



Operation Iron Swords Updated to 1 p.m., December 24, 2023

Northern Arena

- 505 attacks
- 124 Hezbollah operatives killed
- 17 other terrorist-organization operatives killed
- One Lebanese army soldier killed

Israeli Casualties

- Approximately 1,300 military and civilian dead (unofficial estimate)
- 129 hostages remain in the Gaza Strip

Rocket Fire

- About 10,600 rockets and mortar shells
- About 10% failed launches

Overview¹

► **The combat arena:** Over the weekend the IDF forces continued their integrated ground maneuver against terrorist operatives, destroying terrorist facilities and locating large quantities of weapons in the northern, central and southern Gaza Strip. Palestinians reported fierce ground fighting and airstrikes, as well as the extension of the fighting to the Philadelphia Axis area (the border area between the Gaza Strip and Egypt).

► **According to an unofficial estimate, since October 7 approximately 1,300 Israeli civilians and security personnel have been killed, 485 of them soldiers and officers; 129 civilian and military hostages are still being held by the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, 16 of them women and children; 121 hostages have been returned to Israel.**

► **The issue of the hostages:** Senior Hamas terrorists reiterate that without a complete ceasefire there will be no negotiations. "Sources" familiar with the talks held by the Hamas leadership with the Egyptian mediators in Cairo said that the Hamas delegation returned to

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

Qatar to consult with the [Hamas] political bureau regarding an Egyptian initiative for a three-stage hostage deal.

► **The Gaza Strip:** Residents in the central Gaza Strip were asked to evacuate to the Deir al-Balah area. UNRWA officials said that the area was now full of displaced persons and UNRWA shelters were full. They said that no place in Gaza was safe. Residents complained of having to move from one place to another.

► **The northern arena:** Hezbollah continued attacking IDF posts, concentrations of forces on the northern border and civilian targets. Between December 21 and 24, 2023, Hezbollah claimed responsibility for 19 attacks. An IDF soldier was killed by rocket fire at a post near Shtula in the Western Galilee and another soldier was seriously wounded. In response the IDF attacked Hezbollah targets in south Lebanon with artillery fire and airstrikes.

► **Judea and Samaria :** Border Police fighters were attacked in Barta'a (west of Jenin); a female fighter was slightly injured.

► **Iran:** In Tehran, the "international conference to strengthen support for the Palestinians and exert pressure on the occupation" was held, chaired by the president of Iran and with the participation of representatives from more than 50 countries. The spokesman for the Iranian foreign ministry said the purpose of the conference was to strengthen international support for the Palestinian people and to exert pressure on Israel.

► **The pro-Iranian militias:** The Islamic Resistance in Iraq announced it had attacked the Harish gas rig and the city of Eilat. A Japanese-owned ship was hit in the Indian Ocean by a UAV apparently launched from Iran.

► **The UN Security Council:** After a week of delays caused by differences of opinion, the Security Council passed a softened draft resolution calling for urgent, immediate entry of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip, and for creating conditions for a cessation of the hostilities.

The Combat Arena in the Gaza Strip

► Over the weekend, IDF forces continued fierce fighting against terrorists, destroying terrorist facilities and locating large quantities of weapons in the northern, central and southern Gaza Strip. Hundreds of Palestinians suspected of terrorist activity were detained this past week, more than 200 of them Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) terrorist operatives, who were transferred to Israeli territory for further investigation. Since the beginning of the war,

more than 700 terrorist operatives were taken for questioning. **According to IDF estimates, since the beginning of the war, approximately 8,000 Palestinian terrorist operatives have been killed** (IDF spokesperson, December 23, 2023).



Weapons found by IDF forces in the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, December 24, 2023)



IDF forces in the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, December 24, 2023)

► **The northern Gaza Strip:** IDF forces continued cleaning out pockets of terrorist operatives. In Beit Hanoun, IDF forces raided the Kasbah, and cleared the area. They also located tunnel shafts, the largest of which was located in a school from which the forces were attacked the day before. Military-terrorist wing uniforms (including in children's sizes), documents, telephones and an IDF duffle bag were found (spokesman IDF, December 22, 2023).



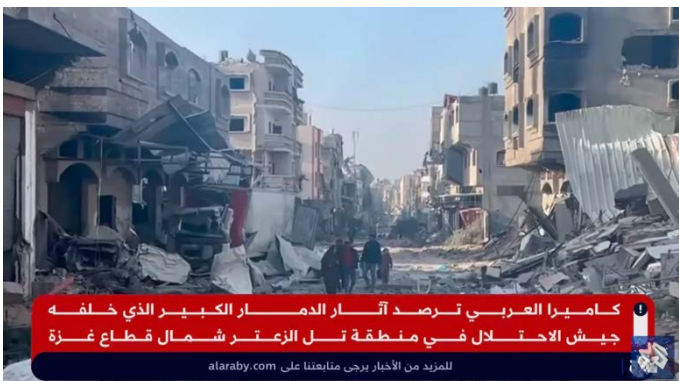
Weapons found in Beit Hanoun (IDF spokesperson, December 22, 2023)

►Al-Ghad TV reported on an exchange of fire between IDF forces and the "resistance fighters" [terrorist operatives] in Jabaliya, and massive IDF gunfire in the eastern neighborhoods of Gaza City, Tufah and Zeitoun (al-Ghad TV, December 24, 2023). On the morning of December 24, 2023, a correspondent for al-Arabi TV in the northern Gaza Strip reported intense exchanges of fire between IDF forces and "resistance fighters" in the Jabaliya area. He said that many residents had not evacuated and remained in their homes despite the fighting (al-Arabi YouTube channel, December 24, 2023).



Smoke rises over Jabaliya (al-Arabi YouTube channel, December 24, 2023)

►Islam Bader, a correspondent for al-Arabi TV in Jabaliya, reporting from Tel al-Za'atar in the Jabaliya refugee camp, said that buildings and facilities had been greatly damaged and that many residents who arrived at the scene were stunned by the extent of the destruction. He said local residents were hoping for a ceasefire to be able to visit their homes (al-Arabi's YouTube channel, December 23, 2023).



Islam Bader, a correspondent for al-Arabi TV in Jabaliya, reports from Tel al-Za'atar in the Jabaliya refugee camp (al-Arabi's YouTube channel, December 23, 2023)

►Gaza City: Operating in south Gaza City, IDF forces uncovered a tunnel hundreds of meters long with command and communication rooms. Terrorist facilities were also located in the neighborhood, including buildings used by Hamas for military-terrorist purposes. An Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked several dozen terrorists who fled to a building used as a Hamas

headquarters. IDF forces also operated on the outskirts of the **al-Shati refugee camp**, where they located a large quantity of weapons, ammunition magazines and maps. In the **Rimal neighborhood** they uncovered an underground terrorist city that was part of Hamas' tunnel system and connected to other significant underground facilities in the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, December 22-23, 2023).



The aftermath of IDF attacks in the Rimal neighborhood (Shehab X account, December 23, 2023)



IDF operations in northern Gaza City (al-Arabi YouTube channel, December 24, 2023)

► **The central Gaza Strip:** IDF forces located a cache of weapons in a kindergarten, including boxes of "toys" containing dozens of mortar shells, warheads, and anti-tank missiles (IDF spokesperson, December 22, 2023).

► **The southern Gaza Strip:** IDF forces carried out several offensive operations in the heart of **Khan Yunis**. They located large quantities of weapons stored in a civilian residence, IEDs, weapons, ammunition magazines, combat equipment and military uniforms (IDF spokesperson, December 22, 2023).



IDF forces in Khan Yunis (IDF spokesperson, December 22, 2023)



Weapons found in Khan Yunis (IDF spokesperson, December 22, 2023)



Right: IDF attacks in the Khan Yunis area (Wafa YouTube channel, December 23, 2023). Left: A map used by TV presenter to explain the fighting in eastern Khan Yunis (al-Arabi YouTube channel, December 24, 2023)

► **The Philadelphia axis:**² It was reported that on December 23, 2023, IDF forces engaged in a short, atypical maneuver near the Kerem Shalom area and the Philadelphia axis. According to Palestinian reports, the IDF brought APCs and tanks into the area. The QudsN network reported that according to "exclusive sources," Israel had informed Egypt that it intended to occupy the border area along the Philadelphia axis and asked the Egyptian soldiers to clear

² The buffer zone between Egypt and the Gaza Strip, it runs from the sea to the Kerem Shalom Crossing.

the border. According to the report, Israel informed Egypt it would not be responsible for the safety of any Egyptian soldier, and that the military operation in the area would continue whether Egypt agreed to or opposed it (QudsN Telegram channel, December 23, 2023). "Knowledgeable Egyptian sources" denied the reports in the Israeli media about Israeli tanks beginning ground operations from Kerem Shalom to the Philadelphia axis (al-Qahera al-Akhbariya TV website, December 23, 2023).

►The Palestinian Crossings Authority also denied the news in an official statement, reporting that the Egyptian side claimed it had no information about Israel's intention to advance along the border axis (al-Araby al-Jadeed, December 23, 2023). **Senior Hamas terrorist Osama Hamdan** held a press conference in Beirut where he said that there was no confirmation about the reports in Israel regarding activity along the Philadelphia axis, calling it psychological warfare and an attempt to deceive people into thinking that Egypt was cooperating with Israel (al-Jazeera channel website, December 23, 2023).

►**Aerial activity:** The Palestinian media reported Israeli Air Force attacks throughout the Strip, including western Rafah and the Japanese neighborhood in western Khan Yunis, and that as of the morning of December 24, 2023, the IDF renewed the artillery fire in different areas of the city. In the central Gaza Strip the IDF attacked buildings in Deir al-Balah, the al-Nuseirat refugee camp and al-Zuweida. In Gaza City, the IDF returned to attack the al-Shati refugee camp in the city after a break of several weeks. In addition, the IDF destroyed the al-Aqsa TV building and the building in Gaza where the offices of the Hezbollah-affiliated Lebanese al-Manar TV and the al-Quds al-Yawm channel were located (Ma'an, al-Quds, December 24, 2023).

►**Naval activity:** Israeli Navy forces attacked Hamas targets on the coastline to assist the ground forces' maneuver in the area (IDF spokesperson, December 22, 2023).

Palestinian reactions to the fighting

►Hamas claimed that the IDF's report of finding weapons in a school in Gaza City were another of the lies that Israel used to justify killing civilians and "proof of its failure" (Hamas Telegram channel, December 23, 2023).

►"A senior Hamas terrorist" indicated the "resistance's" [terrorist organizations'] readiness and complete willingness to continue the campaign and inflict as many losses as possible on the IDF. According to the terrorist, the IDF suffered heavy losses which it had not yet announced but which Hamas' "military wing" reserved the right to announce at "the

appropriate time." He rejected Israel's statement that matters were under Israeli control, and emphasized that Hamas' military[-terrorist] wing and the "resistance" [terrorist] organizations stood firm, claiming that actually the initiative was "in their hands" (al-Araby al-Jadeed, December 22, 2023).

► **Senior Hamas terrorist Osama Hamdan** held a press conference in Beirut where he related to the developments in the war. He claimed "Zionist terrorism" would not break the Palestinians' will, their steadfastness or the "resistance," nor would it achieve any of the goals of its "aggression." He emphasized that the Israeli war cabinet's threats to eliminate the "resistance" [Hamas] were hollow and manifestly bankrupt. He claimed the Palestinians would continue to stand firm and protect "their land and holy places [sic]." He also claimed that the strategy to defeat Hamas had "completely collapsed," Hamas and its military[-terrorist] wing were much stronger than [Israel] expected, and more than half of the number of Israeli casualties that the IDF announced were killed after the end of the temporary ceasefire. He also claimed that the IDF statements about controlling areas and neighborhoods in the Gaza Strip were ridiculous and false, and disproved by the continued "resistance" in those areas (Palinfo, December 23, 2023; al-Jazeera channel website, December 23, 2023).

Israeli casualties

► **According to an unofficial estimate, since October 7 approximately 1,300 Israeli people have been killed. According to the IDF spokesperson, 485 of them are soldiers and officers (of whom 156 have been killed since the start of the ground maneuver on 27 October, 2023); 129 civilian and military hostages are still being held by the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, 16 of them women and children; 121 hostages have been returned.**

Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip

► Over the weekend there was sporadic rocket and mortar fire from Gaza targeting the cities, towns and villages surrounding the Strip.

The issue of the hostages

► **Senior Hamas terrorist Osama Hamdan** said that in light of rumors about negotiations and a hostage deal, Hamas reiterated that there would be no negotiations until after the "aggression" had stopped. If Israel and its supporters wanted the hostages back alive they had to stop the "aggression" against the Gaza Strip. He said the leadership of the movement

[senior Hamas terrorists] was striving with all its might and determination to stop the "aggression" completely, not temporarily, and that the Palestinians were not looking forward to a short-term partial calm, after which the "aggression" would continue. He claimed that Hamas wanted to return the Israeli captives in exchange for the Palestinian prisoners, while the Netanyahu government was not interested (Palinfo, December 23, 2023; al-Jazeera TV website, December 23, 2023).

►According to another senior Hamas terrorist, nothing in the media could be considered a proposal worthy of discussion, which meant that no negotiations were taking place. He claimed Hamas had sent a clear message to the mediators in Egypt and Qatar that there would be no negotiation for a new temporary ceasefire, only for a comprehensive ceasefire. He claimed that Hamas was fully aware of the consequences of a refusal to talk about temporary ceasefires or partial deals and was fully prepared [for the consequences] (al-Araby al-Jadeed, December 22, 2023).

►**Senior terrorist Hassam Badran, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, said Hamas was concerned about the situation of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and wanted to stop the "aggression" permanently, and therefore insisted that it was currently the [only] topic for negotiation and discussion. He claimed that Israel's motive and request to reopen the issue of an exchange deal was related to increasing popular pressures, mainly from the families of the hostages (al-Araby al-Jadeed, December 22, 2023).

►**Senior terrorist Abu Obeida, spokesman for Hamas' military-terrorist wing**, claimed the only way to release the hostages while they were still alive was to enter into negotiations through mediators. He said that was Hamas' permanent position and the only other alternative was that the hostages would continue to die. He also stated that Israel's goal to eliminate the "resistance" [Hamas terrorism] was doomed to failure. Israel, he claimed, was repeating its historical mistakes and like other occupying invaders, it was disconnected from reality. He claimed that the IDF, which was looking to make a show of victory, sometimes announced the elimination of commanders in the field and attacks on jihad fighters [terrorist operatives] or celebrated the discovery of "an old tunnel that is no longer in use" (al-Jazeera, December 21, 2023).

►**Senior terrorist Muhammad al-Hindi, deputy Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) secretary general**, said that his organization's position was in line with Hamas' position, that there would be no negotiations regarding the Israeli hostages before a comprehensive ceasefire in

the Gaza Strip and a complete withdrawal [of IDF forces]. He added that there was no room for an exchange deal as part of a temporary ceasefire, after which Israel would resume attacking "civilians" (al-Araby al-Jadeed, December 22, 2023).

►"Sources" familiar with the Hamas talks in Cairo said that the Hamas delegation returned to Qatar to consult with its political bureau regarding the Egyptian tri-phase initiative. According to the proposal, the first phase would be a two-week humanitarian ceasefire which could be extended for two to three additional weeks, during which Hamas would release 40 Israeli hostages, including women, children and elderly men, especially those who were ill. In return, Israel would release 120 Palestinian prisoners from the same categories, stop its military operations and provide medical aid and fuel to Gaza. In the second phase, a Palestinian national dialogue would be held under Egyptian auspices to end the [internal Palestinian] schism and establish a technocratic government which would be responsible for humanitarian issues, the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip and for paving the way for general elections and elections for the "presidency." Hamas expressed its agreement to the initiative to establish a government of technocrats. The third stage would be a full ceasefire and a comprehensive hostage exchange deal that would include all the captured Israeli soldiers and an agreement on the number of Palestinian prisoners that Israel would release, including those serving heavy sentences and those arrested after October 7. According to the sources, in the final stage Israel would withdraw from the Gaza Strip and allow the displaced residents to return (al-Sharq, December 24, 2023).

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The Gaza Strip

Palestinian casualties

►**The Hamas-controlled the ministry of health in the Gaza Strip** reported that as of 1 p.m., December 24, 2023, the number of dead since the beginning of the war stood at more than 20,424 and the number of wounded at 54,036 (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, December 24, 2023). On December 24, 2023, the Palestinian media reported that during the past 24 hours 201 Palestinians had been killed and 368 wounded by IDF attacks in the Gaza Strip (Ma'an, al-Quds, December 24, 2023).

►The Palestinian media and the social networks reported the deaths of several operatives:

◆ **Rizq Arouq, the deputy secretary general of the Popular Resistance Movement,** and the CEO of Radio al-Buraq, which used to broadcast from the Gaza Strip, was reportedly killed along with several members of his family in an IDF attack (Palinfo, December 22, 2023).



Rizq Arouq, (Facebook page of the Journalist Support Committee, December 23, 2023)

◆ **Muhammad al-Saidi, director of al-Aqsa TV,** was reportedly killed in an attack on his home in the al-Nuseirat refugee camp along with 14 members of his family members (Palinfo, December 22, 2023).

◆ **Hassan Muhammad Hassan al-Atrash,** a released prisoner was killed along with several other people when a vehicle was attacked in front of the al-Masri Tower in Rafah (Safa X account, December 22, 2023). The IDF spokesperson stated that he was killed in Rafah in a targeted airstrike and that he was responsible for the trade, production and provision of weapons for Hamas' military-terrorist wing. He smuggled weapons from various countries to the Gaza Strip and was recently involved in the smuggling of weapons to Judea and Samaria as well (IDF X account, December 23, 2023).



The elimination of Muhammad Hassan al-Atrash (IDF spokesperson, December 23, 2023)

◆ Lt. Col. Mahdi Muhammad (Fouad) Abd al-Majid al-Aqqad, chief of the Khan Yunis police, 43 years old, was killed along with his wife, son and other family members in the

attack on Marwan al-Aqqad's house in the Ma'an area of eastern Khan Yunis (Shehab X account, December 21, 2023; al-Aqqad family Facebook page, December 21, 2023).



Mehdi al-Aqqad (Facebook page of his nephew Riad al-Aqqad, September 6, 2023)

◆ Col. Bassam Ghaben, director of the Kerem Shalom Crossing, and according to sources, three other Palestinians, were killed in an Israeli Air Force attack on the crossing (Telegram channel of Hamas' al-Rai Agency, December 21, 2023; al-Sharq Facebook page, December 21, 2023).



Bassam Ghaben (Facebook page of his cousin Jihad Ghaben, December 22, 2023)

◆ **The son of senior PIJ terrorist Daoud Shehab** was killed in an attack on his family's home in the northern Gaza Strip (Daffa_media Telegram channel [Telegram channel of the Islamic Jihad in the West Bank], December 17, 2023).

► **Dr. Munir al-Bursh, director general of the ministry of health in Gaza**, was reported injured and his 13 year-old daughter Jinan was reported killed in an attack on his sister's house in Jabaliya (Shehab X account, December 21, 2023; QudsN X account, December 21, 2023).



Munir al-Bursh and his daughter Jinan (QudsN X account, December 21, 2023)

The situation in the Gaza Strip

► Displaced persons in Rafah responded to the UN Security Council's resolution to increase aid to the Gaza Strip by saying they were not asking for aid and food, but rather wanted a full ceasefire and to return to their homes. They claimed the UN resolution was in Israel's interest because it would allow the war in the Gaza Strip to continue for one or two more years (Wafa YouTube channel, December 23, 2023).



Displaced persons in Rafah are dissatisfied with the UN Security Council resolution (Wafa YouTube channel, December 23, 2023)

► The director of UNRWA in the Gaza Strip said that Israel had issued a notice calling on the residents of the center's camps to move to Deir al-Balah because it planned to extend its military activity. He claimed that more than 150,000 people were injured as a result of Israel's decision, the area was full of displaced persons and UNRWA shelters were full. He added that many Gazans had been displaced several times. He also claimed the IDF was ordering people to move to areas where aerial attacks were being carried out. He stated no place was safe in the Gaza Strip (journalist Abu Jawad's Telegram channel, December 23, 2023).



An UNRWA school in Deir al-Balah that shelters displaced persons (Wafa, December 23, 2023)

► Displaced persons who were interviewed claimed that following the IDF's announcements they had to leave the al-Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip. They complained that they did not know where to go because there was no safe place for them, and the 72 hours the IDF allotted them for evacuation were not enough because of the overcrowding in the central Gaza Strip (Wafa YouTube channel, December 24, 2023).



Gazans leaving the al-Bureij refugee camp (Wafa YouTube channel, December 24, 2023)

Aid for the Gaza Strip

► "Exclusive sources" said that Israel had refused Russia's request to establish a field hospital in the southern Gaza Strip. According to the sources, the Russian request was conveyed during a telephone conversation between a senior Russian security official and an Israeli security official and the Israeli side conveyed Netanyahu's refusal. According to the sources, Israel tried to convince Russia to help "displace" residents of the Gaza Strip to Egypt by providing medical and humanitarian services on behalf of Russia on the Egyptian side of the border, and pressured Egypt to agree; Russia refused (QudsN, December 22, 2023).

► **Senior Hamas terrorist Osama Hamdan** blamed the UN agencies, including UNRWA and the World Health Organization for the suffering of the residents of the Gaza Strip because they

had failed to fulfill their duties and surrendered to Israel's demands. He called on all institutions to take a firm stand regarding the crimes Israel was [allegedly] committing. He also called on the Arab and Islamic countries to send "popular convoys" to bring aid into the Gaza Strip and to take the wounded for treatment abroad. He reminded the Arab and Muslim leaders that the Palestinians were waiting for the implementation of the decision made by the Riyadh Summit meeting to bring aid into the Gaza Strip. He reiterated that it was the role of the United Nations to protect the schools and institutions where the Palestinians found shelter, and claimed Israel carried out "field executions," the most recent which was of the Annan family in Gaza City (Palinfo, December 23, 2023; al-Jazeera TV website, December 23, 2023).



**Bringing wood into the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom crossing
(Hassan Aslih's X account, December 22, 2023)**

Hamas

► **Senior terrorist Hassam Badran, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, addressed a number of issues (Facebook page of Al-Arabiya channel, December 22, 2023):

- ◆ **The delegation of the Hamas leadership in Egypt:** The visit of Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, and of Khaled Mashaal, his deputy, to Cairo was part of the Hamas' leadership's "wartime political activity." He claimed they discussed aid for the residents of the Gaza Strip and ways to increase it and facilitate its delivery, as well as increasing the number of injured people who go abroad for treatment.
- ◆ **Hamas' status:** Relating to reports that the popularity of Hamas in the Gaza Strip had decreased, he claimed there had been "no criticism of Hamas, not now or at any stage, and that the popularity of Hamas in the Gaza Strip and everywhere had increased many times over." He claimed that the public opinion polls showed that Hamas was extremely popular wherever there were Palestinians.

◆ **Internal relations in the leadership:** Regarding reports of disputes between Hamas' military[-terrorist] and political wings, Badran stated categorically that the members of the Hamas leadership, political and military, inside and outside the Gaza Strip, agreed on all strategies related to resistance [terrorism] and political action [propaganda, subversion and psychological warfare]. He claimed the movement had a solid structure and decision-making mechanisms with clear rules, and there was a consensus in the major issues related to "resistance" and the other issues.

◆ **Yahya al-Sinwar's status:** He said Yahya al-Sinwar was a member of the political bureau and had an important position in the central political leadership of Hamas and had an important role in making decisions, but no one from the leadership could make a decision alone. He said the members of the political bureau "abroad" were in contact with al-Sinwar despite the war.

► **Senior terrorist Ghazi Hamad, a member of Hamas' political,** published a statement in English on behalf of Hamas, in which he criticized the silence of the international community while the IDF continued to carry out "massacres" on a daily basis, especially in the northern Gaza Strip. He emphasized that despite the "massacres," the morale of the Palestinians was very high and they were standing firm on their land. He also stated that Hamas would not conduct any talks about the exchange of prisoners while Israel continued its "war of annihilation," but it was open to any initiative that would contribute to the cessation of the "aggression" (Palinfo in English, 22 in December 2023).

► Interviewed in English, **senior Hamas terrorist Osama Hamdan** said that some people believed the October 7 attack was carried out mainly to damage the normalization efforts between Saudi Arabia and the Israeli government. However, he claimed, the reason for the attack was the rise of an extreme right-wing religious government in Israel which tried to end the Palestinian issue while the United States and Europe were silent and even gave their support. Therefore, "significant action" was needed, not only to spotlight the Palestinian issue, but to reestablish it as "a struggle of a people seeking liberation and self-determination [sic]" (Mondoweiss website, December 21, 2023).

► The daily al-Araby al-Jadeed reported from "sources" that during their visit to Cairo, the Hamas and PIJ delegations discussed ideas for a political plan for the post-war period in the Gaza Strip, one of which included the establishment of a committee of Palestinian organizations as an alternative to the PLO. A Hamas leadership source told the paper that they

believed the current goal was to stop the "aggression," but they were open to discussing "visions" related to the internal situation in the Gaza Strip after the "aggression" ended, and noted that the future of the Gaza Strip was an exclusively Palestinian matter. A senior Hamas terrorist stated that there were currently no negotiations for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and the "resistance" was prepared to continue the battle on the ground and inflict the greatest number of losses possible to the enemy's ranks (al-Araby al-Jadeed, December 21, 2023).

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The Northern Arena

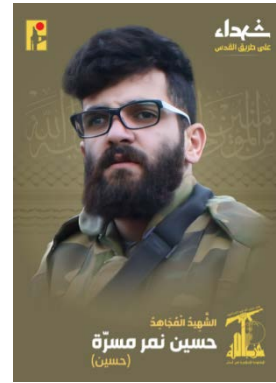
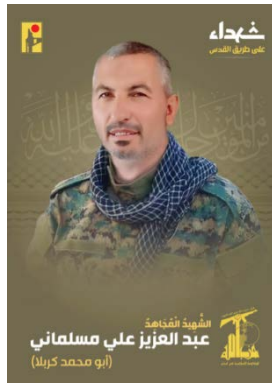
Hezbollah attacks

- ▶ Hezbollah continued attacking IDF positions, concentrations of forces on the northern border and civilian targets. Between December 21 and 24, 2023, Hezbollah claimed responsibility for **19 attacks** using anti-tank missiles, rockets, artillery, Burkan rockets and UAVs (Hezbollah combat Telegram channel, December 21-24, 2023). An IDF soldier was killed by rocket fire at a post near Shtula in the Western Galilee and another soldier was seriously injured.
- ▶ In response, the IDF attacked and fired artillery at several areas in Lebanon. Israeli Air Force fighter jets attacked Hezbollah targets in Lebanon, including operational facilities, terrorist facilities, military compounds and Hezbollah's military headquarters (IDF spokesperson, December 23, 2023).
- ▶ According to a "senior field officer in Hezbollah," so far they have used only a very small part of their weapons. He claimed that Israel's threats to start a war in Lebanon if Hezbollah did not withdraw to the north of the Litani River were psychological warfare, but Hezbollah was prepared for any scenario. Referring to Hezbollah's intelligence capabilities, he claimed they had information about the Israeli forces in the sector, which were deployed in three lines of defense, the first on the line of contact, the second about two kilometers from it and the third at about seven kilometers. He also stated that the IDF had begun using civilian vehicles and that the "resistance" [Hezbollah] had regained about 95% of the intelligence capabilities it had before the outbreak of the war (al-Akhbar, December 22, 2023).

Casualties in Lebanon

► Hezbollah reported the death of six operatives (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel , December 21-23, 2023):

- ◆ Hussein Nimer Misra, aka Hossein, from Aita al-Sha'ab in south Lebanon.
- ◆ Hussein Ali Izz al-Din, aka Abu Nimr, from Ma'roub in south Lebanon.
- ◆ Abd al-Aziz Ali of Salmani, aka Abu Muhammad Karbala, from Aita al-Sha'ab in south Lebanon.
- ◆ Hassan Abd al-Nabi Talis, aka Saleh, from Brital in the Lebanon Valley.
- ◆ Ali Hussein Harb, aka Jaafar, from Yaroun in south Lebanon.
- ◆ Hussein Ibrahim Salameh, aka Nasser, from Aitaroun in south Lebanon.



Hezbollah casualties (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel December 21-24, 2023)

► Speaking a ceremony in memory of one of the organization's operatives **Nabil Qaouq, a member of Hezbollah's Central Council**, said that the "resistance" [Hezbollah] was fully committed to protecting the citizens in Lebanon. He said that any Israeli attack on civilians would be met with a faster and more severe response, implementing the "equation" of "an eye for an eye." He noted that "resistance organizations" [terrorist organizations] in Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen had decided to remain in "constant conflict" with Israel, as long as there was

Israeli "aggression" against the Gaza Strip. He added that the "resistance organizations" were waging a siege on Israel with UAVs, rockets and missiles from every direction, from south Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen and the Gaza Strip, because it was the only weapon that would force Israel to stop its "aggression" against the Gaza Strip. He added that the further the conflict extended into Lebanon, the further it would extend into Israel (MTV, December 23, 2023).

►Speaking at a memorial ceremony in Brital in the Lebanese Valley for a Hezbollah terrorist operative, **Hashem Safi al-Din, the chairman of Hezbollah's executive council**, said that the campaign today was not a campaign for the defense of south Lebanon, but for the Gaza Strip. It was also for the future of Lebanon, its south, oil and gas, and policy. He noted that the presence of the "resistance" [Hezbollah terrorist operatives] along the border was necessary today, from Naqoura to [the] Shebaa [Farms]. He added that the elimination of the "resistance" [terrorist organizations] in the Gaza Strip meant the elimination of the "resistance"³ in the region, adding that the issue was a matter of concern for them and an integral part of all Lebanese issues (Lebanon News Agency, December 24, 2023).

Hamas

► **Senior Hamas terrorist Osama Hamdan** emphasized the "strategic link" between Hamas and Hezbollah. He said some people expected more from Hezbollah, but Hamas understood that Hezbollah operated in "specific circumstances." Nevertheless, Hezbollah had created a sense of uncertainty for the American and Israeli governments, implying that the situation could escalate at any moment. The Israeli army, he claimed, was concerned about potential conflicts in the north while dealing with the Gaza Strip. He added that another aspect was the infiltration of Palestinian Hamas and PIJ operatives in Lebanon into Israel. He said that while the impact was minimal, it sent the message that the "resistance in Lebanon" [Hezbollah and the Palestinian terrorist organizations] was actively committed to preserving the [alleged] "right" of the refugees to return to their "homeland" and was working towards that goal. He claimed the message was "significant" although its current impact might be limited, however, he believed it would essentially affect the future course of the conflict (Mondoweiss website, December 21, 2023).

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

Judea and Samaria

Terrorist attacks

► On the morning of December 22, 2023, during an Israeli Border Police activity in Barta'a (west of Jenin), the forces stopped a suspicious vehicle. The driver began attacking the fighters who detained him. The driver of another vehicle at the scene released his vehicle's handbrake and drove it toward the fighters. A female fighter was superficially wounded. The forces shot at the other driver, wounding him in the leg (Israel Police Force, December 22, 2023).

Counterterrorism activities

► The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities throughout Judea and Samaria, detaining seven wanted Palestinians, four of them Hamas operatives. Since the beginning of the war in the Gaza Strip, about 2,450 wanted Palestinians have been detained, including about 1,210 Hamas operatives (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, December 24, 2023).

◄ Main events :

◆ In an operation in the Nur al-Shams refugee camp in Tulkarm, IDF heavy engineering vehicles uncovered and destroyed IEDs under and on the sides of roads. A wanted Palestinian suspected of arms trafficking was detained. Armed Palestinians threw IEDs and shot at the forces, who responded with gunfire. An IDF soldier was superficially wounded (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, December 24, 2023). The Palestinians reported that before dawn, about 50 Israeli security force vehicles had entered the Nur al-Shams refugee camp in Tulkarm. Clashes and heavy exchanges of fire with armed Palestinians ensued. The activity ended around 11 a.m., causing extensive damage to infrastructure (al-Ghad TV, December 24, 2023).



Right: The Israeli forces enter the Nur al-Shams refugee camp. Left: Damage to infrastructure due to the activity (al-Ghad TV, December 24, 2023)

- ◆ Operating in the village of Karma (southwest of Hebron), Israeli security forces detained two wanted Palestinians and seized weapons. In Sa'ir (north of Hebron), the forces seized weapons (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, December 24, 2023).

Prayers on the Temple Mount

- The Israeli security forces reportedly stepped up security measures around the Temple Mount and the Old City of Jerusalem, preventing Muslims who were not residents of East Jerusalem from praying on the Temple Mount. However, about 12,000 Muslims reportedly participated in the Friday prayer, the largest number since the beginning of the war, after the number of worshippers did not exceed 5,000 on previous Fridays (al-Khaleej al-Jadeed, December 22, 2023; al-Quds, December 22, 2023).
- **Riyadh al-Maliki, PA foreign minister**, condemned the military measures taken by Israel to prevent worshippers from entering al-Aqsa Mosque. He said he viewed the "escalation in al-Aqsa" seriously (Riyadh al-Maliki's Telegram channel, December 22, 2023).
- Hamas said in response that the tightening of restrictions on Palestinians in Jerusalem, which prevented them from reaching al-Aqsa Mosque, and the acts of aggression against them were a continuation of the state of all-out war that Israel was waging against the Palestinians, their land and their holy places. Hamas stressed that the Palestinians would not allow this war and all attempts at Judaization to pass. It warned of the danger of escalation in Jerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque and called on the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Arab League to act seriously and effectively to protect al-Aqsa and the Muslim and Christian holy sites from Judaization plots (Anadolu News Agency, December 22, 2023).

Solidarity with the Gaza Strip

► On December 22, 2023, after Friday prayers, marches and demonstrations in support of the Gaza Strip were held throughout Judea and Samaria (al-Araby al-Jadeed, December 22, 2023; Wafa, December 22, 2023).



Right: March in Ramallah (al-Araby al-Jadeed, December 22, 2023) Left: Released prisoner Ataf Alyan⁴ with a PIJ terrorist-military wing band on her head in a march (QudsN X account, December 22, 2023)

Palestinian Authority (PA)

► **Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission**, stated that the EU had approved an aid package worth €118 million to support the Palestinian Authority (PA). The aid was reportedly intended to pay salaries and pensions to civil service employees in Judea and Samaria, allowances to needy families, and reimbursement of medical costs to hospitals in East Jerusalem. The president added that the EU was prepared to continue assisting the PA in the longer term and was considering providing a package for the next year that would help economic and political stability in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria (Reuters, December 22, 2023).

► **Russian President Vladimir Putin** spoke by phone with **Mahmoud Abbas, chairman of the Palestinian Authority**. Abbas stressed that the ongoing Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people had to be stopped and an immediate ceasefire had to be reached, also noting the importance of bringing humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. He expressed appreciation for Putin for Russia's supportive stance in international forums and for the humanitarian aid it provided. He stressed that the Gaza Strip was an integral part of the

⁴ Senior PIJ operative who planned to carry out a suicide bombing attack in 1987 in Jerusalem by detonating a car bomb. She was imprisoned in Israel for ten years and released in 1997.

Palestinian state. Putin stressed Russia's support for the Palestinian people and their rights and noted the importance of reaching a ceasefire and implementing a political solution. He said the talks regarding the establishment of a Russian field hospital were continuing. He also invited Mahmoud Abbas to visit Russia (Wafa, December 22, 2023).

► **Hussein al-Sheikh, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee**, met in Abu Dhabi with **UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed** and discussed developments in the Middle East and their various ramifications, mainly the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. They reviewed the efforts of the international community to reach an immediate ceasefire and stressed the importance of protecting civilian lives. Bin Zayed stressed that a political horizon had to be found for negotiations to achieve peace based on the two-state solution and end escalation and violence. Al-Sheikh expressed appreciation for the UAE's support for the Palestinian people (UAE News Agency, December 21, 2023).

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Iran

► **Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei**, meeting with Iranians from Kerman and Khuzestan provinces, said there was no doubt that the "Zionist regime" would be uprooted from the face of the earth. He said the event in the Gaza Strip was an unprecedented phenomenon in the recent history of the Muslim world. On the one hand, the "Zionist regime" displays unprecedented cruelty and bloodlust, and on the other hand, the Palestinian people and the Palestinian fighters demonstrate steadfastness, patience and resistance, standing firm as a rock, do not give up and do not surrender, without water, food, medicine and fuel. According to him, it is their non-surrender that makes them victorious, and signs of victory are already evident. The "Zionist regime" remains helpless against the Palestinian fighters despite all the means at its disposal. Khamenei added that the great victory of the Palestinian people was exposing the false claims of the West and the United States regarding human rights, and that the world did not currently distinguish between the "Zionist regime" and the United States and Britain. Khamenei also said that it was the duty of the Islamic countries not to send goods, oil and fuel to Israel. He called on the nations of Islam to demand that their governments cut off all ties with Israel, at least temporarily (Fars, December 23, 2023).

► **Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi** spoke with **Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi**, congratulated him on his election victory and discussed the latest developments in the Palestinian arena and the "importance of Islamic unity." Raisi told el-Sisi that Iran expected Egypt to use all its capabilities to stop Israel's attacks in the Gaza Strip (ISNA, December 23, 2023).

► **Hossein Amir Abdollahian, Iranian foreign minister**, spoke with his **Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov**. They discussed the latest developments in the Caucasus, the Palestinian arena and the Gaza Strip, as well as bilateral and regional issues (Jamaran, December 22, 2023).

► **Mohammad Reza Naqdi, coordinating deputy to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) commander-in-chief**, warned that if Israel and the United States continued their "crimes" against the residents of the Gaza Strip, they should expect new strengths from the "resistance" and the closure of the other shipping lanes. The "resistance forces," which closed the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz to them, and then Bab el-Mandeb and the Red Sea, would close additional shipping lanes in the Mediterranean, the Strait of Gibraltar and elsewhere (Tasnim, December 23, 2023).

► **Ayatollah Kazem Siddiqi, a Friday prayer leader in Tehran**, said in a sermon delivered on December 22, 2023, that Israel's military defeat in Gaza continued and that the "resistance faction" was winning. Referring to the Houthi activity, the cleric said that Yemen had opened a new front against the "Israeli regime" and the United States, and that the "Yemeni uprising" was a prelude to the reappearance of the Mahdi. Siddiqi stressed that the issue of Palestine was the most important issue of the Islamic world and that the Islamic community had to "take the land of Palestine out of the hands of the butchers" (Fararu, December 22, 2023).

► The international conference to rally support for the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, chaired by Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, was held in Tehran with the participation of representatives from more than 50 countries. Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nasser Kanani announced that the objective of the conference was to strengthen international support for the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and to exert pressure on the "Zionist entity" to stop the attacks against the Gaza Strip and lift the siege completely. President Raisi said in his speech that the United States and Israel should be tried at the International Criminal Court on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity. He said the just solution was to allow the Palestinians to decide their fate. Raisi added that Hamas

represented the residents of the Gaza Strip and that the future of the Gaza Strip had to be determined by the residents of the Gaza Strip and not by the United States and other countries (Tasnim, December 23, 2023).

► **Senior Hamas terrorist Bassem Na'im** took issue with the fact that the world was not taking serious action against "Israel's crimes." He noted that Israel had left them with only two options, to "leave" or "die," but their answer was, "Either they live as free people, or they die defending the homeland." He added that it was clear to everyone that the main objective of the Israeli mass killing was to expel the Palestinians from their homeland (PressTV website, December 24, 2023).



Senior Hamas terrorist Bassem Na'im (second from left) at the international conference in Tehran (Tasnim, December 23, 2023)

Pro-Iranian militias

Iraq

► The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for attacking a "vital target in the Mediterranean" a few days ago in response to Israel's massacres against the Palestinians (Islamic Resistance Telegram channel, December 22, 2023). A source in the Islamic Resistance in Iraq said the "vital target" attacked by the network a few days ago had been the Karish gas field (al-Jazeera, December 22, 2023). In this context, it should be noted that the IDF spokesperson said that several days ago, a drone had been intercepted over the Mediterranean Sea (IDF spokesperson, December 22, 2023).



The interception of the drone in the Mediterranean Sea (IDF spokesperson, December 22, 2023)

►The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for attacking a target in Eilat with "appropriate weapons." It later posted a video documenting the launch of an aircraft that it claimed had been launched to Eilat, although it was apparently recycled from launches from Yemen (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, December 22, 2023). In this context, the Jordanian army reportedly shot down a drone launched by the Islamic Resistance in Iraq towards Eilat (al-Manar, December 22, 2023).

Yemen

►The American Army Central Command (CENTCOM) reported several incidents in the Red Sea against ships: Two ballistic missiles were launched at international shipping lanes in the southern Red Sea. No ships reported damage as a result of the attack. Later, the destroyer USS Laboon shot down four drones launched at it from Houthi-controlled areas. There was no damage and no casualties. At around 8 p.m., an SOS call was received from the Norwegian-flagged M/V Blaamanen, which reported that it had almost been hit by a drone launched at it. At the same time, the Indian-flagged oil tanker M/V Saibaba reported that it had been hit by a drone (CENTCOM X account, December 24, 2023).

►The Wall Street Journal reported (December 22, 2023) that an Iranian ship used to collect intelligence was providing the Houthis in Yemen with real-time intelligence that enabled them to launch drones and missiles at ships sailing in the Red Sea. According to the report, many vessels passing through the Red Sea turn off their radios to avoid real-time surveillance, but the Iranian ship stationed in the area is providing the Houthis with the intelligence that allows them to accurately locate the ships. Meanwhile, American National Security Council Spokesperson Adrienne Watson said Iran was heavily involved in planning Houthi operations

against merchant ships in the Red Sea. She noted that Iran's intelligence enabled the Houthis to carry out their attacks (Reuters, December 22, 2023).

►The Pentagon announced that more than 20 countries had agreed to take part in the American multinational Red Sea naval force to protect commercial traffic in the region from Houthi attacks. It was noted that the figure indicated that at least eight countries participating in the force refused to make a public announcement due to the sensitivity of the operation and the regional tensions surrounding the war in the Gaza Strip (Reuters, December 22, 2023).

►**British Foreign Secretary David Cameron** said that Hezbollah, the Houthis, Hamas and other militias directly close to Iran were causing high danger and insecurity around the world. He stressed that it should be made clear to Iran that they would not tolerate any escalation in the Middle East or on British soil. Cameroon pledged that Britain would work with its allies to develop a strong defense system against Iran and that Britain would send warships and join Operation Prosperity Guardian set up by the United States to defend the Red Sea internationally since security and maritime freedom were important to all countries in the world (The Telegraph, December 23, 2023).

►The foreign ministers of Egypt and Britain held a joint press conference after their meeting, in which the Egyptian foreign minister stressed that Egypt was working with the countries around the Red Sea to secure the shipping lanes, noting that his country adhered to the principle of preserving freedom of maritime navigation (al-Qahera Network, December 21, 2023).

►**Mohammad Ali al-Houthi, a member of the Houthi political bureau**, said they would respond against any country that opened its airspace to attacks against Yemen. He stressed that the Houthis had no intention of attacking ships that were not Israeli and did not pass through Israeli ports, and that "international navigation is safe for everyone" (al-Mayadeen, December 21, 2023).

►The Houthi government warned that it would respond to any country that allowed enemies to use its airspace to attack Yemen. In addition, the Houthis threatened that Saudi Arabia's future would be in danger if it cooperated with Israel and "recommended" Saudi Arabia and the UAE not to stand by Israel (IRGC Telegram channel, December 21, 2023).

◄**Ghazi Hamad, a member of Hamas' political bureau in the Gaza Strip**, said Hamas strongly condemned the establishment of an American-led coalition in the Red Sea whose objective was only to back Israel's war of annihilation against the Palestinians, and that it

regarded its establishment as another escalation that would also lead to further expansion of the conflict, and therefore called on all countries to distance themselves from such a dubious coalition. He added that Hamas highly praised the courageous stance of the brothers in Yemen, who stood with the Palestinians and the resistance, and congratulated all the resistance groups in Lebanon, Iraq and Syria for their support of the Palestinians. He expressed great appreciation for Malaysia's position on preventing ships flying the Israeli flag from using its seaports, and called on all countries to declare similar positions to this courageous position as long as the Palestinians were deprived of basic needs in Gaza. He also said it was the responsibility of the UN and the international community to prevent Israel from continuing the mass killing and destruction of all aspects of life in the Gaza Strip (PALINFO, December 22, 2023).

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The Arab Arena

Jordan

► **King Abdullah II of Jordan** met with **French President Emmanuel Macron** and emphasized the important role of the European Union in supporting the two-state solution and intensifying efforts to create a political horizon that would lead to a just and lasting peace. He noted that the entire world had to push for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, protect the lives of civilians, and bring in urgent medical aid (Jordanian royal family X account, December 21, 2023).

► **Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman al-Safadi** arrived in Doha for a visit aimed at achieving a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and met with **Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman**. The two discussed ways to intensify efforts for a full ceasefire in the Gaza Strip (Jordan TV X account, December 23, 2023).

Egypt

► **Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi** spoke with **French President Emmanuel Macron**. The two made it clear that it was necessary to avoid expanding the scope of the conflict in the region and agreed that serious action had to be taken to resolve the Palestinian issue through

the two-state solution. El-Sisi stressed that military operations in the Gaza Strip had to be stopped to protect the residents and ensure the entry of humanitarian aid without hindrance and in sufficient quantities (al-Qahera, December 22, 2023).

The International Arena

United Nations Security Council

►After about a week of delays due to disagreements over the wording, and after the United States vetoed the Russian draft resolution to change the wording of the resolution and call for an urgent cessation of hostilities, the Security Council approved a softer resolution than the one drafted by the UAE. The resolution calls for urgent steps to be taken to allow the immediate, safe and expanded entry of humanitarian aid, and to create conditions for the cessation of hostilities. The resolution also calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and ensuring humanitarian access to address their medical needs. Thirteen of the 15 council members voted in favor of the resolution. The United States and Russia abstained (Reuters, December 22, 2023).

►The following are reactions to the Security Council resolution:

- ◆ **Vasily Nebenzya, Russia's permanent representative to the United Nations**, said the only reason they did not veto the resolution was because they believed the Arab world was capable of making decisions on the issue and bearing full responsibility. He said it was a tragic moment for the Security Council and a moment of unprecedented blackmail that reflected American contempt for the suffering of the Palestinians. He stressed that the demand for a ceasefire remained a necessity (UN website, December 23, 2023).

- ◆ **The UAE foreign ministry** welcomed the decision, saying it was an important step on a long road. The UAE representative to the Security Council said they knew the outcome was not ideal, noting that they would not give up on a permanent ceasefire (UAE foreign ministry X account, December 23, 2023).

- ◆ **Josep Borrell, EU foreign policy chief**, speaking with **UN Secretary-General António Guterres**, welcomed the resolution and noted the need to respect humanitarian law and move towards a ceasefire. Borrell also stressed to Guterres the vital role of the UN in providing assistance to civilians and called on the parties to ensure

their legal obligations and implement the resolution (Josep Borrell's X account, December 23, 2023).

◆ **The spokesman for the Egyptian foreign ministry** praised the establishment of the international mechanism for delivering humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, saying that Egypt considered the resolution an important and positive step, even though the only way to stop the bloodshed was for the resolution to include a demand for an immediate ceasefire (Egyptian foreign ministry spokesman's X account, December 23, 2023).

◆ **Riyad Mansour, the PA's representative to the UN**, said that "this is a step in the right direction" and that the resolution had to be accompanied by great pressure for an immediate ceasefire. He said there was no other way to stop the ongoing "war crimes" and release the prisoners other than reaching a ceasefire (UN website, December 23, 2023).

◆ **Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal al-Miqdad**, speaking at the international conference in Tehran, said the United States had prevented the Security Council from passing any resolution to stop the ongoing "Israeli aggression" in the Gaza Strip, and that it was complicit in the killing of the Palestinian people. Al-Miqdad condemned Israel's attempts to uproot the Palestinian people from the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria and warned of the dangerous consequences for the region and the world (al-Watan, December 23, 2023).

◆ **Hamas** said that this step was not enough and that the resolution should have included a clause to end the "genocidal war in the Gaza Strip." It noted that it was the duty of the Security Council to oblige Israel to bring enough aid into the Gaza Strip. It also claimed that the United States had acted over the past five days to empty the resolution of its essence and issue it in a weak form, against the wishes of the international community (Hamas Telegram channel, December 22, 2023).

◆ **Senior Hamas terrorist Osama Hamdan** described the resolution as a weak and insufficient move that did not meet the requirements of the catastrophic situation in the Gaza Strip. Hamdan noted that the American administration continued to prove its involvement and full participation in the aggression. He said the Security Council should force Israel to bring in sufficient aid to all areas of the Gaza Strip, especially the northern Gaza Strip, ensure safe passages, force Israel to bring in humanitarian aid, medical aid, fuel and gas from all crossings, and warn Israel against harming aid convoys,

ambulances and medical teams. He expressed appreciation for the positions of the Arab countries that proposed the resolution and sought to improve its wording, as well as the responsible position of the Russian mission that tried to amend the resolution to stop the aggression, an attempt that met with the American position (PALINFO, December 23, 2023; al-Jazeera TV website, December 23, 2023).

◆ **The PIJ** said in response that the resolution documented the Security Council's failure to put an end to the "American war of annihilation in the hands of the Zionists," allowed them to control the needs of the Gaza Strip and its residents, did not put an end to "the crimes committed by the Zionist entity" and did not respond to their basic needs in the Gaza Strip (PIJ Telegram channel, December 23, 2023).

Turkey

► **Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan** spoke with **Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman al-Safadi** and discussed the current situation in the Gaza Strip and the discussion held in the Security Council (Anadolu News, December 23, 2023). Fidan also spoke with **UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed**, stressing the need to strive for a ceasefire and a stable peace for the Palestinian people (Anadolu News, December 24, 2023).

India

► The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) said it had received a report of a drone attack on a vessel southwest of Veraval in India and noted that there were no casualties and that the strike had caused an explosion and a fire. It noted that an investigation was underway and recommended that vessels in the area exercise caution and report any suspicious activity to it (UKMTO X account, December 23, 2023). British maritime security firm Ambrey reported that the merchant ship that was attacked off the coast of India was linked to Israel and was flying the Liberian flag. According to Ambrey, the Indian Navy was dealing with the incident (Reuters, December 23, 2023).

► The Pentagon said the Japanese-owned chemical vessel MV Chem Pluto was hit on the morning of December 23, 2023, in the Indian Ocean by a drone launched from Iran. According to the statement, a fire broke out on the deck, but it was extinguished and there were no casualties. It was also emphasized that the incident indicated a growing danger to other ships

(Wall Street Journal, December 24, 2023). This is the first time the United States has claimed that Iran was behind the attack on ships.

►The Indian Coast Guard announced that its vessel was accompanying the ship that was attacked. The ship reportedly has 20 Indians and one Vietnamese on board and is expected to arrive in Mumbai on December 25, 2023 (Indian Coast Guard X account and Reuters, December 24, 2023).