world. Lebanon is the first country where Iran had significant success, via its support of Hezbollah.

Israel's intelligence community believes that Iran and Hezbollah knew about Hamas' plan to carry out a murderous terror attack on Israeli communities along the Gaza border, but Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar didn't share with them the specific date of attack, October 7. Reuters reported that Sinwar's decision surprised and angered the Iranians, causing them to refrain from meeting his expectations and instructing Hezbollah to make do with a limited military

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### Iran vows to take revenge

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was the most senior Iranian figure whose assassination has been attributed to Israel. The overall Quds Force commander, Qassem Soleimani, was assassinated in January 2020 by the Americans, with claims that this was partly based on intelligence provided by Israel.

Mahdavi, who was 63, was a familiar figure in Syria and Lebanon for almost 30 years. According to Dr. Shimon Shapira, who researches Hezbollah, Mahdavi was considered to be



An Iranian flag hanging after what the Iranian media said was an Israeli strike on a building close to the Iranian embassy in Damascus, Monday. *Firas Makdesi/Reuters*

### Large anti-gov't protest leaves some demanding radical steps

Nir Hasson

Jerusalem's Eliezer Kaplan Street has seen every kind of protest over the past year: demonstrations, mass rallies, hunger strikes, sit-down strikes, the burning of tires, confrontations with the police, clashes between the government's opponents and supporters. What it hadn't seen was a massive tent city. Until now. Sunday evening's demonstration was the largest since the beginning of the war on October 7, with tens of thousands of protesters participating. One group of young demonstrators blocked roads in the city once the rally had ended; another placed several barriers in the center of Kaplan Street, filling its northern area with hundreds of small tents.

According to one count, 418 tents were set up in the area and the camp was divided into several sections according to the protest organizations. There was an area dedicated to those calling for the return of the hostages from Gaza. Another represented the high-tech sector protest led by Moshe Radman. Another represented the so-called youth protest. Members of the Brothers and Sisters in Arms movement of army reservists were scattered throughout the area.

This wasn't a spontaneous effort, but an organized move coordinated with the police and is intended to run until Wednesday.

Most of the tents were supplied by the different protest groups, but many demonstrators brought their own. Mobile toilets, a logistics tent, and several food and water supply tents were also established. A small line of people waiting to brush their teeth gathered next to them on Sunday morning, while longer lines were seen next to

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## IDF: Al-Shifa Hospital op may yield crucial intel on hostages

Fadi Amun and Yaniv Kubovitch

The army says that the military operation that ended on Monday at Gaza's Al-Shifa Hospital may yield significant intelligence concerning the hostages held by Hamas.

Senior military officers who took part in the two-week operation say that documentation of the events that took place on October

7 were found in the hospital and may provide information about the hostages. The officers added that Hamas' operational capabilities in Gaza City were not completely hindered from the army's activity, but the group's competence was weakened.

A senior military officer told Haaretz that the army decided to return to the areas where Hamas attempted to restore its capabilities. According to the officers,

when the troops arrived at Al-Shifa, there were 6,200 people on the premises. For several days after the hospital was surrounded, the forces called on all non-involved citizens to evacuate the compound and move away. The soldiers gave food and water to women and children and allowed them to leave the area.

When the forces entered the hospital, they were shot at from almost every building in the compound. The Israel Defense Forces say that about 200 terrorists were killed in the operation and at least 500 were arrested.

During the operation, IDF and Shin Bet security service forces collaborated

with the 162nd Division and forces of the 401st Brigade, including the elite naval commando unit Shayetet 13 and teams from the Nahal Brigade and the elite Duvdevan Unit.

The IDF stated that its forces entered the hospital due to terrorist activity at the premises, which was renewed following the

conclusion of the army's previous operation there in November, and also because Hamas and Islamic Jihad command centers were established there. The army said that "very important officials" were arrested in the compound, noting that many of those detained participated in the October 7 attack. They were also involved in kidnapping Israeli citizens and soldiers and even personally held them hostage.

Last month, IDF Spokesperson Daniel Hagari said that some of those arrested in Al-Shifa were "very important Hamas officials." He added that the IDF is not revealing their identities at this stage "because they hold significant intelligence." According to Hagari, their identity will be disclosed once all intelligence is collected during

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### Soldier killed in Gaza fighting News Page 2

## Famed author, playwright and activist Sami Michael dies at 97

Tomer Haruv

Prolific Israeli author Sami Michael, one of the greats of contemporary Hebrew literature, died on Monday at the age of 97.

Apart from his literary career, Michael was also known as a playwright, translator, social activist and president of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel. Michael's books have

changed his name. A year later, fearing that he would be deported back to Iraq, Michael arrived in Israel, settled in Jaffa and later moved to the northern city of Haifa where he worked for the Arabic-language Al-Ittihad newspaper edited by Emile Habibi.

In 1955, disappointed with the policies of the Soviet Union, he withdrew from the Communist Party,

youth novels, adult fiction and monographs. He won many awards, from both Israeli and international organizations.

In his novels, Michael presents the identity and existential conflicts of women and men, Jews and Arabs, immigrants and members of different social classes. His rich body of work shifts in time and space, describing the 1920s and the 2000s, Baghdad to Haifa (the two central cities in his work) and frequently using biographical materials.

His first novel in Hebrew, "All Men are Equal - But Some are More," was published in 1974 and deals with the discrimination suffered by immigrants from Islamic countries in Israel through the story of an Iraqi family that emigrated from Baghdad.

In the non-fiction title "Gvulot HaRuakh" ("Limits of the Spirit"), which was published in 2000 and never translated into English, Michael told linguist Ruvik Rosenthal about how he and other Mizrahi migrants were received in Israel. "Primitive. That was a common word that was heard all around us. Back then, I thought that the primitives were the tribes in central Africa, and I'm a part of a culture whose roots have existed for 2,500 years," he said.

"And who called me a primitive? Not a professor or a teacher, but someone that grew up in a remote village

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### Turning the tables in Turkey

## Opposition lands authoritarian President Erdogan a shocking blow

Louis Fishman

On Saturday night, history was written in Turkey.

The secular CHP, the Turkish opposition, dealt a major blow to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's AKP in the local elections. It was nothing less than a political tsunami, with a CHP wave washing out AKP strongholds throughout the country and maintaining huge leads in the nation's capital of Ankara, the metropolis of Istanbul, and the western coastal city of Izmir.

In Ankara, the incumbent mayor, Mansur Yavas, won a massive landslide victory, securing his second term in power. While his victory was no surprise, with the residents of Ankara happy with his five years in power, the 28-point margin of win dealt a humiliating blow to the AKP. With such a large victory, it is not hard to see how the CHP picked up such key municipalities as Bursa, Denizli, and Manisa, among other cities.

In Istanbul, the CHP incumbent mayor, Ekrem Imamoglu, also easily won his second term. A strong showing of over a million votes separated him from Erdogan's hand-picked candidate, Murat Kurum. While Ankara's Yavas is someone who transitioned to the CHP, Imamoglu comes from with-



CHP supporters celebrating in Ankara on Sunday.

Ali Unal/AP

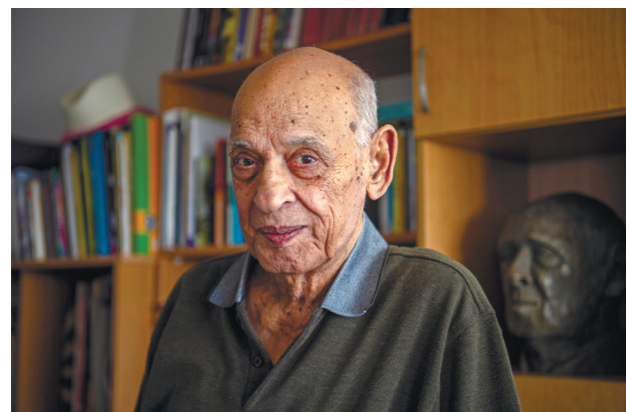
in the party. Erdogan used his Istanbul mayorship to catapult himself to national politics in 2002 - and to his chagrin, Imamoglu is likely to leverage the same platform to challenge Erdogan as Turkey's leader in the future.

For over two decades, Erdogan has mocked the CHP Kemalist party for being a closed secular elite removed from the masses. While there is some truth to that, over the years, the CHP has grown in scope and depth and become more inclusive. Before Saturday night's victory, some CHP officials were worried; un-

imaginable since the 1970s. The goal is now no less than winning the next national elections, in 2028.

Almost all of Turkey's major TV networks lost their independence long ago, serving as nothing more than a rubber stamp for the Erdogan government. But the results were so quick and decisive Saturday night that even these hobbled stations had no choice but to air uncensored and without even symbolic refutations of the emerging seismic shift in Turkish politics.

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Sami Michael

Gil Elishu

been translated into dozens of languages, won many awards and some have been adapted for theater, cinema and television.

Born Kamal Salah Menashe in Baghdad, Iraq, in 1926, Michael graduated from the city's Jewish Shamash High School in 1945. In his youth, he joined the communist underground in Iraq, was active against the Iraqi regime and fought for human rights.

In 1948, an arrest warrant was issued against him. He fled to Iran and

and for 25 years worked as a hydrologist for the Agriculture Ministry. He wrote numerous times about his experiences as a hydrologist, especially in his book "Water Kissing Water."

Michael was a graduate of the Department of Psychology and Arabic Literature at the University of Haifa. Immediately after graduating, he started writing in Hebrew, instead of his native Arabic.

Michael published twenty-one books in Hebrew, including children's books,