



The Iron Swords War Updated to 1 p.m., October 22, 2023

Overview¹

- ▶ **The southern sector:** Israeli Air Force airstrikes on terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip continued, destroying several terrorist facilities, mainly belonging to Hamas. Meanwhile, the Palestinian terrorist organizations continue firing rockets at Israel, although at a relatively low pace. **So far, more than 7,500 rockets have been fired at Israel.** Several hundred launches fell in the territory of the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ **So far, more than 1,400 civilian and soldier deaths have been reported; 212 civilian and soldier abductees are being held in the Gaza Strip by the terrorist organizations.** Two abductees, a mother and her daughter, American citizens, were returned to Israel after negotiations mediated by Qatar. Arabs and Palestinians are talking about continuing the mediation and releasing additional abductees, especially of foreign nationality. Hamas claimed they intended to return the abducted soldiers in exchange for Palestinian prisoners.
- ▶ **The Gaza Strip:** Israel's calls for the residents of the northern Gaza Strip to evacuate to the south have been met with opposition from Hamas, especially the evacuation of hospitals and UNRWA shelters. On October 21, 2023, the Rafah Crossing was opened to allow twenty trucks of humanitarian aid to enter the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ **The northern sector:** Attacks continued on the Lebanese border. Hezbollah terrorist operatives fired anti-tank weapons and shot small arms at IDF posts and civilian towns and villages. Six Hezbollah terrorists were killed. Hamas also launched a barrage of about thirty rockets. The IDF responded with gunfire and airstrikes targeting anti-tank units and Hezbollah military-terrorist facilities in Lebanon. An IDF fighter was killed and several were wounded. According to reports, a joint operations room has been set up for the [so-called] "axis of resistance" [Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinian terrorist organizations and the Houthis in

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

Yemen]. In **Syria**, an attack attributed to Israel was carried out on the airports in Damascus and Aleppo, putting them out of commission.

► **Judea and Samaria:** IDF forces continued counterterrorism activities. In Jenin, for the first time since the second intifada, a plane was used to attack a mosque where there were terrorist operatives who were en route to carrying out a mass-casualty attack. One Border Police fighter was killed and several were wounded.

► **Iran:** Iranian government officials condemned American support for Israel and are preparing to send aid to Gaza. Pro-Iranian militias in Iraq attacked several American military bases. An American warship prevented the Houthis in Yemen from launching missiles and UAVs at Israel.

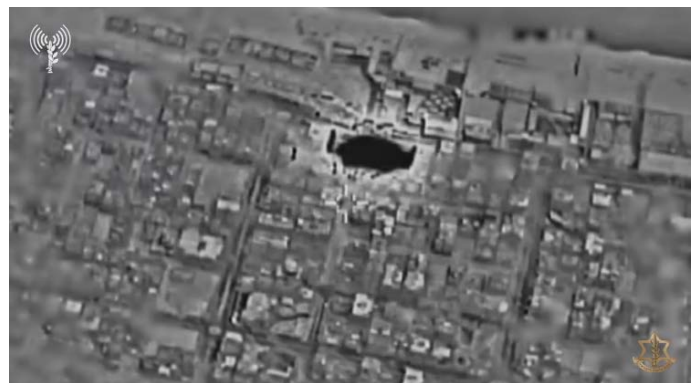
► **An international summit conference convened in Cairo** to discuss the situation in Gaza. No resolutions were passed because of differences of opinion.

► **Global Jihad:** ISIS called on its supporters to attack Jews and their supporters around the world.

The Combat Arena

IDF activity

► **Aerial activity:** The massive Israeli Air Force airstrikes on Hamas military-terrorist targets continued, including Hamas headquarters and facilities above and below ground, rocket-launching squads, and observation and sniping positions. A terrorist operative of the Hamas naval wing, who had been involved in carrying out attacks by sea, was killed in a combined Israeli Air Force-Israeli Navy attack on a Hamas operational headquarters. A senior terrorist operative responsible for the development of Hamas' strategic weapons, a senior engineer and the head of a unit of the projects and development department of Hamas production headquarters were killed (IDF spokesman, October 19, 20 and 21, 2023).



Israeli Air Force strikes in the Gaza Strip (IDF Spokesman's website, October 21, 2023)



Israeli Air Force strikes in the Gaza Strip (IDF Spokesman's website, October 21, 2023)



Israeli Air Force strikes in Gaza (Right: QudsN Twitter account, October 20, 2023). Left: The aftermath of an attack on buildings in al-Zara'a, south of Gaza (Twitter account of photojournalist Hassan Aslih, October 20, 2023)



Attack on the Andalus Building (Shehab Twitter account, October 19, 2023)

Rocket launches

► Meanwhile, the Palestinian terrorist organizations continued firing rockets at Israel, although at a relatively slow pace. Most of the launches targeted the cities, towns and villages near the border, with the rest fired at the center of Israel. The military-terrorist wings of Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) claimed responsibility for the rocket fire.



Photos from a video released by the PIJ's military-terrorist wing documenting rocket launches from launch pits (Jerusalem Brigades' Telegram channel, October 21, 2023)



Right: A rocket hits a house in Sderot (QudsN Twitter account, October 21, 2023). Left: A rocket falls near Latrun (QudsN Twitter account, October 20, 2023)

- More than 7,500 rockets have been fired at Israel since the beginning of the war. Several hundred rockets have fallen in the Gaza Strip.

Israeli casualties

- So far, more than 1,400 civilian and soldier deaths have been reported; 212 civilian and soldier abductees are being held in the Gaza Strip by the terrorist organizations.

The issue of releasing the abductees

- Two abducted women, a mother and daughter who are American citizens, were returned to Israel on October 20, 2023, arriving late in the evening. **Majed Muhammad al-Ansari, spokesman for the Qatari foreign ministry**, said they had been released after several days of continuous contacts between the sides. He added that the Qatari dialogue between Israel and Hamas regarding the release of the captives would continue and Qatar hoped it would lead to the release of all civilian captives of all nationalities (Reuters, October 20, 2023).

► **Abu Obeida, spokesman for Hamas' military-terrorist wing**, claimed they had released two American citizens (a mother and her daughter) for “humanitarian reasons,” and to “prove” to the American people and the entire world that the claims of Biden and the Israeli government were “wrong and baseless” (Abu Obeida’s Telegram channel, October 20, 2023). Hamas subsequently issued a statement in Arabic and English claiming that as part of its “commitment” to all mediators, especially Egypt and Qatar, a woman and her daughter with American citizenship had been handed over. Hamas claimed it was “cooperating” with all the mediators to implement its decision to “close the civilians’ file if the appropriate security conditions are met” (Hamas Telegram channel, October 20, 2023).

► **Musa Abu Marzouq, a member of the Hamas political bureau**, claimed that from the beginning Hamas had announced in all media that it had no interest in keeping the civilian abductees, women, men, children, old people and workers of different nationalities, and that many diplomatic missions had contacted Hamas to inquire about their kidnapped citizens. He noted the Qatari mediation as the most successful and effective. He also claimed they had informed the International Red Cross that it would be the intermediary for any hostage handover, because unlike other international organizations which withdrew to the south of the Gaza Strip, its people remained in the north of the Gaza Strip (al-Jazeera Mubasher, October 21, 2023).

► Speaking from Beirut, **senior Hamas figure Osama Hamdan** claimed the two had been released “in accordance with Hamas's commitment,” and it expressed “the extent of Hamas' ‘moral commitment’ [sic] in the conflict with Israel,” claiming the “conditions on the ground” had made it possible. He added they wanted to end the issue. Asked about the kidnapped IDF soldiers, he said Hamas's position was clear, they would discuss it only after the “aggression against the Gaza Strip and the Palestinians in general” ended (CampsPostPlus Facebook page, October 21, 2023).



Hamdan sits in the middle at the press conference. To his right is Hamas spokesman Jihad Tahe, to his left the Hamas representative in Lebanon, Ahmed Abd al-Hadi (Facebook page CampsPostPlus, October 21, 2023)

► According to an article on the NBC website, Hamas admitted not having custody of all the abductees, some of whom were being held by the PIJ and others by Gaza residents. NBC also reported Hamas claimed it was trying to obtain custody of all the abductees, but could not because of the attacks on the Gaza Strip (NBC website, October 18, 2023).

The Gaza Strip

Palestinian casualties

► According to the Hamas-controlled ministry of health in Gaza, as of 1:45 p.m. the number of dead in the Gaza Strip stood at 4,651 and the number of wounded at 14,245 (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, October 22, 2023).²

► According to a senior European intelligence source, at most 50 people were killed in al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City (Agence France-Presse, October 19, 2023). According to France's directorate of military intelligence, the hospital explosion was not the result of an Israeli attack but most likely the result of a Palestinian rocket launch error (Reuters, October 20, 2023).

Evacuation of the northern Gaza Strip

► The IDF continued calling on the residents of the northern Gaza Strip to evacuate to the south. According to Israeli estimates, so far approximately 700,000 residents have answered the call. Hamas opposes the evacuation and called on the population not to evacuate UNRWA hospitals and schools in the area. **Salama Maaruf, head of the Hamas' media information bureau**, called on the residents of the north who had evacuated to the south to return to the

² So far, neither the ministry of health nor the ministry of health in Ramallah has issued a list of the names of the Palestinians who were killed.

north and not believe "Israel's lies" (Hamas “government” media information bureau, October 21, 2023).

► There was strong opposition to evacuating al-Quds Hospital. Hamas called Israel's threat to attack al-Quds Hospital and the Palestinian Red Crescent headquarters in the Gaza Strip a "new war crime," especially after the [false, disproved and debunked] "bombing of al-Ahli Hospital. In another announcement, Hamas called on UNRWA not to surrender to Israel's threats to evacuate five schools that served as shelters for displaced people in the Gaza Strip (Hamas' Telegram channel, October 20, 2023).

Mai al-Kayla, Palestinian Authority (PA) minister of health, called on the international community and international organizations to make Israel cancel its call to evacuate al-Quds Hospital. She claimed 400 patients were hospitalized there and thousands of residents had found refuge there after the attack on their homes in Gaza (ministry of health in Ramallah, October 21, 2023).

The situation in the Gaza Strip

► **Thomas White, UNRWA's head of operations in the Gaza Strip**, reported on the situation in the Gaza Strip. He claimed humanitarian supplies were “very limited,” water and food had become scarce, and they need a continuous supply line of aid to prevent a disaster (Shehab Twitter account, October 22, 2023).

► The Hamas media information bureau claimed 1.4 million Gazans had left their homes, about half of them going to 127 shelters, and the rest to friends and relatives. A tent camp was also established in the al-Muasi neighborhood in Gaza City. International organizations are working in shelters to prevent outbreaks of disease and transfer aid to those in need.



Tents erected by UNRWA in the west of Khan Yunis for the evacuees from the northern Gaza Strip (Wafa, October 19, 2023)

► According to **senior Hamas figure Usama Hamdan**, four hospitals were not functioning and about 25 hospitals and medical centers had [allegedly] been damaged by Israeli attacks. He encouraged the management of al-Quds Hospital and of all the hospitals that had been attacked or received threats, saying it was important to protect the hospitals and medical centers according to international law, to prevent another [false, disproved and debunked] "massacre" like the one at the al-Ahli Hospital from happening again (CampsPostPlus Facebook page, October 21, 2023). Now as in the past, hospitals in the Gaza Strip serve as shelters for senior Hamas terrorist operatives and the Hamas leadership, and the IDF refrains from attacking them.

Opening the Rafah Crossing

► On October 21, 2023, at 10 a.m., the Rafah Crossing opened for a short time to allow 20 trucks of humanitarian aid to enter the Gaza Strip from Egypt. They brought medical equipment and food from the Egyptian Red Crescent, were unloaded at the Crossing, and the aid was handed over to the Palestinian Red Crescent under UN supervision (al-Quds, October 21, 2023).

► According to comments in the Palestinian media, the aid was insufficient (QudsN Twitter account, October 21, 2023). The ministry of health in Gaza claimed it was only 3% of the aid that entered the Gaza Strip every day before the war and did not meet the needs of the hospitals (ministry of health in Gaza Telegram channel, October 21, 2023).



Right: The trucks enter the Rafah Crossing (QudsN Twitter account, October 21, 2023). Left: Unloading trucks and loading the equipment onto Palestinian trucks (Telegram channel of journalist Hassan Aslih, October 21, 2023)

► In a speech given at the Rafah Crossing, **UN Secretary General António Guterres** claimed the residents of the Gaza Strip suffered from a lack of water, food and fuel, and the transfer of humanitarian aid from Egypt had to be accelerated and the number of trucks increased. He called for an unconditional humanitarian ceasefire to ensure aid reached the Gaza Strip, and

said there should be fewer conditions regarding the delivery of aid (al-Jazeera, October 20, 2023).



UN Secretary General Guterres holds a press conference on the Egyptian side of the Rafah crossing (QudsN Twitter account, October 20, 2023)

Senior Hamas terrorists who were killed

► On October 21, 2023, the death of Talal al-Hindi (Abu Hamza), a senior Hamas terrorist operative, was reported. He was killed in an attack on his house in the al-Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip (Telegram channel of Hamza al-Masri [a Gazan who opposes Hamas], October 21, 2023; Ameer Sleiman's Facebook page, October 21, 2023)].



Talal al-Hindi (Right: alburaij1948 Facebook page, October 21, 2023. Left: Musa Hamo's Facebook page, October 21, 2023)

► On October 21, 2023, the death of Hani Jalal Abd al-Sathar al-Farra (Abu al-Saher), a commander in Hamas' military-terrorist wing, was reported (Hamza al-Masri's Telegram channel, October 21, 2023; @sabrifarra24's Twitter account, October 21, 2023). He was killed in the attack on his house in Khan Yunis (Farra.Family Facebook page, October 21, 2023).



Hani Jalal al-Farra (Fawzi al-Farra's Facebook page, October 21, 2023)

► The Hamas “government” monitoring committee issued a mourning notice for Brigadier General Fouad Ali Abu Batihan, 55 years old, chairman of the borders and crossings authority in the Gaza Strip, who was killed in an attack on his house in the Nuseirat refugee camp on October 17, 2023 (Xinhua News Agency, October 17 2023; Hamas’ al-Rai Agency, October 17, 2023). Fouad Abu Batihan was from the town of al-Zawayda. He had a master's degree in Islamic education. He previously served as the police chief in the central district of the Gaza Strip and as head of the prisons department in the ministry of interior in the Gaza Strip (Facebook page of the municipality of al-Zawayda, February 25, 2019).



Fouad Abu Batihan

(Facebook page of the crossings authority in the Gaza Strip, October 17, 2023)

► The IDF spokesman reported the killing of Muhammad Katamesh, the deputy head of Hamas' artillery unit in the Gaza Strip, who was responsible for managing rocket and artillery fire in the Central Camps Brigade (IDF Twitter account, October 22, 2023). Posts were published on Palestinian Facebook pages announcing the death of Muhammad Fathi Katamesh without specifying his position.

► The IDF spokesman reported other deaths but they have not been confirmed by Palestinian sources. Among them was Mahmoud Sabih, a senior Hamas terrorist operative who was an engineer and head of a unit in the organization's projects and development department; Majed Majed Muhammad Abu Awda, an operative in the Hamas naval force (IDF Twitter account, October 20, 2023); and Mamduh Shalabia, a naval commando operative (IDF Twitter account, October 19, 2023).

Hamas

► Interviewed by Saudi Arabian TV, Khaled Mashal, chairman of the Hamas movement "abroad," related to a number of issues and claimed the following (al-Arabiya YouTube channel, October 19, 2023):

► **The attack on October 7:** He claimed the attack on October 7 had been carried out as an exclusive decision by Hamas without the knowledge of Iran.

► **Killing civilians:** He falsely claimed the military wing of Hamas and the other organizations focused their activities on the IDF forces, on the soldiers, but in all wars there were also civilian casualties, for which Hamas and the other organizations were not responsible [sic]. When asked if he planned to apologize for what happened to the Israeli citizens, he claimed that had to be demanded from Israel, falsely claiming Hamas did not target civilians but focused on soldiers.

► **Aid for the Palestinians:** They thanked everyone who stands by them. He stated that Hezbollah and Iran provided weapons, knowledge and technology, and complained that in the current "campaign" Hamas demanded more. They also demanded help from the Arab countries. Asked if Iran did what Hamas expected, he evaded answering, claiming their role was to ask and remind. However, everyone was responsible for their own decision.

► **The "captives"** [correcting the interviewer who called them hostages]: He claimed their numbers and details was in the hands of the military wing, and there were two groups: a group of officers and soldiers, perhaps more than two hundred, a number sufficient to empty the Israeli jails of Palestinian prisoners. There was a group of male and female civilians and foreign nationals and an "effort is being made to count them." He said that as far as Hamas was concerned the "equation" was "prisoners for prisoners." In return for Gilad Shalit they had "received" more than a thousand prisoners, and today they had dozens of officers and soldiers whom they would use to empty all the prisons and free all the Palestinian men and women from all the "factions."



Khaled Mashal (al-Arabiya YouTube channel , October 19, 2023)

► **Senior Hamas figure Usama Hamdan** held a press conference in Lebanon where he called on UNRWA and the UN to take responsibility and condemn Israel's threats about damaging UNRWA schools, which were sheltering tens of thousands of displaced persons, including children, women and the elderly. Regarding the release of the two American abductees, Hamdan confirmed they would work with all mediators to implement Hamas' decision to end the issue of the abducted civilians "under the appropriate conditions." He claimed Israel was responsible for the welfare of the abductees because of its continuing attacks on the Gaza Strip. Relating to the entry of the humanitarian aid trucks through the Rafah Crossing, he claimed it was insufficient for the needs of the "besieged Palestinian people" and the Gaza Strip's collapsing public health sector. He called for the Crossing to be permanently open for the passage of wounded from the Strip to other countries and the entry of humanitarian aid and fuel (Hamas Telegram channel, October 21, 2023).

The Northern Arena

Lebanon

The current situation

► Tensions mounted and hostile events continued in northern Israel over the weekend. Hezbollah terrorist operatives continued firing anti-tank missiles and launching rockets at IDF posts and northern cities, towns and villages, many of which had to be evacuated. IDF forces attacked Hezbollah targets with artillery and aerial strikes. The targets included operational and terrorist facilities, anti-tank missile launchers and terrorist squads. Hezbollah, via its combat propaganda channel, claimed responsibility for all shootings. An IDF soldier was killed and several were injured; six Hezbollah terrorist operatives were killed.

► Hamas' military-terrorist wing claimed responsibility for launching a barrage of rockets at towns and villages in the Galilee (October 19, 2023). The military-terrorist wing of al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya, an Islamist-fundamentalist organization, also claimed responsibility for the second time for launching missiles at Israel. The military-terrorist wing promised to respond to any "aggression" against the Palestinian people in south Lebanon (Nur Radio, October 21, 2023).³

► The more prominent events:

◆ On the afternoon of October 19, 2023, a barrage of rockets was launched towards the towns and villages of the Upper and Western Galilee. Hamas' military-terrorist wing in Lebanon claimed responsibility for launching a barrage of thirty rockets at the settlements of the Western Galilee (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, October 19, 2023).

◆ On October 19, 2023, the IDF's response to an attack on the Tsiporen post allegedly killed a journalist and injured a number of media personnel. The Lebanese army announced that seven journalists near to the Tsiporen post were attacked by Israel, resulting in the death of one (al-Nashra, October 19, 2023). Hezbollah said the killing of civilians and "aggression" against Lebanon would not go unanswered, adding the "aggression" was another "Israeli crime" against media personnel in Lebanon and "Palestine" to prevent them from "reporting the truth" (Radio al-Nur, October 20, 2023). UNIFIL reported the Lebanese army had asked for help to rescue seven people close to the Israeli border who found themselves in the crossfire. UNIFIL said it had contacted the IDF and requested it stop firing; the Lebanese army rescued them. According to reports, one person was killed in the incident (UNIFIL's Telegram channel, October 19, 2023).

³ Muhammad Taqush, secretary general of al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya secretary general, claimed the organization's military wing had recently returned to activity alongside Hezbollah on the Lebanon-Israel border. He said the al-Fajr forces had been established in 1982, adding that the connection and coordination with each party, including Hezbollah, depended on the degree of harmony between the parties regarding certain issues (al-Jazeera, October 21, 2023).



Photos from a video released by Hezbollah documenting the anti-tank fire at the Tsiporen post on October 19, 2023 (Hezbollah's combat information Telegram channel, October 20, 2023)

- ◆ In another incident on October 19, 2023, three terrorists were identified in the area of the border fence. An aircraft operating in the area attacked them. Meanwhile, IDF snipers shot armed men who were identified on the Lebanese border (IDF spokesman, October 20, 2023).
- ◆ On October 20, 2023, IDF forces pursued a terrorist who had shot at an IDF reserve force near the settlement of Margalioth in northern Israel; he was located and killed. A reserve soldier was seriously injured and died of his wounds.
- ◆ On October 21, 2023, the IDF attacked two terrorist squads, one which fired rockets into the Mount Dov area, and the other which fired an anti-tank missile at the Margalioth area (IDF spokesperson, October 21, 2023).



Photos from a video released by Hezbollah documenting anti-tank fire at the Margalioth post on October 20, 2023 (Hezbollah's combat information Telegram channel, October 21, 2023)



Right: The attack on the terrorist squad which launched an anti-tank missile at the Margaliof area. Left: Attack on an observation post (IDF spokesman's website, October 21, 2023)

- ◆ IDF forces attacked a terrorist squad as it was trying to launch anti-tank missiles at the Shlomi area (IDF spokesman, October 22, 2023).
- ◆ On October 21, 2023, three IDF soldiers were injured by an anti-tank missile fired by Hezbollah at the Baram area (IDF spokesman, October 22, 2023).
- ◆ On the morning of October 22, 2023, a UAV attacked a terrorist squad identified by IDF surveillance as it was trying to fire into the Zar'it area. In addition a UAV approaching from Lebanese territory was intercepted and terrorists who launched anti-aircraft missiles towards the area of the Tsiiporen post and a squad which launched an anti-tank missile in the Mount Dov area were also attacked (IDF website, October 22, 2023).

Hezbollah fatalities

► On October 21, 2023, Hezbollah reported six deaths, stating they had been killed while "fulfilling their jihad duty," without specifying the date or location, except for one⁴ (Hezbollah's combat information Telegram channel, October 21, 2023):

- ◆ Isma'il Ahmed al-Ziyan, aka Haidar Ali, from the town of Shehour in southern Lebanon.
- ◆ Bilal Nimr Ramiti, aka Abu Ali Nur, from the village of al-Mjadel in south Lebanon.
- ◆ Ali Khalil Khris, aka Haidar, from the town of al-Khayam in south Lebanon.
- ◆ Abbas Bassam Shuman, aka Abu al-Faisal, from the neighborhood of al-Nebi Na'am in Baalbek in the Beqa'a Valley in Lebanon.
- ◆ Ibrahim Hassan Atoui, aka Abu Tarab, from the town of al-Suwaneh in south Lebanon.
- ◆ Wissam Muhammad Haider, aka Ahmed Abbas, from the city of Marjayoun and a resident of the town of Dibbin in south Lebanon.

⁴ Isma'il Ahmed al-Ziyan, killed on October 20, 2023.



Five of the six Hezbollah operatives killed on October 21, 2023 (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, October 21, 2023)

- ▶ According to reports, Abdullah Rabi' al-Baqa'i, born on August 5, 1997, was killed in an exchange of fire with an IDF force at the Tsiporen post on the Lebanon-Israel border. He lived in the village of Bar Elias in the Beqa'a Valley. He may have been Palestinian since according to the mourning notice his family originated from the village of Mghar al-Kheit in Safed Governorate (Shehab Agency, October 20, 2023).
- ▶ The PIJ's military-terrorist wing announced the death of Muhammad Mahmoud Musa, 41 years old, an operative in the Syrian arena, who was killed on October 21, 2023, in south Lebanon "while performing his jihad duty in support of Gaza" (Jerusalem Brigades' Telegram channel, October 21, 2023). According to reports he was from the Khan Danon refugee camp in Or Damascus (@ayham_gh1 Twitter account, October 22, 2023).
- ▶ The Lebanese Army reported that as part of its inspection and search operations in the al-Qleileh area, from which rockets had been launched at Israel, an army unit found 25 Grad-type rocket launchers, one of which was armed with a rocket ready for launching (Lebanese Army Twitter account, October 20, 2023).

Reactions

Hezbollah

- ▶ **Hezbollah deputy secretary general Na'im Qassem** claimed that today Hezbollah was at the heart of the campaign and was making achievements. He said three IDF divisions were deployed against Hezbollah and five against the Gaza Strip, and if Hezbollah had not joined the campaign, all the IDF divisions would have deployed opposite the Gaza Strip. He noted that what they were currently doing in south Lebanon was suitable for confrontation, and if more were necessary they would do more. He warned Israel against a ground maneuver in the Gaza Strip, and claimed Hezbollah had received many requests not to intervene, but now they were at the heart of the campaign (al-Mayadeen, October 21, 2023).

► **Hashem Safi al-Din, chairman of Hezbollah's Executive Council**, said the regional "resistance" fighters were armed and prepared to fight with their missiles and weapons to the end on any front (al-Manar, October 21, 2023).



Hashem Safi al-Din at a memorial ceremony in the town of Kounine, south Lebanon (al-Manar, October 21, 2023)

► **Muhammad Raad, the head of Hezbollah's parliamentary bloc**, claimed Hezbollah's activity defended Lebanon. He called on the residents not to be afraid because Hezbollah, not Israel held the initiative, their activity helped deter Israel and would end the attacks on the Gaza Strip (al-Manar, October 21, 2023).

► Hezbollah reportedly began coordinating the evacuation of civilian populations from the southern villages northward, mainly to the area of Tyre. According to reports, Hezbollah opened its warehouses and sent food, water and blankets to population centers, mainly to schools, hospitals and Red Cross centers (Beirut News, October 22, 2023); the reports are unconfirmed.

► **Ibrahim al-Amin, a publicist close to Nasrallah**, wrote an article about the regional involvement of the "resistance axis" on behalf of the Palestinians. He claimed that in recent days all "axis" forces had created mechanisms to support "Palestine" at the highest level, **joint operations rooms were established** to monitor the situation on the ground, and plans had been formulated and implemented by "axis" member organizations in more than one arena. For example, he said the Palestinian [terrorist] organizations continued launching rockets at Tel Aviv, "the resistance" in Lebanon continued to damage Israeli technical equipment on the border and had turned Kornet anti-tank missiles "into the personal weapons of its operatives." The joint operations room also carried out operations in other arenas, such as in Iraq against American bases, and Yemen. He also claimed the operational coordination among the "resistance forces" was aimed at exhausting Israel on more than one front (al-Akhbar, October 20, 2023).

Hassan Fadlallah, a member of Hezbollah's parliamentary faction, said Hezbollah was deployed along the front line with Israel and Lebanon's interests were the organization's top priority, including the need to prevent Israel from achieving its goals in the Gaza Strip. He added that Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah was monitoring developments in the fighting in south Lebanon and supervised its management, stating Nasrallah did not make media appearances to "confuse the enemy." He noted that "if Nasrallah thinks the campaign requires him to appear in the media, he will" (al-Mayadeen, October 22, 2023).

Lebanese officials

► **Najib Mikati, Lebanon's interim prime minister**, said the war was still limited to the Gaza Strip, but that what was happening in south Lebanon had to be stopped. He demanded other countries exert pressure to stop "Israeli provocations and aggression against Lebanon." He related to the demonstrations in Lebanon and clashes with the security forces, claiming people had a legitimate right to express their opinions about what was happening. However, popular actions which exceeded expressions of opinion and turned into attacks against people, security forces and diplomatic missions were unacceptable (al-Nashra, October 19, 2023). In another statement, he said they were holding international and regional contacts to end Israel's attacks against Lebanon in general and the south of the country in particular, and to prevent the spread of the war in the Gaza Strip to Lebanon (Twitter account of the Lebanese prime minister, October 22, 2023).

► **Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdullah Bou Habib** said he recognized the impact of the fighting in Gaza on the situation in south Lebanon, adding that they were continuing contacts with various elements "to keep the confrontations with Israel from developing into something more serious." He said Lebanon knew the price of war and "Israel has to know it as well" (al-Jazeera, October 21, 2023).

Palestinian officials

► **Ahmed Abd al-Hadi, Hamas representative in Lebanon**, said in an interview that Iran and all the other "resistance axis" members had stressed that Operation al-Aqsa Storm had been planned and implemented by the Palestinians. However, he said, that did not cancel strategic coordination with the "resistance axis and Hezbollah." He claimed the position of Iran's leadership was clear: they would not remain neutral if Israel crossed the red lines. He claimed the political, military and security coordination with the "resistance axis" were being

managed by experts. He also said that Hezbollah's entry into the war was a strategic decision, and after assessing the situation and developments on the ground in the Gaza Strip, Hezbollah's leadership would decide when to enter. However, for the atmosphere to be suitable when the decision was made, the arena in south Lebanon had to gradually escalate. Hamas and other organizations, such as the PIJ, also operated there. According to him, the Gaza Strip and Lebanon were in contact (LuaLuaTV Twitter account, October 19, 2023).

Syria

► According to a "Syrian military source," on October 22, 2023, at around 5:25 a.m., Israel attacked Damascus and Aleppo airports from the Mediterranean Sea simultaneously, west of Latakia, and from the Golan Heights. A Damascus Airport employee was killed and another was wounded. The runways of both airports were damaged and put out of commission. According to the ministry of transport, flights scheduled to land or take off from either airport would be transferred to Latakia Airport (SANA, October 22, 2023).

Judea, Samaria, and the Palestinian Authority

Events on the ground

► The Israeli security forces continued their extensive counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria. Since the beginning of the war in the Gaza Strip, 727 wanted Palestinians have been detained, more than 480 of them Hamas operatives (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, October 22, 2023). A Border Police fighter was killed and nine were wounded. Twenty Palestinians were killed in clashes and riots. As of October 22 at 8.00 a.m., the ministry of health in Ramallah reported that the number of fatalities in Judea and Samaria since the beginning of the war in Gaza was 90 (Wafa, October 22, 2023).

► The main events:

- ◆ Before dawn on October 22, 2023, an Israeli Air Force fighter jet attacked a terrorist tunnel under the al-Ansari Mosque in the Jenin refugee camp. A squad of Hamas and PIJ operatives responsible for a series of terrorist attacks carried out in recent months was present in the mosque and planning to carry out a mass-casualty attack in the immediate future. The mosque was used by the terrorists as an operational war room for planning the attacks and a base from which to carry them out. During the operation in Jenin at the beginning of July 2023, IDF forces found terrorist facilities and weapons in the same mosque. It was the first time the IDF had attacked a terrorist target with a

fighter jet in Judea and Samaria since the second intifada (IDF spokesman's Twitter account, October 22, 2023). The ministry of health in Ramallah reported two fatalities in the attack (Wafa, October 22, 2023). One had been involved in planning and carrying out the shooting attack that killed a father and son in Hawwara on August 19, 2023 (Israeli media, October 22, 2023).



Attack on the terrorist tunnel under the al-Ansari Mosque in the Jenin refugee camp (QudsN Twitter account, October 22, 2023)

◆ On October 19-20, 2023, Israeli security forces operated in the Nur al-Shams refugee camp in Tulkarm, locating and destroying car bombs, explosive laboratories, and dozens of IEDs and detaining wanted Palestinians. Armed Palestinian terrorists exchanged fire with the forces and threw IEDs at them, one of which killed a Border Police fighter and wounded nine others (IDF spokesman's website, October 20, 2023). The Palestinians reported 12 fatalities (Wafa, October 20, 2023).



Lathe for manufacturing weapons and weapons (IDF spokesman's website, October 21, 2023)



**IDF aerial strike on a terrorist squad in the Nur al-Shams refugee camp
(IDF spokesman's Twitter account, October 19, 2023)**

◆ On October 20, 2023, police at the Hizma Checkpoint detained a Palestinian from Ramallah, in Israel illegally, for stealing an Israeli vehicle in north Jerusalem. The Palestinian, who refused to stop at the checkpoint, tried to flee and hit a police car. A short time later the forces overpowered and detained him. Questioning revealed that he identified with Hamas and planned to carry out a car-ramming attack with the stolen vehicle (Israeli media, October 20, 2023).

► On October 20, 2023, mass marches were held in all the cities of Judea and Samaria in response to Hamas' call in support of the "resistance" and the Gaza Strip. Clashes broke out with IDF forces in a number of locations in accordance with the Hamas call to confront the forces (al-Shahed website, October 20, 2023; Palestine Post, October 20, 2023; QudsN, October 20, 2023).



Right: A march in Ramallah (Twitter account of al-Quds TV, October 20, 2023). Left: A march in Nablus (QudsN Twitter account, October 20, 2023)

Palestinian Authority (PA)

► **Mahmoud Abbas, chairman of the Palestinian Authority**, met in Cairo with **British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak**. Abbas noted his opposition to uprooting Palestinians from the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria or Jerusalem, claiming peace and security had to be achieved

through implementing the two-state solution. Sunak said Britain opposed the killing of civilians and would provide humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip (Wafa, October 20, 2023).

► **PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh** said the general mood in Israel today was one of revenge and the desire to kill had to stop because no one wanted to see innocent people killed. He said the killing of every civilian, every person who does not deserve to die, had to be condemned. Asked if the Hamas attacks on October 7 surprised him, he replied that everyone was shocked, but the policies of the Israeli government were responsible for everything that happened (CNN, October 21, 2021).

Iran

► Iranian sources related to the involvement of the United States and its support for Israel:

◆ **Mohammad Bagheri, chief of staff of the Iranian armed forces**, spoke by phone with Turkish Defense Minister Yaşar Güler and told him the extensive support of the United States for Israel, including the supply of weapons and ammunition, complicated the situation. He said serious steps had to be taken to prevent the continuation of the "crimes of the Zionist regime" and to allow humanitarian aid to reach the residents of the Gaza Strip (Fars, October 20, 2023).

◆ **Iranian Defense Minister Amir Mohammad-Reza Ashtiani** also addressed the American aid to Israel. In a telephone conversation with Iraqi Defense Minister Thabet Muhammad Saeed, the Iranian minister said that the United States' support for Israel was a license for "a greater massacre of the residents of Gaza." He warned that an Israeli ground incursion into the Gaza Strip would further complicate the humanitarian and security situation (Mehr, October 20, 2023).

◆ **Iranian Ambassador to Lebanon Mojtaba Amani** said in an interview that the United States was unable to enter the war, but its only goal was to save Benjamin Netanyahu and the "Zionist regime." He said the most important diplomatic mission was to stop the fighting, claiming "Hezbollah is independent in its decisions" (al-Manar, October 19, 2023).

► Meanwhile, the Iranians are preparing to send aid to the Gaza Strip. **Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein-Amir Abdollahian** told his Algerian counterpart, **Ahmed Attaf**, that the immediate priority in the current situation was to stop the "crimes of the Zionist regime" and send humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. He added that the Iranian Red Crescent was prepared

to send food and medicine to the Gaza Strip via Egypt (Khabar Online, October 20, 2023). The head of the Iranian Red Crescent said the first shipment of Iranian humanitarian aid was ready to leave for Gaza via Egypt in coordination with the head of the Egyptian Red Crescent. He said the shipment included 60 tons of medicine and food and could be transported to Egypt by sea and air (Fars, October 20, 2023).

- ▶ Foreign Minister Hossein-Amir Abdollahian spoke by phone with his Omani counterpart, Badr al-Busaidi, to discuss the latest developments in the Palestinian arena (Fars, October 21, 2023).
- ▶ According to unverified reports on social networks, on October 21, 2023, Ismail Qaani, commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps' (IRGC) Qods Force, arrived in Syria to monitor the pro-Iranian militias on alert in western Syria (@PDousti75, October 22, 2023).

Pro-Iranian militias

Iraq

- ▶ Over the past few days, several airstrikes have been carried out against American bases in Iraq. A senior Iraqi security force official said that the Iraqi Army had ramped up security measures around American bases and the American embassy. He said they had intelligence information about the intentions of armed groups to attack bases with missiles and drones (al-Araby al-Jadeed, October 19, 2023).
- ▶ A network called the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for a series of attacks on American bases in Iraq and Syria, including an attack on the Ain al-Assad base in western Iraq, where American forces are deployed. According to the announcement, the attack was carried out by barrages of missiles that directly hit their targets (the network's Telegram channel; al-Saberin News, October 19, 2023). Also reported were an attack on the American Harir base in northern Iraq using two drones (the network's Telegram channel, October 20, 2023) and an attack on an American base near Erbil Airport in Iraq using two drones (al-Saberin News Telegram channel, October 22, 2023)
- ▶ The Hezbollah Brigades, the dominant pro-Iranian militia in Iraq, began a campaign to raise money "for Gaza" through Mastercard and ZainCash Wallet, Iraq's most popular digital wallet app (MEMRI, October 20, 2023).

Syria

- ▶ On October 19, 2023, explosions were reported at the American base located at the al-Omar oil field in eastern Deir ez-Zor in Syria. The Saber News Telegram channel, affiliated with the pro-Iranian militias, reported a "direct hit" (Saberin News Telegram channel, October 19,

2023). The Hezbollah-affiliated al-Mayadeen network reported that the attack was directed against the Kuniko gas pipeline in the area (al-Mayadeen, October 19, 2023).

Yemen

► On October 19, 2023, the spokesman for the United States Department of Defense reported an American warship had intercepted three missiles and several UAVs in the Red Sea. He noted it was impossible to say with certainty where the missiles were aimed, but that they were launched from Yemen to the north, potentially at targets in Israel (Reuters, October 20, 2023). Citing an American official source, CNN later reported that an American warship which intercepted drones off the coast of Yemen had encountered a larger, more sustained barrage than previously known, intercepting four cruise missiles and 15 drones in nine hours. It was claimed that the trajectory of the missiles left little doubt that they were targeting Israel (CNN, October 20, 2023).

The Arab World

Summit in Cairo

► On October 21, 2023, a regional summit meeting was held in Cairo, initiated by Egypt, to discuss the fighting in the Gaza Strip. Among the participants were Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas, King Abdullah II of Jordan, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Emir of Qatar Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, UN Secretary General António Guterres and others (al-Qahara News Twitter account, October 21, 2023). France was represented by the president's envoy to the Middle East, Jean-Yves Le Drian (Reuters, October 21, 2023).

No joint statement was issued after the meeting and no resolutions were passed. According to al-Mayadeen, one of the issues of preventing an agreement on a joint statement was the refusal of Western delegations to demand a ceasefire and hold Israel responsible for the deaths of civilians. Another was the refusal of the Western delegations to call for the permanent opening of the Rafah Crossing (al-Mayadeen, October 21, 2023).



Summit in Egypt (Wafa, October 21, 2023)

- ▶ **Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi** said that he had convened the forum to draw a road map that would end the "current human tragedy" and revive the peace process. He said international protection had to be provided to the Palestinian people, adding Egypt was interested in bringing humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip but repeated Israeli strikes prevented it. He claimed "it is collective punishment." He said the solution to the Palestinian issue was the establishment of an independent state and not the uprooting of residents at the expense of other countries (Facebook page of the Egyptian president, October 21, 2023).
- ▶ **Jordan's King Abdullah II** said they rejected the "brutal bombings of Gaza," claiming "it is collective punishment" and a violation of international humanitarian law. He said they had to act to stop the war in the Gaza Strip, bring humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip and postpone the uprooting of Palestinians from their land (al-Mamlaka Network, October 21, 2023).
- ▶ **Mahmoud Abbas, chairman of the Palestinian Authority**, claimed the "defenseless Palestinian people" were dealing with "brutal aggression by the Israeli war machine" which violated international law and indiscriminately harmed thousands of civilians, including women and children, hospitals, schools, and shelter centers in the Gaza Strip. He warned against the attempts to uproot Gaza residents and expel Palestinians from their homes in Jerusalem or Judea and Samaria. Abbas called for an immediate end to the "barbaric aggression," the opening of humanitarian corridors for the delivery of medical equipment, and the supply of water and electricity to the Gaza Strip. **He stressed his opposition to the killing of civilians on both sides and called for the release of all civilians, prisoners, and detainees.** He also called on the UN Security Council to bear its responsibility to defend the Palestinian people and on the rest of the world to recognize the "state of Palestine" and hold an internationally sponsored peace conference (Wafa, October 21, 2023).

► Hamas issued a statement saying that during the summit meeting in Cairo, Israel continued to attack homes, schools and hospitals in the Gaza Strip, "revealing the true face" of Israel. Hamas announced they were holding the summit participants responsible for stopping the aggression and opening the crossings immediately (Hamas' Telegram channel, October 21, 2023).

Egypt

► **Jordan's King Abdullah II** met in Cairo with **Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi**. They noted their united position rejecting the policy of collective punishment which included siege, starvation, and uprooting of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip. They also said they rejected any attempt to forcibly displace Palestinians to Jordan or Egypt, claiming that the [false, disproved, debunked alleged] "disaster of the bombing of al-Ahli Hospital is a dangerous escalation" and reiterated their condemnation of "the heinous crime against innocent people" [referring to Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip, not the Hamas massacre of civilians in the Israeli villages near the border] (Petra News Agency, October 19, 2023).

Jordan

► Jordan's directorate of general security announced it was continuing its work to maintain the security of civilians, property and assets, with an emphasis on implementing the guidelines regarding gatherings and safeguarding participants. The Directorate made it clear it would prohibit gatherings in border areas and areas that could pose a danger to civilians (Ammon News Agency, October 19, 2023).

Rallies and demonstrations for the Gaza Strip

► On October 20-21, 2023, a large number of rallies were held in support of the Gaza Strip in the Arab and Islamic world and in several Western countries. At a demonstration in Egypt there were calls for Hezbollah secretary general Hassan Nasrallah to "strike Tel Aviv." In Lebanon, a small flotilla sailed off the coast of Sidon (TikTok and al-Jazeera, October 20, 2023).



Right: Rallies in support of the Palestinians (clockwise) in Amman, Istanbul, Tripoli in Lebanon, Copenhagen, Kuala Lumpur (Indonesia) and Beirut (al-Jazeera, October 20, 2023). Left: Flotilla off the coast of Sidon (al-Jazeera, October 20, 2023)

The International Arena

European Union

► The United States and the European Union issued a joint statement strongly condemning Hamas and its barbaric terrorist attacks throughout Israel and affirmed Israel's right to defend itself against "such despicable attacks" in accordance with international law. According to reports they would work with partners in the region to emphasize the importance of protecting civilians and were concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip (White House website, October 21, 2023).

Summit of Southeast Asian and Gulf States

► Riyadh hosted a summit meeting of leaders of Southeast Asian and Gulf states. **Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman** said in a speech that he was opposed to harming Gazan civilians and called for an end to military operations against civilians and infrastructure in the Gaza Strip (al-Arabi, October 20, 2023). According to the statement issued at the end of the conference, the meeting's participants condemned any attack against civilians and called for a ceasefire, access to humanitarian aid and the provision of basic necessities to the Gaza Strip. They also called for the protection of civilians and the immediate and unconditional release of civilian prisoners (Safa News Agency, October 20, 2023).

United States

► **American President Joe Biden** said in a speech that the United States could not ignore the need for innocent Palestinians to live in peace, adding that Hamas sought to destroy Israeli democracy. He said he intended to ask Congress for an additional \$14 billion in aid to Israel to help fight Hamas. Regarding the involvement of the United States, he said he refused

to let Hamas win because when terrorist organizations did not pay the price for their actions, they caused more chaos, death and destruction, further threatening the United States and the world (Reuters, October 20, 2023).

France

► **French President Emmanuel Macron** announced that French medical aid to the Gaza Strip would be sent soon. He said he was focused on trying to prevent an escalation between Hezbollah and Israel and they had conveyed messages to the Lebanese side (Reuters, October 21, 2023). French **Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna** spoke by phone with her Qatari counterpart, Mohammad Abdel Rahman, to discuss the situation (al-Jazeera, October 21, 2023).

Global Jihad

Call for attacks against Jews

► The editorial in ISIS's al-Nabā' weekly online magazine, titled "Practical steps to fight the Jews," called for attacks on Jews and their allies around the world. According to the editorial, focusing on fighting Jews in the Palestinian territories was not enough to complete the goal of eliminating the Jews. ISIS called on Muslims who wanted to participate in the fighting Jews and "free themselves from their evil," to attack Jews all over the world, especially in Jewish neighborhoods in the United States and Europe, and attack Jewish and Christian embassies everywhere. It called on the countries bordering Israel to strike Israel's front lines and fences. Regarding the situation on the ground and the possibility of a ground maneuver in the Gaza Strip, the article argued that in preparation for the maneuver, religious-moral preparations had to be carried out, including adherence to Islamic religious law and military preparations, with an emphasis on organizing appropriate equipment, especially explosive belts, "that have disappeared from the arena of confrontation with the Jews" (Telegram, October 20, 2023).

► It was ISIS's first explicit reference to Operation al-Aqsa Storm, although it did not explicitly mention the name of the operation and or Hamas. Last week, the magazine's editorial vaguely and generally referred to the need to help Muslims in Gaza.



The article in al-Nabā' (Telegram, October 20, 2023)

► Al-Nabā' also published an infographic entitled "Practical Ways to Help Muslims in Palestine," calling on Muslims around the world to help the Palestinians by attacking Jewish neighborhoods in the United States, Europe and the rest of the world, burning and destroying embassies, and attacking synagogues, Jewish entertainment complexes and economic interests of Jews around the world. Muslims were also called on to help with propaganda and prayer (Telegram, October 20, 2023).



Infographic "Practical Ways to Help Muslims in Palestine" (Telegram, October 20, 2023)

Terrorist attack in the United States

► The president of the Detroit Jewish Synagogue, Rabbi Samantha Wall, 40, was stabbed to death outside her home on October 21, 2023. The murderer has not yet been apprehended and the motive is unknown. It may be Islamic terrorism in response to calls by ISIS and al-Qaeda to attack Jews around the world or the motive might have been anti-Semitic. The Rabbi

worked with several Democratic Party politicians, including Congresswoman Elissa Slotkin, and had established a Jewish-Muslim forum in the city (Ynet, October 21, 2023).