

*Palestinian president says Israel
killed Hamas leader Ismail
Haniyeh to prolong its war on
Gaza*



Ramallah, August 7 (RHC)-- Israel has killed Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh to prolong its war on Gaza, according to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. In an interview published by Russia's state news agency RIA in Russian on Tuesday, Abbas said the assassination was "a cowardly act and a dangerous development in Israeli politics."

"There is no doubt the purpose of Mr Haniyeh's assassination is to prolong the war and expand its scope," he said. "It will have a negative impact on the ongoing negotiations to end the aggression and withdraw Israeli troops from Gaza."

Abbas said he would discuss the conflict with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow. The agency quoted a diplomatic source as saying that Abbas would be in the Russian capital from August 12th to the 14th.

"The main goal of our visit is to hold consultations and exchange views on the latest events in the Palestinian and international arenas, coordinate positions and strengthen bilateral relations in all areas," RIA quoted Abbas as saying. Abbas is also expected to be in Turkey from August 14 to 15.

Haniyeh was assassinated in the Iranian capital, Tehran, last week in an attack that drew threats of revenge on Israel and fuelled concern that the conflict in Gaza would turn into a wider Middle East war.

Haniyeh was the face of Hamas's international diplomacy since the war started on October 7 last year and had been taking part in internationally brokered efforts to reach a ceasefire in Gaza. Iran, which backs Hamas in its conflict with Israel in Gaza, has blamed Israel for the killing and has pledged "harsh punishment" in retaliation. Israeli officials have not officially claimed responsibility.

Russia, which has forged close ties both with Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and Arab leaders, has condemned Haniyeh's killing and called on all parties to refrain from further destabilisation in the Middle East. It has also repeatedly criticized the West for ignoring the need for an independent Palestinian state within 1967 borders.

On Monday, a senior ally of Putin, Sergei Shoigu, held talks in Tehran with Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian, who said he was determined to expand ties with "strategic partner Russia." "Russia is among the countries that have stood by the Iranian nation during difficult times," Pezeshkian told Shoigu, the secretary of Russia's security council, Iranian state media reported.

The president said that shared positions between Iran and Russia "in promoting a multipolar world will certainly lead to greater global security and peace".

In Washington, DC, U.S. Department of State spokesperson Matthew Miller referred to Shoigu's talks in Tehran, saying the United States had no expectation that Russia would play a productive role in easing Middle East tensions.

Miller said Washington had been sending messages through its diplomatic engagements encouraging countries to tell Iran that escalation in the Middle East is not in Tehran's interest. Diplomatic pressure has mounted to avert an escalation between Iran and Israel.

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