



REMARKS ON POLITICAL VIOLENCE GROUP (REMARKS OPV) — THE END OF THE “SAFE HAVEN” FOR MEDIATION? AN ASSESSMENT OF THE DOHA STRIKE’S IMPLICATIONS

what happened?

On the afternoon of Tuesday, 9 September 2025, multiple explosions were heard in Doha and heavy smoke rose over the Katara area amid a large security and emergency response. Israel announced it had carried out a precision strike inside Qatar targeting senior Hamas figures, including Khalil al-Hayya (a member of the interim leadership committee). Hamas stated its top leadership survived; six people were killed, including al-Hayya’s son, his aide/office director, several escorts, and a Qatari security officer. Doha condemned the attack as “cowardly” and a violation of international law. U.S. and U.K. reporting indicated the White House was notified “shortly beforehand,” and a U.S. spokesperson described the strike as “unhelpful.”

What Does It Mean?

- A first on Qatari/Gulf soil (publicly acknowledged): This is the first publicly acknowledged strike on Qatari territory a Gulf mediator state that hosts U.S. forces, expanding the target geography beyond Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria to a pivotal mediation hub.
- A blow to Doha's mediation role: The attack undermines perceptions of a neutral, “safe” platform for talks and may push some rounds to more risk-averse venues or toward a distributed, multi-site mediation format.
- A cross-border deterrence signal: Hitting the Katara/Leqtaifiya vicinity a civilian/touristic zone signals that quasi-diplomatic safe havens are not immune if designated as command nodes.
- Awkward positioning for Washington: Advance notification coupled with the “unhelpful” label weakens the image of trilateral coordination (U.S.–Qatar–Israel) and complicates U.S. mediation.

Remarks OPV conclusion

Amid rapidly unfolding events between late August and 10 September, the regional theater has widened: in Yemen, the Houthis announced the killing of their prime minister Ahmad Ghalib al-Rahawi in strikes on Sana'a, followed by a drone attack that hit Ramon Airport near Eilat; in Tunisia, the "Global Sumud Flotilla" to Gaza reported two boats coming under drone attacks on consecutive days while moored in Sidi Bou Said. Against this backdrop, the Doha strike punctured the "safe haven" assumption for Gulf-based mediation, raised protection costs, and disrupted communications protocols. The pattern of cross-border strikes and efforts to consolidate control over key border arteries and regional airspace suggests Israel is seeking to expand its "freedom of operational action," approaching an extended security reach beyond traditional theaters.

In the near term, we expect tightened security in Doha and restrictions on movement for Palestinian figures, alongside narrative contestation (Doha emphasizing a sovereignty breach; Israel foregrounding "precision"). In our risk estimate, escalation in the West Bank remains high-probability/high-impact; acceleration and formalization of annexation steps are medium-probability/high-impact; and a Yemen-Israel track is medium-probability, shaped by the tempo of strikes and Houthi attacks.

Bottom line: The Doha strike resets the security baseline for mediation tracks and nudges them toward geographic distribution rather than collapse, while the risk of slippage into a broader regional confrontation persists without, at present, clear indicators of an openly declared, full-scale regional war.