



The Iron Swords The war in the south of Israel Updated to 1 p.m., October 10, 2023

Overview

- ▶ **The southern sector:** IDF fighters continued battling terrorists in the Israeli villages and IDF posts in the area surrounding the Gaza Strip. Later in the day, the IDF spokesman announced that full control of the fence had been regained. The massive attacks against Gaza from the air, sea and land continued. The terrorist organizations launched rocket barrage after barrage, although fewer than during the first two days. Several people were injured and property damage was reported.
- ▶ Many Gazans sought shelter from the IDF attacks in UNRWA schools. Hamas hinted they would harm the Israeli captives if Israel continued the attacks. Hamas also continued to encourage the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria and Israeli Arabs to join the war and called for focusing activity this coming Friday, October 13, 2023. Ali Barake, a senior Hamas figure, gave in an interview in which he revealed details about Hamas' terrorist attacks, claiming that neither Iran nor Hezbollah had participated in carrying it out. He also claimed Hamas had sufficient weapons and operatives for an extended campaign.
- ▶ **The northern sector:** Tensions rose in the north of Israel after a terrorist squad of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) operatives infiltrated Israeli territory. Two of the terrorists were killed and a third returned to Lebanese territory. In the clashes with the terrorists an IDF officer was killed and five soldiers were injured. In response, the IDF shot and killed a number of Hezbollah operatives. Hezbollah then fired mortar shells at two IDF bases in northern Israel, "as an initial response."
- ▶ **Judea and Samaria:** Throughout Judea and Samaria there were several attacks and attempts to carry out attacks. Palestinians also held rallies and demonstrations in support of the wars. Two Palestinians were killed during clashes with Israeli security forces. Senior Palestinian Authority (PA) figures continued "diplomatic" activity while blaming Israel for the situation.

▶ **The international arena:** Expressions of support and sympathy for Israel continued around the globe, including in several Arab countries. Militias in Iraq and Jihad groups in Syria expressed support for Hamas.

The Combat Arena

IDF activity

▶ **Ground activity:** IDF fighters continued battling terrorists in Israeli villages and IDF posts in the area surrounding the Gaza Strip. The main combat sites were Kibbutz Kissufim, Kibbutz Nahal Oz and Netiv HaAsara; the IDF regained control over the villages and posts, and fired artillery at the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesman, October 9 and 10, 2023).

▶ The IDF spokesman reported that full control of the fence along the Gaza Strip border had been restored, adding that during the past 24 hours not a single terrorist had entered Israeli territory. He said the IDF controlled the fence by means of surveillance and fire power, and engineering forces were working to seal the breaches. In the meantime, he said, IDF forces were working to clear the area lest individual terrorists still might be hiding. The spokesman noted that at the current stage, the suspected existence of tunnels crossing into Israeli territory had not been verified (IDF spokesman, October 10, 2023).

▶ **Aerial activity:** Aerial attacks in the Gaza Strip against terrorist targets, mainly those belonging to Hamas, increased. More than 200 attacks were carried out in the Rimal neighborhood in Gaza City and in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip. Among the targets attacked were (IDF spokesman, October 9 and 10, 2023):

- ◆ A building used by Hamas operatives for interrogations.
- ◆ The shaft of an attack tunnel and military facilities.
- ◆ A mosque where an operational headquarters was located.
- ◆ Weapons storehouses.
- ◆ A building where many PIJ terrorist operatives were staying.
- ◆ An armed terrorist squad on the fence in the Zikim area in the northern Gaza Strip.



**An attack on operational headquarters used by Hamas and the PIJ
(IDF website, October 10, 2023)**



Right: Attack on a terrorist squad in the Zikim area. Left: Attack on terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesman's website, October 10, 2023)

- ▶ **Naval activity:** While the Israeli Air Force was carrying out airstrikes, Israeli Navy forces attacked Hamas targets along the Gaza shore. Navy ships also prevented boats from sailing from the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ Hamas' military-terrorist wing claimed it had launched Mitvar 3 surface-to-air missiles at Israeli F16 planes flying in the skies over the sea off the coast of the Gaza Strip, at a range of 22 miles (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, October 9, 2023).
- ▶ The IDF spokesman reported that as of 6:30 a.m. on October 10, 2023, 640 attacks had been carried out on terrorist targets: 492 attacks on rocket launching systems, 95 attacks on combat and terrorist targets, 26 attacks on strategic military facilities and 27 attacks on underground targets (IDF spokesman, October 10, 2023).
- ▶ **Mai al-Kayla, PA minister of health,** claimed Israel was deliberately attacking hospitals and medical personnel. She called on the international community to intervene immediately to restrain the "aggression" against medical centers, ambulances and rescue teams in Gaza, calling it a "blatant violation of international law" (Wafa, October 9, 2023).

Rocket fire

▶ In the meantime, Palestinian terrorists continued launching of rockets at Israel, although to a relatively lesser extent than during the two preceding days. Most of the attacks targeted the Israeli villages surrounding the Gaza Strip. Two rocket barrages were launched at targets further away:

▶ In the afternoon, a massive rocket barrage targeted the central Israel and coastal plain areas.

▶ In the afternoon, a massive barrage targeted the Jerusalem area. Rocket hits were identified in the neighborhoods of Har Adar, Mevo Bitar and Abu Gush. Several people were injured and property damage was reported.



A fire caused by a rocket hitting a house in Ashkelon (QudsN Twitter account, October 9, 2023)

▶ **Since the beginning of the campaign, about 4,900 rockets have been fired at Israel: 2,800 fell in open areas, 350 rockets were intercepted by the Iron Dome aerial defense system; and 80 direct hits were identified.**

Israeli casualties

▶ So far **more than 900 deaths have been reported**. According to the Israeli ministry of health, there were 2,900 wounded Israelis in hospitals across the country. About 150 Israelis are being held in the Gaza Strip by Hamas and the PIJ.



Photos from the settlements surrounding Gaza after the terrorist attack by Hamas (QudsN Twitter account, October 10, 2023)

The Gaza Strip

The situation on the ground in Gaza

► The Palestinian media in Gaza continue headlining the extent of the destruction and intensity of the IDF attacks in the Gaza Strip. They mainly loop videos of harmed children and publish photos of bodies and their extraction from under the rubble (Twitter account of photojournalist Hassan Aslih, Shehab Twitter account, October 9, 10, 2023).



Right: The al-Rimal neighborhood in Gaza City after Israeli Air Force strikes during the night (Shehab Twitter account, October 10, 2023). Left: The aftermath of an attack on the building of the Palestinian telecommunications company PALTEL in Gaza City (Twitter account of photojournalist Hassan Aslih, October 10, 2023)



Right: Israeli Air Force night strikes in Gaza City (Twitter account of photojournalist Hassan Aslih, October 9, 2023). Left: Attack on a target in the northern Gaza Strip (Shehab Twitter account, October 9, 2023)

► **Abu Hamza, the spokesman for the PIJ's military-terrorist wing**, published a video message warning that if Israel cared about the lives of the soldiers, officers and "settlers" held by the PIJ, it had to immediately stop attacking homes and killing "innocent people." If not, he threatened, they would suffer the same fate as Ron Arad more than forty years ago¹ (PIJ military-terrorist wing Telegram channel, October 10, 2023).



Abu Hamza. The Arabic on the screen reads, "Our resistance continues; a bomb for a bomb and a kill for a kill (al-Mayadeen TV Twitter account, October 9, 2023)

► At 1:00 p.m. on October 10, 2023, the ministry of health in Ramallah reported **770 dead and 4,000 wounded** Palestinians since the beginning of the fighting in Gaza (Ma'an, October 10, 2023).

► According to a UNRWA report, **more than 187,000 people** have been displaced from their homes, of whom at least 137,000 have sought shelter in dozens of the organization's schools. UNRWA stated that the numbers were expected to rise in the coming days. According

¹ **Ron Arad** was an Israeli Air Force weapon systems officer who has been officially classified as missing in action since October 1986. He was lost on a mission over Lebanon and is believed to have been captured by the Shiite Amal organization and later handed over to Hezbollah. He is presumed dead (Wikipedia).

to the agency, its absorption capacity has reached 90% (Wafa, October 10, 2023). According to claims, 18 facilities belonging to UNRWA have been damaged since the beginning of the fighting. According to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, two schools managed by UNRWA which served as shelters for displaced families were damaged (UN website, October 9, 2023).

▶ According to the Gazan energy commission, the fuel available to operate the power plant in Gaza will be sufficient until next Tuesday (October 17, 2023). It also stated that if the current situation continued, it would be forced to completely shut down the power plant, which could lead to a "humanitarian disaster." The commission called on the international community and human rights and humanitarian organizations to intervene immediately and urgently to force Israel to resume the supply of electricity from Israel to Gaza (al-Bawaba 24, October 10, 2023).

▶ **The Secretary General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres**, expressed deep concern at Israel's announcement that it would impose a complete blockade on the Gaza Strip and emphasized that the humanitarian situation in Gaza was dire even before the hostilities and now it would only deteriorate. He called on all parties to allow the UN access to provide urgent humanitarian aid to Palestinian citizens in the Gaza Strip (UN website, October 9, 2023).

▶ **Mahmoud Abbas** spoke on the phone with Guterres and asked him to intervene immediately, especially in the Gaza Strip, where Israel was threatening to withhold all humanitarian needs from the population. Guterres replied that the UN was making efforts to provide humanitarian aid to the residents of the Gaza Strip and make contacts with international parties to stop the escalation (Wafa, October 9, 2023).

▶ According to the Gaza Strip crossings authority, the Rafah Crossing is operating normally. Reportedly, about 1,000 Gazans are expected to leave the Strip (Rafah Crossing News Facebook page, October 10, 2023). Later, **Iyad al-Buzum, spokesman for the ministry of the interior in Gaza**, said the crossing administration on the Egyptian side announced it had to be evacuated immediately because of threats of attack (Safa, October 10, 2023).



Activity at the Rafah Crossing (Rafah Crossing News Facebook page, October 10, 2023)

Following the IDF spokesman's call for citizens living in Gaza to flee to Egypt to escape IDF attacks in the Gaza Strip, "senior Egyptian sources" warned against pushing Palestinians towards the border with Egypt and calling for a mass exodus from the Gaza Strip. According to the "sources," the purpose of Israel's "dangerous calls" was to empty the Strip of its inhabitants and eliminate the Palestinian issue, and they emphasized that "Egyptian sovereignty is not something to be toyed with." One of the "senior sources" claimed Israel had the responsibility of creating humanitarian crossings to transfer aid to the residents of the Gaza Strip (al-Qahara Network, October 10, 2023).

Hamas

Hamas' political bureau issued a statement listing a number of reasons "which justify its fighting Operation al-Aqsa Storm." According to Hamas, the operation is "a legitimate right" of the Palestinians based on all international and Sharia laws to "defend themselves." Other reasons cited by Hamas were the [alleged] desecration of the holy places and in particular al-Aqsa Mosque, Israel's aggression, violations by the settlers and the settlements, Israel's [alleged] crimes against the prisoners and the war [allegedly] waged by Israel against the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria (Hamas Telegram channel, October 9, 2023).

Hamas continued attempts to recruit operatives for the war. A statement published by Hamas called on the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria and east Jerusalem, Israeli Arabs, the Palestinians in the dispersal and the entire Arab nation to join forces with Hamas. The statement claimed that this coming Friday, October 13, 2023, would be a day of general mobilization in the Arab and Islamic world to show solidarity with the Palestinian people and their "resistance" [terrorist attacks on Israel], to be called "Friday of Operation al-Aqsa

Storm." Hamas also called for demonstrations and confrontations with IDF soldiers ("the cowardly occupation army") everywhere. Another call was addressed to the Palestinians in the refugee camps and the dispersal, asking them to march en masse towards Israel's borders (Hamas Telegram channel, October 10, 2023).

▶ During the past 24 hours, **Abu Obeida, spokesman for Hamas' military-terrorist wing**, issued several announcements. In a recent statement he said Hamas would never negotiate under fire and Israel should "prepare to pay the price." He called the declaration of war on the Strip and the insinuations of a ground entry "ridiculous," because how would Israel fight in the Gaza Strip after Hamas had put the IDF's Gaza Division out of commission? He also stated Hamas was prepared for prolonged combat (Telegram channel of the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing, October 9, 2023).

▶ **Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau**, said they had informed all the parties who contacted them regarding the abductees ("enemy prisoners") that the matter would not be resolved before the end of the war, and only at a price that satisfied them. He added that Operation al-Aqsa Storm was a Palestinian war, but they believed that all members of the Muslim people and nation, and first and foremost the "resistance," [i.e., the "resistance axis," Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinian terrorist organizations and the Houthis in Yemen] had to fight in the war. He claimed Israel would pay a high price for its destruction and "cruelty" in the Gaza Strip (Hamas Telegram channel, October 10, 2023).

Details of the Hamas attack

▶ **Ali Barake, who was Hamas's representative in Lebanon and now serves as the head of Hamas' national and international relations department and is responsible for coordinating with other Palestinian organizations**, said the attack was planned by about half a dozen senior Hamas commanders in Gaza, and that even Hamas' closest allies had not been informed in advance of the date of its execution, but rather only after the attack had begun. He denied reports that Iranian security officials helped plan the attack or approved it at a meeting held in Beirut last week. However, he noted that allies such as Iran and Hezbollah would join the war if Gaza were subjected to a war of annihilation.

▶ Barake admitted that Iran and Hezbollah had helped Hamas in the past, but said that since Operation Protective Edge in 2014 Hamas had been manufacturing its own rockets and training its own operatives. He also denied the speculations that the attack, which was planned for more than a year, was intended to harm American efforts to convince Saudi Arabia

to normalize relations with Israel. He claimed the motives for the attack were a variety of actions taken by the "extreme right-wing government in Israel" in the past year, including the "provocative" visits to the Temple Mount and the increased pressure on the Palestinian prisoners. He also said Hamas believed Israel had plans to assassinate its top leaders.

► Barake also noted that even Hamas was shocked by the extent of the attack's "success" [sic]. He said they had expected Israel to prevent or limit the surprise. He added they had been surprised by the great collapse [of Israel's deterrence], as they had planned to make some achievements and take prisoners [to use as bargaining chips to release Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails]. According to Barake, nearly 2,000 Hamas operatives, of an army of 40,000, had participated in the fighting. He claimed Hamas was ready to fight a long war against Israel, and had an arsenal of rockets sufficient for months and were well-prepared for all scenarios, including one of a prolonged war.

► Barake also stated that Hamas would use the dozens of Israelis it had abducted to secure the release of all the Arabs detained in Israeli prisons and even some Palestinians imprisoned in the United States on charges of funding Hamas (AP, October 10, 2023; The Guardian, October 10, 2023).

The Northern Arena

► In the north, tensions have also risen in the past 24 hours (IDF spokesman, October 9 and 10, 2023):

► **On the afternoon of October 9, 2023, there was concern** that terrorists had infiltrated from the Lebanese border in the western Galilee. Local residents were asked not to leave their homes. Later, several terrorists who crossed the border into Israeli territory were identified. IDF fighters, a combat helicopter and an aircraft arrived at the scene and exchanged fire with them. Two terrorists were killed and another escaped to Lebanese territory. During the exchange of fire, an IDF aircraft shot at two Hezbollah observation posts and a Hezbollah emergency post. At the same time, artillery was fired in the area. An IDF officer was killed and five soldiers were wounded (IDF spokesman, October 9 and 10, 2023).

► The PIJ's military-terrorist wing claimed responsibility for dispatching the squad (PIJ military-terrorist wings Telegram channel, October 9, 2023). The two were residents of refugee camps in Lebanon.



**Two PIJ operatives killed in the clash in northern Israel
(Website of the PIJ's military-terrorist wing, October 9, 2023)**

- ▶ **Ali Abu Shahin, a member of the PIJ's political bureau and in charge of its media information department**, said that the “heroic attack” carried out by the military wing from Lebanon was part of Operation al-Aqsa Storm (Paltoday, October 10, 2023). At a rally held on October 6, 2023, to mark the 36th anniversary of the organization’s founding, the PIJ’s military-terrorist wing announced the establishment of new battalions, including one in the Lebanese arena named after Commander Mahmoud al-Majdhoub, and another in the Syrian arena named after Commander Ali al-Aswad (alqudsnews website, October 6, 2023).
- ▶ In response to the squad's entering Israeli territory, IDF forces fired artillery at several towns and villages in southern Lebanon. Several Hezbollah operatives were reportedly killed (Hezbollah reported three, but seven were also reported).
- ▶ In response to the artillery fire, at around 9 p.m. on October 9, 2023, mortar shells were fired from Lebanese territory at IDF bases in Israel. No casualties were reported. In response, IDF forces fired artillery at Hezbollah posts in south Lebanon.
- ▶ Hezbollah said in an announcement that after three of its fighters were killed in Israeli attacks in Lebanon, the organization's **initial response** was to attack the Biranit and Avivim bases with guided missiles and mortar shells, which scored direct hits (combat media information Telegram channel, October 9, 2023). Hezbollah also noted that rumors of a larger number of fatalities were incorrect (al-Manar, October 9, 2023).
- ▶ An article written by **Ibrahim al-Amin, who is close to Hassan Nasrallah**, related to the tension in south Lebanon, saying that Israel’s attack on known Hezbollah posts on the border reflected Israel’s tension, and sent a clear message that Hezbollah bore direct responsibility for any action directed against it from Lebanese territory. Regarding Hezbollah’s announcement that the attack on the Biranit and Avivim bases was only an “initial response” to the killing of Hezbollah operatives, he said Hezbollah could be expected to act

according to equation that required the organization to carry out a military operation that would lead to the deaths of at least three Israeli soldiers, and Israel's response to that might lead to a broader confrontation. As to the war in the Gaza Strip, he said the Hamas leadership in the Gaza Strip had informed the "resistance" elements outside the Gaza Strip that its rocket capabilities were capable of dealing with Israel for an extended period of time and it was prepared for an extensive ground war (al-Akhbar, October 10, 2023).

UNIFIL

► UNIFIL forces reported explosions in the al-Bustan area in southwest Lebanon. **Aroldo Lázaro, the force commander**, is reportedly in contact with all the parties involved and called on them to exercise restraint and use UNIFIL's coordination and liaison mechanisms to prevent further escalation and loss of life (UNIFIL Twitter account, October 9, 2023).

Lebanese Prime Minister meets with Lebanese army commander

► In light of the events, **Najib Mikati, the prime minister of the interim government in Lebanon**, met with **Joseph Aoun, commander of the Lebanese army**, to discuss the developments (Twitter account of the Lebanese Prime Minister's Office, October 10, 2023).

Judea, Samaria, and the Palestinian Authority

Events

► The ministry of health in Ramallah reported that two Palestinians were killed by IDF gunfire during clashes related to Israel's attacks in Gaza. One was killed in Beit Ummar and the other in the al-Arroub refugee camp (north of Hebron). The number of fatalities in Judea and Samaria since the beginning of the war in the Gaza Strip stands at 18 (Ma'an, October 10, 2023).

► Meanwhile, several attacks or attempted attacks were carried out:

◆ On the evening of October 9, 2023, shots were fired near the Jalameh Crossing (north of Jenin). A bullet hit the helmet of an IDF soldier who was on patrol in the area (Israeli media, October 9, 2023). The Jenin Battalion claimed responsibility for the shooting, allegedly a response to the IDF attacks in the Gaza Strip (Jenin Battalions Telegram channel, October 9, 2023).

◆ On the night of October 10, 2023, a drive-by shooting was reported in the settlement of Tene Omarim (southwest of Hebron). No casualties were reported, and an

IDF force responded by shooting at the vehicle and searching the area (Rescue Without Borders Judea and Samaria, October 10, 2023).

◆ On October 9, 2023, shots were fired and an IED was thrown at IDF forces near Beit El (north of Ramallah). There were no casualties and no damage was reported (Rescue Without Borders Judea and Samaria, October 9, 2023).

◆ On the morning of October 9, 2023, a "suicide" UAV exploded over the Sde Ephraim farm (north of Salfit). There were no casualties and no damage was reported (Rescue Without Borders Judea and Samaria, October 9, 2023).

Demonstrations of support

▶ A march was held in Nablus where participants chanted slogans of support for Gaza and the "resistance," especially Hamas' military-terrorist wing. **Dalal Salameh, a member of Fatah's Central Committee**, gave a speech in Shuhada Square in Nablus where he said that the residents of Gaza would not be alone and that the "resistance" in Gaza, which carried out the "heroic operation," had put Israel in the eye of the storm making it fear for itself and its policies. She called on all Palestinians to unite to confront Israel. **Muhammad Hamdan, secretary of Fatah's branch in the Nablus district**, said they had instructed the movement's operatives and supporters to confront IDF forces, which, he said, "is a myth and turned out to be made of cardboard that must be burned and eliminated" (al-Jazeera TV website, October 9, 2023).



Right: A procession in Nablus. Left: Dalal Salameh speaking (al-Jazeera TV website, October 9, 2023)

▶ On October 9, 2023, another support march was held in Nablus in response to the call of the Lion's Den network. The procession passed through Shuhada Square and continued towards the Hawwara checkpoint to confront IDF soldiers (Safa, October 9, 2023).



The procession in Nablus (Safa, October 9, 2023)

► In Jenin, the Jenin refugee camp, and the villages of Ya'bad and Araba south of the city, demonstrations were held in support of the Gaza Strip at the call of the national and Islamic factions (Wafa, October 9, 2023).



Demonstration in support of the Gaza Strip in Jenin (QudsN YouTube channel, October 9, 2023)

Palestinian Authority

► Senior PA officials continued their "diplomatic" activities. **Hussein al-Sheikh, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee**, reported that the Palestinian leadership, headed by Mahmoud Abbas, was holding intensive contacts with world leaders to immediately stop the "destructive Israeli war" and demanded the delivery of food and medical equipment into the Gaza Strip (Wafa, October 10, 2023).

► Mahmoud Abbas continued to hold talks with leaders from around the world. In a conversation with Turkish President Tayyip Erdoğan, he asked for the transfer of emergency aid to the residents of the Gaza Strip. Abbas demanded that the UN secretary general intervene immediately to stop Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip and its cutting off the supply of electricity and water (Wafa, October 9, 2023).

► According to Palestinian media reports, Mahmoud Abbas is under international pressure to condemn Hamas' activity against Israel in light of Western threats to stop their

support for the PA. So far, Mahmoud Abbas has not yielded to pressure and is not prepared to condemn the “activities of the resistance” (Watan, October 9, 2023).

▶ The PA ministry of economy denied reports of a shortage of food products (Wafa, October 9, 2023). **Majdi Abu Bakr, head of the PA’s fuel administration**, said there was no shortage of fuel (Ma’an, October 10, 2023).

Iran

▶ Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said in a speech that Israel had suffered an irreparable military and intelligence defeat and that they were “kissing the hands of the Palestinians” who planned the attack on Israel. He said Iran was proud of the Palestinians and supported them, but anyone who linked Iran to the attack on Israel was mistaken (al-Alam, October 10, 2023).

Arab World

Jordan

▶ The Jordanian General Security Directorate announced the closure of the Allenby Crossing to passenger and cargo traffic, noting that there was no change regarding movement through the Sheikh Hussein Crossing and the southern crossing. The Directorate called on the public to monitor media reports regarding the opening hours of the bridges and crossings (Twitter account of Jordan’s Directorate of General Security, October 10, 2023).

Saudi Arabia

▶ **Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman** held telephone conversations with Mahmoud Abbas and other Arab leaders:

◆ In a conversation with **Mahmoud Abbas**, Abbas thanked Saudi Arabia and expressed his appreciation for its positions and efforts in support of the Palestinian people. The crown prince stressed that Saudi Arabia would continue to stand by the Palestinian people and was making great efforts to restore quiet and stability (Wafa, October 9, 2023).

◆ In a conversation with **Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi**, he said that the current escalation posed a great danger to civilian lives and threatened regional stability. During the conversation, the importance of restraint at this critical stage and

preventing a deterioration in the security and humanitarian situation was stressed (Egyptian Presidential Office website, October 9, 2023).

◆ In a conversation with **King Abdullah II of Jordan**, he stressed the need to strengthen Arab coordination, unite efforts to stop the escalation and be careful of its implications for the entire region. Abdullah stressed that international humanitarian law had to be respected and civilians protected (Petra News Agency, October 9, 2023).

Bahrain

▶ The Bahraini Foreign Ministry issued a statement stating that the Hamas attacks were a dangerous escalation. The ministry also expressed sorrow over the “great loss of life and property.” Bahrain also condemned the abduction of civilians. The ministry appealed to the international community to intervene and promote efforts to achieve peace, stability and security in the region (Bahraini Foreign Ministry website, October 9, 2023).

Iraq

▶ **Muqtada al-Sadr, chairman of the al-Sadr faction in Iraq**, a Shi'ite faction that opposes Iran's presence in the country and is hostile to Israel and the United States, called on anyone who loved the Palestinian cause to go demonstrate and wave Palestinian flags this coming Friday (al-Sadr's Telegram channel, October 9, 2023).

▶ **Hadi al-Ameri, chairman of the Iraqi Al-Fatah Alliance and representative of the coordination committee of the pro-Iranian parties in Iraq**, stressed his support for the Palestinian cause and praised the Palestinian people for their “great victory over the Zionist enemy.” He made it clear that everyone had to be prepared to defend the Palestinian cause, noting that if the United States intervened in the fighting in the Gaza Strip, they would not hesitate to attack American interests (Iraqi al-Ghadir TV, October 9, 2023).

▶ So far, the demonstrators for the Palestinians in Iraq have been members of pro-Iranian militias (especially Nujaba and Kata'ib Hezbollah), and the general public has not really participated. On the other hand, Muqtada al-Sadr has extensive support among the Shi'ites in Iraq, and it is quite possible that he is trying to close the ranks around him by means of the demonstration.

Western countries

Joint Statement of Support

▶ The White House issued a joint statement of support for Israel on behalf of **the leaders of the United States, Britain, Germany, France, and Italy**, stating that they supported Israel and would remain united and coordinated, together as allies and as common friends of Israel, to ensure Israel was able to defend itself, and to ultimately set the conditions for a peaceful and integrated Middle East. They condemned Hamas' actions, referring to them as appalling acts of terrorism, lacking any justification or legitimacy. The leaders also noted that it was not the time for Israel's enemies to take advantage of the attacks. They also said that the rights of the Palestinian people and Israel were both recognized and supported, but Hamas did not represent them and offered the Palestinian people nothing but more terrorism and bloodshed (White House website, October 9, 2023).

United States

▶ IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevy spoke with his US counterpart, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr. They agreed to fully coordinate the operational defensive forces and to prepare for worsening offensive scenarios in the event of a multi-front war. According to the IDF, Israel receives all the necessary assistance from the United States and considers the United States' deterrent power as of great importance (IDF spokesman, October 10, 2023).

United Nations

▶ **UN Secretary-General António Guterres** spoke to journalists at UN headquarters in New York after meeting with UN officials on "unprecedented developments" in Israel and the "occupied Palestinian territory." He condemned the "abhorrent" attacks by Hamas and other groups against Israeli towns and villages, which left over 800 Israelis dead and more than 2,500 injured. He also added that while he recognized Israel's legitimate security concerns, he also reminded Israel that military operations had to be conducted in strict accordance with international humanitarian law, civilians had to be respected and protected at all times, and civilian infrastructure could not be targeted (UN website, October 9, 2023).

European Union

► **EU Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi** announced that the EU was immediately suspending and reviewing its €691 million aid to the Palestinians. He said the scope of terrorism and cruelty against Israel and its residents was a turning point and things could not continue as usual (Olivér Várhelyi's Twitter account, October 9, 2023). The EU later reversed its decision and said it would urgently review the granting of aid to ensure it was not "misused" (AP, October 9, 2023).

Global Jihad

Jihadi elements in Syria expressed support

► **Abd al-Rahim Atoun, the most senior religious authority of HTS**, which operates in Syria and is affiliated with al-Qaeda, noted that the Islamic nation must participate in the fighting in "Palestine" (Telegram, October 7, 2023).

► **Abu Abdullah al-Shami, leader of Jabhat Ansar al-Din**, a jihadi umbrella organization operating in Syria affiliated with Al-Qaeda, noted that the Hamas attack "warms the hearts of the believers, confirms the weakness of the occupiers and the level of betrayal of the supporters of normalization [with Israel], and exposes the exploitation of the situation by the recalcitrant Shi'ites [Iran and Hezbollah]." He said it hastened the promise of the Islamic oral tradition, according to which the Day of Judgment would not be realized before the Muslims fought the Jews, until the Jews hid behind the trees and stones, and the trees and stones reported to the Muslims that there were Jews behind them, so that they could kill them, except for the Gharqad tree, which would not reveal the hiding place of the Jews (Telegram, October 7, 2023).

► **Amer al-Sheikh, leader of Ahrar al-Sham**, a jihadi organization operating in Syria, expressed joy at Hamas' terrorist attack on Israel. He called on the Palestinians to stand firm and lamented the fact that the Iranian regime was taking advantage of the situation to advance its interests in the region and the fact that the eyes of the Muslim world were on the Palestinians, while completely ignoring what was happening to Muslims in Idlib and its environs by the Syrian regime, the Iranians and the Russians. He congratulated all the jihad fighters on earth, stressing that the Islamic nation was one and that its existence lay in its unity (Telegram, October 7, 2023).