



The Iron Swords – The war in the south of Israel Updated to 1 p.m., October 12, 2023

Overview

▶ **The southern sector:** IDF forces reported they had control over the area surrounding the Gaza Strip and most of it had been cleared of Hamas terrorist operatives. Meanwhile, IDF fighters continued operating against terrorist squads still in the area attempting to carry out attacks. Israeli Air Force waves of air strikes in the Gaza Strip continued attacking dozens of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) military targets and the deaths of several senior operatives were reported. The rocket fire from the Gaza Strip attacking civilian Israeli targets continued, albeit at a slower pace. Exceptionally, a rocket was fired at the Carmel area in northern Israel, and a barrage of rockets was launched at the settlements of Sharon and Samaria. Another barrage was launched at the Beit Shemesh area.

▶ **The Gaza Strip:** Hamas claimed it had more than 120 hostages, and as long as the fighting continued they would not discuss the issue. In the Gaza Strip the humanitarian situation is worsening. According to reports, the electricity supply was cut off and the hospitals were collapsing under the strain. Arab and international parties began organizing to create a "humanitarian corridor." Egypt is concerned about allowing citizens to leave the Gaza Strip and enter its territory. Hamas officials continued an intensive battle for hearts and minds to counteract the accusations and mounting evidence that they committed ISIS-type atrocities. Hamas called for activity and violent clashes in Judea and Samaria and along the borders of Israel on Friday October 13, 2023.

▶ So far, more than 1,300 civilian and soldier deaths have been reported and there are about 3,300 wounded. Approximately 150 abductees remain in the Gaza Strip and 5,750 rockets were launched into Israeli territory.

▶ **The northern sector:** Israel's north is quiet but tense. UNIFIL and Lebanese army forces reported that they were remaining in the area. Hezbollah continued expressing support for Hamas and keeping its forces on alert, recruiting fighters to its ranks and coordinating their

operations with the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) and the Palestinian terrorist organizations.

▶ **Judea and Samaria:** Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities. Demonstrations of several thousand participants were held in several cities in support of the Gaza Strip. Hamas encouraged terrorist attacks in Judea and Samaria. Husam Badran, a member of Hamas' political bureau, called on everyone who had a weapon, either by virtue of their [formal] occupation or participation in the "resistance" [Palestinian terrorist organizations], to carry out attacks immediately.

▶ **The Arab/Islamic arena:** Iran's leaders held talks with Syria and Saudi Arabia to cooperate in stopping Israel's activities. The Arab League's foreign ministers held an emergency meeting and called for an immediate end to the fighting and the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

The Combat Arena

IDF activity

▶ **Ground activity:** IDF forces gained control of the area surrounding the Gaza Strip and most it has been cleared of Hamas terrorist operatives. Meanwhile, IDF fighters continued operating against terrorist groups still in the region and attempting to carry out attacks. IDF engineering forces continued operations to seal breaches in the border fence to prevent further incursions. Israeli Air Force aircraft, including combat helicopters and UAVs, provided protective cover for the forces (IDF spokesman, October 11, 2023).

▶ During the past day, the presence of several terrorist squads inside Israeli territory was suspected. On the evening of October 11, 2023, IDF soldiers identified several terrorist vehicles near Kibbutz Nir Am. The vehicle was attacked with tank fire, three terrorists were killed and IDF forces continued to search the area. Before dawn on October 12, 2023, the IDF killed a terrorist who tried to drive into Israel (IDF spokesman, October 11 and 12, 2023).

▶ Given the IDF activity, Hamas' military-terrorist wing issued several announcements claiming its forces continued to operate in Israeli territory. At 3:10 p.m. on October 11, 2023, Hamas claimed replacement operatives had been sent to the Zikim-Ashkelon, Sofa and other axes, and its forces were conducting "fierce battles" in the Sofa area (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, October 11, 2023). Later, the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades

announced that using two al-Zawari "suicide" UAVs, it had attacked an IDF regrouping site in the eastern Gaza Strip, (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, October 11, 2023).

► **Aerial activity:** During the past day, waves of Israeli Air Force air strikes continued attacking dozens of Hamas and PIJ military-terrorist targets. On October 12, 2023, an extensive wave was carried out against the headquarters of the nukhba, Hamas' elite unit whose operatives invaded Israel. A senior Hamas naval officer was killed in the strikes. The IDF spokesman reported that attacks were based on information obtained from the interrogation of captured terrorists, and the attacks severely curtailed Hamas' ability to operate in the field (IDF spokesman, October 12, 11, 2023).

► Hamas claimed the IDF report of attacks on nukhba forces was baseless. According to Hamas, residential neighborhoods and buildings and civilian institutions, mosques and houses were attacked and razed to the ground on top of their occupants without prior warning (Hamas website, November 12, 2023).



Right: Attack on a building where terrorist operatives were staying. Left: Attack on an apartment used as a Hamas control center (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, October 12, 2023)



Air Force strikes in Gaza (QudsN Twitter account, October 12, 2023)



IDF attack in the Tel Sultan neighborhood in western Rafah (Shehab Twitter account, October 12, 2023)

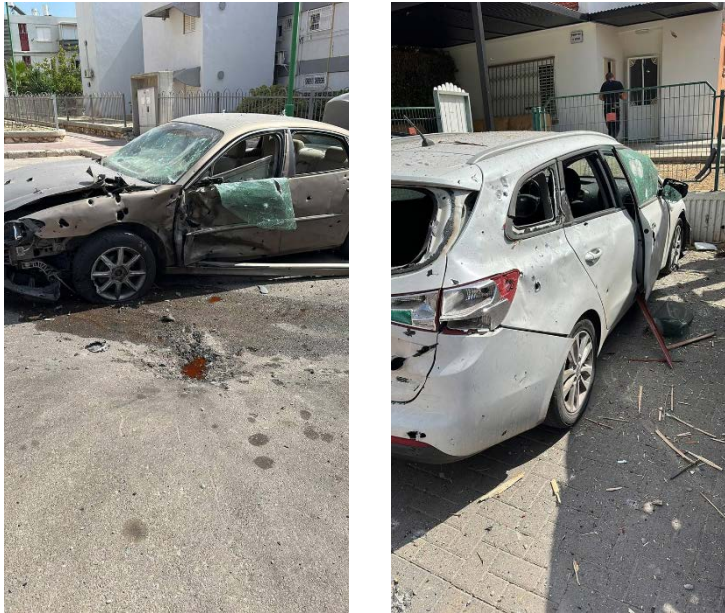
Rocket fire

▶ Meanwhile, rocket fire continued. On October 11, 2023, several barrages were launched into the area of Beersheba (Israel's largest southern city) and the center of the country. In the evening a long-range rocket was fired into the Carmel Beach area (Haifa). The rocket fell in an open area. No casualties or damage were reported. The night of October 11, 2023, was quiet and no rockets or mortar shells were fired at Israel for the first time since the outbreak of the war.

▶ On October 12, 2023, a barrage was launched towards the coastal plain and the Samaria region. No casualties or damage were reported. Seven rockets fell in Sderot. Four people were injured, two of them seriously, and several buildings were damaged (Sderot municipality spokeswoman, October 12, 2023). Another barrage was launched towards the area of Beit Shemesh.



Right: A rocket from Gaza falls near Ariel (Shehab Twitter account, October 12, 2023). Left: A fire in Ashkelon caused by a rocket hit (QudsN Twitter account, October 11, 2023)



Damage caused in Sderot (Sderot municipality spokeswoman, October 12, 2023)

▶ Hamas and the PIJ claimed responsibility for most of the rocket fire. Hamas claimed responsibility for launching the rocket at Haifa. The Hamas military-terrorist wing reported that an R160 rocket had been launched towards Haifa (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, October 11, 2023). Later, the military-terrorist wings of Hamas and PIJ announced they had launched a barrage of rockets towards Tel Aviv. Hamas claimed it was in response to the attack on the "civilians in the Gaza Strip" (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, October 11, 2023; Jerusalem Brigades Telegram channel, October 11, 2023).

▶ As of October 12, 2023, **5,750 rockets had been launched at over thirty villages, towns and cities throughout Israel. The Iron Dome aerial defense system intercepted 590 rockets; about 100 scored direct hits. Five rockets were fired from Lebanese territory.**

Israeli casualties

▶ So far, **over 1,300 civilian and soldier deaths have been reported. About 3,300 Israelis were injured, and about 150 Israelis were abducted and are being held captive in the Gaza Strip.**

Israeli abductees

▶ **Hamas spokesman Abd al-Latif al-Qanua** said the organization had more than 120 hostages and claimed "resistance fighters" [terrorist operatives] continued crossing the fence to the villages surrounding the Gaza Strip and abducting more prisoners. He also said there

would be no discussions about exchanging prisoners until the "aggression against the Gaza Strip" ended (al-Mamlaka TV, October 12, 2023).

▶ **António Guterres, UN secretary general**, called for the immediate release of all the hostages held in the Gaza Strip (António Guterres' Twitter account, October 12, 2023). Agence France-Presse reported from an "official source" that Turkish President Tayyip Erdoğan had started a negotiation process with Hamas for the release of Israeli prisoners (AFP, October 11, 2023).

▶ The al-Arabiya network claimed Egypt would deal with the issue of the foreign prisoners and those with dual citizenship and try to reach an understanding with Hamas regarding them. "Sources" told the network that Egypt had received a "commitment" from Hamas that it would not abuse the foreign abductees (al-Arabiya TV Twitter account, October 11, 2023).

▶ Interviewed by CNN, **Izzat al-Rishq, head of Hamas' central media information bureau**, said Arab and non-Arab countries had made several requests of the Hamas leadership abroad regarding the possibility of a prisoner exchange deal. He said Hamas had announced it was still too early to discuss the issue and they would hold a discussion only after the cessation of Israeli attacks (CNN, October 12, 2023).

The Gaza Strip

The situation on the ground

▶ UNRWA reported that as a result of the fighting, 14 of its food distribution centers had closed and the agency's activities had been reduced (UN website, October 11, 2023). **Hamada al-Biyari, a senior official at the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Gaza**, called for a humanitarian ceasefire to allow rescue teams to assess the situation. He said the UN teams in Gaza could not currently assess the situation because of the ongoing war. He said the number of residents evacuated from their homes had risen to 338,000 and approximately 220,000 were currently staying in 90 UNRWA shelters throughout the Gaza Strip (UN website, October 11, 2023; al-Quds, October 12, 2023).

▶ **Zafer Melhem, chairman of the Palestinian Energy Authority in Ramallah**, reported that the power plant in Gaza had completely stopped operations at 2:00 p.m. on October 11, 2023. He warned that in the current situation the hospitals were unable to

function and would become mass cemeteries (Muhammad Shtayyeh's Facebook page, October 11, 2023).



Zafer Melhem (Muhammad Shtayyeh's Facebook page, October 11, 2023)

The Rafah Crossing

► Egypt is preventing the passage of residents from the Gaza Strip to the Sinai area. At a press conference held by **Sameh Shukri, the Egyptian foreign minister**, with his Italian counterpart, he emphasized Egypt's commitment to keep the Rafah Crossing open to provide the necessary assistance and support to the residents of the Gaza Strip. He said that the security escalation led to instability and encouraged Palestinian residents to try to immigrate to Europe (al-Youm al-Sabaa, October 11, 2023).

Palestinian casualties

► **Dr. Ashraf al-Qidra, spokesman for the ministry of health in Gaza**, held a press conference where he said that since the beginning of the war, the number of dead had passed 1,220 and the number of wounded was more than 5,800. He said that the public health system in the Gaza Strip had begun to collapse and all hospitals were fully occupied ministry of health in Gaza (Facebook page of the ministry of health in Gaza, October 12, 2023).



Dr. Ashraf al-Qidra holds a press conference (Facebook page of the ministry of health in Gaza, October 12, 2023)

▶ UNRWA reported the deaths of 11 of its staff members since Saturday, the deaths of 30 of its school students and the wounding of eight (UN website, October 11, 2023).

▶ A number of senior activists were reported killed in IDF operations in the Gaza Strip:

◆ **Abd al-Rahman Rabia Abd al-Rahman Shehab** was born in Jabaliya in 1968. He joined the PIJ in 1986, was detained by Israel in December 1988, sentenced to 35 years in prison and released in the Gilad Shalit exchange deal. He was the leader of the PIJ prisoners in Israeli prisons. After his release, in 2012 he founded the Atlas Center for Research and became a researcher specializing in Israeli issues (Ra'ia Center for Political Development website, June 20, 2022).



Abdel Rahman Shehab (Ra'ia Center for Political Development website, June 20, 2022)

◆ The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) issued a mourning notice for **Awad Ghaleb Ramadan al-Sultan (Abu Samoud)** from Beit Lahia, who was killed in an attack on the Jabaliya refugee camp. He joined the PFLP in 2001 and rose through its ranks, becoming an operative in its military-terrorist wing and carrying out several operations, especially at sea. He was detained on February 14, 2010 on a boat at sea in the northern Gaza Strip and released from prison in Israel on February 13, 2018. He was a member of the PFLP Central Committee and was head of its bureau of shaheeds, prisoners and wounded until his death (Amad, October 12, 2023).



Awad al-Sultan (Paldf Twitter account, October 12, 2023)

- ◆ **Muhammad Abu Shamala, a senior terrorist operative from the Hamas naval force in the Rafah Brigade.** His house was also used to store naval weapons (IDF spokesman, October 12, 2023).

Hamas

- ▶ **Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau,** spoke on the phone with **Ali Akbar Velayati, the Iranian leader's senior advisor for international affairs.** Velayati said Hamas' activity was a source of pride for the entire [Muslim] nation and all their actions had surprised Israel, which did not expect the Palestinian people would be able to "to stand and fight." He condemned the "Zionist crimes" against defenseless citizens, the destruction of infrastructure and the cutting off of electricity and water. Haniyeh said the "resistance" [anti-Israeli terrorism] continued, the "resistance" fighters [terrorist operatives] stood firm and could confront Israel "which, due to the terror that befell it, resorted to committing heinous massacres" (Hamas' Telegram channel, October 11, 2023).

Revealing the details of the Hamas attack

- ▶ In the meantime, more details are being revealed about the Hamas terrorist invasion. According to al-Sharq al-Awsat, **Muhammed Deif, the commander of Hamas' military-terrorist wing,** began planning the attack immediately after Operation Guardian of the Walls in May 2021 because of events on the Temple Mount. A source close to Hamas described the attack as a response to photos from the Temple Mount showing Jews entering the compound, attacking Muslim worshipers and beating the elderly. "The source" said preparations and training for the invasion had been made over a period of two years and the decision to plan and carry it out was made by Muhammad Deif and Yahya al-Sinwar. He also stated that only a few members of the Hamas leadership knew about it. Moreover, according to al-Sharq al-Awsat, planning was so compartmentalized that even Iran knew nothing about it or its timing, and it

had not been discussed in any meeting held by Hamas operatives with Hezbollah and other Palestinian [terrorist] organizations (al-Sharq al-Awsat, October 12, 2023).

▶ **Muhammad Nizal, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, said Hamas had been planning the war for years, and was leading the "conflict" together with most of the [terrorist] organizations in the Gaza Strip. He noted Hamas had avoided participating in previous campaigns because it wanted to conserve its ammunition and capabilities for the current "campaign," claiming [falsely] they were not attacking civilians, but soldiers and settlers who carry weapons (al-Jazeera Mubasher, October 11, 2023).

The battle for hearts and minds

▶ Meanwhile, Hamas is making a media effort to repair its image as an organization which commits cold-blooded murder and other atrocities. To that end, al-Jazeera aired a video taken at the border of the Gaza Strip in which a woman and two small children were seen being released from captivity and receiving permission to walk back to Israeli territory. The pictures were accompanied by an interview with someone in the Gaza Strip referred to as "an expert on security matters," who called the video "proof" that the Israeli prime minister was lying and that the operatives of Hamas' military wing of Hamas did not murder women and children, but rather set them free (al-Jazeera, October 11, 2023). Hamas also issued a video in English on its Telegram channel which it claimed presented "the lies told by the media about Operation al-Aqsa Storm."

▶ Izzat al-Rishq said Hamas rejected the claims of some of the Western media which falsely promoted Israeli claims that operatives from the "Palestinian resistance" had beheaded children and attacked women, without any evidence supporting the lies and claims.¹ He falsely claimed the targets of the "fighters of the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades have always been concentrations of forces and military personnel, and they repeatedly issued warnings to civilians to stay away from the battlefields and points of conflict, out of their commitment to the laws of war and its rules." That, he claimed, was in contrast to Israel, whose "previous and current crimes exceed the limits of logic" (Hamas' Telegram channel, October 11, 2023).

▶ **Husam Badran, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, rejected the accusations of Israel and some of the Western media that the "resistance" was slaughtering Israeli citizens.

¹ The alleged "lies and claims" are fully documented.

He claimed Islam forbade them to attack civilians, and the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades "fighters" carried out the instructions of Muhammad Deif on the subject, and there were even videos that prove it. He claimed the "resistance" attacked soldiers and the instructions of the fighters on the ground were to attack soldiers and military bases (Hamas website, October 11, 2023).



An ISIS flag found in Kibbutz Sufa among the equipment of Hamas terrorists (IDF spokesman, October 12, 2023)

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad

► **Abu Hamza, the spokesman for the PIJ's military-terrorist wing**, said in a recorded message that the "campaign" was not limited to the Gaza Strip alone, and that Israel had seen PIJ fighters in Judea and Samaria as well and the "campaign" might soon expand into Israel and other arenas. He said that what happened in southern Lebanon [the PIJ terrorist squad which infiltrated into Israeli territory] was only a small part of what would come next. He called on all the "fighters" in Judea and Samaria to continue fighting the "occupation" (Abu Hamza's Telegram channel, October 12, 2023).

► Referring to Biden's speech, **Khaled al-Batash, a member of the PIJ's political bureau**, claimed the American statements and position were "proof of the extent of the United States's complicity in violating the rights of the Palestinian people." He called on the entire [Muslim] nation to take an uncompromising, unequivocal position in the face of the threats of Israel and the United States to close the crossings and not allow the delivery goods and equipment [to the Gaza Strip] (PIJ Telegram channel, October 11, 2023).

The Northern Arena

Lebanon

▶ The Lebanese army issued a statement saying that after searching the border areas, a military unit found a launcher in the al-Qleileh area from which several rockets had been fired. A rocket was found ready for launching (Lebanese army Twitter account, October 11, 2023). **UNIFIL spokesman Andrea Tenenti** said the force continued to be present and operational, its vital work continued, and the commander of the force, Lázaro, was in contact with elements on both sides of the border and urged them to exercise restraint (UNIFIL spokesman's Twitter account, October 11, 2023).

▶ In an article published by **Ibrahim al-Amin, who is close to Hassan Nasrallah**, al-Akhbar stressed that after the limited operations on the Lebanese border, the United States had conveyed a message to the Lebanese government and army and through them to Hezbollah, according to which if Hezbollah opened a front from the north, the United States would stand by Israel and would not prevent it from strongly attacking Lebanon. He said Hezbollah would not accept any threats and “intimidation does not affect it or the resistance in Palestine.” He added that the only mediator who would be welcomed would one who would request to stop “Israeli aggression.” Al-Amin noted that the “resistance in Lebanon” remained on alert, continued recruiting fighters to its ranks and coordinated with the other “resistance forces,” including the IRGC, Hamas, and the PIJ. According to “sources referred to as involved,” the “external” resistance forces had to carry out actions that would confuse Israel and prevent it from mobilizing its capabilities against the Gaza Strip (al-Akhbar, October 12, 2023).

▶ Hezbollah called on its supporters to participate in rallies to be held on Friday, October 13, 2023, in support of Operation al-Aqsa Storm and Palestine. It was also reported that Naim Qassem, PIJ deputy secretary general, would speak at one of the rallies held in Beirut (al-Ahed Telegram channel, October 11, 2023).

▶ In response to the dispatch of American aircraft carriers to the region to support Israel, Hezbollah said in a statement that it regarded the United States as a full partner in the “Zionist aggression” and the killing, destruction and massacres of defenseless civilians. The statement added that aircraft carriers would not frighten Hezbollah or the Palestinian organizations, and they were prepared for confrontation “until final victory and complete

liberation are attained.” Hezbollah called on the Arab-Muslim nation to condemn the intervention of the United States and its international partners (Telegram channel of Hezbollah’s combat media unit, October 11, 2023).

Syria

▶ According to an unverified report, on October 11, 2023, Iranian-backed militias in Syria transferred nearly 100 fighters by bus from a staging point in al-Hajana Square in Albukamal (southeastern Syria) to southern Syria on the Israeli border. Most of the fighters were Syrian combat engineers from the Homs and Hama provinces who specialized in assembling and neutralizing IEDs (Nahar Media, October 11, 2023).

Judea, Samaria, and the Palestinian Authority

Events

▶ During the past 24 hours, Israeli security forces continued to detain wanted Palestinians in Judea and Samaria. According to reports, 56 wanted Palestinians were detained, 28 of them Hamas operatives (Israeli media, October 12, 2023). The following were events recorded in the last 24 hours:

- ◆ On the afternoon of October 11, 2023, a Palestinian staying in Israel illegally attacked an IDF soldier and attempted to snatch his weapon on the Tunnel Road, south of Jerusalem. He was shot and killed; an Israeli civilian was wounded (Israeli media, October 12, 2023).
- ◆ On the afternoon of October 11, 2023, clashes were reported between Palestinians and Jewish settlers near the village of Qasra (south of Nablus), which included stone-throwing by both the sides. A short time later Palestinians fired at an IDF post in the area. In response, several armed settlers on ATVs entered the village of Qasra, shot at several Palestinians and set fire to electricity poles. An IDF force that entered the village separated the sides (Israeli media, October 11, 2023). The Palestinians reported four Palestinians had been killed by Israeli settlers during the clashes (Wafa, October 11, 2023). The IDF reported the incident was under investigation. The Palestinians reported that during the funeral procession, settlers shot at the participants near al-Sawiya (south of Nablus), killing a father and son (Wafa, October 12, 2023).

▶ Hamas continues to try to ignite the region, boasting that the two who shot fireworks at police forces in the Silwan neighborhood on October 10, 2023, and one of the terrorists who shot at the Jalameh checkpoint were Hamas operatives (Green Jenin Telegram channel, October 11, 2023). Hamas also called on residents of Judea and Samaria to participate in widespread protests on Friday, October 13, 2023.

▶ **Hussam Badran, a member of Hamas' political bureau,** issued a statement saying that “the West Bank is a front that can best support Gaza before they ask for aid from abroad.” He called on the residents of Judea and Samaria to take action because, he claimed, every day of delay allowed Israel to kill more of their people in Gaza. He said anyone carrying weapons by virtue of his occupation or on behalf of the “resistance” had to carry out attacks immediately (Palinfo, October 12, 2023).

▶ At Hamas initiative, mass demonstrations were held in Judea and Samaria in support of the Gaza Strip. Thousands of participants waved Hamas flags and chanted slogans in praise of the “resistance,” Muhammad Deif, and the rocket fire. There were also calls for terrorist attacks in Judea, Samaria and Israeli territory (Safa, October 11, 2023). The march held in Ramallah was attended by senior Hamas figures in Judea and Samaria, including Hassan Yusuf (al-Andalou News, October 11, 2023).



Right: A procession in Tulkarm. Left: A procession in Nablus (Shehab Twitter account, October 11, 2023)



A march in Ramallah (Shehab Twitter account, October 11, 2023)



A procession in Hebron (Shehab Twitter account, October 11, 2023)

Palestinian Authority

► **Hussein al-Sheikh, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee**, said that as part of the efforts of the Palestinian leadership to stop the war in the Gaza Strip, Mahmoud Abbas, PA chairman, would go to Amman and meet with Jordan's King Abdullah II; he will also meet with Antony Blinken, head of the American Department of State (Hussein al-Sheikh's Twitter page, October 12, 2023).

► The Bank of Palestine² donated half a million dollars to purchase food for residents in UNRWA shelters. The donation was transferred to the UN World Food Program (WFP) following a campaign launched by the organization to raise aid for those staying at UNRWA facilities in the Gaza Strip (al-Quds, October 12, 2023).

² One of the largest banks in the Palestinian economy. It has dozens of branches in the PA and the Gaza Strip. The bank's headquarters are in Ramallah and are controlled by the al-Shawa family from Gaza.

Iran

▶ **Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi** spoke with **Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman**. They discussed recent events and stressed the need for unity in the Islamic world and the fact that the “crimes of the Zionist entity” would lead to its own insecurity (Twitter account of Mohammad Jamshidi, assistant to the Iranian president for political affairs, October 12, 2023).

▶ He also spoke with **Syrian President Bashar Assad**. Raisi said Iran was trying to obtain cooperation between the leaders of Islamic countries to end Israel’s activity against the Palestinians. Assad praised the “great victories of the resistance” and said the Islamic and Arab countries had to act without delay to transfer aid to the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip (Tasnim, October 12, 2023).

▶ **Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian** spoke with UN Secretary-General António Guterres. According to Abdollahian, Operation al-Aqsa Storm is a Palestinian initiative in response to the “crimes of the Israeli government in recent months.” He claimed that the Gaza Strip was under a “full siege” and offered to send humanitarian aid (Iranian foreign ministry Telegram channel, October 11, 2023).

▶ NBC reported American intelligence had information proving Iran’s leaders were surprised by the Hamas attack. The network sources noted that the seniority of the Iranians who were surprised was high enough to know whether Iran had helped Hamas. In addition, it was noted that the American administration was examining whether the IRGC had prepared and trained Hamas operatives, as well as the claim that during the demonstrations held along the border fence in recent weeks, explosives had been placed along the fence (NBC, October 12, 2023).

Arab World

Arab League

▶ The foreign ministers of the Arab League met in Cairo to discuss the events. They issued a joint statement calling for an immediate halt to the “Israeli war on the Gaza Strip” and called on all sides to restrain themselves. They also stressed the need to allow humanitarian aid to enter the Gaza Strip and reverse Israel’s decision to stop the supply of

electricity and water to the Gaza Strip. The ministers warned against attempts to “transfer” the Palestinian people (Wafa, October 11, 2023). **Riyadh al-Maliki, PA foreign minister**, referred to the “dangerous” freezing of aid funds by several European countries, saying that by doing so, the Europeans pointed a finger of blame at the PA and thereby collectively punished all Palestinians (PA foreign ministry Telegram channel, October 11, 2023).

Egypt

► **Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi** spoke with UN Secretary General António Guterres to discuss the escalation in the Gaza Strip and the international efforts taken to restore regional calm. They stressed the importance of keeping the fighting from spreading to other places, and the need to protect civilians and prevent the humanitarian situation from deteriorating. Guterres thanked el-Sisi for Egypt’s efforts to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip (Facebook page of the Egyptian presidential spokesman, October 11, 2023).

Jordan

► In a speech given by **King Abdullah II of Jordan** on the occasion of the opening of the third permanent session of parliament, he noted that the dangerous escalation and aggression in the Palestinian territories were proof that regional stability would not prevail until the implementation of the two-state solution. He said Jordan would not deviate from defending the interests of the Palestinian people, Jordan’s position would remain stable and it would not relinquish role as the defender of the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem (Jordanian News Agency and al-Rai newspaper, October 11, 2023).

► On October 11, 2023, another mass rally in support of Hamas was held in Amman, the capital of Jordan (Shehab News Agency, October 11, 2023).



Amman Support Rally
(Shehab News Agency, October 11, 2023)

Turkey

► **Turkish President Tayyip Erdoğan** spoke with **Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman** to discuss the latest developments. Erdoğan noted that Turkey had begun taking steps to transfer aid to civilians harmed by attacks in the Gaza Strip and that attacks against civilian areas were unacceptable (Twitter account of the Turkish president, October 11, 2023).

United Arab Emirates

► **UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed** spoke with his Iranian counterpart, **Hossein Amir-Abdollahian**, to discuss “the importance of protecting civilians in the conflict (UAE News Agency, October 11, 2023).

Iraq

► The information office of **al-Sistani, Iraq’s top Shi’ite religious leader**, said Israel (the “occupation army”) was imposing a stifling siege on the Gaza Strip and harming the helpless. According to the statement, Israel wants revenge on the residents of the Gaza Strip to compensate for its resounding failure in the recent clashes. The events, according to the announcement, were taking place before the entire world, and there were "even elements that support the criminal acts and justify them under the pretext of self-defense." The announcement encouraged the countries of the world to stand up to Israel's terrible cruelty and prevent it from continuing to implement its plans to cause greater damage to the Palestinian people. It stated that ending the tragedy of the Palestinian people was the only way to establish peace and security in the region (Iraqi News Agency, October 11, 2023).

Western countries

United States

▶ In a speech to **Jewish leaders, US President Joe Biden** said that the “day of massacre” carried out by Hamas near the Gaza Strip was “the deadliest since the Holocaust.” On the other hand, he also noted the importance of Israel acting in accordance with the laws of war (PBS, October 12, 2023).

▶ Biden and **UAE President Mohammed bin Zayed** discussed the importance of protecting civilians and opening humanitarian corridors (UAE News Agency, October 11, 2023). The White House added that “President Biden condemned Hamas’ attacks on Israel” (Reuters, October 11, 2023).

Germany

▶ **German Chancellor Olaf Scholz** announced that Germany would suspend all aid for the development of the Palestinian territories until an examination had been completed to ensure that it best served Israel’s security and regional peace. He said the silence of the PA and its chairman Mahmoud Abbas was shameful. He said they could predict, to their dismay, that the suffering of civilians in the Gaza Strip would increase, but that this was “the fault of the Hamas attack on Israel.” Scholz stressed that he was in direct contact with Egyptian President el-Sisi, Turkish President Erdoğan and the Emir of Qatar, who he said could play an important role in de-escalation (Reuters, October 12, 2023).

▶ The German chancellor announced a complete ban on carrying out activities in solidarity with Hamas throughout Germany. He also said in support of Israel that without Iran, the attack would not have taken place (DW, October 11, 2023).