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## Hamas official: Mashaal will not run for re-election

Ma'an News Agency

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BETHLEHEM (Ma'an) -- Hamas' chief-in-exile Khaled Mashaal will not run for re-election as leader of the Islamist movement, a group official said Wednesday, reiterating a position outlined several months ago.

"It is probable that Hamas will end its internal elections at the end of this year and Mashaal's position towards the elections won't change unless he changes his mind, because he has the right to run for the election," senior Hamas official Ahmad Abu Yousef told Ma'an.

"Mashaal's visit to Gaza confirms to the leadership that they need to achieve two issues: first is the reconciliation file, which we are continuing to achieve without hesitation, and the second is holding elections based on the foundation of a political partnership," he added.

Practical steps have already been taken by Hamas to implement reconciliation, Yousef said, while administrative matters are dependent on Egypt's role as mediator and Fatah leader President Mahmoud Abbas.

The senior Hamas official said there is unofficial communication with the United States administration, but being listed as a terrorist organization by Washington prevents an official relationship.

In September, Hamas official Salah Bardawil told Ma'an that Mashaal would remain in the Islamist movement but had decided not to run for re-election as party chief.

Serious discussions were ongoing within Hamas about a successor to Mashaal, Ma'an sources close to the movement said at the time.

Potential candidates include current prime minister Ismail Haniyeh or deputy head of Hamas politburo Mousa Abu Marzouq, who is based in Cairo.

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