



# Operation Iron Swords Updated to 1 p.m., January 2, 2024

### Northern Arena

- 556 attacks
- 138 Hezbollah operatives killed
- 19 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

## Overview<sup>1</sup>

► **The combat arena:** The IDF forces continued their integrated ground maneuver in the Gaza Strip focusing on the **Daraj-Tufah neighborhoods** in Gaza City and Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip, while the fighting continued against terrorist centers in the northern and central Gaza Strip. Senior Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) terrorists continue to claim that they have the upper hand in the fighting with the IDF.

► **According to an unofficial estimate, since October 7 approximately 1,300 Israeli civilians and security personnel have been killed, 507 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.** Regarding the issue of the hostages, "Palestinian sources" reported that Hamas waived the condition of a permanent ceasefire and agreed to release about 40 Israeli hostages in exchange for a 40-day ceasefire, the release of Palestinian prisoners, the return of residents from the south of the Strip to the north and an increase in aid to Gaza.

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

► **The situation in the Gaza Strip:** The Hamas-controlled crossings authority in the Gaza Strip reported that since October 21, 2023, 5,294 trucks bringing humanitarian aid had entered the Strip. Senior Hamas and PIJ terrorists, as well as senior figures in the Palestinian Authority (PA), expressed strong opposition to the idea of uprooting Palestinians from their places of residence as a solution for "the day after."

► **The northern arena:** Hezbollah continues attacking IDF posts and concentrations of forces on the northern border. Over the past day Hezbollah claimed responsibility for **three attacks**; recently the number of attacks has been relatively small. The reason is unclear, but it may be due to escalation of IDF attacks. Elements in Lebanon (mainly Christians) have criticized Hezbollah for dragging the country into war.

► **Judea and Samaria:** The Israeli security forces continue counterterrorism activities

► **The pro-Iranian militias:** The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for a relatively large number of attacks on American military bases in Syria and Iraq.

## The Combat Arena

► The IDF forces continued the integrated ground maneuver in the Gaza Strip focusing on the **Daraj-Tufah neighborhoods** in Gaza City and **Khan Yunis** in the southern Gaza Strip, while fighting continued against terrorist centers in the northern and central Gaza Strip.

► The Palestinian media reported heavy exchanges of fire between the IDF forces and the "resistance" [Palestinian terrorist operatives] in the Daraj-Tufah neighborhoods in the east of Gaza City. In addition, there were reports of shelling to the north of the al-Maghazi refugee camp and east of the al-Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip. The Israeli Air Force attacked all areas Khan Yunis, especially in the west of the city, and Israeli Navy ships fired shells at Rafah from the sea (Shehab X account, January 2, 2024). During the past day, 156 dead and 246 wounded were reported in IDF attacks in the Gaza Strip (Ma'an, January 2, 2024).

► **The northern Gaza Strip:** IDF forces continued operating in the **Daraj-Tufah neighborhoods**. The fighters raided military outposts and the houses of senior terrorist operatives, and killed dozens of terrorist squads firing anti-tank missiles (IDF spokesperson, January 1, 2024). According to reports, on January 2, 2024, IDF forces took control of a terrorist facility located in the house of the commander of Hamas military-terrorist wing's' Gaza City Brigade. During the operation, the forces encountered terrorists and killed several dozen, located and destroyed tunnel shafts, and found weapons and intelligence materials linking

the local mosque to the terrorist attack and massacre of October 7 (IDF website, January 2, 2024). In the **Jabalia** area, IDF forces killed dozens of terrorists who tried to plant IEDs, operate drones and attack IDF forces. (IDF spokesperson, January 2, 2024).



**Weapons found in the area of the mosque (IDF spokesperson, January 2, 2024)**

► **The central Gaza Strip:** During the last two weeks the IDF carried out intensive activity in the central Gaza Strip to achieve operational control of the area, expand the attack to other regions and prevent the return of terrorist operatives to the area. IDF forces killed a large number of terrorists, destroyed more than 100 tunnel shafts, located stockpiles of weapons which included RPGs and ammunition, and directed dozens of airstrikes against terrorist targets near Gaza City (IDF spokesperson, January 1, 2024). The forces located a laboratory used for the production of weapons, missile launch pits and long-range rocket launchers (IDF spokesperson, January 2, 2024). In the al-Bureij area, the forces located a number of rocket launchers installed near an UNRWA school (IDF spokesperson, January 2, 2024).



**Rocket launchers located near an UNRWA school (IDF spokesperson's X account)**

► **Mahmoud al-Louh, a correspondent for al-Ghad TV**, reporting from Shuhadaa al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir Al-Balah, said that approximately 66 dead bodies had been brought to the

hospital. He added that residents reported a large number of bodies scattered in the fighting areas which rescue teams could not currently reach (al-Ghad TV, January 2, 2024).



**Right: Residents in the center of Deir al-Balah with IDF attacks in the central Gaza Strip in the background (Wafa YouTube channel, January 1, 2024). Left: Mahmoud al-Louh, an al-Ghad TV correspondent, reporting from Shuhadaa al-Aqsa hospital in Deir al-Balah (al-Ghad TV, January 2, 2024)**

► **The southern Gaza Strip:** IDF forces operating in the Khan Yunis area attacked a number of terrorist facilities, raided apartments where weapons were stored and from where terrorist operations were directed, and located large quantities of weapons (IDF spokesperson, January 2, 2024).

► **Ibrahim Qanan, a correspondent for al-Ghad TV in Khan Yunis,** reported that a "massive number of tank shells" were fired at the center of Khan Yunis. Among the areas attacked were the old market and nearby streets (al-Ghad TV, January 2, 2024). A photographer from Wafa TV, who was in the main building of the Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis, recorded the situation in the city, showing Israeli Air Force aircraft flying over Khan Yunis and with the sound of explosions in the background (Wafa YouTube channel, January 2, 2024). The **video also showed Hamas police vehicles, which have regularly been stationed at the main entrance to Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis since the beginning of the war** (Wafa YouTube channel, January 2, 2024).



**Right: Israeli Air Force aircraft in the skies above Khan Yunis. Left: IDF attacks on Khan Yunis (Wafa YouTube channel, January 2, 2024)**



**Hamas police vehicles parked at the main entrance to Nasser Hospital (Wafa YouTube channel, January 2, 2024)**

## Palestinian reactions to the fighting

► **Senior terrorist Abu Obeida, spokesman for Hamas' military-terrorist wing**, listed its "[alleged] achievements" during the last four days: completely or partially destroying 71 military vehicles; killing 16 soldiers and wounding dozens; carrying out 42 "military missions" against the IDF forces, which left a number of dead and wounded soldiers; capturing two houses and two tunnels and detonating them on IDF forces; detonating a minefield to attack IDF vehicles and soldiers; and carried out two sniping operations. He also claimed they shot at a helicopter in the skies over the Gaza Strip, shot down two patrol aircraft, took control of an unmanned aerial vehicle, attacked headquarters, command rooms on the ground and concentrations of military forces using mortars and short-range rockets along all the combat axes in the Gaza Strip, and launched a barrage of M90 rockets at Tel Aviv (Shehab Telegram channel, January 1, 2024).

► **Terrorist Ali Abu Shahin, a member of the PIJ's political bureau and head of its media information department**, claimed the "resistance" [terrorist organizations] could continue

fighting, stand firm, and show creativity with its weapons. He mentioned the rocket barrage attacking Tel Aviv shortly after midnight on New Year's, which was launched from the northern Gaza Strip, claiming it was "an important message" at a time when Israel was talking about tightening control over the Gaza Strip and the beginning of a return to the cities, towns and villages near the Gaza border. He claimed it had weakened the morale of the Israeli public, whose leadership claims that the IDF controls the area and had caused the "resistance" significant damage. He also claimed the "resistance" showed photos "proving" it caused the IDF forces losses, and still controlled the area in terms of campaign management and military tactics, adapting to every new scenario and every new IDF plan. He claimed that generally speaking, the situation favored the "resistance," which controlled the field and could continue fighting for months (al-Jazeera Mubasher TV website, January 2, 2024).

### Israeli casualties


► **According to an unofficial estimate, since October 7 approximately 1,300 Israeli people have been killed. According to the IDF spokesperson, 507 of them are soldiers and officers (of whom 173 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

► "Palestinian sources" knowledgeable about the prisoner exchange talks between Hamas and Israel reported that Hamas had waived the condition of a permanent ceasefire, and agreed to release about 40 Israeli hostages in exchange for a 40-day ceasefire (one hostage each day), and the withdrawal of IDF forces from the Gaza Strip. In return, Israel would release an agreed-on list of Palestinian prisoners, Gazans would return to the north, and the delivery of aid to the Strip would increase. The sources claimed Hamas had informed the Qatari and Egyptian mediators of its position, who then conveyed it to Israel. The "sources" noted that the talks involving Egypt, Qatar, the United States, Hamas and Israel continued, and that so far no agreement had been reached. It was also reported that Hamas wanted a longer ceasefire than the previous one, but was prepared to apply the standards of the previous agreement, so that the remaining women who were not soldiers would be released according to the "equation" of "one for three." "The sources" revealed that Hamas agreed to the release of Palestinian prisoners serving "medium" prison sentences, in addition to the release of all those detained

in the Gaza Strip during the war, again according to the "equation" of three Palestinian detainees for one Israeli hostage. The process of releasing the hostages would change depending on the situation on the ground and logistical conditions, and would eventually lead to the release of somewhat more than 40 women and elderly Israeli hostages (Arab World Press News Agency (AWP), January 2, 2024).

► **Senior terrorist Ali Abu Shahin, a member of the PIJ's political bureau**, stated that there was nothing new regarding the negotiations and that in his opinion Israel was being stubborn. He claimed that if Israel wanted its hostages and the United States aspired to regional stability, two conditions had to be met, a complete cessation of "aggression" and a full, complete withdrawal of IDF forces, only then would it be possible to discuss "everything." He said they would not agree to any negotiations with Israel as long as the "aggression" continued, would not negotiate under fire and the united Palestinian position was that the "aggression" had to stop before they moved on to the next stages (al-Jazeera Mubasher TV website, January 2, 2024).

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## The Gaza Strip

### Palestinian casualties

► **The Hamas-controlled the ministry of health in the Gaza Strip** reported that as of the afternoon of January 2, 2024, the number of dead since the beginning of the war stood at 22,185 and the number of wounded at 57,035 (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, January 2, 2024).

► Dr. Ashraf al-Qidra held a press conference at the Tel Sultan Hospital in Rafah, where he claimed that "only very limited medical aid" entered the Gaza Strip due to restrictions imposed by Israel (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, January 1, 2024).

### The situation in the Gaza Strip

► The Wafa YouTube channel reported the destruction of facilities and houses in Beit Lahia and Jabalia resulting from IDF activities in the area. Residents who were interviewed by the channel reported that their homes had been completely destroyed by "belts of fire" which focused on the area from Beit Lahia to Tel al-Zaatar in the Jabalia refugee camp (Wafa YouTube channel, January 1, 2024).



**Beit Lahia (right) and Jabalia (left) (Wafa YouTube channel, January 1, 2024)**

## Aid for the Gaza Strip

►The Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip crossing authority reported that since October 21, 2023, 5,294 humanitarian aid trucks entered the Strip, according to the following distribution: 397 trucks of medical equipment, 211 of medicine, 53 of medical appliances, 2,641 of food, 833 of water, 179 of cleaning materials, 59 of kitchen utensils, 94 of shoes and clothing, two of duffle bags, 497 of blankets and carpets, 125 trucks of tents and awnings, and one of electrical appliances and solar panels. In addition, 1,896 gas tanks and 3,793,177 liters of fuel were delivered, and 81 new ambulances (al-Ghad TV, January 1, 2024).



**An Egyptian Zakat [Charity] truck brings humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing (al-Ghad TV, January 2, 2024)**

## The issues of a ceasefire and "the day after"

►Given the discourse in Israel about the settlement of the Gaza Strip and the transfer of the Palestinians to other places, Hamas claimed the statements made by the Israeli leadership about removing the Palestinians from the Strip were only "daydreams" which would fail thanks to their "courageous resistance" [unequivocal terrorism]. Hamas called on the international community to force Israel's leaders to take responsibility for their [alleged] "ongoing crimes" (Hamas Telegram channel, January 1, 2024). The PIJ stated that it



considered the American administration responsible for the Israeli statements and for encouraging Israel to implement them by inventing the term "voluntary displacement." In addition, according to the PIJ, they continued to face a war of displacement and relied on the bravery of the "fighters" [terrorist operatives] on the ground to foil Israel's plans (PIJ Telegram channel, January 1, 2024).

► **Regarding Israel's plans, senior terrorist Ali Abu Shahin, a member of the PIJ political bureau**, said the experience of 1948 would not be repeated, claiming the Palestinians preferred to suffer and die on their land than any alternative to their homeland. He [falsely] claimed that the idea of deportation and transfer was part of Zionist ideology, was common to all Israeli political parties, and was not limited only to the Gaza Strip, but was part of Israeli strategy and action had to be taken to thwart it. Asked how, he claimed Israel had tried to implement the plan from the beginning of the war but failed due to the "firm stand of the Palestinians," who were prepared to sacrifice everything to prevent the plan from coming to fruition and due to the functioning of the "resistance" [terrorist operatives] on the ground (al-Jazeera Mubasher TV website, January 2, 2024) .

## Hamas tribute to Qassem Soleimani

► Hezbollah held a ceremony to mark the anniversary of the killing of Qassem Soleimani, commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps' (IRGC) Qods Force, and of Abu Mahdi al-Muhandas;<sup>2</sup> it was held at a venue named after Sheikh Abdel Amir Qublan in Sidon. The ceremony was attended by Iran's ambassador to Lebanon; Sheikh Nabil Qaouq, a member of Hezbollah's Central Council; Sheikh Maher Hammoud, president of the World Union of Resistance Scholars; and **senior Hamas terrorist Osama Hamdan**. Hamdan said in a speech that in the current "campaign," the action, influence and part played by Qassem Soleimani and those who worked with him as comrades or "soldiers" [terrorist operatives] were obvious for all to see. He said Soleimani had carried the issue of "Palestine" and Jerusalem to every arena in which he operated, adding that Abu Mahdi al-Muhandas followed the same path and "Palestine" was his top priority, and his comrades continued their path. Hamdan added that on December 31, 2023 at midnight, while many stayed awake and waited for the beginning of a new year, the "resistance" fighters [terrorist operatives] in the Gaza Strip launched rockets at Tel Aviv after Israel thought it had succeeded in eliminating their rocket capabilities. He

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<sup>2</sup> Deputy commander of the "popular mobilization," a pro-Iranian Shi'ite militia in Iraq. He was eliminated along with Qassem Soleimani.

[falsely] claimed it was the largest barrage since October 7 and its objective was to tell the world that the "resistance" [anti-Israeli terrorism] would not be broken, and would continue until "victory" (al-'Ahed website, January 1, 2024; al-Mayadeen TV website, January 1, 2024).

► **Khaled Qadoumi, Hamas representative in Iran**, interviewed on the anniversary of the killing of Qassem Soleiman, said Soleimani had helped the "jihad fighters and the Islamic resistance" [Palestinian terrorist operatives and organizations] in various aspects. His most important contribution, according to Qadoumi, was the transfer of knowledge and weapons and training to fight in the field. He said Soleimani had visited "Palestine" and was now greatly missed, even though his disciples continued his path, because no one could fill his shoes. Asked when the relationship between Soleimani and the Hamas leaders began, he said it was around the time the Hamas leaders were deported in 1993 [their deportation to Marj al-Zahour in Lebanon in December 1992], and Hamas' relationship with the IRGC also began around then. The relationship continued until 1998, when Soleimani became commander of the Qods Force, and he and the Hamas leadership had "a good relationship" until his death. Asked about Soleimani's effect on the current campaign, he replied that Soleimani's extensive "jihad" [terrorist] experience had been passed on to the next generation of Palestinian fighters [terrorist operatives], and they had inherited his "valuable legacy" regarding the path of jihad and fighting Israel. He added that they considered themselves indebted to Soleimani's efforts and were committed to continuing his path until the "liberation of Jerusalem" (Mehr Agency in Arabic, January 1, 2024).

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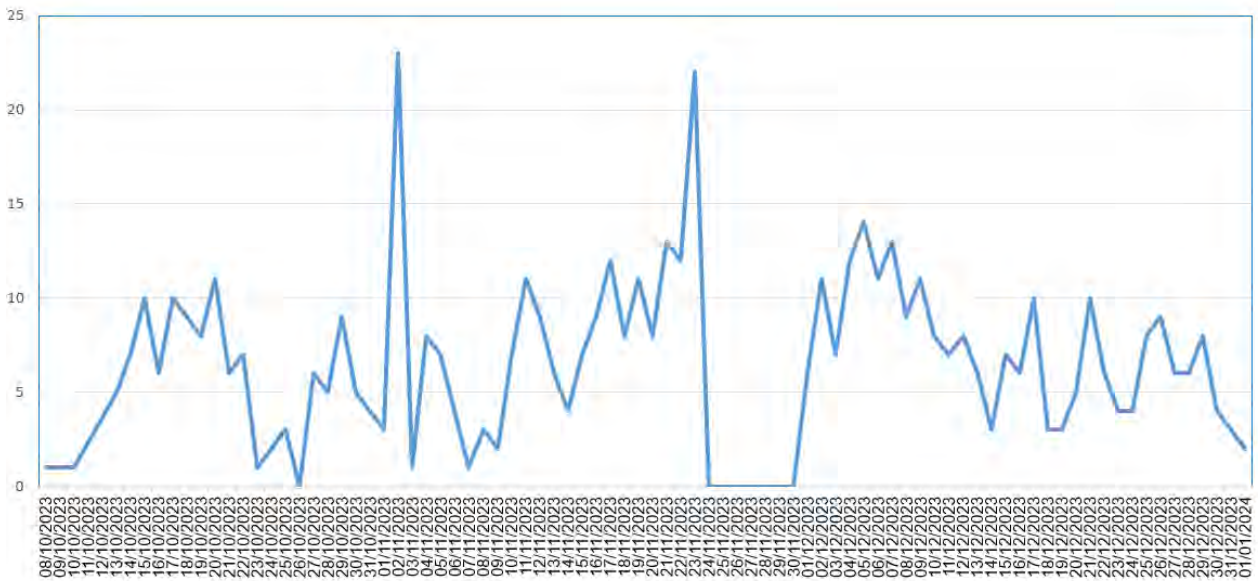
## The Northern Arena

### Hezbollah attacks

► Hezbollah continued attacking IDF posts and troop concentrations on the northern border. In the past day Hezbollah claimed responsibility for three anti-tank missile and rocket attacks (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 1-2, 2024). One rocket superficially wounded five IDF soldiers (IDF spokesperson, January 1, 2024).

► The number of attacks has been relatively small in recent days. The reason is unclear, but may be due to the escalation of IDF attacks in south Lebanon in response to Hezbollah's

attacks. Certain elements in Lebanon (mainly Christians) have criticized Hezbollah for dragging the country into war.



#### Daily Hezbollah attacks during Operation Iron Swords [Operation al-Aqsa Flood] (based on Hezbollah's claims of responsibility published on its combat information Telegram channel)

► In response to Hezbollah's attacks, the IDF attacked Hezbollah targets in south Lebanon with artillery fire and airstrikes, hitting rocket-launching positions, terrorist facilities and destroying military-terrorist sites used by Hezbollah operatives. In addition, a terrorist squad operating in the Houla area was eliminated (IDF spokesperson, January 1, 2024).



#### Attacking Hezbollah targets (IDF spokesperson, January 2, 2024)

► Lebanese sources reported a number of airstrikes and artillery fire carried out in southern Lebanon:

- ◆ **Ali Shoeib, a correspondent for al-Manar TV**, reported that an Israeli UAV attacked an empty house in Maroun al-Ras, about three kilometers north of Yaroun. He also reported that artillery was fired at **Majdal Zoun**, about eight kilometers northeast of Kibbutz Hanita (Ali Shoeib's X account, January 1, 2024).

- ◆ Kfar Kila was attacked from the air (Fouad Khreiss' X account, January 1, 2024).
- ◆ The area between the towns of Houla and Markaba, about two kilometers west of Margaliot, was attacked from the air. Considerable damage was done to the electric lines (Fouad Khreiss' X account, January 1, 2024).



**Right: Air strike in Kafr Kila. Left: Airstrike between Houla and Markaba (both from Fouad Khreiss' X account, January 1, 2024)**

- Local news in Meiss al-Jabal, south Lebanon, published information about the damage caused by the IDF's artillery fire to the town and its surroundings. It showed damage to local houses as well as to the town's government hospital (Meissyat Facebook page, January 1, 2024).



**Damage caused in Meiss al-Jabal (Meissyat Facebook page, January 1, 2024)**

- The social networks in south Lebanon documented the destruction of houses in the **town of Houla** near the Israeli border. One showed a video of a cat being rescued from the ruins (bintjbeil.org Facebook page, January 1, 2024).



Rescuing a cat from the ruins of a house (bintjbeil.org Facebook page, January 1, 2024)

## Casualties in Lebanon

► Hezbollah reported the deaths of four operatives, three of them from south Lebanon (Hezbollah's combat information Telegram channel, January 1, 2024):

- ◆ Hussein Ahmad Yahya, aka Jawad, from Kafr Kila in south Lebanon.
- ◆ Musa Hassan Sheet, aka Hadi, from Kafr Kila in south Lebanon.
- ◆ Jihad Musa Sheet, aka Abu Hussein, from Kafr Kila in south Lebanon.
- ◆ Abd al-Jalil Ali Hamza, aka Assad Allah, from al-Khader in the Beqa'a Valley.



Hezbollah fatalities (Hezbollah's combat information Telegram channel, January 1, 2024)

► Lebanese media reported that three medics working for Hezbollah's Islamic Health Organization<sup>3</sup> had been killed in an IDF attack on Kafr Kila. They noted that they were the first fatalities among the Lebanese rescue forces in the current conflict; brothers Jihad and Musa Sheet, and Hussein Yahya, belonged to the Hezbollah-affiliated Islamic Health Authority, (Janoubia, January 1, 2024). Hezbollah published their names on its list of "jihad fighters"

<sup>3</sup> For further information on the Islamic Health Organization, see the ITIC August 15, 2019 report, "[The Islamic Health Organization: Hezbollah institution providing health services to Hezbollah operatives and the Shiite population in general as a means for gaining influence and creating a Shiite mini-state within Lebanon](#)"

killed "on the way to Jerusalem" (Hezbollah's combat information Telegram channel, January 1, 2024).

## Lebanese Army / UNIFIL

► **Joseph Aoun, commander of the Lebanese army**, visited UNIFIL headquarters where he met with **Sébastien Lecornu, minister of the French Armed Forces**. The two discussed UNIFIL's mission and the protection of UNIFIL soldiers and Lebanese army soldiers. Aoun stressed the importance of cooperation between the Lebanese army and UNIFIL regarding Security Council Resolution 1701, especially in the current exceptional circumstances. Lecornu also visited Deir Kifa and spoke with soldiers of UNIFIL's French battalion. Aoun visited the headquarters of the Lebanese Army's Fifth Intervention Fawj (regiment) in Kafr Dunin and was updated on the force's latest activities following developments in south Lebanon. During his visit, he also expressed condolences over the death of a Lebanese army soldier in an Israeli attack on December 5, 2023 (al-Nashra, January 1, 2024).

## The Lebanese government

► **Nabih Berri, Amal's leader and speaker of the Lebanese parliament**, said they were committed to the presence of UNIFIL forces in south Lebanon and regarded them as part of them. As for Resolution 1701, Berri noted that they were prepared to implement it, but Israel was impeding it, and that implementation of the resolution would begin only with Israel's withdrawal from point B1 in Rosh Hanikra and would continue with the halt of Israel's penetration into Lebanese airspace. Moreover, he declared that they would not give up one inch of Lebanese territory. He expressed his concern over Israel's ongoing attacks on villages near the border and its attempt to "drag the resistance to war" against Lebanon's will (al-Sharq al-Awsat, January 2, 2024).

## Syria

► On the evening of January 1, 2024, five rocket launches were identified from Syrian territory into Israeli territory. They fell in open areas. There were no casualties, and no damage was caused. In response, on the night of January 1, 2024, the IDF attacked Syrian army infrastructure (IDF spokesperson, January 2, 2024).

► Citing a "military source," SANA News Agency reported that at around 4:35 a.m., Israel had carried out an airstrike from the direction of the Golan Heights toward several targets in the Damascus area. Property was reportedly damaged (SANA, January 2, 2024). Another source

noted that Israeli Air Force fighter jets had fired several missiles from the direction of the Golan Heights at the area of the town of Kanaker, about 30 kilometers southwest of Damascus (and about 30 kilometers east of Majdal Shams). According to them, the target of the attack was an artillery company belonging to the Syrian Army's 121<sup>st</sup> Brigade, where Hezbollah operatives were deployed. It was also reported that a number of Hezbollah headquarters were located in the area. Casualties and material damage were reported (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, January 2, 2024).

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## Judea and Samaria

### Counterterrorism activities

- ▶ The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities throughout Judea and Samaria. During the night, seven wanted Palestinians were detained. Since the beginning of the war in the Gaza Strip, more than 2,550 wanted Palestinians have been detained, including about 1,300 Hamas operatives (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, January 2, 2024).
- ▶ During the night, Israeli security forces operated in the town of 'Azzun (east of Qalqilya). Armed Palestinians shot and threw IEDs at the forces, who identified the building where they were hiding. After an exchange of fire, the forces killed four armed operatives and seized three improvised Carlo weapons they were using. An IDF officer was wounded in the exchange of fire (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, January 2, 2024).
- ▶ The Palestinian media reported that Israeli security forces had raided homes and businesses in 'Azzun in the early morning hours and seized security cameras. Four Palestinians were reportedly killed during an exchange of fire with the Israeli security forces. Mosques in 'Azzun lamented their deaths and called for a general strike as a sign of mourning (Ma'an and Shehab X account, January 2, 2024).
- ▶ **Rawhi Fattouh, chairman of the PLO's Palestinian National Council**, condemned the killing of the four. He said the operation was carried out under international silence, allowing Israel to carry out its operations in the Gaza Strip as well (Wafa, January 2, 2024).



**Right: The weapons found in the possession of the armed operatives in 'Azzun (IDF spokesperson's X account, January 2, 2024). Left: Palestinians gather near the site where the armed squad was killed (Shehab X account, January 2, 2024)**

► In another activity to locate weapons in the city of Qalqilya, an IDF force shot at an armed Palestinian who shot at it and killed him (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, January 2, 2024).

## Death of a Palestinian prisoner

► The Israel Prison Service announced the death of a security prisoner from Megiddo Prison. According to the statement, the prisoner was a 23-year-old Palestinian from Nablus, a Fatah operative who was serving a prison sentence for several offenses, including shooting (Ynet, January 1, 2024). The Palestinian Prisoners' Affairs Authority and the Palestinian Prisoners' Club said he was Abdul Rahman Bassem al-Bahsh, who had been detained since May 31, 2022, and sentenced to 35 months in prison. In a joint statement, they claimed that al-Bahsh had been killed, and that it was a continuation of the policy of assassinating prisoners. They said al-Bahsh was the seventh prisoner killed since the beginning of the campaign, and called on all international human rights institutions, first and foremost the UN and the Red Cross, to fulfill their duties and exert pressure to stop the "unprecedented crimes" against prisoners in Israeli jails (Palestinian Authority for Prisoners and Released Prisoners' Affairs Facebook page, January 1, 2024). Zaher Jabarin, who is in charge of Hamas' office of the dead, prisoners and wounded, said the prisoner's assassination would return as hell to Israel, and that the "resistance" would teach Israel the appropriate lessons (Hurriya News, January 1, 2024).





Abdul Rahman al-Bahsh (Palestinian Authority for Prisoners and Released Prisoners' Affairs Facebook page, January 1, 2024)

## Blaming the PA's security services

►The Jenin Battalion issued a statement accusing the PA's security services of pursuing resistance fighters in Jenin since Operation Bayit Vagan (the July 2023 Jenin incursion), seizing their weapons and even shooting at them. In the statement, the PA's security services were accused of killing Burqin Battalion operative Ahmed Hashem Obeidi on December 31, 2023. The Jenin Battalion stressed that the resistance factions in Jenin avoided clashes with operatives of the PA's security services, but the latter did not stop confronting them (QudsN, January 1, 2024).

## Solidarity with the Gaza Strip



March and military display organized by the Jenin Battalion in support of the "resistance" in the Gaza Strip (@Khaldounnaji X account, January 1, 2024)

## Palestinian Authority (PA)

►According to Israeli media reports, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair arrived in Israel and met with senior Israeli officials to serve as an emissary to mediate between Israel's plans

for the "day after" and the moderate Arab countries and examine the possibility of receiving refugees from the Gaza Strip in countries around the world (Israeli media, December 31, 2023). Against this background, **Mahmoud Abbas' office** issued a condemnation. Abbas' office said they rejected any attempt to uproot Palestinians from their land. It demanded that the British government not concern themselves with the future of the Palestinians, noting that they considered Blair a persona non grata in the Palestinian territories. The office also appealed to the UN secretary-general and asked him to do everything possible to prevent such actions that violated international law (Wafa, January 1, 2024).

► **Salam Fayyad, former PA prime minister**, whose name was mentioned as the person who would run the Gaza Strip, said he had no part or side in the Western dialogue on running the Gaza Strip. Fayyad said it was an internal Palestinian matter that had to be carried out within the framework of a national consensus, and that any engagement with this issue perpetuated the internal Palestinian rift and expanded the separation of the Gaza Strip from the PA (QudsN X account, January 2, 2024).

► **Diab al-Louh, Palestinian ambassador to Cairo**, met with the governor of northern Sinai. Al-Louh said Mahmoud Abbas, PA's chairman, was expected to visit Egypt to discuss the latest developments. However, he did not specify a date. He stressed that Egypt was a vital strategic ally for the Palestinians. The governor of northern Sinai reported that the wounded were being admitted to hospitals in Egypt and treated there (al-Youm al-Sabaa, January 2, 2024).

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## Iran

► **Hossein Amir Abdollahian, Iranian foreign minister**, met with **Mohammad Abdeslam, spokesman for the Ansar Allah movement** (the Houthis in Yemen) and head of the movement's negotiating team, and thanked him for the Houthis' support for the Palestinians. Abdollahian also stressed Iran's support for the peace talks between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia. Abdeslam thanked Iran for its continued support of the "resistance front"<sup>4</sup> (ISNA, January 1, 2024).

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<sup>4</sup> Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinian terrorist organizations, the Shi'ite Houthis in Yemen and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq.

## Pro-Iranian militias

### Iraq

► The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for several attacks against American army bases: a drone attack on the base in al-Shadadi, Syria; a rocket attack on the Koniko oil field in Syria; a drone attack on al-Qarya al-Khadra in Syria; a rocket attack on al-Shadadi, Syria; and a drone attack on the Ramilan base in Syria (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram account, January 1 and 2, 2024).

► At the same time, two "security sources" reported that a drone had been intercepted over Erbil Airport in northern Iraq, where American forces are stationed. It was also reported that it was not yet clear whether damage was caused as a result of the attack (Reuters, January 2, 2024).

### Yemen

► There were reports of clashes between the Houthis and an American warship (Sky News, January 1, 2024). A Houthi political bureau source denied that there had been clashes with an American warship in the Red Sea (al-Jazeera, January 2, 2024).

► **Ali al-Qahum, a member of the Houthis' political bureau**, said the United States and Britain had acted with extensive aggression against their forces in the Red Sea on December 31, 2023, noting that they had ignited a campaign from which they would not be able to extricate themselves easily and that the price would be very high. He stressed that the United States and Britain had to bear the consequences of their actions (Sputnik, January 1, 2024).

► Hamas issued a statement expressing condolences over the deaths of ten Houthis in attacks by American forces in the Red Sea. Hamas' statement expressed its appreciation for the Houthis' activities and for the solidarity and defense of the Palestinians and their just national cause (Hamas Telegram channel, January 1, 2024). The Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) condemned the "barbaric American aggression" against Yemen. The PIJ statement called on members of the Arab and Islamic nation to confront the United States by all possible means (PIJ Telegram channel, January 1, 2024).

## The International Arena

### Turkey

► Turkey's prosecutor general announced that arrest warrants had been issued for 46 people suspected of Mossad activity "against foreign elements in Turkey." According to reports,

Turkish authorities detained 33 people suspected of spying for the Mossad, and police simultaneously raided 57 locations in eight different provinces in Turkey. The assessment in Turkey is reportedly that the objective of the suspects was to identify, track, abduct and assassinate foreigners in Turkey (Daily Sabah, January 2, 2024).

► On January 1, 2024, a mass demonstration of support for the Palestinians was held in Istanbul (Anadolu News, January 1, 2024).



**Mass demonstration in Istanbul in support for the Palestinians (Anadolu News, January 1, 2024)**