



Operation Iron Swords Updated to 1 p.m., December 27, 2023

Northern Arena

- 529 attacks
- 129 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:** The IDF forces continued to attack terrorist targets, terrorist groups and military facilities in the Gaza Strip focusing on the **Daraj and Tufah neighborhoods** of Gaza City and the refugee camps in **central Gaza**, and in **Khan Yunis** in the south. The Palestinians reported intense IDF artillery fire targeting east al-Bureij and al-Maghazi, shelling targeting east Khan Yunis, and attacks in Jabalia and Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip and in east Gaza City.

► **According to an unofficial estimate, since October 7 approximately 1,300 Israeli civilians and security personnel have been killed, 498 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:** A three-phase updated Egyptian proposal has been published which includes a ceasefire, the return of the hostages and the release of Palestinian prisoners. Senior Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) terrorists reiterated that there was nothing

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

new in the proposal and they adhered to their original position of negotiations only after a comprehensive ceasefire.

► **The Gaza Strip:** According to reports, Egyptian officials are working to settle "the day after" and are in contact with the Hamas leadership "abroad."

► **The northern arena:** Hezbollah claimed responsibility for nine attacks. An anti-tank missile was fired at a church in the Christian village of Iqrit, injuring a civilian and several IDF soldiers. In one attack, an anti-tank missile was launched close to a mosque in south Lebanon. IDF forces responded with artillery fire and airstrikes.

► **Judea and Samaria:** The heads of the Palestinian Authority are dealing with "the day after." Mahmoud Abbas, chairman of the Palestinian Authority (PA), said the PA was capable and prepared to shoulder the responsibility, as it already had a presence in the Gaza Strip.

► **Iran:** Iranian leaders continued commenting on the killing of Seyyed Razi Moussavi and threatened Israel with a harsh response.

► **The pro-Iranian militias:** An Israeli Air Force fighter jet intercepted a hostile air target in the Red Sea area en route to Israeli territory. A Houthi spokesman claimed that their air force had attacked military targets near Eilat and in other areas "of occupied Palestine" with a large number of UAVs.

The Combat Arena

► IDF forces continued to attack terrorist targets, terrorist squads and military sites in the Gaza Strip, focusing on the Daraj and Tufah neighborhoods of Gaza City and the refugee camps in the central Gaza Strip, and on Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip.

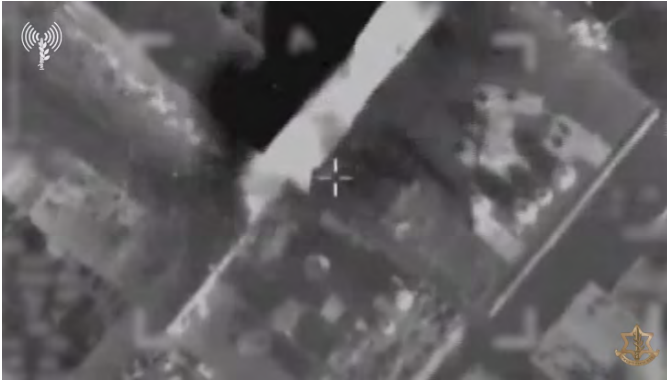


IDF forces in the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, December 27, 2023)

► **Abdullah Miqdad, a correspondent for al-Arabi TV,** reported that during the night the IDF continued attacking east al-Bureij, al-Maghazi and east Khan Yunis with intense artillery fire.

IDF attacks also continued in the area of Jabalia and Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip and in east Gaza City (al-Arabi YouTube channel, December 27, 2023). The Palestinian media reported 241 dead and about 380 wounded during the past day (Ma'an, December 27, 2023).

► **The northern Gaza Strip:** The IDF took operational control of the Gaza City neighborhoods of Zeitoun, Shejaiya and Rimal, and of the Shati refugee camp, which were Hamas' main control centers in the northern Gaza Strip. Hundreds of terrorist operatives were killed and a large number of terrorist facilities were destroyed (IDF spokesperson, December 26, 2023).



IDF attacks terrorists in the Shejaiya region (IDF spokesperson, December 27, 2023)

► **The central Gaza Strip:** The IDF forces attacked the battalions of the Hamas military-terrorist wing's Central Camp Brigade and Hamas facilities in the al-Bureij refugee camp, an area with densely-populated civilian neighborhoods. During the first hours of the fighting in the al-Bureij refugee camp, a shaft leading to a wide tunnel was located, as well as a training complex where large quantities of weapons were found (IDF spokesperson, December 26, 2023).



Underground shafts in the al-Bureij area (IDF spokesperson, December 26, 2023)

► **Bassel Khalaf, a correspondent for al-Arabi TV,** from the al-Bureij refugee camp reported that there was very little movement of residents and most of them were preparing to leave.

He said gunfire and IDF attacks could be heard and billows of smoke could be seen rising in the distance (al-Arabi YouTube channel, December 27, 2023).



**Al-Arabi TV correspondent reports from the al-Bureij refugee camp
(al-Arabi YouTube channel, December 27, 2023)**

- ▶ **Gaza City:** IDF attacks continued in the **Daraj** and **Tufah** neighborhoods. The forces initiated raids and uncovered a large number of tunnel shafts and large quantities of weapons, including in civilian homes (IDF spokesperson, December 26, 2023).
- ▶ The southern Gaza Strip: **Ibrahim Qanan, correspondent for al-Ghad TV in Khan Yunis,** reported that IDF forces continued to attack neighborhoods in north, center and south Khan Yunis, and continued shelling Abasan and Khiza'a, to the east to the city, where fierce fighting was being waged (al-Ghad TV, December 27, 2023).



IDF attacks in the Khiza'a area of eastern Khan Yunis (QudsN X account, December 27, 2023)

Reactions to the fighting

- ▶ **Senior Hamas terrorist Osama Hamdan held a press conference in Beirut** where he discussed the latest developments, claiming that in the past two days the IDF had [allegedly] committed "horrific crimes" against "defenseless civilians" in the central Gaza Strip, the al-Maghazi, al-Bureij and Nuseirat refugee camps and in Khan Yunis to "avenge its resounding failure in its fight against Hamas' military wing." He claimed Israel was attacking the Palestinians with "all types of prohibited weapons and ammunition which have never been

used in civilian areas" [sic]. For example, he claimed, it has used incendiary bombs in areas that were declared safe for civilians (al-Jazeera Mubasher YouTube channel, December 26, 2023).

►On another occasion **Osama Hamdan** claimed Israel was now trying to change its tactics in order to effect a ground retreat step by step, and that talk of withdrawal and a buffer zone was a tactic doomed to failure, just as the previous tactics had failed. He claimed Israel was close to admitting its failure because Israel was being increasingly criticized for waging the war (al-Arabi TV X account, December 26, 2023).

►**Senior terrorist Musa Abu Marzouq, a member of the Hamas political bureau**, claimed the Hamas leadership was striving to completely stop the "aggression and massacres" and that the Palestinians did not want temporary ceasefires or a brief lull in the fighting, after which Israel would resume its attacks, killings and massacres, as had happened in Beit Hanoun, Jabalia and Sheikh Radwan. He claimed Israel's goal was to take the trump card of the hostages away from the "resistance" [terrorist organizations] in order to continue its "criminal war against the Palestinians and the 'resistance'" [terrorist organizations] (Musa Abu Marzouq's X account, December 27, 2023).

►**Nasser Abu Sharif, the PIJ representative in Iran**, said that the Palestinians insisted on a total ceasefire and the release of all Palestinian prisoners, emphasizing that the Palestinian people would not accept any external sponsors. He said that so far they did not have accurate data on the "resistance's" losses because the war was still ongoing. He added that they did not underestimate the IDF, which "may have uncovered some tunnels," but even when the soldiers found tunnels, either they had been booby-trapped or "resistance fighters" [terrorist operatives] emerged from them to "cause the IDF great losses" (IRNA in Arabic, December 27, 2023).

Israeli casualties

►**According to an unofficial estimate, since October 7 approximately 1,300 Israeli people have been killed. According to the IDF spokesperson, 498 of them are soldiers and officers (of whom 164 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.**

The issue of the hostages

►The Arab World News Agency (AWP) reported it had seen an updated, three-phase Egyptian proposal for ending the war. It included:

- ◆ A 48-hour ceasefire before its implementation to allow for an agreement to be reached regarding the names of those who would be released in the first and second stages through indirect negotiations to be held in Egypt (Arab World News Agency (AWP), December 27, 2023):

- ◆ A ten-day humanitarian ceasefire during which Hamas would release all kidnapped civilians, children, women and the elderly, and in return, Israel would release an appropriate, agreed-on number of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails. The first phase would also include a complete ceasefire throughout the Gaza Strip, with the IDF forces deployed far from the population centers and freedom of movement for civilians from the southern Gaza Strip to the north, including the movement of cars and trucks. The phase would also include the cessation of all types of Israeli flights, including patrol planes, and an increase in the delivery of humanitarian aid, including to the northern Gaza Strip.

- ◆ The release of all female soldiers held by Hamas in exchange for the release of a number of Palestinian prisoners to be agreed upon by both sides and the exchange of all the bodies held by both sides since October 7. The phase would last seven days according to the same standards and procedures as the first phase.

- ◆ Negotiations for a month on the release of all soldiers held by Hamas in exchange for Israel releasing an agreed number of Palestinian prisoners. The phase would also include the redeployment of IDF forces outside the Gaza Strip and the continued cessation of all aerial activity. Hamas would be obligated to cease all "military" activities against Israel.

► **Senior Hamas terrorist Osama Hamdan** noted that recently there had been an increase in talk about proposals and initiatives regarding negotiations for an exchange deal, and reiterated Hamas' explicit position regarding the need and priority to stop the "aggression." He claimed Hamas had received proposals and initiatives from a number of countries and was open to all initiatives which would result in a comprehensive ceasefire and realize the Palestinians' interests. He reiterated that the Palestinians were not waiting for temporary

ceasefires which would [allegedly] be violated by Israel, but for a total cessation of all forms of "aggression" (al-Jazeera Mubasher YouTube channel, December 26, 2023).

► **Senior terrorist Zaher Jabarin, who holds the prisoner portfolio in Hamas**, said discussing a ceasefire as though the only issue was the hostages was an illusion. He claimed they were open to any idea or initiative whose first step was a ceasefire, that all the Palestinian forces coordinated and discussed every idea proposed to them, as long as it related to an overall ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. He claimed they were not preparing lists of prisoners and had neither offered nor received names, reiterating that a discussion would be held only after a comprehensive and complete ceasefire. He claimed Israel and its supporters were trying to reduce the problem to the issue of the hostages, but the issue was the liberation and rights of the Palestinians, and the matter of the prisoners was only a small part of the campaign (al-Mayadeen YouTube channel, December 26, 2023).

► **Senior terrorist Musa Abu Marzouq, a member of the Hamas political bureau**, claimed that when the Israeli "soldiers" were captured, they remembered their original citizenship and begged for help from their countries, and dozens of countries appealed to Hamas to release their citizens. Also, he [falsely] claimed, half a million [residents of Israel] had left without returning to their original countries. He emphasized that the entire West was called upon to defend "the fragile [Zionist] project" and fight alongside it against Hamas, all had been defeated and the Palestinian people and the "resistance" [Palestinian terrorism] had won (Musa Abu Marzouq's X account, December 26, 2023).

► **Interviewed in Beirut, Rasmi Abu Issa, responsible for PIJ-Arab relations**, said that so far there was nothing new regarding talks for a ceasefire. The mediators were making attempts to reach different formulas, but Netanyahu was determined to continue the war for personal reasons. He said they had announced their position before the visits to Cairo, reiterating that they would not enter into an exchange deal of "everyone in return for everyone" before a complete cessation of "aggression" and the lifting of the blockade. He claimed Israel was taking action to return the hostages in any way possible without a commitment to end the "aggression." Israel, he claimed, continued wasting time, only talked about a temporary ceasefire and had not presented anything clear so far. He also stated the PIJ delegation led by Ziyad al-Nakhalah had left Cairo and would not return unless Egypt received a clear, explicit Israeli agreement to their terms (al-Jazeera Mubasher TV website, December 27, 2023).



Rasmi Abu Issa (al-Jazeera Mubasher website, December 27, 2023)

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The Gaza Strip

Palestinian casualties

► **Dr. Ashraf al-Qidra, spokesman for the Hamas-controlled the ministry of health in the Gaza Strip** reported that as of the afternoon of December 27, 2023, the number of dead since the beginning of the war stood at more than 21,110 and the number of wounded at 55,243 (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, December 25, 2023).

► **The death of Khamis Jawdat al-Najar, a Hamas member of the Legislative Council**, was reported. He was killed along with his wife, two of his children and several of his grandchildren in an attack on his house in Khan Yunis (al-Qahera al-News TV website, December 26, 2023). He was born in Khan Yunis in 1949, was a doctor specializing in blood disorders and internal medicine, and held a number of positions in the public health system in the Gaza Strip (al-Najar family forum).



Khamis al-Najar (khaberni website, December 26, 2023)

The situation in the Gaza Strip

►Following the expansion of the IDF's activity in the central Gaza Strip and the heavy shooting in the area, residents of the al-Bureij refugee camp continued to evacuate to the Deir al-Balah and Rafah areas (Wafa YouTube channel, December 26, 2023).



Residents evacuate the al-Bureij refugee camp (Wafa YouTube channel, December 26, 2023)

►Anas al-Sharif, a correspondent for al-Jazeera TV in Jabalia, reported on the extensive destruction in Jabalia after the IDF operation. Local residents who were interviewed for the article claimed they did not recognize the city after the IDF operation and had not expected such destruction (al-Jazeera YouTube channel, December 26, 2023).



**Anas al-Sharif reports on the destruction in Jabalia
(Al Jazeera YouTube channel, December 26, 2023)**

►On the afternoon of December 26, 2023, the Palestinian communications company Paltel announced the complete collapse of all communications services in the Gaza Strip. It was also reported that despite the dangerous conditions on the ground, the company's technical teams were working to restore services (Paltel X account, December 26, 2023).

Egypt's proposal for "the day after"

►A "Palestinian source" familiar with Cairo's efforts to settle the issue of "the day after" the war claimed that Hamas and the PIJ had not rejected the Egyptian initiative. According to the source, Egyptian officials told the Palestinian Authority (PA) that the leaked information regarding the initiative was not final, and Egypt would find a way to maintain direct contact with Hamas in the Gaza Strip to discuss the details of a new deal after the deliberations which were currently being held with its leadership "abroad." According to the source, the relations between the leadership in Gaza and the leadership abroad were in flux and there was no continuous communication with the leadership on the ground. He said that Hamas had not closed the door to negotiations on temporary ceasefires which would pave the way for a long ceasefire but was awaiting the opinion of the military leadership. "The source" also said that Egypt was investing efforts to hold a meeting in Egypt of Fatah, Hamas and the PIJ, adding that conditions were not yet ripe (Arab World News Agency (AWP), December 27, 2023).

►"Sources" said there was a Palestinian initiative for Egypt to lead a national Palestinian dialogue for integrating Hamas into the PLO. According to the sources, the PA decided to form a delegation which would go to Egypt to present the initiative. According to reports, it would be a PLO delegation headed by **Hussein al-Sheikh, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee**. The sources said the Palestinian initiative would deal with the establishment of a national reconciliation government rather than a technocratic government and would include "independents" proposed by the Palestinian organizations. According to the sources, the Palestinian initiative included a plan to reconstruct Gaza after the establishment of the national reconciliation government (al-Sharq, December 26, 2023). The PLO Executive Committee rejected the Egyptian initiative to establish a Palestinian government over which the PLO would have no sway.

►Given the report about the PA initiative to integrate Hamas into the PLO and establish a national reconciliation government, a member of the PLO stated several conditions for agreeing to integrate Hamas into the organization: Hamas would have to define a clear position regarding an independent Palestinian state within the 1967 borders, commit to the PLO's being the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and meet the organization's obligations. Additional conditions would be a commitment to legitimacy and

international law as a basis for resolving the [Palestinian-Israeli] conflict, alongside a commitment to popular and non-"military" resistance (al-Arabiya, December 27, 2023).

► **Sabri Sidam, deputy secretary of Fatah's Central Committee**, said they hoped to achieve Palestinian unity by means of communications between the various organizations. He also stated they welcomed any Arab effort whose objective was to reach a ceasefire (al-Jazeera Mubasher, December 27, 2023).

► **Mahmoud al-Habash, advisor to Mahmoud Abbas for religious affairs and a Sharia high court judge**, said that the Palestinian leadership supported all efforts whose objective was to stop Israeli "aggression" and protect the Palestinians, regardless of the cost. He said the PLO was the only representative that spoke on behalf of the Palestinian people, and the Palestinians were responsible for their own internal affairs. Furthermore, he noted that "Palestine" was the "homeland" of all Palestinians, and they rejected any attempt to forcibly displace any Palestinian from his "homeland" (Facebook page of the office of the Sharia high court judge, December 26, 2023).

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The Northern Arena

Hezbollah's activity

► Hezbollah continued attacking IDF outposts, concentrations of forces on the northern border and civilian targets. During the past day, Hezbollah claimed responsibility for **nine attacks**, launching anti-tank missiles and rockets, firing artillery, and launching Burkan rockets and drones (Hezbollah's combat information Telegram channel, December 26-27, 2023).

► Several IDF soldiers were wounded by fire which targeted the village of Shomera. In the afternoon, an anti-tank missile was fired at Israel, hitting a church in the Christian village of Iqrit, wounding an 80-year-old civilian who had come to pray at the church for Christmas. Several IDF soldiers who came to evacuate him were also wounded.



Guided missile hits a building in Dovev (Hezbollah's combat information Telegram channel, December 26, 2023)

►The IDF responded with artillery fire and attacks on Hezbollah infrastructure in Lebanese territory. The IDF attacked a building where the terrorist who fired the anti-tank missile at the church was hiding. It was found that the missile fired at Dovev was launched from an area near a mosque in the village of Yaroun in south Lebanon (IDF spokesperson, December 26, 2023).



Right: Attack on Hezbollah facilities. Left: Attack on the building where the terrorist who fired the missile at the church was hiding (IDF spokesperson, December 26, 2023)



Missile launch near a mosque (IDF spokesperson, December 26, 2023)

►Lebanese media reported an attack on a house belonging to the Bazi clan in the al-Durah neighborhood in central Bint Jbeil, and that the house was destroyed and the bodies of Ali Bazzi, his brother, Ibrahim Bazzi, and Ibrahim's wife, Shorouk Hammoud were recovered

(Lebanese News Agency, December 27, 2023). **Although the fatalities were represented as civilians, Hezbollah issued a death notice for Ali Bazzi, a Hezbollah terrorist operative** (see below).

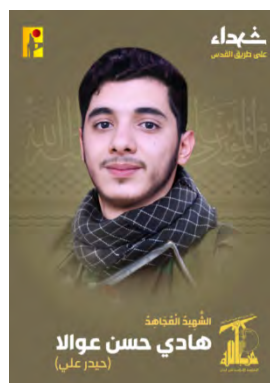


Ruins of the Bazzi family home in Bint Jbeil (Muhammad Farhat's X account, December 27, 2023)

Fatalities

►Hezbollah reported the deaths of three operatives (Hezbollah's combat information Telegram channel, December 26, 2023):

- ◆ Hadi Hassan Awala, aka Haidar Ali, from al-Dahiya al-Janoubia in Beirut.
- ◆ Ahmad Hassan al-Dirani, aka Amir Ali, from Qsarnaba in the Beqa'a Valley.
- ◆ Ali Ahmad Bazzi, aka Qassem, from Bint Jbeil in south Lebanon.



Hezbollah fatalities (Hezbollah's combat information Telegram channel, December 26, 2023)



Right: Ali Ahmad Bazzi in Hezbollah uniform (Hezbollah's combat information Telegram channel, December 27, 2023). Left: Ali Bazzi in civilian clothes (Saqer Jabal Amel's X account, December 27, 2023)

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Judea and Samaria

Counterterrorism activities

- ▶ The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities throughout Judea and Samaria, detaining 14 wanted Palestinians. Since the beginning of the war in the Gaza Strip, about 2,550 wanted Palestinians have been detained, about 1,300 of them Hamas operatives (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, December 27, 2023).
- ▶ In the early morning hours of December 27, 2023, Israeli security forces operated in the Nur al-Shams refugee camp in Tulkarm for the second time in the past 24 hours. The forces detained three wanted Palestinians and seized weapons and money intended to finance terrorist activity. During the activity, a group of armed Palestinians threw IEDs at the forces; they were attacked by an Israeli Air Force aircraft (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, December 27, 2023). The Palestinians reported six dead and seven wounded following an attack by an Israeli Air Force aircraft. Local sources also reported heavy damage to infrastructure in the camp (al-Arabi TV, December 27, 2023).
- ▶ The Fatah movement in Tulkarm declared a general strike in the district as a sign of mourning for the six deaths (Wafa, December 27, 2023). Hamas issued a statement condemning Israel's actions in Tulkarm and calling on the residents of Judea and Samaria to escalate the "resistance" [terrorist attacks] and continue Operation al-Aqsa Storm until the end of the "Israeli aggression" (Hamas Telegram channel, December 27, 2023).



Al-Arabi TV correspondent reports on damage to infrastructure in the Nur al-Shams refugee camp (al-Arabi TV YouTube channel, December 27, 2023)

► During the past day, Israeli security forces also operated in the al-Dheisheh refugee camp in Bethlehem. They seized the equipment of a printing press that had printed inflammatory materials for Hamas, and a drone. In Hebron, Israeli security forces detained several wanted Palestinians (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, December 27, 2023).



Israeli security forces operating in Hebron (QudsN X account, December 27, 2023)

Solidarity with the Gaza Strip

► On December 26, 2023, demonstrations were held in city centers in Judea and Samaria in support of the Palestinian prisoners and against the war in Gaza. The activities were organized by institutions in charge of the Palestinian prisoners' affairs (Anadolu News, December 26, 2023).



Right: Activity held in Ramallah (TVyemenshabab X channel, December 26, 2023). Left: Activity in Jenin (Wafa, December 26, 2023)

► Hamas in Judea and Samaria called on the Palestinians to participate en masse in demonstrations to be held on December 29, 2023, after Friday prayers, from the main mosques in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem, calling for an end to the siege on al-Aqsa Mosque and in support of the Gaza Strip and the “resistance” [terrorist organizations] (Hurriya News, December 27, 2023).

Palestinian Authority (PA)

► **Riyadh Mansour, the PA representative to the UN**, sent a communiqué to UN Secretary-General António Guterres, the president of the Security Council and the president of the UN General Assembly, claiming that despite the UN General Assembly resolution of December 13, and the Security Council resolution of December 22, 2023, Israel was continuing its war of the "annihilation of the Palestinian people" while ignoring the above institutions. He called for all efforts to be invested in implementing all UN resolutions, including imposing sanctions on Israel if it continued to violate the UN Charter and ignore the demands of the international community (Wafa, December 27).

► In an interview, **Mahmoud Abbas, chairman of the PA**, said the PA wanted to stop the fighting completely, bring humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip and prevent the Palestinians from emigrating from their homeland. According to him, they were the three conditions demanded by the PA. Then, if the IDF left the Gaza Strip, the PA would be willing to assume the responsibility it was currently bearing and fulfill all its responsibilities in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Jerusalem as one Palestinian state.

► Asked whether there was a plan and teams prepared for the day after the war, Abbas replied that the PA was present in the Gaza Strip and that it had institutions, staff and young people in the Strip. He said the PA was paying the Gaza Strip, both residents and institutions, \$120

million a month. He noted that today, five of the government ministers were from the Gaza Strip and three were living there. He also said that the PA was prepared to examine the situation based on international legitimacy, and that a Palestinian state would include the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Jerusalem.

► Mahmoud Abbas claimed Israel did not want the PA in the Gaza Strip, but wanted to remain there itself and take parts of it for itself, but the world did not agree to it and theoretically, the United States did not agree with Israel either. He noted that contacts with Egypt and Jordan were continuing as part of the efforts to stop the war, and that meetings would soon be held with other countries, such as the UAE and Qatar to discuss what would happen after the war as well. He claimed Israel wanted to cause the emigration of Palestinians from Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip, as it had in 1948, and its plan and that of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was to get rid of the Palestinians and the PA .

► Mahmoud Abbas added that the United States was Israel's supporter and could stop the war with one word. He claimed he had said that to the Americans, but they denied it and said Israel was not listening to them. He said what was happening in the Gaza Strip was not happening anywhere else in the world, and that the war was [allegedly] larger and more terrible than the nakba.² He also said the Gaza Strip would need tens of billions of dollars to start a new life (Mahmoud Abbas' Facebook page, December 26, 2023).



Mahmoud Abbas in the interview (Mahmoud Abbas' Facebook page, December 26, 2023)

► PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh said that Israel continued to deduct Palestinian tax revenues, and that international efforts were still ongoing and they had no intention of giving up on the issue. Regarding the war in the Gaza Strip, he said the Gaza Strip was a central component of the territory of the State of "Palestine," and that "starvation is nothing but

² The "catastrophe," Israel's War of Independence, during which about 600,000 Arabs either fled or were displaced from the British Mandate and became refugees..

murder." Therefore, they demanded that the UN bring in humanitarian aid through all the Gaza Strip crossings (Wafa, December 27, 2023).

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Iran

► Senior Iranian officials continued to comment on the killing of Seyyed Razi Mousavi and threatened Israel with a harsh response:

◆ **Ramazan Sharif, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) spokesman**, said at a press conference that Iran's response to Mousavi's killing would consist of direct action and action by the "resistance front." He said Iran's confrontation with Israel was an ongoing process and not a momentary, isolated clash. He claimed that even when Iran assassinated a senior Israeli officer, as happened in the past, Israel did not allow the media to publish it. He added that Operation al-Aqsa Storm had been one of the acts of revenge of the "resistance axis" for the killing of Qassem Soleimani, and alleged that the Zionists had lost more than 200 commanders during the Hamas attack. Sharif also said that Iran would continue in Mousavi's footsteps, just as after Soleimani's assassination opposition to the Zionists only increased. He claimed the decision to assassinate Mousavi stemmed from the defeats of the "Zionist regime" in Gaza. He said one of Israel's strategies was to turn the war between "Palestine" and Israel into a war between Iran and the United States. Although the Supreme Leader of Iran stressed from the first day of the war that the al-Aqsa Storm had been a Palestinian operation, Israel continued its efforts to implement its strategy (Entekhab, December 27, 2023).

◆ **Mohammad Bagheri, chief of staff of the Iranian armed forces**, said that "Israel's criminal leaders" had made a strategic mistake in killing Seyyed Razi Mousavi. He noted that there was no doubt that their crimes would not remain unpunished and that the blood of the martyrs would "accelerate Israel's elimination." According to Bagheri, not only would the "terrorist and insane operation" not help Israel rebuild its shaky foundations but the siege of the "resistance axis"³ against it would become more pronounced (Tasnim, December 26, 2023).

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

◆ **Iraj Masjedi, senior advisor to the commander of the IRGC's Qods Force and former Iranian ambassador to Iraq**, said there was no need for Iranian intervention in the war in the Gaza Strip because the Palestinian resistance could deal with Israel on its own, but if Israel acted against the Islamic Republic, Tel Aviv would be razed to the ground. He noted that the Islamic Republic proudly declared its support for the "resistance" [anti-Israeli terrorism] and the "oppressed" and served as their defense camp. He added that the "resistance" had become a great regional force and that after the war the United States and Europe would have to contend with it (Tasnim, December 26, 2023).

Pro-Iranian militias

Iraq

- ▶ The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for attacking the al-Shadadi base of the American Army in Syria. According to the organization's announcement, the attack was carried out in continuation of the resistance to the American occupation forces in Iraq and the region and Israel's massacres in the Gaza Strip, and the Islamic resistance would continue to destroy enemy strongholds (Islamic Resistance Telegram channel, December 26, 2023).
- ▶ **American National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson** said three American military personnel had been wounded on December 25, 2023, in an attack for which the pro-Iranian Kataib Hezbollah (Hezbollah Brigades) militia claimed responsibility in Erbil, northern Iraq. She noted that "The United States will act at a time and in a manner of our choosing should these attacks continue" (American Embassy in Iraq X account, December 26, 2023).
- ▶ According to sources close to the pro-Iranian militia Kataib Hezbollah, the militia was preparing for a new wave of escalation against the American bases in Iraq and Syria in response to the American airstrikes in Iraq and the Israeli assassination of Seyyed Razi Mousavi. It was noted that the decision had already been made and that the escalation would include launching rockets and drones. The sources also confirmed that the negotiations between Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia' al-Sudani and the Iraqi organizations had ended, and that al-Sudani and several heads of the coordination committee of the pro-Iranian parties in Iraq had agreed that the attacks on American bases should be stopped without any compensation, such as stopping the aggression in Gaza or reexamining the security agreement with the Americans (al-Araby al-Jadeed, December 26, 2023).

►The pro-Iranian militias in Iraq commented on the series of attacks carried out by American Army forces against three facilities used by Kataib Hezbollah and other groups in Iraq (December 25-26, 2023):

- ◆ The **al-Nujaba** militia noted that one of its operatives had been killed in the Babel Province (south of Baghdad) and demanded that the Iraqi government take deterrent measures. The militia announced that they would continue carrying out jihad operations until the Americans left (al-Nujaba TV X account, December 26, 2023).
- ◆ **Abu Ali al-Askari, spokesman for Kataib Hezbollah**, condemned the American attack and claimed that the Iraqi government's recent statements were considered authorizing the American forces to attack Popular Mobilization operatives and security forces (Kataib Hezbollah spokesman's Telegram channel, December 26, 2023).
- ◆ **Hadi al-Amiri, chairman of the Al-Fatah Alliance and representative of the coordination committee of the pro-Iranian parties in Iraq**, called for the withdrawal of foreign forces from Iraq. He called on the Iraqi government to set a timetable for the withdrawal of the forces as soon as possible (Hadi al-Amiri's Telegram channel, December 26, 2023).
- ◆ **Qais al-Khazali, secretary general of the Asaib Ahl al-Haqq militia**, noted that it was a violation of Iraqi sovereignty and that the American forces had to be expelled from Iraq by all means (Qais al-Khazali's X account, December 26, 2023).

Yemen

►On the evening of December 26, 2023, an Israeli Air Force fighter jet intercepted a hostile aerial target in the Red Sea area en route to Israeli territory (IDF spokesperson, December 25, 2023).



Interception and destruction of the target (IDF spokesperson, December 26, 2023)

► **Yahya Saria, spokesman for the Houthi armed forces**, said that the Yemeni naval forces had attacked a merchant ship named MSC United with "appropriate naval missiles." He noted the attack had been carried out after the ship's crew refused to heed the calls and warnings of the forces. He also said that Yemeni Air Force forces had attacked military targets in the Eilat area and other areas in "occupied Palestine" with several drones. He said they would continue to support the Palestinian people and act against Israeli ships or ships heading for Israeli ports until food and medicine entered the Gaza Strip (Yahya Saria's Telegram channel, December 26, 2023).

► The American Army Central Command (CENTCOM) reported that for ten hours, starting at 6:30 a.m., the warship USS Laboon, which is part of the Dwight D. Eisenhower's carrier strike group, and fighter jets had shot down 12 drones, three anti-ship ballistic missiles and two land-attack cruise missiles launched by the Houthis in Yemen (CENTCOM X account, December 26, 2023).

► The United Kingdom Marine Trade Operations (UKMTO) said it had received reports of an incident in the Hudaydah area in Yemen, in which explosions were heard and missiles were seen. It was also reported that a vessel in the area and its crew were safe, and that the authorities were investigating the case. The vessels in the area were urged to exercise caution and report any suspicious activity to the organization (UKMTO X account, December 26, 2023).

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The Arab Arena

Egypt

► Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi welcomed Jordan's King Abdullah II in Cairo. The two are expected to discuss the latest developments in Gaza and efforts to reach a ceasefire. Yesterday (December 26), the Jordanian foreign minister arrived in Cairo for a visit and met with his Egyptian counterpart (Egyptian president's X account, December 27, 2023).

The International Arena

United Nations

► The UN Secretary-General appointed **Sigrid Kaag, former foreign minister of the Netherlands**, as the senior coordinator for humanitarian aid and reconstruction in Gaza. She was appointed in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2720 and will take office on January 8, 2024. She will be expected to assist, coordinate, accelerate, supervise and verify the process of bringing humanitarian aid shipments into Gaza through the establishment of a UN mechanism. She previously served as the UN Special Coordinator in Lebanon (UNSCOL) and head of the OPCW Commission of Inquiry in Syria (CNN, December 26, 2023).

United States

► **American President Joe Biden** spoke by phone with **the Emir of Qatar Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani** to discuss the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and mediation efforts to calm the situation in the region and reach a permanent ceasefire (Reuters, December 26, 2023).

France

► The French foreign ministry said in a statement that it was very concerned by Israel's announcement that it would prolong and intensify the fighting in the Gaza Strip. The statement stressed that France strongly renewed the call for an immediate truce that would lead to a ceasefire. The French ministry also called on Israel to protect the lives of the civilian population in the Gaza Strip and facilitate the use of all access and transportation routes, including full operation of the Kerem Shalom Crossing, and the delivery of humanitarian aid to all areas (Agence France-Presse, December 27, 2023).