



Operation Iron Swords Updated to 1 p.m., December 5, 2023

Northern Arena

- 363 attacks
- 89 Hezbollah operatives killed
- 14 other terrorist-organization operatives killed

Israeli Casualties

- Approximately 1,200 military and civilian dead (unofficial estimate)
- 137 abducted remain in the Gaza Strip

Rocket Fire

- About 10,500 rockets and mortar shells
- About 10% failed launches

Overview¹

► **The combat arena:** The integrated IDF forces extended the fighting in the Gaza Strip, focusing their activity in the Jabalia and Shejaiya areas in the northern Gaza Strip and in the Khan Yunis region in the south. The Palestinian media reported a very difficult night in the Khan Yunis region and in the central Gaza Strip. A Hamas source said the Gaza Strip was burning "in the most horrific war in modern history."

► **According to an unofficial estimate, since October 7 approximately 1,200 Israeli civilians and security personnel have been killed, 406 of them soldiers and officers (including three bodies being held by Hamas in the Gaza Strip); 137 civilian and military abductees are still being held by the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, 17 of them women and children; 113 hostages have been returned to Israel.**

► **The issue of the hostages:** Hamas is calling for a return to indirect negotiations, but not under fire. Hamas claims that since most of the hostages are officers and soldiers, there will be different criteria for their release. A spokesman for the American Department of State said

¹ Click <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en> to subscribe and receive the ITIC's daily updates as well as its other publications.

Hamas did not release kidnapped Israeli women lest they report what they experienced in captivity.

► **Accusations against Hamas:** Hamas denied the accusations of acts of rape and other sexual abuse committed during the October 7 attack and accused Israel of spreading "false propaganda."

► **The Gaza Strip:** The situation in the Gaza Strip remains dire. According to UNRWA, more than 80% of the Gazans were displaced from their homes.

► **The northern sector:** Hezbollah continued attacking IDF positions along the northern border; the IDF responded with artillery and aerial fire. Hamas sources in Lebanon announced the establishment of an organization called Pioneers of Operation al-Aqsa Storm, calling on young and adult men to join its ranks. The organization was apparently established with Hezbollah's blessing. Following criticism, Hamas was quick to claim it was not a military organization, but rather the "popular recruitment" of young Palestinians into its ranks.

► **Judea and Samaria:** The Israeli security forces continued counterterrorism activities. Relating to the detentions, senior Hamas terrorist Osama Hamdan claimed Israel was trying to increase the number of Palestinian detainees in order to exert pressure on Hamas. He said the detainees would be used as bargaining chips in future negotiations on a comprehensive deal.

The Combat Arena

► During the past day, the IDF forces expanded their ground activity, focusing on the areas of Jabalia and Shejaiya in the northern Gaza Strip and the Khan Yunis region in the south.

IDF activity on the ground

► The IDF forces completed the encirclement of the Jabalia refugee camp, operating in Hamas strongholds and destroying terrorist facilities. They located weapons and rocket launchers in civilian buildings, and directed aerial forces to attack terrorist squads. They attacked buildings from which the nukhba terrorists operated, and located and destroyed rockets. Integrated land and naval forces raided the building of Hamas' general security war room in Jabaliya, where they located surveillance and control equipment, weapons and maps (IDF spokesperson, December 5, 2023).



**Rockets found in the yard of a house in the northern Gaza Strip
(IDF spokesperson, December 5, 2023)**



**Right: A terrorist fighting position. Left: A tunnel used by Hamas terrorist operatives
(IDF spokesperson, December 4, 2023)**



IDF forces in the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, December 5, 2023)

► **Aerial activity:** Israeli Air Force aircraft continued attacking terrorist targets, including rocket launchers, terrorist facilities, ammunition depots and terrorist squads (IDF spokesperson, December 5, 2023).

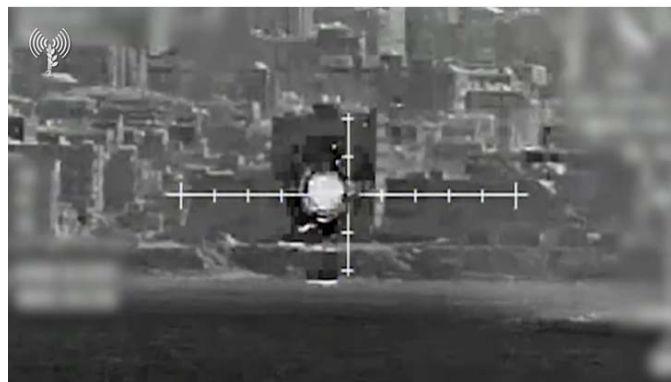


IDF attacks in the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, December 5, 2023)



Israeli Air Force night strikes in the Rafah region (Wafa YouTube channel, December 5, 2023)

► **Naval activity:** Israeli Navy fighters attacked dozens of terrorist targets to assist the forces operating on land, including buildings from which the terrorists fought and launched mortar shells (IDF spokesperson, December 5, 2023).



Israeli Navy attack (IDF spokesperson, December 5, 2023)

► The Palestinian media reported the IDF's massive attacks had caused a difficult situation during the night in the Khan Yunis region and the central Gaza Strip. Fifty deaths were reported, and large numbers of wounded Palestinians sought medical care in Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis. Many casualties were brought in private vehicles because rescue vehicles were overburdened (QudsN X account, December 5, 2023). In the morning, **Hashem Jaber, a**

military commentator, reported that the IDF's ground activity had focused on two areas, Khan Yunis in the south and the Shejaiya neighborhood in east Gaza City in the north (al-Ghad TV, December 5, 2023).

►The Palestinian media also reported fierce exchanges of fire between the IDF forces and the "resistance" [Palestinian terrorist organizations] in the eastern Khan Yunis region in the areas of Bani Suheila, al-Qarara, Abasan and the western and eastern entrances to the city (Shehab Twitter account, December 5, 2023). It was later reported that IDF forces were encircling Khan Yunis in preparation for starting operations inside the city (al-Mamlaka TV, Jordan, December 5, 2023).

►Meanwhile, heavy fire was reported in northern Gaza Strip, especially near Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahia. The director general of hospitals in the ministry of health in Gaza reported dozens of deaths resulting from an IDF attack near the hospital (alresala.net, December 5, 2023).

►On the morning of December 5, 2023, **media correspondent Anas al-Sharif** reported from Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahia. He said there was a heavy exchange of fire and the hospital was besieged, adding that "many people" were congregated in the hospital and "anyone who tried to go outside was shot" (QudsN X account, December 5, 2023).

► Hamas condemned the Israeli attack on the Kamal Adwan, claiming it was a direct continuation of Israel's [alleged] "policy of massacre" (Hamas Telegram channel, December 4, 2023). **Musab al-Bari, spokesman for the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)**, claimed the attack on the hospital was another instance of Israel's exerting pressure on the Gazans and leaving no chance for the wounded to survive. He claimed the [alleged] "brutal crime" was being committed in front of the whole world, which chose to close its eyes and ears (PIJ Telegram channel, December 4, 2023).



Evacuation of casualties in the Khan Yunis area to Nasser Hospital in the city
(QudsN X account, December 5, 2023)



Gazans gather at the main entrance of Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis and Hamas police try to restore order (Wafa YouTube channel, December 5, 2023)

Reactions to the fighting

► **Senior terrorist Sami Abu Zuhri, a member of the Hamas leadership "abroad,"** reported that the Gaza Strip was burning in "the most horrific war in modern history," and was facing a broad Western alliance everywhere. He claimed it was not enough to applaud the "resistance" [terrorist operatives], the entire Muslim nation had to act before it was too late. He said the time had come for the Muslim nation to shed blood instead of tears, and for the "enemies" everywhere to pay the price (al-Anadolu News, December 4, 2023).

► **Hamas terrorist Taher Al-Nunu, Ismail Haniyeh's media advisor,** said their position was clear: they were prepared to discuss a total, complete ceasefire, would not return to partial agreements or temporary ceasefires, and were open to all relevant proposals. Asked if by releasing kidnapped soldiers in exchange for an Israeli agreement to a ceasefire, Hamas would waive the idea of emptying Israeli prisons, he answered the question with a question asking, "Why do people always talk about exchanging rights for rights?" He claimed Palestinian prisoners had the "right to freedom," and the Palestinians had the right "to stop the aggression against them." Why, he asked, should only one be chosen? Regarding Israel's announcement regarding the targeted attacks on the Hamas leadership, he claimed the threats reflected Israel's military and political impasse and did not frighten the Hamas leaders. He claimed the threats were a blatant violation of the sovereignty and security of the countries where the leadership lived (Cairo24 website, December 4, 2023).

► The **PIJ** claimed the statements by White House officials regarding safe areas [in the Gaza Strip] were false and provided cover for the IDF "genocide," adding that the objective of attacking hospitals and cutting off communications was to kill as many Palestinians as possible. The PIJ claimed the "enemy's crimes" in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip would strengthen the determination of the Palestinians to retain their land, defend themselves,

protect the holy places and eradicate Israel (PIJ media information bureau Telegram channel, December 5, 2023).

► **Lebanon-based PIJ spokesman Muhammad al-Hajj Musa** claimed the IDF had completely failed in the Gaza Strip and had been "forced to retreat by the resistance." He added that the military wing and the "resistance" [terrorist operatives] were in good fighting form, the best evidence of which was the rocket launches. He claimed the Islamic resistance in Lebanon was an integral part of the campaign (Filastin al-Yawm Telegram channel, December 4, 2023).

Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip

► During the past day, the Palestinian terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip continued firing rockets and mortar shells at Israel, primarily at the cities, towns and villages surrounding the Gaza Strip. On the afternoon of December 4, 2023, a barrage of rockets was launched at central Israel, and another at the Beersheba region. No injuries were reported. Before dawn on December 5, 2023, another barrage was launched at the Beersheba region, and in the afternoon at the cities, towns and villages surrounding the Gaza Strip and Ashkelon.

Israeli casualties

► **According to an unofficial estimate, since October 7 approximately 1,200 Israeli civilians and security personnel have been killed, 406 of them soldiers and officers (including the bodies of three IDF soldiers being held by Hamas in the Gaza Strip); 137 civilian and military abductees are still being held by the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, 17 of them women and children; 113 abductees have been returned.**

The issue of the hostages

► **Senior terrorist Ali Baraka, a member of the Hamas leadership "abroad,"** claimed that for 50 days before the first temporary ceasefire Netanyahu had failed to eliminate Hamas or rescue the Israeli hostages, and therefore had surrendered to the terms of the "resistance." He called on Netanyahu to spare the deaths of more soldiers and negotiate without fighting. He claimed Hamas was in favor of indirect negotiations but not under fire, adding that their priority was to return to a temporary or permanent ceasefire. Then, he claimed it would be possible to discuss the remaining hostages, "most of whom" were officers and soldiers, and "of course" the criteria for their return would be different from those of the first deal (Alkalima Online website, December 4, 2023).

►Asked if Hamas violated the ceasefire by refusing to release the 20 Israeli women still being held hostage, as agreed, **Hamas terrorist Taher al-Nunu, Ismail Haniyeh's media adviser**, claimed the assertion was "baseless." He falsely claimed that the discussion revolved around four female soldiers, whose names Israel gave to the mediators and wanted as part of the group of civilians. He claimed they had been "captured" while in uniform, and therefore Hamas' position was that it was a different issue and the conditions of the temporary ceasefire did not apply to them, and their "price" would differ from that of the civilians. Al-Nunu claimed the principle of a ceasefire for hours or a few days was no longer valid, adding that they had privately announced they were open to talks on a complete cessation of "aggression" and "negotiations" for a comprehensive deal (al-Jazeera Mubasher X account, December 5, 2023).

►**Matthew Miller, spokesman for the American State Department**, said one reason Hamas did not release kidnapped Israeli women was that it was concerned they would reveal what they had experienced in terrorist captivity. He added that was also the reason for the collapse of the temporary ceasefire (The Recount, December 4, 2023).

►According to a "diplomatic source," while in Doha, French President Emmanuel Macron had been unable to get answers regarding the possibility of releasing Israeli hostages with French citizenship. According to the source, he did not succeed because he had been unable to contact the leadership of Hamas' military-terrorist wing during his visit (al-Banaa, December 5, 2023).

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The Gaza Strip

Palestinian casualties

►**Dr. Ashraf al-Qidra, spokesman for Hamas-controlled the ministry of health in the Gaza Strip**, said that as of 4:00 p.m., December 4, 2023, the number of dead since the beginning of the war stood at more than 15,899 and the number of wounded at more than 42,000 (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, December 4, 2023).

The situation in the Gaza Strip

► **Ahmed al-Bata, a correspondent for al-Arabi TV in Khan Yunis** reporting from Nasser Hospital, said that due to the massive IDF attacks in the Khan Yunis region, in the morning many local residents and asylum seekers were leaving the hospital for safer places (al-Arabi's YouTube channel, December 5, 2023). Reportedly, evacuees and asylum seekers flocked to the European Hospital Complex, located southeast of Khan Yunis (Shehab X account, December 5, 2023).



Local southern Gaza Strip residents and asylum seekers leave Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis (Al-Arabi YouTube channel, December 5, 2023), (Al-Ead channel, December 5, 2023)

► UNRWA reported that since October 7, 2023, 1.9 million people, more than 80% of the residents of the Gaza Strip, had been displaced and were homeless. According to the agency, 1.2 million were sheltering in 156 UNRWA facilities throughout the Gaza Strip (al-Ghad TV, December 4, 2023).

► On December 4, 2023, Paltel, the Palestinian telecommunications company, announced that all communication services in the Gaza Strip had collapsed after the network's main components had been disconnected. According to the announcement, the collapse had been caused by the "ongoing aggression against the Strip." The following day, Paltel announced the gradual return of services (Paltel X account, December 4, 5, 2023).

► The civil defense forces in the Gaza Strip announced that the IDF attacks in the northern Gaza Strip had rendered all their vehicles useless (Al Jazeera's Telegram channel, December 4, 2023).

Aid to the Gaza Strip

► Qatar announced that it had completed its commitment to transfer \$18 million to UNRWA for 2023-2024. Reportedly, Qatar hastened to fulfill its 2024 commitment in support of the Palestinian people in view of the difficult conditions they were facing. Qatar has increased its aid to UNRWA in recent years in accordance with the country's policy of supporting the Palestinians (Qatari foreign ministry X account, December 4, 2023).

Hamas

► A delegation including **senior terrorists Bassem Na'im, a member of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip and chairman of its international relations department; Khaled Qadoumi, Hamas representative in Iran, and Emad Saber,**² arrived in Johannesburg to participate in the Fifth Global Convention of Solidarity with Palestine. Interviewed by a local media outlet, Bassam Na'im said Hamas' main strategic enemy was Israel. He claimed Hamas did not intervene in the internal conflicts in Arab and Islamic countries or in conflicts between countries, and worked to unite Muslims against Israel, the "common enemy." However, he claimed, Hamas was prepared to offer unconditional help to everyone around the world. Therefore, he continued, if Iran was willing to help with training, the transfer of weapons or political support, Hamas thanked it. If there were countries that could help financially, like Qatar, and countries that could provide political support, like Russia in the Security Council, Hamas welcomed it (Radio Islam International website, South Africa, December 4, 2023).

► Regarding the statement of the spokesman of the American State Department on December 4, 2023, that the United States had not seen any proof that Israel was deliberately killing civilians in the Gaza Strip, **senior terrorist Hassam Badran, a member of Hamas' political bureau of Hamas**, accused the State Department of trying to whitewash the damage done by Israel's direct, targeted attacks on civilians and hospitals in the Gaza Strip. He claimed it was more proof of the American administration's direct involvement in the campaign against the Palestinians. He assigned full responsibility to the American administration for the green light it gave Israel to carry out more "massacres" of "defenseless civilians" in the Gaza Strip (al-Araby al-Jadeed, December 4, 2023; Quds Press, December 5, 2023).

² Represented the African media as a senior figure in Hamas' international relations, responsible for the East, Central and South African regions.

Hamas and the accusations of rape

► Given the harsh accusations made against it, Hamas claimed it strongly rejected and condemned the [alleged] "lies" of Israel and Western media outlets of rape and other acts of sexual violence during the October 7 attack. Hamas also claimed that beheading children and harming Nova Festival participants were false accusations designed to distort the activities of the "resistance" and destroy its "moral image" [sic] (Hamas Telegram channel, December 4, 2023).

► **Khaled Qadumi, Hamas representative in Iran**, condemned Israel's multidimensional warfare, which he claimed included "lies, propaganda and military combat." He claimed Hamas had made a formal demand and he again demanded an independent commission of inquiry to investigate the propaganda surrounding the Nova Festival and the issue of beheading babies and rape, the claims about the existence of a Hamas headquarters under Shifa Hospital and more. He warned against allowing such "fabricated stories" to dominate the discourse (Radio Islam International website, South Africa, December 4, 2023).

► **Senior Hamas terrorist Taher al-Nunu, Ismail Haniyeh's media advisor**, also claimed Hamas wanted an impartial international commission of inquiry to investigate a number of issues, including how 200 Palestinians were [allegedly] burned in Israeli territory during the attack, and to investigate whether the Israeli hostages were sexually abused. He [falsely] claimed that there had been no cases of rape or other sexual abuse during the October 7 attack (al-Jazeera Mubasher X account, December 5, 2023).

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Hezbollah's activity

► On December 4-5, 2023, Hezbollah continued its attacks against IDF posts and forces on the Lebanese border. Hezbollah claimed responsibility for 12 attacks, including attacks on Biranit, Shtula, Hanita, Manara and Mount Dov. A barrage of rockets was also fired at Kiryat Shemonah.

► IDF forces responded with artillery fire. Israeli Air Force fighter jets and UAVs attacked Hezbollah targets in Lebanese territory, including an operational headquarters, terrorist

facilities and military structures, a weapons storehouse and launching positions (IDF spokesperson, December 4 and 5, 2023).



Attacks on Hezbollah targets (IDF website, December 5, 2023)

► "Sources close to Hezbollah" reported that all Hezbollah's activities in south Lebanon were intended only to express solidarity with the Palestinian people, and if the fighting in the Gaza Strip stopped, the operations in south Lebanon would cease and there would be no need to talk about or amend UN Resolution 1701, and it would be possible to return to the status quo ante of October 7. According to the sources, Hezbollah adamantly rejects any attempt to reach a deal that would condition the implementation of Resolution 1701 on the identity of the next Lebanese president or any other political deal, because the organization is not willing to bargain over its "freedom of military and security movement" in south Lebanon or tie its strategic presence to political issues. The sources revealed that one of Hezbollah's most prominent responses to the pressure exerted on it was to allow Hamas to establish the al-Aqsa Storm Guards in Lebanon (see below) (al-Jarida, November 5, 2023).

Establishment of a Palestinian organization in Lebanon

► Hamas in Lebanon announced the establishment of an organization called Pioneers of Operation al-Aqsa Storm, calling on young and adult men to join the vanguard of the "resistance" and take part in the liberation of Jerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque (Lebanese al-Watania News Agency, December 4, 2023). Hamas sources attributed the new project to the large influx into the ranks of the movement after Operation al-Aqsa Storm, especially in Lebanon, adding that Hamas was present in the 12 Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. They claimed the project was not only military, but everyone contributed according to their ability in the fields of information, politics, charity, training, education or the military sphere, and its goal was to allow as many Palestinians to participate as possible. The sources stressed

that Hamas had never used weapons except as part of the "resistance" and fighting against Israel (al-Sharq al-Awsat, December 4, 2023).

► Hamas' declaration in Lebanon was condemned by **Gebran Bassil, chairman of the Free National Movement**, who said he strongly opposed Hamas' declaration. He said any armed action in the Lebanese territories constituted an infringement of national sovereignty. Lebanon, he said, had the right to strengthen itself through "national resistance" to Israel for self-defense, but would be weakened if a "Hamasland" was established in its territory to attack Israel (al-Nashra, December 5, 2023).

► **Ahmed Abd al-Hadi, Hamas representative in Lebanon**, said the Pioneers of Operation al-Aqsa Storm was not a military organization whose objective was to accept fighters and train them to join the ranks of the "armed resistance," but rather a popular recruitment framework intended to accept young Palestinians into its ranks. He added that it was an idea that arose after Operation al-Aqsa Storm, when they noticed that young Palestinians were flocking to Hamas under the influence of "the heroism of the resistance and the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades in the Gaza Strip," and based on that, they saw fit to accept the young people into their ranks and shape their personalities from national, religious, moral and physical perspectives. He claimed the objectives were to attract young people and integrate them into community service programs and charitable activities. Abd al-Hadi expected the Lebanese to understand and stressed that Hamas respected sovereignty and law in Lebanon, and it was inconceivable that it would do anything that would harm Lebanon's security, as Hamas' history attested. He claimed there was no need to worry about the framework because it would not harm Lebanon or have a negative impact on the Palestinians (aljazeera.net, December 4, 2023)

► **Rafat Mara, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, claimed it was a popular recruitment framework designed to exploit the energies of Palestinian youth in the service of the Palestinian cause. He claimed it was a popular mobilization framework and not a military formation or a body of a warlike nature (Agence France-Presse, December 5, 2023).

► Hezbollah was reportedly working to attract the Sunni population sympathetic to Hamas, whether in the Gaza Strip or Lebanon. Hezbollah wants to invest in that population for the benefit of the organization, and at the same time gain Sunni support for its activities. With the establishment of the pioneers of Hamas' Operation al-Aqsa Storm in the background, Hezbollah is working to establish new groups called Unity of the Arenas' Youth. In effect,

Lebanon has become completely open to the activity of various anti-Israeli elements. It was noted that there was a possibility that some of Hamas' terrorist operatives would leave the Gaza Strip if Israel completed its military activity there. In such a situation, it would be possible that the pioneers of Operation al-Aqsa Storm would allow some or all of them to enter Lebanon, and in the future, the organization would serve as a base for military and "security" activity. In such a situation, south Lebanon would become the land of the "axis of resistance"³ (Al-Modon, December 5, 2023).

The Lebanese government

►According to "prominent sources," **Bernard Amieux, head of French intelligence**, and five other senior officials are in Beirut on a secret visit. According to the "sources," one of the reasons the French went to Beirut was to offer Lebanese diplomats ideas for implementing UN Resolution 1701. One of the proposals, according to the sources, was to distinguish between the Radwan forces and other "resistance" forces and distance them from the Israeli-Lebanese border. According to sources familiar with the discussions, the Lebanese made it clear to Western representatives that the Radwan Force was an integral part of Hezbollah (al-Akhbar, December 5, 2023).

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Judea and Samaria

Counterterrorism activities

► The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities throughout Judea and Samaria. During the past day, 21 wanted Palestinians suspected of terrorist activity were detained (IDF spokesperson's X account, December 5, 2023):

- ◆ In the early morning hours of December 5, 2023, IDF forces operated in Jenin. The forces mapped two houses of Ahmed Barakat, one of the terrorists who carried out a shooting attack in Hermesh on May 30, 2023, in which an Israeli was murdered. During the activity, IDF forces exposed IEDs planted under the roads and detained two wanted

³ Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinian terrorist organizations, the Shi'ite Houthis in Yemen and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq.

Palestinians. Armed Palestinians threw IEDs and shot at the forces, who responded with gunfire (IDF spokesperson's X account, December 5, 2023).

- ◆ IDF forces in the village of Doha (west of Bethlehem) closed and sealed two printing presses that were printing inflammatory materials for Hamas (IDF spokesperson's website, December 5, 2023).

► Regarding the detentions carried out by Israel in Judea and Samaria, **senior Hamas terrorist Osama Hamdan** said Israel was trying to increase the number of Palestinian detainees in its possession to exert pressure on them and break the "resistance" and perhaps also weaken the Palestinians' desire to wage the war. He claimed the detainees were intended to serve as additional bargaining chips in future negotiations on a comprehensive deal. He said Hamas' decision was to have everyone in Israeli jails released, including the new prisoners recently detained by Israel (Alkalima Online website, December 4, 2023).

Palestinian Authority (PA)

► At the weekly cabinet meeting, **Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh** said they were facing the reoccupation of the Gaza Strip and plans to create buffer zones inside Gaza. He said they refused and called on the countries of the world to reject the plans. Shtayyeh also said he called on Karim Khan, the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, who visited Ramallah, to expedite the investigation proceedings. Shtayyeh stressed that the world had to demand that Israel stop the "aggression" immediately (Wafa, December 4, 2023).

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Iran

► **Ali Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader**, meeting with **Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel**, who is visiting Tehran, said the Palestinian issue was not related only to the latest developments in the Gaza Strip, because the Palestinian people had been subjected to various forms of torture and suffering for 75 years. However, the disaster in Gaza today was so great that it was no longer possible to hide it from world public opinion. Khamenei added that the Cuban president's positions on global issues, especially on Palestine, were in line with

those of Iran, and called for the establishment of a global alliance against "American and Western bullying" (Fars, December 4, 2023).

► **Hossein Amir Abdollahian, Iranian foreign minister**, went to Moscow to attend a meeting of the foreign ministers of the Caspian Sea countries. Upon his arrival in Moscow, he said that during the meeting of the foreign ministers, he intended to discuss the issue of Palestine and the "crimes of the Israeli regime against the Gaza Strip," including ways to immediately stop the "genocide and war crimes against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank" and the opening of the crossings for delivering ongoing humanitarian aid to the residents of the Gaza Strip (Fars, December 5, 2023).

Pro-Iranian militias

Iraq and Syria

► The United States Army Central Command (CENTCOM) reported that on December 3, 2023, rockets originating from Iraq were launched at the American base in Rmelan, Syria. They reportedly located the source of the launch and advised the Iraqi security forces, who came to investigate the site. A fuel truck was found at the site that had been converted into a launcher capable of launching up to 20 rockets (CENTCOM X account, December 5, 2023). CENTCOM also confirmed that on December 3, 2023, American forces attacked five Nujaba militia operatives in the Kirkuk area of Iraq who were attempting to launch a drone (CENTCOM X account, December 4, 2023).

► **Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid** met in Baghdad with **Mohammad Bagheri, chief of staff of the Iranian Armed Forces**. Rashid stressed the importance of developing relations between the two countries from a security, political and economic perspective. He also referred to Iraq's position supporting the right of the Palestinian people to achieve its rights, stressing that the "aggression" against the Palestinians had to be condemned and efforts had to be made to stop the war. Bagheri stressed Iran's support for Iraq's efforts for its security and Iran's desire to develop relations (Iraqi presidential Telegram channel, December 4, 2023).

Yemen

► Local sources in Sana'a reported that four powerful explosions were heard in the north and west of the city on the morning of December 5, 2023. The Houthi movement denied the reports (YNN, December 5, 2023).

- ▶ **American National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan** said they were holding talks with other countries regarding the establishment of a maritime task force of ships from partner countries alongside the United States to work to ensure the safe passage of ships in the Red Sea (White House website, December 5, 2023).
- ▶ The British government spokesman condemned the Houthi attacks on merchant ships in the Red Sea. He said Iran supported the Houthis militarily and politically and was responsible for the actions of its partners and proxies (British government website, December 4, 2023).
- ▶ The commander of the coastal defense of the Houthi rebels in Yemen threatened that they would turn the Red Sea into a "graveyard for Israeli ships." He stressed that the rebel leader had warned Israel in the past that the Red Sea was a forbidden zone for them. He said the Houthis' actions did not compromise international shipping lanes or other commercial ships, but only Israeli ships (Iranian Fars News Agency, December 4, 2023).
- ▶ **Mahdi al-Mashat, chairman of the Houthi movement's Supreme Political Council**, issued a law prohibiting recognition of the "Zionist enemy entity" and normalization with it. According to him, "normalization with the entity is a betrayal of the Arab-Islamic nation" (Houthi media office Telegram channel, December 5, 2023).

The Arab Arena

Qatar

- ▶ **Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim**, speaking at the opening of the Gulf Cooperation Council conference held in Doha, stressed that the temporary ceasefires were not an alternative to the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and that they would invest efforts with international allies to stop the "aggression" in the Gaza Strip. He claimed Israel was committing crimes against humanity and the argument of self-defense did not apply. He called on the UN to conduct an international investigation into the "crimes of the occupation." He made it clear that they condemned the attacks "on civilians of all nationalities." He also said the conflict in Palestine was not religious and had nothing to do with the struggle against terrorism, since it was essentially a national issue and a conflict with the "occupation" (al-Arabi, December 5, 2023).
- ▶ **Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan** said in his speech that the Israeli government was jeopardizing the security and future of the region to prolong its political life. He said they should not allow the massacres in Gaza to turn into a regional war that would include Syria.

He stressed Israel was committing "war crimes and crimes against humanity" and that the top priority now was to declare a permanent and immediate ceasefire and ensure the continuous entry of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip (Anadolu News, December 5, 2023).



Sheikh Tamim speaking at the conference (al-Jazeera, December 5, 2023)

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Turkey

► According to an official source in Turkey's National Intelligence Organization, they warned of "serious consequences" if Israel tried to assassinate senior Hamas figures abroad, including on Turkish soil (Reuters, December 4, 2023).

France

► On November 30, 2023, France issued an order freezing the assets and economic resources of arch Hamas terrorist Yahya al-Sinwar, head of Hamas' political bureau in the Gaza Strip, for six months. The order goes into effect on December 5, 2023. On November 13, 2023, an order was issued freezing the assets of arch terrorist Muhammad -Deif, commander of Hamas' military-terrorist wing (Agence France-Presse, December 5, 2023).