



Operation Iron Swords Updated to 1 p.m., January 28, 2024

Northern Arena	Israeli Casualties	Rocket Fire
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 715 attacks• 171 Hezbollah operatives killed• 24 operatives of other terrorist-organization killed• One non-affiliated operative• One Lebanese army soldier killed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approximately 1,300 military and civilian dead (unofficial estimate)• 132 hostages remain in the Gaza Strip	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approximately 11,000 rockets and mortar shells• Approximately 9,000 rockets and mortar shells launched from the Gaza Strip• Approximately 2,000 rockets launched from Lebanon and 30 from Syria

Overview¹

► **The southern arena:** The fighting continued, mainly in the Khan Yunis area, where IDF forces extended their presence. They confronted armed terrorist squads, located munitions stockpiles, shafts and tunnels. Meanwhile, Israel opened a secure humanitarian corridor for residents from the combat zone to move towards the west. The Palestinian media reported heavy fighting in the Khan Yunis area and clashes in the northern and central Gaza Strip.

► **According to an unofficial estimate, since October 7, 2023, approximately 1,300 Israeli civilians and security personnel have been killed, 557 of them soldiers and officers; 132 civilian and military hostages are still being held by the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip; 121 hostages have been returned to Israel.**

► **Negotiations for a hostage release deal:** Western spokesmen reported that Hamas and Israel, under the aegis of the United States and Qatar, were close to reaching a deal for the release of the hostages. Hamas stated that the proposals, which include a two-month

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

temporary ceasefire in exchange for a new hostage deal, did not meet their "basic requirements".

▶ **The Gaza Strip:** Sources in the Gaza Strip reported a severe shortage of medical supplies, adding that residents were fleeing from the Khan Yunis area southward to the Rafah area. In response to the demonstrations by the families of the hostages near the Kerem Shalom Crossing in Israel and their attempt to block the entry of aid to the Gaza Strip, the **Palestinian Authority (PA) foreign ministry** claimed Israel was ignoring the UN's warnings about the dire humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and allowing urgent aid to be kept from entering the Gaza Strip. Signs of protest are being seen in the Strip against Hamas, mainly by displaced persons.

▶ **UNRWA:** Following information provided by Israel to UNRWA about the 12 agency employees who took an active part in the October 7, 2023, terrorist attack and massacre, UNRWA announced the immediate termination of the employment of those staff members and the opening of an independent investigation of experts. Several countries, including the United States, announced they were suspending the agency's funding. The Palestinians criticized UNRWA's actions, noting that the agency was taking a political position. They also expressed surprise at the actions taken by the donor countries before the investigation into the matter had been completed.

▶ **The northern arena:** Hezbollah claimed responsibility for 16 attacks over the weekend, and reported the use of new weapons, including a missile system developed by Iran and a Falaq-1 rocket. Four Hezbollah operatives were killed in IDF strikes in response.

▶ **The pro-Iranian militias:** It was reported that the Islamic Resistance in Iraq had attacked the Zebulun naval facility in Israel. It also claimed responsibility for several attacks against United States bases in Syria and Iraq. The Houthis attacked several ships in the Red Sea, including an American destroyer and a British oil tanker.

▶ The International Criminal Court in The Hague has issued an interim ruling regarding South Africa's "genocide" petition in the Gaza Strip. Although the tribunal did not call on Israel to stop the fighting, it adopted the South African "genocide" narrative and issued several interim orders to Israel and called for the return of the Israeli hostages. The PA and Hamas expressed satisfaction with the ruling, but noted that it did not include a demand for a ceasefire.

The Southern Arena

- ▶ Palestinian media reported 165 dead and 290 wounded in IDF attacks in the Gaza Strip during the past day (Ma'an, January 28, 2024). An al-Jazeera TV correspondent reported that most of the IDF attacks focused on the area of the city of Khan Yunis, in its north and west as well as in the area of Nasser Hospital. In the **northern Gaza Strip**, the IDF attacked a number of targets and there was an exchange of fire with "members of the resistance" [terrorist operatives] in Beit Lahia; in **Gaza City** the IDF attacked in the Zeitoun and Tel al-Hawa neighborhoods; and in the **central Gaza Strip** the IDF attacked in Deir al-Balah (al-Jazeera YouTube channel, January 28, 2024).
- ▶ The Palestinian Red Crescent reported that IDF forces continued shooting near al-Amal Hospital (west of Khan Yunis), which is operated by the organization (Shehab X account, January 28, 2024). The hospital claimed that IDF forces continued surrounding it, and that in the area next to it there was heavy fighting between the IDF forces and "members of the resistance" (Wafa, January 28, 2024).
- ▶ On January 27, 2024, attacks were reported in Khan Yunis; in Gaza City in the Sabra, Zeitoun and Tel al-Hawa neighborhoods; in Rafah in the al-Jenina neighborhood (east of the city); and in the central Gaza Strip; attacks on agricultural areas near the power plant in the al-Nuseirat refugee camp (Wafa, January 27, 2024).
- ▶ On January 26, 2024, dozens of dead and hundreds of wounded were reported on the night of January 25, 2024. Heavy IDF attacks were reported in the Khan Yunis area, Rafah, al-Bureij refugee camp, and at the al-Saftawi junction in the northern Gaza Strip (al-Arabi TV, January 26, 2024).
- ▶ **The southern Gaza Strip:** IDF forces continued to penetrate further into the Khan Yunis area. So far the fighting forces have located about 200 tunnel shafts, destroyed over 130 terrorist facilities, attacked ten rocket launchers and killed armed operatives and squads firing anti-tank missiles. Israeli Air Force fighter jets, directed by the forces in the field, attacked dozens of terrorist targets, including operational apartments, ammunition depots, observation posts and terrorist gathering points (IDF spokesperson January 25-27, 2024).
- ▶ IDF forces raided the military headquarters of the commander of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) intelligence and the headquarters of Hamas, where they found large quantities of

ammunition, weapons, tactical radios, night vision equipment, maps and intelligence information (IDF spokesperson, January 25, 2024).



Attack in Khan Yunis (IDF website, January 27, 2024)



IDF forces in Khan Yunis (IDF website, January 27, 2024)



The weapons found by the forces (IDF spokesperson, January 25, 2024)



IDF attacks in the Khan Yunis area (al-Jazeera YouTube channel, January 28, 2024)

- ▶ Meanwhile, the IDF opened a secure humanitarian corridor west of Khan Yunis for the safe movement of the residents of the Gaza Strip to the al-Mawasi humanitarian zone, while the fighting against Hamas continued (IDF spokesperson, January 27, 2024).



Residents evacuate from Khan Yunis to the south because of IDF activity (Wafa YouTube channel, January 26, 2024)

- ▶ **The northern Gaza Strip:** Ground forces, in cooperation with the Israeli Air Force, attacked Hamas military facilities. The fighters killed a number of armed terrorist operatives by firing tanks and targeting them with aircraft (IDF spokesperson, January 25, 2024). Fighter jets attacked a booby-trapped structure, a military structure, an anti-tank post, and a shaft used for terrorist operational purposes (IDF spokesperson, January 26, 2024).
- ▶ The al-Mujahedeen Brigades organization (the military wing of the al-Mujahedeen organization, which split from the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades), reported that its operatives had shot down an IDF Sky Racing UAV with a surface-to-air missile in the Beit Lahia area. The organization published a video of the moment the missile was launched and the UAV after it had been shot down (Mujahedeen Brigades Telegram channel, January 27, 2024). On January 3, 2024, Hamas' military wing reported that in a joint operation with al-Mujahedeen Brigades operatives, it shot down an Israeli Hermes 900 UAV in the east of Gaza City, using an anti-

aircraft missile (Shehab Telegram channel, January 3, 2024). The organization also claimed responsibility for launching rockets at Israel several times.

► **Aerial activity:** On the night of January 26, 2024, IDF fighter jets attacked dozens of targets, including operational apartments, ammunition depots, observation posts, and gathering points for armed terrorists (IDF spokesperson, January 26, 2024).

Palestinian perspective on the fighting

► **Ahmed Abd al-Hadi, Hamas representative in Lebanon**, said that Hamas had formulated a defense plan based on the large tunnels that stretch from the north of the Strip to the south, which are connected to one another and of which Israel knew nothing. He claimed that the operations carried out by the fighters indicated the level of Hamas' preparations for the campaign. He added that Israel had helped the fighters "firm stance" by creating batteries and barricades above the ground by demolishing houses. He said the ruins created barricades for the "fighters" which allowed them to carry out more attacks on the IDF. He claimed that the communication lines between Hamas leaders inside the Gaza Strip were safe and had not been damaged by the Israeli attacks. According al-Hadi, as they prepared for Operation al-Aqsa Flood, they took the "fighters" telephone communication network inside the tunnels into consideration. He added that the communication between the leaders of the movement inside and outside the Gaza Strip was also taking place securely, enabling them to coordinate positions regarding all military and political events. He also claimed al-Sinwar was in perfect health, as were the other Hamas members, who were "conducting the campaign wisely and calmly and achieving results." He also said the Hamas central leadership was situated in several locations, visited Lebanon because of the presence of the Palestinian refugee camps, and met with Lebanese leaders. He said they had greater freedom of movement in Lebanon than in any other country "for reasons that everyone was familiar with," but Hamas was committed to Lebanon's policies and laws, and respected its sovereignty (alarabia.net, January 25, 2024).

Israeli casualties

► **According to an unofficial estimate, since October 7, 2023, approximately 1,300 Israeli people have been killed. According to the IDF spokesperson, 557 of them are soldiers and officers (222 since the start of the ground maneuver on 27 October, 2023); 132 civilian and military hostages are still being held by the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip; 121 hostages have been returned.**

The issue of the hostages and a ceasefire agreement

► **John Kirby, White House spokesman**, said that **Brett McGurk, the United States State Department's Middle East envoy**, was returning to Washington after visiting countries in the region to promote a hostage deal. He claimed they were optimistic about progress (Reuters, January 26, 2024). The New York Times reported that according to its "sources," Hamas and Israel were close to reaching an agreement under the aegis of the United States and Qatar: the fighting will cease for two months, during which about a hundred hostages will be released. According to the article, the outlines of the deal were drawn up in the last ten days but there were still points of contention which would be dealt with by the heads of the intelligence agencies who are expected to meet at the summit in Paris (The New York Times, January 28, 2024). The AP confirmed the report from senior United States government officials (AP, January 28, 2024).

► An "Egyptian source," aware of Egypt's efforts to achieve a ceasefire, said that talk of the release of all the Israeli hostages in one group, estimated at 136, including about 27 bodies, in exchange for a month's temporary ceasefire and the release of a number of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons, was inaccurate. He said Hamas had rejected the idea of releasing all the hostages at once unless a total ceasefire was reached, and if not, the movement adhered to release in stages, the last of which would be the release of the estimated 55 kidnapped military personnel. He said Hamas had claimed more than once during discussions with the mediators that it did not trust Israel's positions (al-Araby al-Jadeed, January 27, 2024).

► **Ghazi Hamad, a member of Hamas' political bureau in the Gaza Strip**, said Hamas had received many ideas and they were being examined. He reiterated yet again that the Israeli hostages would not be released before a ceasefire and the withdrawal of IDF forces from the Gaza Strip (al-Mayadeen News YouTube channel, January 27, 2024).

► **Ahmed Abd al-Hadi, Hamas representative in Lebanon**, said that the Israeli proposals for a two-month ceasefire in exchange for a new hostage deal did not meet Hamas' basic demands of Hamas of the cessation of "aggression" against Gaza and the complete withdrawal of the IDF from the Gaza Strip, Hamas' conditions for the resumption of negotiations. He claimed they would be prepared to renew the negotiations if a proposal were submitted that led to a total cessation of "aggression" and the withdrawal of the IDF, after receiving guarantees from the mediators that the aggression against the Gaza Strip would not

be repeated. He said there was still no agreement, and that they would not waste their trump care of the hostages in exchange for temporary ceasefires that would end after Israel received what it wanted. He also noted that Hamas leaders' leaving the Gaza Strip was out of the question for Hamas (al-Arabiya.net, January 25, 2024).

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The Gaza Strip

Palestinian casualties

- ▶ **The Hamas-controlled ministry of health in the Gaza Strip** reported that as of 10:10 a.m., January 28, 2024, the number of dead since the beginning of the war stood at 26,422 and the number of wounded at 63,087 (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, January 28, 2024).
- ▶ The al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades (AAMB) announced the death of Atta Ahmed Hamouda, a field commander who was killed with his family in the attack on his home in the northern Gaza Strip (elaqsa_1965, the AAMB Telegram channel, January 26, 2024).
- ▶ The Hamas-controlled government information bureau in the Gaza Strip announced the death of Iyad Ahmed al-Rawwagh, the 120th journalist killed in the war, who was a broadcaster and presenter on Hamas' Radio Sawt al-Aqsa. He was reportedly killed along with 11 members of his family in an attack on his home in the al-Nuseirat refugee camp on January 25, 2024 (Palestine Online, January 27, 2024; Radio Sawt al-Aqsa account, January 26, 2024).



Iyad al-Rawwagh (Account X of Radio Sawt al-Aqsa, January 26, 2024)

The situation in the Gaza Strip

- ▶ **Dr. Ashraf al-Qidra, spokesman for the Hamas-controlled ministry of health in the Gaza Strip**, reported a severe shortage of blood and medicine at Nasser Hospital in Khan

Yunis. He again claimed the stock of fuel for the hospital generators was expected to run out within four days (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, January 27, 2024).

► The Palestinian Red Crescent reported that the supply of oxygen at al-Amal Hospital (west of Khan Yunis) had run out and because of the fighting near the hospital [it could not obtain more], therefore it was unable to perform surgeries (Wafa, January 28, 2024). Al-Jazeera TV reported that 350 patients and approximately 5,000 residents remained at Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis, after a large number of patients and residents had fled from it in recent days (al-Jazeera YouTube channel, January 28, 2024).

► Meanwhile, many residents from around the Gaza Strip were reported to have arrived near Rafah and set up a tent camp. Residents stated that they had come to find a safer place because everywhere they had gone to so far was unsafe. Some also said they had arrived because of the overcrowding in the UNRWA schools, which were being used as shelters (Wafa YouTube channel, January 27, 2024). Many residents were reported fleeing the Khan Yunis area towards Rafah because of increased IDF activity in the city (Wafa YouTube channel, January 26, 2024).



**Residents set up a tent camp near the Gaza Strip-Egypt border
(Wafa YouTube channel, January 27, 2024)**

► In response to the demonstrations by the families of the hostages in Israel near the Kerem Shalom Crossing and their attempt to block the entry of aid to the Gaza Strip, the **PA foreign ministry** claimed Israel was ignoring UN warnings about the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and was allowing the families of the hostages to block the Kerem Shalom Crossing, thereby preventing urgent aid supplies to enter for four consecutive days. The foreign ministry also called it "contempt for the decisions of the International Court of Justice" and a denial of the basic needs of all the residents of the Gaza Strip (PA foreign ministry X account, January 27, 2024).

UNRWA

▶ Following information transmitted to UNRWA by Israel about 12 UNRWA employees who took an active part in the October 7, 2023, terrorist attack and massacre, **Stéphane Dujarric, spokesman for the UN secretary general, said that Antonio Guterres, the UN secretary general, had spoken with Philippe Lazzarini, UNRWA's commissioner general,** and asked him to quickly investigate the serious allegations. According to the announcement, the secretary general was "horrified" by this news and asked to make sure that any UNRWA employee who was proven to have taken part in the events would face criminal prosecution (UN website, January 26, 2024).

▶ **Philippe Lazzarini** said he would immediately terminate the employment of those staff members and launch an independent investigation of experts to protect the agency's ability to provide humanitarian assistance. He also claimed that any UNRWA employee who was involved in terrorist acts would be held accountable, including by means of prosecution (Reuters, January 27, 2024).

▶ Following the revelations, **the spokesperson of the United States State Department** announced that the United States would temporarily suspend UNRWA's funding until the investigation had been completed. According to the announcement, **Antony Blinken, the Secretary of State,** had spoken with **Antonio Guterres, the UN secretary general,** and demanded the matter be investigated. The announcement mentioned UNRWA's vital role in humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip (United States State Department website, January 26, 2024).

▶ Following the United States announcement, Great Britain, Italy, Finland, Canada and Australia announced that they would temporarily suspend any further funding to the agency while the investigation was being carried out, and were later joined by the Netherlands. Germany stated that it was very concerned about the issue and would not allocate additional resources until the accusation had been removed (Agence France-Presse, January 27, 2024). Other countries welcomed the opening of the investigation, but for the time being did not announce the suspension of aid to the agency.

▶ About 92% of UNRWA's funding comes from international contributions and the United States is the largest donor, followed by the European Union and Germany. American funding to UNRWA was stopped by Trump in 2018, and restored at the beginning of the Biden administration in 2021.

▶ **Antonio Guterres** addressed the governments which had suspended their contributions and said that he "understood" their concern, but the continuation of UNRWA's activities had to be assured and the thousands of workers who worked for the humanitarian needs of people around the world should not be punished (UN website, January 28, 2024).

Martin Griffiths, the under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs, said that the residents of the Gaza Strip had been suffering "unimaginable horrors and deprivation" for nearly four months and that they should be given hope, and that now was not the time to disappoint them (Martin Griffiths' X account, January 27, 2023).

▶ **Hussein al-Sheikh, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee**, called on the countries that had stopped funding UNRWA to retract their decision, claiming it involved "enormous political and humanitarian risks," as the Palestinian people currently needed maximum support from the agency (Hussein al-Sheikh's X account, January 27, 2024). **The PA foreign ministry** condemned the Israeli government's "campaign of incitement" against UNRWA and claimed that during the [alleged] "genocidal war" Israeli prejudices were emphasized. The ministry expressed surprise at the steps taken by a number of countries before the UN investigation had been completed and demanded they retract their decision. The foreign ministry said that even if Israel's claims were proven to be true, "they would not harm UNRWA's authority or its role," and accused Israel of trying to erase the issue of Palestinian refugees in any way it could (PA foreign ministry Telegram channel, January 27, 2024).

▶ **Hamas** claimed that it was a campaign of incitement launched by Israel against "international institutions." According to Hamas, the claim that Hamas used the hospitals in the Gaza Strip for military purposes was false and the purpose of the "incitement" was to deny the Palestinians their right to receive services from international agencies. Hamas called on the UN and international institutions not to surrender to Israel's threats and emphasized their importance in documenting the "crimes of the occupation" (Hamas Telegram channel, January 27, 2024)

▶ Hamas also condemned the decision of UNRWA's commissioner general to dismiss a number of the agency's employees and open an investigation on the grounds that it was not UNRWA's role to describe the "Palestinian resistance" as a terrorist organization and that UNRWA was taking a "political position." According to the movement, the agency did not issue statements or take explicit positions in relation to the "Zionist terrorist attacks" and it

demanded that UNRWA retract its decision and adhere to its international mandate. Hamas also stated that the agency's call to release the hostages deviated from its mandate and called on it to return to operating in all parts of the Gaza Strip (Hamas Telegram channel, January 27, 2024).

► **Ghazi Hamad, a member of Hamas' political bureau in the Gaza Strip**, said that following the ruling of the International Court of Justice, which was based on the statements and testimonies of the UN workers in the Gaza Strip, the United States put pressure on UNRWA to publish the "unfortunate and shameful statement" regarding the attack on the October 7, 2023, in which it was called a terrorist incident. According to him, UNRWA should not have published the statement because it was not included in the scope of its activity, and it intervened in a political issue that it had nothing to do with, which was a very serious mistake. Another serious mistake by UNRWA, he claimed, was punishing the workers based on Israel's claims, thereby yielding to all Israeli security demands without conducting an investigation itself. He said he was surprised UNRWA had not demanded that Israel investigate the killing of 112 Palestinians during the war who were UNRWA workers, and why it had not taken practical measures against Israel following the IDF attacks on UNRWA centers. He claimed UNRWA submitted to American and Israeli dictates and the statement was a politicization of its activities. He added that UNRWA's statement was questionable and unacceptable, and it had to retract the statement and "apologize to the Palestinians for the mistake" (al-Mayadeen News YouTube channel, January 27, 2024).

► The **Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)** condemned the suspension of funding and stated called it actual participation in the [alleged] "war of extermination" waged by Israel. The PIJ warned that harming UNRWA would have serious consequences for the entire region (PIJ Telegram channel, January 27, 2024).

Humanitarian aid for the Gaza Strip

► Qatar and Britain jointly sent a humanitarian aid plane to the Gaza Strip with medical supplies and food. According to the Qataris, it was part of the cooperation between the countries (Qatari foreign ministry X account , January 26, 2024).

Protest demonstrations

► Gazans demonstrated in Khan Yunis and called on the Israeli and Hamas leaderships to stop the fighting and end the destruction. Some of the protesters waved a white flag. Pictures of the demonstration were distributed by independent correspondents in the Gaza

Strip as well as by the Russian news agency Sputnik, however, the demonstration was not covered by the Hamas-affiliated media or other organizations in the Gaza Strip. It was the second demonstration in Gaza calling for an end to the war (QudsN X account, January 25, 2024).



The demonstration in Khan Yunis

(Right: QUDSN X account. Left: Sputnik website in Arabic X account , January 25, 2024)

► The Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) issued pictures of displaced Palestinian persons who passed through the safe crossing from Khan Yunis to the al-Mawasi area, chanting "The people want to overthrow Hamas" (COGAT Facebook page in Arabic, January 27, 2024).



Right: A picture from a video published by al-Arabiya TV (COGAT Facebook page in Arabic, January 27, 2024). Left: Nabas website, January 27, 2024)

"The day after"

► An Egyptian source said that a new delegation of the Hamas leadership was in Cairo to conduct discussions on all issues related to the Gaza Strip. He said senior officials in Cairo were making every effort to organize a meeting to narrow the gap between Hamas' positions and those of the PA. The objective would be to deliberate proposals which required a great deal of understandings from all the Palestinian organizations and elements. He said the Hamas delegation had discussed ideas related to the management of Gaza the day after, the establishment of a national unity government, and the possibility of joining the PLO. Hamas did not express its commitment to continue "managing" the Gaza Strip after the war, and it presented more than one view, none of which included its absolute rule, but based on partnership through mechanisms to be determined by the Palestinians themselves. He emphasized that the things that Hamas did not compromise on were its rejection of disarming the "resistance" [terrorist organizations], and the complete withdrawal of IDF forces from the Gaza Strip (al-Araby al-Jadeed, January 27, 2024).

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The Northern Arena

Hezbollah

► Over the weekend Hezbollah **claimed responsibility for 16 attacks** carried out by means of anti-tank missiles, rockets and Burkan rockets (whose warheads weigh between 660 and 1100 pounds), heavy Falaq-1 missiles (whose warheads weigh 110 pounds) and snipers (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 25-28, 2024).

► In response to Hezbollah's actions, IDF tanks attacked Hezbollah terrorist facilities in south Lebanon in the area of Tayr Harfa and Aita al-Shaab. IDF warplanes attacked a Hezbollah terrorist facility in the areas of Kfar Kila, al-Hiyam Blida, Marwahin, Aita al-Shaab, Zibqin, Houle and Tyre. The targets included was an observation post, a military position and a military structure (IDF spokesperson, January 25-27, 2024).



Attacking Hezbollah military targets (IDF spokesperson, January 28, 2024)

- ▶ Videos of the Israeli Air Force strikes were published in the Lebanese media and on social networks (Fouad Khreiss' X account, January 25, 2024).



The results of Israeli Air Force attacks in Kafr Kila (Fouad Khreiss' X account, January 25, 2024)



The results of the Israeli Air Force attacks in al-Hiyam attack (Fouad Khreiss' X account, January 26, 2024)

- ▶ In the documentation of an attack on a building in Deir Aames, about 12 kilometers (about 7.5 miles) north of Shtula, a person can be heard in the background saying that a three-story building was completely destroyed (Fouad Khreiss' X account, January 27, 2024).



**Results of the Israeli Air Force attack in Deir Aames 2024
(Fouad Khreiss' X account, January 27, 2024)**



**The results of the Israeli Air Force attack Tayr Harfa-al-Jabin
(Fouad Khreiss' X account, January 28, 2024)**



**Right: The Israeli Air Force attacks in Houle (Fouad Khreiss' X account, January 28, 2024). Left:
The Israeli Air Force attacks Zibqin and Majdal Zoun (Nour Ajini's X account, January 28, 2024)**

Hezbollah casualties

► Hezbollah reported the death of four operatives from south Lebanon (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 26, 2024).

◆ Taleb Yahya Balhas, aka Yahya Ali, from Sadiqin.

- ◆ Ali Fawzi Milhem, aka Jihad, of Majdal Salem.
- ◆ Muhammad Ali Mazah, aka Jihad, from Tayr Filasia.
- ◆ Islam Muhammad Zalzali, aka Abu Saleh, from Deir Qanoun al-Nahar.



Hezbollah casualties (Telegram channel of Hezbollah's combat information arm, January 26, 2024)

- ▶ Regarding the circumstances of their death, Hezbollah reported that the four were staying in a building in Beit Lif, about five kilometers north of Shtula (al-Arabi Akhbar YouTube channel, January 27, 2024).

Hezbollah's new weapons

- ▶ The Hezbollah-affiliated al-Mayadeen network reported from its "sources" that the missile system used in the attack on the Dvoranit post (east of Rosh HaNikra) on January 25, 2024, was a new Russian-made system developed in Iran, and it was not the first time that Hezbollah had used it. According to the report, it was an anti-tank missile called **Almas**, which uses fiber-optic cables for a "fire-observe-and-update" mode, enabling precise guidance toward the target, and not by laser. According to the report the warhead can be changed and the camera on the missile is part of the process of controlling it and the missile is able to hit targets that cannot be seen and provide coordinates that are not picked up by UAVs (al-Mayadeen, January 26, 2024; MTV Lebanon News YouTube channel, January 26, 2024).



Right: The target at the Dvoranit post, as seen from the missile's camera before launch. Left: The target a few seconds before it was hit (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 25, 2024)



The target at the Dvoranit post, as seen from the missile camera, only one second before it was hit (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 25, 2024)

► Hezbollah provided technical details and photos of a **Falaq-1** heavy rocket and its launcher, which it claimed it had used in an attack on the Ma'ale Golani camp (on the slopes of Mount Hermon) on January 26, 2024. According to Hezbollah, the rocket has a maximum range of ten kilometers (six miles), can reach a maximum height of 3,500 meters, weighs 113 kgs (about 250 pounds) with a warhead weighing 50 kgs (110 pounds), is 1.32 meters long and has a diameter of 240 mm. The rocket is launched from a double-barrel [or four-barrel] launcher mounted on top of an ATV. It can also be used to attack naval targets (al-Manar, January 26, 2024).



Right: A double barrel Falaq-1 rocket launcher mounted on an ATV (al-Manar, January 26, 2024).

Left: A double-cannon launcher and its technical specifications (al-Manar, January 26, 2024)

Statements by senior Hezbollah figures

► **Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah deputy secretary general**, spoke at the launching of a book called *The Highest Commandments*. He said that as long as the fighting in the Gaza Strip continued, they would continue to fight in Lebanon and postpone any political discussion related to the southern front until the end of the war in the Gaza Strip. He said Hezbollah and the "resistance" in Lebanon were being accused of "fulfilling their obligations," while the blame should lie with the Arab Islamic countries and the rest of the world, which did not take action to support "Palestine" He said they were paying the price on the southern front in Lebanon, and claimed they were making efforts to ease the lives of Lebanese civilians so they could continue with their lives. However, he claimed, the war in south Lebanon or the war in the Gaza Strip prevented them from carrying out their duty and everything needed for the Lebanese. He said they would continue their jihad against Israel and as long as the fighting in the Gaza Strip continued, they would also continue to fight, if Israel expanded the fighting in Lebanon (Na'im Qassem's X account, January 26, 2024).

► **Mohammad Raad, head of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese parliament**, said during a ceremony held by the organization to honor the memory of Faisal Ali Salman Shaar, a Hezbollah operative who was killed, that they had warned Israel not to make a mistake in its activity against Lebanon because what awaited it in Lebanon were "cemeteries." He stated the willingness to confront Israel "to the end" and pointed out that so far Israel had seen only a small part of their strength, and they were prepared to show it to the full (al-Nashra, January 27, 2024).

► The Hezbollah-affiliated daily al-Akhbar reported that **Dr. Ole Diehl, the deputy director of German foreign intelligence**, arrived in Beirut about two weeks ago and met with

Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah deputy secretary general. According to the report, the meeting had no result and the Germans were unable to convince Hezbollah to stop its attacks on the border or promote the idea of separating the arenas. Qassem claimed they could defeat Israel if it expanded its "aggression" and refused to discuss any idea before the end of the war in the Gaza Strip (al-Akhbar, January 27, 2024).

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Judea and Samaria

Counterterrorism activities

▶ The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities throughout Judea and Samaria, detaining ten wanted Palestinians. Since the beginning of the war, more than 2,950 wanted Palestinians have been detained, more than 1,350 of them Hamas operatives (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, January 28, 2024).

▶ On the morning of January 28, 2024, Israeli security forces operated in the Jenin refugee camp, detaining two wanted Palestinians (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, January 28, 2024). An al-Jazeera TV correspondent reported that one of the wanted Palestinians detained in the al-Hadaf neighborhood of the Jenin refugee camp was Suhaib Majdi Abu al-Haija, the son of senior Hamas figure Majdi Abu al-Haija imprisoned in Israel (al-Jazeera YouTube channel, January 28, 2024). The Palestinian media reported heavy exchanges of fire between armed Palestinians and the Israeli security forces (QudsN X account, January 28, 2024).

▶ The Israeli security forces also operated in the village of Qalqas (south of Hebron), where they seized weapons and tens of thousands of shekels intended to finance terrorist activity. In al-Shuyukh, the forces detained two wanted Palestinians who had been transporting infiltrators into Israeli territory (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, January 28, 2024).

▶ In the early morning hours of January 26, 2024, Israeli security forces operated in the Qalandia refugee camp (north of Jerusalem), where they detained two wanted Palestinians and seized weapons (IDF spokesperson's X account, January 26, 2024).

Palestinian Authority (PA)

▶ **Mahmoud Abbas, PA chairman,** met in Ramallah with **Antonio Tajani, Italian deputy prime minister and foreign minister,** to discuss the latest developments in the

Palestinian territories, especially the Gaza Strip, and efforts to stop the Israeli “aggression” against the Palestinian people. Abbas reiterated that he categorically rejected the uprooting of the Palestinians and stressed that there was no military or security solution for the Gaza Strip, which was an integral part of the Palestinian state. He thanked Italy and the European Union for their support in the efforts to achieve peace based on the implementation of the two-state solution (Wafa, January 25, 2024).



**Mahmoud Abbas meets with Italy's deputy prime minister and foreign minister
(Wafa, January 25, 2024)**

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Iran

- ▶ **Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi** spoke by phone with **South African President Cyril Ramaphosa** and expressed Iran's support for South Africa's complaint against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague. Raisi noted that all nations expected the court to issue an order condemning the "criminal Zionist regime," saying that filing the complaint was a courageous step that established the name of the South African president alongside Nelson Mandela as an anti-racist and justice-seeking figure in the world (Tasnim, January 26, 2024).
- ▶ **Hossein Amir Abdollahian, Iranian foreign minister**, spoke with **Mohammad bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, Qatari foreign minister**, to discuss bilateral issues and developments in the region and the Gaza Strip. They stressed that the main actors were now interested in ending the war in the Gaza Strip and focusing on the political process (Fars, January 27, 2024).

Pro-Iranian militias

Iraq

▶ Media outlets affiliated with the militias in Iraq reported a drone attack on the Zevulun naval facility in Israel (Saberin News Telegram channel, January 28, 2024). No damage to a naval facility was detected in Israel. At the same time, over the past few days, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq has claimed responsibility for attacking American bases in Syria and Iraq with drones and rockets. Among the bases attacked were the Ain al-Assad base in western Iraq, the base near Erbil Airport in the Kurdish region of Iraq, the Koniko base, and the base in the Green Village in Syria (Islamic Resistance Telegram channel, January 25-27, 2024).

Yemen

▶ Over the past few days, the Houthis have carried out several attacks against military and civilian vessels. The United States Army Central Command (CENTCOM) reported that on January 26, at around 12:30 p.m. (Israel time), the Houthis fired an anti-ship ballistic missile at the American destroyer USS Carney (DDG-64) in the Gulf of Aden. It was also reported that the missile was successfully intercepted by the destroyer and that there were no casualties or damage (CENTCOM X account, January 26, 2024)

▶ The United States Army Central Command (CENTCOM) reported that on January 26, at 7:45 p.m. (Sana'a time), the Houthis fired an anti-ship ballistic missile and hit the oil tanker Marlin Luanda, which was flying the Marshall Islands flag. According to CENTCOM's statement, the American destroyer USS Carney helped the tanker, and no casualties had been reported. Later, CENTCOM said the ship that was attacked had nothing to do with the conflict in the Gaza Strip or with Israel. In addition, it was stated that the Houthis were firing indiscriminately and affecting dozens of countries around the world (CENTCOM website, January 28, 2024).

▶ **Yahya Saria, spokesman for the Houthi armed forces**, said the Houthi naval forces had attacked a British oil ship named Marlin Luanda in the Gulf of Aden with several naval missiles. According to Saria, the attack caused a direct hit to the ship and a fire on board (Yahya Saria's Telegram channel, January 26, 2024).

▶ According to another CENTCOM statement, on January 27, at around 3:45 a.m. (Sana'a time), United States military forces attacked a Houthi anti-ship missile that was directed at the Red Sea and was ready for launch. CENTCOM noted that the forces had

identified the missile and determined that it posed a threat to ships in the area, and therefore attacked and destroyed it in self-defense (CENTCOM X account, January 27, 2024).

► **Abd al-Malik al-Houthi, leader of the Houthis in Yemen**, said in a speech that they had already launched more than 200 drones and 50 missiles and that they would continue until the “aggression” in the Gaza Strip stopped. He noted that the main reason for the continuation of the "Zionist crime" was the American position and that the British-American escalation would neither change nor affect their position. He also said that if the Muslims had provided the Palestinian people with the necessary support, the equation would have been completely different (al-Masirah, January 25, 2024).

► A senior United States administration official said **Jake Sullivan, the American national security adviser**, pressured **Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi** during a meeting to use China's influence on Iran to help curb Iranian support for the Houthis. China said it would raise the issue with the Iranian government. The United States was waiting to find out whether China had done so and the effectiveness of the communication (Reuters, January 27, 2024). Reuters reported, citing "four Iranian diplomatic sources," that Chinese officials had asked their Iranian counterparts to help halt Houthi attacks from Yemen against ships in the Red Sea. According to them, China was interested in preserving its interests, since if one of its ships was damaged, trade relations between the countries could have been compromised. The "sources" noted that several meetings had recently been held in China and Iran on the issue, but they refrained from giving further details (Reuters, January 26, 2024).

► The United States and Britain simultaneously imposed sanctions on four senior Houthi officials, including **Houthi Defense Minister Mohammad Nasser al-Atefi and Navy Commander Mohammad Fadl Abd al-Nabi**, because of their involvement in attacks in the Red Sea and in actions that threaten peace, stability and security in Yemen (the United States Treasury Department website and British government website, January 25, 2024).

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The Arab Arena

Jordan

► **Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman al-Safadi** met in Amman with **Brett McGurk, the American envoy to the Middle East**, to discuss efforts to reach an immediate and permanent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and the implications of continuing the war on the Gaza

Strip. Al-Safadi stressed that the “aggression” against the Gaza Strip had to be stopped immediately and humanitarian aid had to be brought in regularly (Jordanian foreign ministry X account, January 25, 2024).

▶ The minister also met with **Annalena Baerbock, Germany's foreign minister**, to discuss efforts to stop the war in the Gaza Strip and the destructive situations it caused. Al-Safadi stressed that stopping the Israeli “aggression” against the Gaza Strip was a top priority and the only way to end the humanitarian disaster. The two agreed to cooperate in efforts to provide humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. Baerbock said each side had to do its part until the suffering of both sides ended, and that, as the International Court of Justice had ruled, the Israeli government had to allow the immediate delivery of additional humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip and change its conduct in the war (Jordanian foreign ministry X account, January 27, 2024).

Egypt

▶ According to the spokesman for the Egyptian presidential office, **Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and United States President Joe Biden** discussed the regional situation in the Middle East, particularly the war in the Gaza Strip. It was also reported that the two discussed efforts to reach a humanitarian ceasefire and a hostage deal (Egyptian presidential office Facebook page, January 26, 2024).

Qatar

▶ **Tamim bin Hamad, Emir of Qatar**, spoke with **President Joe Biden** and discussed the latest developments in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria. Biden expressed his appreciation to Bin Hamad for the efforts Qatar was investing with regard to the war in the Gaza Strip. Bin Hamad stressed the need to strengthen regional and international cooperation to reach an immediate ceasefire and to continue the opening of the border crossings for the entry of humanitarian aid (Qatar News Agency, January 26, 2024).

The International Arena

The International Court of Justice

▶ On January 26, 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued its decision on injunctions against Israel as part of South Africa's lawsuit against Israel on December 29, 2023, alleging that Israel was violating the Convention on the Prevention of Genocide. At the outset,

the president of the Court stated that South Africa had a prima facie right to bring the case against Israel, and the Court allegedly had the authority to adjudicate it. Since the rights granted to South Africa in the framework of the lawsuit were acceptable, there was urgency in announcing temporary measures due to the need to protect the rights of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and South Africa's rights under the Convention. The ICJ refrained from ordering Israel to implement an immediate ceasefire and called for the immediate, unconditional release of the hostages.

- ▶ Following are the interim orders that were announced:
 - ◆ Israel must take all measures at its disposal to prevent acts that constitute "genocide" against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip as defined in the Convention. The State of Israel will ensure that its military forces do not carry out such acts.
 - ◆ Israel must take all measures at its disposal to prevent and punish incidents of public and clear incitement to commit "genocide."
 - ◆ The State of Israel must take immediate and effective steps to facilitate the entry of basic needs and all the humanitarian assistance required into the Gaza Strip to cope with the harsh conditions there. Israel must take all necessary steps to prevent the destruction and preserve evidence related to acts that fall under the Convention in the context of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.
 - ◆ The State of Israel shall submit a report on all measures taken to comply with the Court's order within one month from the date of the ruling.



**Mahmoud Abbas watches from his office in Ramallah the ruling of the ICJ in The Hague
(Mahmoud Abbas' Facebook page, January 26, 2024)**

- ▶ The court's ruling was favorably accepted by the Palestinians, but some criticized the court's failure to call for an immediate ceasefire.

◆ **Muhammad Shtayyeh, PA prime minister**, said he hoped the decisions would include an order for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. He said the decisions marked the end of the time when Israel evaded punishment (Wafa, January 26, 2024).

◆ **Riyadh al-Maliki, PA foreign minister**, praised the temporary measures ordered by the ICJ and called on the international community to ensure that Israel implements them. He said the court proved that no country was above the law. He also expressed his appreciation for South Africa (Riyadh al-Maliki's X account, January 26, 2024).

◆ **Hamas** welcomed the court's decision, stressing that it meant the cessation of all forms of "aggression" against the Palestinians in Gaza. Hamas called on the international community to force Israel to implement the ICJ's decisions and stop the "crime of genocide." It said that it was looking forward to the final decisions to convict Israel of "genocide," war crimes, and crimes against humanity, opening the way for Israel's leaders to be prosecuted before the International Criminal Court (ICC). Hamas also expressed appreciation for South Africa's position and its move and thanked all the countries that had expressed their support for the move (Hamas in Judea and Samaria Telegram channel, January 26, 2024).

◆ **Izzat al-Rishq, a member of Hamas' political bureau and head of Hamas' central information bureau**, said the court's decision was an important step on the road to justice for the Palestinians, and meant the beginning of proceedings to prosecute Israel, saying it couldn't escape responsibility. He said it was an important start to hold Israel and all those who support it accountable for the crimes of genocide they were committing against the Palestinians. Al-Rishq called for immediate action to force Israel to implement the court's ruling, to oppose any attempt by Israel to evade the obligation, and reject attempts by the American administration, which was "complicit in the crimes of genocide," to circumvent the ruling (Hamas in the West Bank Telegram channel, January 26, 2024).

◆ **Musa Abu Marzouq, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, said Hamas welcomed the court's decision and regarded it as a direct conviction for all the "crimes" Israel was committing against the Palestinians, which amounted to "war crimes and crimes of genocide." According to him, genocide is not necessarily related to shootings,

and if the ICJ were to demand a ceasefire without reference to the other forms of genocide, the genocide would have continued. According to him, the published decision led more to an end to the war and an end to the genocide. He said the decision opened the door to a ceasefire, lifting the siege and bringing in all aid. Regarding the ICJ president's demand that Hamas release the hostages unconditionally, he replied that the release had to be from both sides unconditionally. He added that Hamas wanted an exchange deal, but Israel's stubbornness prevented it (al-Arabi TV X account, January 26, 2024).

◆ **The PIJ** condemned the failure of the International Court of Justice to issue a clear decision forcing Israel (the "Zionist enemy") into an immediate ceasefire, even though it implicitly recognized the genocide it was committing in the Gaza Strip. According to the PIJ's statement, it was proof that the global forces of evil control the global legal systems for the sake of their own interests at the expense of the oppressed (PIJ's information bureau Telegram channel, January 26, 2024).

▶ **Hassan Fadlallah, a member of Hezbollah's parliamentary faction**, praised the court's decision, saying that although the decision did not include a total condemnation of Israel and did not accept the decision the Palestinian people had been waiting for, it determined the beginning of holding Israel accountable. He said the Arab and Islamic countries no longer had room to play their role in achieving international and humanitarian justice (al-Ahed, January 27, 2024).

▶ Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Turkey also welcomed the decision, saying they hoped the ruling would bring an end to the fighting. **Hossein Amir Abdollahian, Iranian foreign minister**, congratulated South Africa and the Palestinian people on the success at the ICJ in The Hague. Abdollahian called on his counterparts around the world to support the South African move against Israel at the ICJ in The Hague (Iranian foreign minister's X account, January 26, 2024).

▶ **Hizam al-Assad, a member of the Houthis' political bureau**, said the court was in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, not in The Hague (Hizam al-Assad's X account, January 26, 2024).

▶ **The United States Department of State** noted that the ruling was consistent with the American view that Israel had the right to take action in accordance with international law (Reuters, January 26, 2024).

UN Security Council

► "Diplomatic sources" reported that Algeria had called for a meeting of the UN Security Council on January 31, 2024, to discuss the situation in the Gaza Strip. According to the sources, the call came in the context of the orders issued by the ICJ in The Hague regarding the war in the Gaza Strip (al-Jazeera, January 27, 2024). Following the call, the presidium of the Security Council announced that the Council would convene on January 31, 2024 (Agence France-Presse, January 27, 2024).

Russia

► The Russian foreign ministry announced that **Mikhail Bogdanov, Russian deputy foreign minister**, had met in Russia with a Houthi delegation headed by **Houthi spokesman Muhammad Abdeslam** to discuss the developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the deterioration of the situation in the Red Sea. The sides condemned the attacks carried out by the United States and Britain against Yemen, which could destabilize the situation in the region (Sputnik, January 25, 2024).

Turkey

► **Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan** met in Istanbul with **British Foreign Minister David Cameron** to discuss the urgent need for a full ceasefire in the Gaza Strip (Anadolu News, January 26, 2024).