

**Middle East war****Hamas accuses Israel of sabotaging ceasefire after commander is targeted**

Israeli army said it killed Raed Saad, one of the architects of the October 7 attack



Palestinians examine a car hit by an Israeli strike in Gaza © MOHAMMED SABER/EPA/Shutterstock

**James Shotter** in Jerusalem

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Israel launched a strike against a senior Hamas commander in Gaza on Saturday in one of the most high-profile attacks since a US-brokered ceasefire took hold in the Palestinian enclave two months ago.

An Israeli military official said the strike, which targeted a vehicle in Gaza City, had killed Raed Saad, one of the architects of Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel, and the second-in-command in its military wing.

Hamas did not immediately confirm whether Saad had been killed but accused Israel of "deliberately seeking to undermine and sabotage the ceasefire agreement through its escalating and continuous violations".

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that the attack was a response to an IED explosion that lightly injured two Israeli soldiers in southern Gaza on Saturday. He added that Saad had been working to rebuild Hamas's military capabilities.

The Israeli military said Saad had been head of Hamas's weapons production headquarters and was one of the last remaining senior militants in Gaza.

The strike is the latest incident to strain the fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hamas brokered by US President Donald Trump, which took effect in October. The truce ended more than two years of fighting in the bloodiest war in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israel's offensive has killed more than 70,000 people, according to Palestinian officials, as well as causing a humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. Hamas's October 7 2023 attack, which triggered the war, killed 1,200 people, according to Israeli officials.

Although the ceasefire agreement has halted large-scale hostilities between the two sides, the fighting has not stopped entirely. Israeli forces have killed more than 380 people and injured more than 1,000 since the truce took hold, according to Gaza's health ministry.

Hamas militants have killed three Israeli soldiers since the ceasefire took effect, according to the Israeli military.

Under the terms of the 20-point plan pushed by Trump, the ceasefire was meant to be followed by the disarmament of Hamas and phased replacement of Israeli forces in Gaza by an international stabilisation force.

This week, Netanyahu acknowledged that the first stage of the ceasefire — which required Hamas to hand over all the living and dead hostages still in its hands — was close to completion and said that the second phase could begin this month.

But important aspects of the next phase of the ceasefire, such as the mandate and composition of the stabilisation force, have not been agreed. The head of the Israeli military described the positions to which his forces had withdrawn in Gaza as a “new border line”, stoking concerns that the process could stall before it was completed.

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