



The Iron Swords War Updated to 1 p.m., October 18, 2023

Overview¹

► **The southern sector:** The IDF continued its activity in the Gaza Strip, mainly by conducting airstrikes on terrorist targets of Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Terrorist facilities were damaged and several senior Hamas terrorist operatives were killed, the most prominent of whom was Ayman Nofal. In the evening the Palestinian Authority reported a hospital in Gaza had been hit by an airstrike which killed several hundred people. The incident immediately provoked a wave of angry reactions and accusations against Israel. The IDF investigation revealed the incident was a failed Palestinian Islamic Jihad rocket launch and the damage was not as serious as represented by Hamas. American President Joe Biden emphasized that the attack had not been carried out by Israel. The Palestinian terrorist organizations continued firing rockets at Israel, including several barrages targeting the center of the country. So far 7,114 rockets have been fired at Israel.

► So far, **more than 1,400 civilian and soldier deaths have been reported; 199 civilian and soldier abductees are held captive by Hamas in the Gaza.**

► **The Gaza Strip:** The IDF continued calling on the residents of the northern Gaza Strip and Gaza City to evacuate to the south. The humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip is worsening. Egypt and Jordan have expressed concern that Palestinian refugees will move from the Gaza Strip into their territory.

► **The northern sector:** Several anti-tank missiles and rockets were launched into Israeli territory from Lebanon; four IDF soldiers were injured. Hezbollah reported the deaths of five operatives. Lebanese government officials are calling for calm in the southern region.

► **Judea and Samaria:** The Israeli security forces continued detaining Palestinians suspected of terrorist activities, most of them Hamas operatives. Shots were fired at an IDF position east

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

of Tulkarm. No casualties were reported. Mahmoud Abbas condemned the incident in the hospital in Gaza and left Jordan.

► **Iran:** Senior government officials in Iran continue their preoccupation with the Palestinian issue, claiming it concerns the entire international community. Senior officials in Iran condemned Israel following the incident of the hospital in Gaza and the Iranian government declared a national day of mourning.

► **The United States:** President Joe Biden visited Israel and expressed America's full support for Israel. His visit to Jordan was canceled due to the events of the hospital in Gaza.

The Combat Arena

IDF activity

► **Aerial activity:** During the past day the IDF continued attacking terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip, including operational headquarters, assembly areas, rocket and anti-tank launching positions and terrorist facilities, under some of which tunnels had been built to hide and store weapons. Guided by intelligence information, the IDF killed a number of senior operatives in Hamas' military-terrorist wing, among them Ayman Nofal, commander of the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades in the central Gaza Strip refugee camps, Muhammad al-Wadiya, commander of the Gaza City's anti-tank brigade, Akram Hijaz, who dealt arms and funded terrorism, and who was involved in carrying out terrorist attacks in Israel and an operative in Hamas' naval unit (IDF spokesman, October 17, 18, 2023).



Recent Israeli Air Force strikes in the Gaza Strip (IDF website, October 18, 2023)



Right: Israeli Air Force strikes in Gaza (QudsN Twitter account, October 17, 2023). Left: Israeli Air Force attack on western al-Bureij in the central Gaza Strip (Paldf Twitter account, October 17, 2023)

Accusing Israel of attacking a hospital

► At approximately 8 p.m. on October 17, 2023 the ministry of health in Ramallah reported at least 500 people had been killed in an airstrike on the al-Ahli Hospital in the center of Gaza City.² The news provoked a wave of enraged reactions against Israel and condemnations among Palestinians, the countries of the world and international organizations. Hamas issued an official statement claiming the "massacre" Israel had carried out, which killed hundreds of

² On October 17, 2023, the ministry of health in Ramallah reported that 600 people had been killed (Twitter account of photojournalist Hassan Aslih, October 17, 2023).

people, was a "crime of genocide" (Hamas Telegram channel, October 17, 2023). **Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau**, gave a speech claiming the "massacre" proved Israel's cruelty and was another on the list of massacres carried out by Israel "since the occupation of Palestine." He called on the international community, the UN, its Security Council and other organizations to explicitly condemn "the massacre" (Hamas Telegram channel, October 17, 2023).

► However, a comprehensive investigation conducted by the IDF, which included cross-referencing information from all operational and intelligence systems, made it clear that the IDF had not attacked the hospital in Gaza, which rather had been damaged by a rocket launched by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) which fell in the Gaza Strip, one of a barrage of rockets launched from a cemetery near the area hospital.



The trajectory of the rocket launch (IDF spokesman, October 18, 2023)

► Furthermore, an IDF analysis of aerial photographs confirmed there had been no direct hit on the hospital, and only to the hospital parking lot had been damaged. The photographs clearly showed signs of fire damage but no crater, which would have been formed by a missile fired from a plane, and no damage to the hospital, whose walls remained intact, or to buildings in the area, which would not have been the case in an air strike. The IDF spokesman also released the transcript of a conversation, intercepted and recorded, between PIJ operatives who admitted that a failed launch had apparently led to an explosion at the

hospital in Gaza. One of them said the debris was from rockets manufactured locally, and "not [like those made by] Israel, adding that "as soon as it was fired, something went wrong and it fell [near the hospital]" (IDF spokesman, October 18, 2023).



Infrared image of the parking lot. The main impact points and some damage to roofs are visible. There are no craters and none of the walls of the surrounding buildings has collapsed (IDF spokesman, October 18, 2023)

► Following the IDF spokesman's statement, the **PIJ** issued a denial, falsely claiming it had not been responsible for the damage to the hospital. According to the statement, all the accusations were "false and baseless" and an attempt by Israel to evade responsibility for its "brutal massacre." The statement further claimed eyewitnesses confirmed the attack was carried out from the air by a fighter jet, and the claim that the organization's operatives used places of worship, hospitals and schools to store weapons was false (PIJ Telegram channel, October 18, 2023).

► **Hamas** claimed Israel was trying in vain to deny carrying out the "massacre" by presenting a false narrative and marketing it through propaganda with no connection to reality. Hamas falsely claimed Israel had threatened to attack the hospital, along with 22 other hospitals and medical centers, medical staffs, patients and the wounded. Hamas added that Israel, which had presented more than one version as soon as it occurred, was directly responsible for "the terrible massacre," which took place on live TV with American firepower (Hamas website, October 18, 2023). Intelligence information revealed that as soon as Hamas operatives received the reports, they realized a failed PIJ rocket launch had been responsible for the incident and launched an extensive campaign of lies designed to hide the truth, including exaggerating the number of dead (IDF spokesman, October 18, 2023).

Rocket fire

► **Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip continued during the past day**, with the barrages increasing during the afternoon and evening. A large number of rockets were launched, including towards the center of the country. Hamas claimed its operatives had launched an R160 rocket at Haifa (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, October 17, 2023). No such incident was reported. It was second time Hamas' military-terrorist wing reported the launch of a long-range R160.

► **Since the beginning of the war, 7,114 rockets and mortar shells have been launched into Israeli territory.** About 450 of the rockets launched by the terrorist organizations fell inside the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesman, October 18, 2023).



Right: German Chancellor Olaf Schulz and his entourage prostrate on the ground at Ben-Gurion International Airport following sirens heralding rocket launches from Gaza (QudsN Twitter account, October 17, 2023). Left: A fire in Ashqelon caused by a rocket from Gaza (QudsN Twitter account, October 17, 2023)



Failed rocket launches that fell inside the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesman, October 18, 2023)

The wounded and abducted

► So far, over 1,400 civilian and soldier deaths have been reported; Hamas is holding 199 abducted civilians and soldiers in the Gaza Strip.

► "A senior Hamas figure" was quoted as claiming Hamas was prepared to release all the foreign and Israeli civilian prisoners in their hands "within an hour" if Israel stopped attacking. Regarding the captive soldiers, he said they would be released only after all the Palestinian prisoners had been released from Israeli jails (NBC network, October 17, 2023).

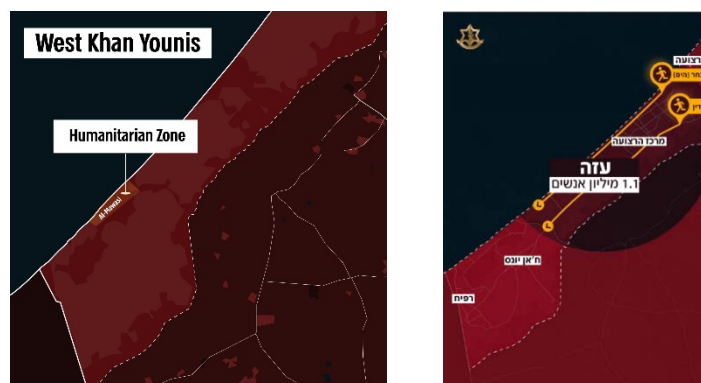
The Gaza Strip

Palestinian casualties

► Mai al-Kayla, PA minister of health, reported that as of 12:15 p.m. more than 3,300 Palestinians had been killed in the Gaza Strip since the beginning of the war. She said there was a shortage of medicines and medical equipment and warned against the spread of disease due to poor sanitation (ministry of health in Ramallah Facebook page, October 18, 2023).

The situation in the Gaza Strip

► The IDF continues calling on the residents of the northern Gaza Strip and Gaza City to evacuate to the al-Mawasi area south of the Gaza Wadi, or to the open spaces to the west of Khan Yunis (IDF spokesperson, October 18, 2023).



The Gazan move to protected places and open areas (IDF website, October 15 and 18, 2023)

► According to the Palestinian media, since the beginning of the war more than 4,500 residential buildings, including 12,000 housing units, have been completely destroyed. About 113,000 housing units were partially damaged, of which 8,190 are uninhabitable (Wafa, October 18, 2023).

► UNRWA reported its school in the al-Maghazi refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip had been damaged by Israeli airstrikes. According to the report, at least six people were killed and dozens injured, including UNRWA staff members (UNRWA website, October 17, 2023).

Aid for the Gaza Strip

► **Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi** held a press conference in Cairo with **German Chancellor Olaf Schulz**, where he said Egypt opposed the movement of Palestinians to the Sinai Peninsula because it would turn it into a new arena of conflict. He added that "if Israel wanted to establish a temporary safe zone for the residents of Gaza until the end of its military operations, it could have done so in the Negev inside Israel's borders" (al-Ghad, October 18, 2023).

► **Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry** claimed Egypt had never officially closed the Rafah Crossing but it had been subject to four Israeli aerial attacks and was therefore not functioning normally. He said they were in continuous contact with all UN agencies to ensure the safe passage of aid, but so far no confirmation had been received from Israel. Regarding the movement of Gazans to the south, he claimed that Israel's request completely contradicted the laws of international humanitarian law. Regarding the possibility that Egypt would accept and settle refugees from the Gaza Strip in its territory, he answered sarcastically that "Britain or any other European country can house two and a half million refugees in their territory"³ (BBC, October 17, 2023).

Senior Hamas terrorist operatives killed

► The military wing of Hamas announced that it mourned the death of **senior commander Ayman Nofal (Abu Ahmed), a member of the General Military Council and the commander of the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades in the central Gaza Strip**, who was killed in an Israel attack on the al-Bureij refugee camp (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, 17 in October 2023).

◆ Ayman Nofal (Abu Ahmed) was born in 1965 in the al-Bureij refugee camp. He held a number of military-terrorist positions in the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades and was a commander of military activity during the two intifadas. He was detained in Israel in 1991, and in 1997 he was arrested by the PA's intelligence apparatus. After the demolition of the border fence between the Gaza Strip and Egypt at the end of January

³ **Note:** In addition to the one million Syrian refugees they have already taken in.

2008 he was arrested in Egypt. He escaped from prison during the January 2011 uprising against Egyptian President Mubarak and returned to the Gaza Strip (Quds Press, October 17, 2023).

◆ Nofal commanded the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades' intelligence apparatus for several years, a position he was identified as holding during the "Firm Support" exercise carried out by Palestinian terrorist organizations' joint operations room at the end of December 2021 (al-Akhbar, Lebanon, December 31, 2021). He was then put in charge of "military relations" and made responsible for coordinating with the other terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip which participated in the joint operations room (aljazeera.net, June 12, 2023).



Ayman Nofal (aljazeera.net, June 12, 2023)

► The Palestinian social networks reported on sons of senior Hamas and military-terrorist wing nukhba operatives who were killed when they invaded Israel on October 7, 2023, or in Israeli Air Force strikes in the Gaza Strip. Among those mentioned were two sons of **Abu Anas al-Ghandour, a member of the Military Council and the commander of the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades' Northern Gaza Brigade** (Bilal Nazar Riyan's Twitter account, October 7 @mechheek Twitter account, October 8, 2023).

The Northern Arena – Lebanon

Terrorist attacks

► Shooting from Lebanon at Israeli territory continued throughout the past day. The IDF responded to every incident with return fire:

◆ On **October 18, 2023, around 3 a.m.**, an anti-tank missile was fired at an IDF force in the Shtula area. IDF forces responded with artillery fire. Four IDF soldiers were injured. Hezbollah claimed responsibility for attacking a tank at the Nurit outpost in south Lebanon, claiming a direct hit which resulted in dead and wounded. Hezbollah claimed

the attack had been carried out by the Hussein Hani al-Tawil and Mahdi Muhammad Atoui squad, named for two Hezbollah shaheeds (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, October 18, 2023).

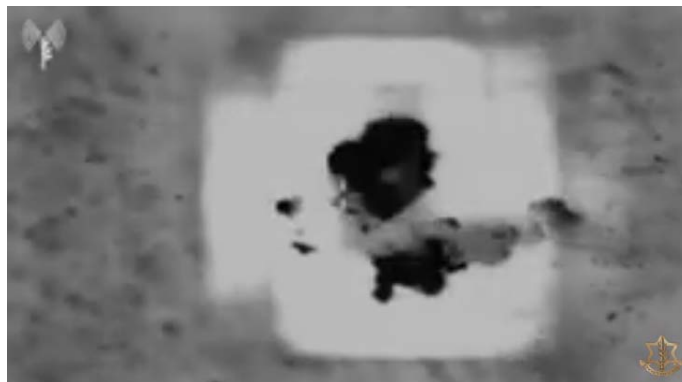
◆ On **October 17, 2023, at around 6 p.m.**, a UAV approached Israeli airspace from Lebanon, and was intercepted by the aerial defense fighters. In response, Israeli Air Force planes attacked a Hezbollah terrorist facility and observation post (IDF spokesman, October 17, 2023).

◆ On **October 17, 2023, at around 5 p.m.**, two rockets were launched from Lebanon at Israeli territory. One of them was intercepted, the other fell in an open area. Hezbollah claimed responsibility for attacking a concentration of IDF soldiers at the Biranit post using guided missiles, claiming the attack had caused several casualties, including one dead and one wounded. According to Hezbollah, the attack was carried out the Mahmoud Ahmed Biz and Hussein Abbas squad, named for two Hezbollah shaheeds (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, October 17, 2023).

◆ On **October 17, 2023, at around 4:00 p.m.**, anti-tank missiles were fired at the village of Zar'it. IDF forces responded with artillery fire. Hezbollah issued two claims of responsibility for launching guided missiles at the village of Carmia and the Shushan post. Hezbollah claimed there were casualties in both attacks, including a fatality (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, October 17, 2023).



Photos from a Hezbollah video documenting the anti-tank fire at Zar'it (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, October 18, 2023)



IDF attack on the northern border (IDF website, October 17, 2023)

◆ On **October 17, 2023**, at around 3 p.m., two anti-tank missiles were fired at Kibbutz Yiftah and several IDF posts were attacked with small arms fire. IDF forces responded with tank and artillery fire targeting Hezbollah terrorist positions.

► **Hezbollah reported five deaths in Israeli attacks.** The Lebanese Red Cross announced four operatives had been killed by Israel's attack on Alma al-Sha'ab (al-Nashra, October 17, 2023).

► Hezbollah claimed they had been killed while "fulfilling their jihad duty," without specifying the date or location (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, October 17, 2023).

They were:

- ◆ Mahmoud Ahmed Biz, aka "Kazem," from the village of Masha'ra in the west Lebanon Valley.
- ◆ Hussein Abbas Psa'ei aka "Sajed Karbala'," from the village of Kounine in south Lebanon.
- ◆ Hussein Hani al-Tawil, aka "Rabia," from the village of Khirbet Salem, in south Lebanon.
- ◆ Hadi Muhammad Atoui, aka "Amir Karbalaa," from the village of Kounine in south Lebanon.
- ◆ Ibrahim Habib al-Dabeq, aka "John," from the village of Kounine, in south Lebanon.



The five Hezbollah terrorist operatives killed on October 17, 2023 (al-Manar, October 17, 2023)

- ▶ The dates of Hezbollah's announcements indicate that two were apparently killed in one incident, two more in a second incident and another in a third incident. Since several anti-tank missiles were launched on the same day, they might be operatives of two anti-tank squads who were killed in an IDF airstrike or by IDF artillery fire. Hezbollah only announced the death of Ibrahim Habib al-Dabeq at 6:24 p.m., he either died in a separate incident or was injured earlier and died of his injuries.
- ▶ No organization issued a claim of responsibility for the attempt to place an IED on the border fence in the Hanita area. The attempt was made by a squad of four terrorist operatives who were killed by IDF fire on October 17, 2023. However, on October 18, 2023, according to reports, Lebanese army and Lebanese Red Cross vehicles were en route to the location of three bodies in the Alma al-Sha'ab area, about 800 meters (about half a mile) north of the Lebanon-Israel border across from Kibbutz Hanita (al-Mayadeen Telegram channel, October 18, 2023).

UNIFIL

- ▶ UNIFIL headquarters claimed its soldiers remained in their positions and in their roles and were continuing their work, including carrying out routine activities. UNIFIL claimed it had no plans to leave and its soldiers were working around the clock to relieve the tension and prevent further escalation (UNIFIL Telegram channel, October 18, 2023). The claim was apparently made because of reports the UNIFIL force had evacuated its soldiers and staff from south Lebanon.

Responses and diplomatic activity

- ▶ **Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan** met in Beirut with his Lebanese counterpart, **Abdullah Bou Habib**. At a joint press conference, Fidan said Turkey was doing everything in its power to prevent the crisis in Gaza from expanding and he would continue contacts and

meetings with Lebanese officials. He also said they had begun discussions with Hamas about releasing the abductees. Bou Habib declared Lebanon was not interested in war but in quiet and stability, which would be possible under two basic conditions: "stopping the Israeli provocations and attacks in south Lebanon and stopping the escalation in Gaza" (NAA, October 17, 2023).

- ▶ In a meeting with **interim Lebanese prime minister, Najib Mikati**, the Fidan claimed pressure had to be exerted on Israel to reach a ceasefire, bring aid into the Gaza Strip and work to find a final solution to the conflict. Mikati stressed that the priority was stopping the Israeli war in the Gaza Strip and Israel's attacks in south Lebanon (al-Nashra, October 17, 2023).
- ▶ Following the alleged attack on the hospital in Gaza, Hezbollah issued a statement condemning the "Zionist crime which claimed the lives of hundreds of innocent people and blaming the United States. According to Hezbollah, condemnations were no longer sufficient, and it called on Muslims and Arabs to take to the streets and squares, express anger, and exert pressure on governments and countries. It also called on them to take immediate action. Hezbollah declared October 18 an "unprecedented day of rage" against Israel and the visit of the American president to Israel (Hezbollah's combat information Telegram channel, October 17, 2023).

Judea, Samaria and the Palestinian Authority

Events on the ground

- ▶ In Judea and Samaria, Israeli security forces continued counterterrorism activities. During an extensive campaign during the past 24 hours, 83 Palestinians suspected of involvement in terrorist activity were detained in Judea and Samaria, 51 of them Hamas operatives. Since the beginning of the war in the Gaza Strip, 440 wanted Palestinians have been detained in Judea and Samaria, 220 of whom are Hamas terrorist operatives (IDF spokesman, October 18, 2023).
- ▶ During the past 24 hours, two Palestinians were reportedly killed. One was killed in the Nebi Saleh area during clashes with IDF forces and the other when an IED exploded near the Awarta roadblock, southeast of Nablus (Ma'an, October 18, 2023).
- ▶ On the evening of October 17, 2023, shots were reportedly fired at an IDF post in Avnei Hefetz, east of Tulkarm. No casualties were reported (Judea and Samaria Rescue, October 17, 2023).

Demonstrations

► Mass demonstrations were held in the PA territories following the incident at the hospital in Gaza. Demonstrators in Hebron, Jenin and Ramallah tried to reach government buildings but were repelled and dispersed by the Palestinian security forces (Safa, October 17, 2023). There were violent clashes with Israeli security forces at the friction points in Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem (Ma'an, October 17, 2023). A general strike was declared throughout Judea and Samaria, and according to reports, there were calls for going to the friction points with the IDF for confrontations (QudsN Twitter account, October 18, 2023).



Right: A protest march in Bethlehem. Left: Demonstration in central Ramallah and clashes with Palestinian security forces (QudsN Twitter account, October 17, 2023).



Right: Clashes with Israeli security forces near the Qalandia Crossing (QudsN Twitter account, October 18, 2023). Left: General strike in Nablus (QudsN Twitter account, October 18, 2023)

Counterterrorism by the PA's security services

► According to "informed sources," the PA's national intelligence apparatus had detained four PA security service operatives who planned to attack Israeli targets in revenge for the war in the Gaza Strip. The detainees include two policemen, a national security operative and an operative of the "presidential" guard. According to the "sources," the two policemen planned to carry out a drive-by shooting at an IDF post in Nablus and then enter the post and kill the soldiers. The national security operative, who was from Ramallah, planned to attack a car of

settlers and kill its passengers, and the fourth detainee, from Tulkarm, intended to confront an IDF foot patrol. The "sources" added that serious reports had reached the PA leadership about the possibility that dozens of operatives were planning to carry out terrorist attacks because of the events in the Gaza Strip. A security service operative even revealed the security service commanders were greatly concerned about lone-wolf attacks. As a result, foot patrols which came into direct contact with their Israeli counterparts were given less ammunition and suspicious operatives were placed on leave (al-Shahed website, October 17, 2023).

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

► Following the incident at the hospital in Gaza, **PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas** cut his visit to Jordan short and returned to Ramallah along with his entourage. That evening he convened the PA leadership for an urgent meeting. He said that following the "tragedy" he had agreed with the leaders of Egypt and Jordan that the planned summit meeting should be canceled. He claimed the "occupation government" [Israel] had crossed all red lines, and they would not allow it to evade responsibility and punishment. He called on the international community to hold Israel responsible and protect the Palestinian people, called on the Palestinians to unite, and expressed his admiration for the residents of the Gaza Strip (Wafa, October 18, 2023).

► Before leaving Jordan, **Mahmoud Abbas and American Secretary of State Antony Blinken** met in Amman to discuss the latest developments in the Palestinian arena and attempts to stop the escalation and protect civilian lives. They noted the importance of bringing medical aid into the Gaza Strip along with food and electricity, and the importance of stopping the displacement of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip (Wafa, October 17, 2023).

► **PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh** continued meeting with international bodies to stop Israel's attacks in the Gaza Strip and bring in humanitarian aid. He met (separately) with the Swiss representative to the PA and Norway's envoy to the Middle East peace process (Wafa, October 17, 2023).

Iran

► **Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian** went to Saudi Arabia to participate in an ad hoc meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Jeddah to deal with the Palestinian issue (IRNA, October 17, 2023). On October 18, 2023, Abdollahian met in Jeddah

with the OIC's secretary general and called for "an immediate and comprehensive boycott of the Zionist regime" (Telegram channel of the Iranian foreign ministry, October 18, 2023).

► **Ali Bagheri-Kani, deputy Iranian foreign minister**, meeting with ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions in Tehran, said that the Palestinian issue did not concern only the Palestinians, Arabs, or Muslims, but all humanity and the international community. He threatened the governments that support Israel and called on the governments of the world to fulfill their human and moral duty to stop "the crimes of the Zionist regime in Palestine and stop the brutal attacks on Gaza." He added that the Zionists had to know the Muslims in the region and freedom seekers around the world would not tolerate Israel's continued oppression and the continued attacks in the Gaza Strip would fan the anger of the people of the region (Fars, October 17, 2023).

► Senior Iranian government officials condemned the incident at al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza, and the Iranian government declared a national day of mourning, during which demonstrations were supposed to be held throughout Iran (Fars, October 18, 2023).

The Arab World

Egypt

► Egyptian President **Abdel Fattah el-Sisi** met with **German Chancellor Olaf Scholz**. El-Sisi warned that "the deteriorating situation in Gaza could spin of control." He expressed concern about the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, stressing that Egypt had not closed the Rafah crossing but rather Israeli attacks had prevented it from opening. He told the German chancellor that **Egypt refused to eliminate the Palestinian problem by means of military tools** (al-Ghad, October 18, 2023).



El-Sisi (right) and the German chancellor hold a joint press conference (al-Ghad, October 17, 2023)

Jordan

- ▶ Following the incident the hospital, Ayman al-Safadi, the Jordanian foreign minister, announced that the summit meeting planned for Amman with President Biden had been canceled (Jordanian TV, October 17, 2023).
- ▶ **Jordan's King Abdullah II** met in Amman with **German Chancellor Olaf Scholz** to discuss the current escalation. Abdullah said Jordan and Egypt would not accept refugees from war in Gaza, calling it "a red line." He said it was impossible to try to force the Palestinians into other countries. Regarding the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, he said it was important for the international community to act to de-escalate the situation quickly. Abdullah condemned the killing and harm to civilians on both sides (Petra, October 17, 2023).
- ▶ **The King of Jordan** convened a meeting with the heads of the Jordanian armed forces where he said Jordan would defend its borders and support the Palestinian people on their own land as much as it could. He said they opposed the uprooting of Palestinians in any form, whether in the Gaza Strip or Judea and Samaria. He noted the importance of providing unconditional aid to the Gaza Strip to ensure the continued existence of the Palestinian people (Petra, October 17, 2023).
- ▶ There are reports of an intention to hold a march to the Israeli border entitled The Return March (masirat al-awdah) on Friday, October 20, 2023 (Ammon News Agency, October 17, 2023).

Iraq

- ▶ The American Army reportedly prevented an attack on its forces at the Ain al-Assad base in Iraq after two drones were intercepted before could attack. The attack was prevented while the American military forces were on high alert, apparently because of warnings about the activity of Iranian-supported groups connected to the fighting between Hamas and Israel (Reuters, October 18, 2023). Several pro-Iranian Iraqi militias threatened to attack American forces if the United States joined Israel's campaign in the Gaza Strip.

Protest demonstrations

- ▶ Following the report of the fatalities in the hospital in Gaza, demonstrations were held in support of Hamas and the Gaza Strip in front of the American embassies in Cairo (a small demonstration), Beirut and Amman, as well as in front of the Israeli embassy in Amman and the Israeli consulate in Turkey. Demonstrations in support of the Palestinians and the Gaza

Strip were also held in Baghdad, Rabat (Morocco), Taiz (Yemen) and Nouakchott (Mauritania) (al-Jazeera, October 17, 2023).



Right: Demonstration in front of the Israeli consulate in Turkey, and left, in front of the Israeli embassy in Jordan (Al-Jazeera, October 17, 2023; Orient, October 18, 2023)



Demonstrations in Yemen, Morocco, Iraq, Mauritania and Egypt (al-Jazeera, October 17, 2023)

The International Arena

United Nations

► **UN Secretary-General António Guterres** said he had personally appealed to Hamas and demanded the unconditional **release** of the hostages, and to Israel to allow the Gaza Strip access to humanitarian aid. Guterres also noted that he was horrified by the hundreds of people killed following the "attack" on the al-Ahli Hospital, saying that Hamas attacks in Israel on October 7, 2023, did not justify collective punishment of civilians (Reuters, October 18, 2023).

United States

► American President Joe Biden landed in Israel. At a press conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Biden said he had come to Israel to emphasize that the United States stood with Israel. He stressed that he would ensure that Israel received everything necessary to defend itself. He also noted that "it is important to remember that these monsters [Hamas] do not represent all Palestinians." He also said the incident at the Gaza hospital was not caused by Israel but by another group [i.e., PIJ] (Channel 12 and 13, October 18, 2023).

Russia

► Russian President Vladimir Putin said that "the attack[sic] on the hospital in Gaza, which killed hundreds of Palestinians, is a catastrophe that shows that the conflict must be ended." He expressed hope it was a signal the fighting had to end (Reuters, October 18, 2023).

Germany

► On the night of October 17, 2023, anti-Semites threw Molotov cocktails at a Jewish community center in Berlin, which houses a synagogue, a school and a daycare center. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz noted that attacking Jewish institutions and violent riots in the streets of Germany were inhumane and could not be tolerated and anti-Semitism had no place in Germany (Reuters, October 18, 2023; Scholz's Twitter account, October 18, 2023).

The Global Jihad

► ISIS issued a statement claiming responsibility for the attack in Brussels on October 16, 2023. According to the announcement, the attacker, codenamed Abu al-Salam al-Muhajir, shot at several "infidel Christians," killing two of them and wounding several others. According to the statement, "the countries of the Crusader coalition [the American-led global coalition against ISIS] must understand that our war against them continues and what is about to happen will be more difficult and bitter" (Telegram, October 17, 2023).

► According to another statement issued by the A'maq News Agency, an Islamic State fighter attacked a group of citizens of global coalition countries in the Belgian capital, claiming the attack had been carried out as an action called for by the Islamic State against citizens of the coalition countries [against ISIS]" (Telegram, October 17, 2023). **The statements possibly indicate the attack was unrelated to the events in the Gaza Strip.**

مقاتل من الدولة الإسلامية ينفذ هجوماً ضد رعايا دول التحالف في العاصمة البلجيكية بروكسل

أعماق
البحرية
AMAQ NEWS AGENCY



صورة لمنفذ الهجوم في العاصمة البلجيكية بروكسل

بلجيكا - بروكسل - وكالة أعماق: نفذ مقاتل من الدولة الإسلامية هجوماً ضد مجموعة من رعايا دول التحالف في العاصمة البلجيكية بروكسل.

وقالت مصادر أمنية لوكالة "أعماق" إن مقاتلا من الدولة الإسلامية نفذ هجوماً مسلحاً أمس الإثنين، ضد عدد من نصارى السويد، المشاركة في التحالف الدولي ضد الدولة الإسلامية، قرب ساحة "سانكتيليت" شمالي العاصمة بروكسل.

وأضافت المصادر أن المقاتل شرع بإطلاق النار من سلاحه الرشاش نحو النصارى قبيل حضورهم مباراة رياضية، حيث قتل اثنين منهم وأصاب اثنين آخرين بجروح، قبل أن يقتل لاحقاً برصاص القوات البلجيكية أثناء محاولة اعتقاله.

وأوضحت المصادر أن الهجوم يأتي في سياق العمليات التي دعت لها الدولة الإسلامية لاستهداف رعايا دول التحالف.

17 أكتوبر 2023

A'maq News Agency's statement (Telegram, October 17, 2023)