

The terrorist organization Hamas receives significant funding, materiel, and political support from Turkey. For decades, Turkey and Israel enjoyed a productive partnership. However, since 2009, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has diminished relations between the two countries while increasing support to Hamas. Most recently, Erdogan's public support for Hamas's October 7 massacre of Israeli civilians has terminated Turkey-Israel diplomatic associations.

1. Turkey does not consider Hamas a terrorist organization

Following Hamas's October 7 massacre of Israeli civilians, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan [said](#), "Hamas is not a terrorist organization" but "a liberation group, 'mujahideen' waging a battle to protect its lands and people."

2. Turkey provides Hamas a safe haven

Hamas [established](#) a presence in Turkey in 2011 at the direct invitation of the Turkish government. The move was part of an Egyptian-brokered deal that saw Israel [release](#) more than one thousand Palestinian prisoners, including high-profile Hamas figures, in exchange for Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldier Gilad Shalit. Since then, Turkey has provided a safe haven for senior Hamas leadership. [Saleh al-Aroui](#), currently Hamas's deputy political chief, temporarily [relocated](#) from Damascus to Turkey following the outbreak of the Syrian civil war to establish a Hamas branch there. The U.S. Treasury [sanctioned](#) al-Aroui in 2015.

3. Previously, Turkey and Israel shared a strong partnership

Turkey was the [first Muslim country](#) to recognize the State of Israel in 1949. Successive Turkish governments maintained strong ties with Israel, in part due to Turkey's sizeable Jewish minority. Israeli-Turkish ties were based on security and defense cooperation. In 1996 and 1998, Turkey [awarded](#) Israel contracts to upgrade the Turkey's fleet of fighter jets. Ankara also [awarded](#) Israel a \$700 million contract in 2002 to upgrade Turkish tanks. The two countries conducted frequent military exercises together and shared intelligence with one another until the early 2000s.

4. Turkey-Israel relations deteriorated under Erdogan

At the 2009 [World Economic Forum](#) in Davos, then-Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan lashed out at Israeli President Shimon Peres over the 2008-2009 war with Hamas that began with heavy rocket fire from the Gaza Strip into Israel. Erdogan accused Israel of killing Palestinian babies before storming off the stage. In 2010, a flotilla of ships, encouraged by the government of Turkey, attempted to breach Israel's naval blockade of Gaza. This resulted in the [military altercation](#) known as the *Mavi Marmara* incident. *Mavi Marmara* led to a significant downgrading of diplomatic ties between Ankara and Jerusalem. Upon assuming the Turkish presidency in 2014, Erdogan strongly [sided against](#) Israel during the Israel-Gaza conflict that year, leveling accusations of terrorism. Turkey and Israel [reestablished](#) diplomatic ties at the ambassadorial level in September 2022. However, after Turkish President Erdogan delivered a vitriolic speech about the war in Gaza on October 28, 2023, Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen publicly [stated](#) that he "ordered the return of diplomatic representatives" from Ankara "in order to conduct a reevaluation of the relations between Israel and Turkey."

5. Turkey supports Hamas leaders by providing intelligence, Turkish passports

Hamas [maintains](#) offices in Turkey, although these locations are not publicly known. [In 2015](#), Jihad Yaghmour, a Hamas operative who [played](#) a role in the abduction of IDF soldier Nahshon Waxman, became Hamas's representative to the Turkish government. [According](#) to the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Yaghmour "liaises between Hamas and the Turkish government and the Turkish National Intelligence Organization (MIT)." Erdogan openly takes meetings with [senior Hamas leadership](#), most recently in July 2023, when he [hosted](#) Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh. Ankara [granted](#) Haniyeh Turkish citizenship in [2020](#). His deputy, Saleh al-Aroui, also [received](#) a Turkish passport.

6. Turkey supports Hamas financially

In 2012, the Turkish government [reportedly](#) donated \$300 million to Hamas as the group set up shop in Turkey. A Turkish nongovernmental organization with [ties](#) to the government, the [Foundation for Human Rights](#) (IHH) [which also organized the 2010 *Mavi Marmara* flotilla], has transferred cash payments to its branch in the Gaza Strip since 2010. Hamas uses these payments to [fund](#) terrorism. Jihad Yaghmour [leads](#) another Turkish NGO that raises money for Hamas. In 2020, a U.S. District Court identified Yaghmour as a financier of a 2015 [Hamas terrorist attack](#) that killed two Israelis in the West Bank. The court explicitly ruled that the Turkish bank Kuveyt Turk Bank “helped finance the Hamas.”

7. Turkey supports Hamas militarily

In 2018, Israel arrested and deported [Kamil Takli](#), a Turkish law professor and Hamas financier. Takli [admitted](#) during an interrogation with Israeli officials that Hamas operates in Turkey and receives military support from Ankara. Turkey-Hamas collaboration is facilitated by [SADAT](#), a private military contractor in Turkey led by an Islamist general with close ties to Erdogan. Israeli security officials believe that SADAT is responsible for [supplying](#) Hamas with weapons and materiel. In July 2023, Israeli authorities [seized](#) 16 tons of explosive material that originated in Turkey and were [bound for Gaza](#), apparently intended for Hamas rockets.

8. Erdogan’s political views align with Hamas

In 2017, Erdogan directly quoted verses from Hamas’s founding [charter](#) calling for the destruction of Israel. The next year, he publicly [accused](#) Israel of carrying out a “cultural genocide” and claimed Israeli policy was “no less grave than the oppression done to the Jews during WWII.” Erdogan’s worldview is [shaped](#) by the National Outlook Movement, the founding movement of political Islam in Turkey, which harbors deep [anti-Western](#) and antisemitic beliefs.

9. Erdogan refused to condemn Hamas after October 7

Hamas [committed](#) clear war crimes on October 7 by murdering and kidnapping Israeli civilians. However, at a pro-Hamas rally on October 28, Erdogan [called](#) Israel’s defensive actions in the Gaza Strip a “massacre” and said that Turkey is preparing to “tell the whole world that Israel is a war criminal.” He also appeared to threaten military action against Israel, saying that Turkey can “come at any night unexpectedly.” On November 15, Erdogan [called](#) Israel a “terror state” and accused Israel of committing “the most treacherous attacks in human history.”

10. Turkey is coordinating its response to the Hamas-Israel war with Iran, Hamas’s primary patron

Since October 7, Turkish officials, including Erdogan and Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, have openly [met](#) with their Iranian counterparts to coordinate an anti-Israel response. A meeting on November 1 resulted in both officials advocating for “peace” while [threatening Israel](#) with a broader regional war.