



Operation Iron Swords Updated to 1 p.m., December 20, 2023

Northern Arena

- 479 attacks
- 117 Hezbollah operatives killed
- 17 other terrorist-organization operatives killed
- One Lebanese army soldier killed

Israeli Casualties

- Approximately 1,300 military and civilian dead (unofficial estimate)
- 129 abducted remain in the Gaza Strip

Rocket Fire

- About 10,600 rockets and mortar shells
- About 10% failed launches

Overview¹

► **The combat arena:** The IDF forces continued their integrated ground maneuver in the northern and southern Gaza Strip, attacking more than 300 targets. The ground forces, air force and navy carried out simultaneous attacks, and according to reports gained control of the Jabaliya area in the northern Gaza Strip. The Palestinians reported heavy fighting. In the Gaza Strip, medical officials reported that about a hundred dead had been brought to hospitals.

► **According to an unofficial estimate, since October 7 approximately 1,300 Israeli civilians and security personnel have been killed, 466 of them soldiers and officers; 129 civilian and military hostages are still being held by the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, 16 of them women and children; 129 hostages have been returned to Israel.**

► **The issue of the hostages:** Senior Hamas terrorists continue to reiterate their refusal to conduct negotiations without a comprehensive ceasefire. An "Egyptian source" said the

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

American administration still believed that if Egypt and Qatar exerted greater pressure on Hamas, a new agreement could be reached.

► **The Gaza Strip:** According to reports, trucks carrying humanitarian aid continue to enter the Gaza Strip. The Hamas leadership arrived in Egypt and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) leadership is also expected to join them soon.

► **The northern arena:** Hezbollah claimed responsibility for two attacks, claiming one was carried out in response to the death of a Lebanese civilian. IDF forces attacked Hezbollah targets in south Lebanon. Israeli aerial defense forces intercepted a rocket and a UAV launched at Israel from Lebanese territory.

► **Judea and Samaria:** A Palestinian attempted a vehicular-ramming attack. Meanwhile, the Israeli security forces continue their counterterrorism activities.

► **Yemen:** The United States is mobilizing the countries of the world for an international force to combat the Houthi threat in the Red Sea.

► **Global jihad:** The Army of the Nation in Jerusalem, a Salafi-Jihadi organization, operating in the Gaza Strip and affiliated with al-Qaeda, claimed its operatives were involved in the October 7 attack and massacre, and in the fighting in the Gaza Strip.

The Combat Arena

► During the past day, IDF forces attacked more than 300 targets in the Gaza Strip, clashing with terrorists, directing aircraft at armed terrorist squads and weapons, and coordinating with air force and navy strikes, which killed dozens of terrorist operatives and destroyed terrorist facilities (IDF spokesperson, December 20, 2023).



IDF forces in the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, December 20, 2023)

► The Palestinian media reported that IDF forces continued to attack the Jabalia area, the northern Gaza Strip, eastern Gaza City, the Shejaiya and Tufah neighborhoods, the central

Gaza Strip and the Khan Yunis area in the southern Gaza Strip. Medical personnel in Gaza reported that about a hundred dead had been brought to the various hospitals during the night and morning (al-Quds, December 20, 2023).

► **The northern Gaza Strip:** The IDF forces completed the takeover of the Jabaliya area and severely damaged the military capabilities of the Northern Gaza City Brigade, killing hundreds of terrorists in clashes and face-to-face combat. About 500 Gazans suspected of terrorist activity surrendered, some of them affiliated with Hamas and PIJ, some of whom were involved in the October 7 attack and massacre in the cities, towns and villages surrounding the Gaza Strip. A large number of military-terrorist facilities were destroyed, including training facilities, tunnels, command and control centers, and sites for the production of rockets. In the Atatra and Jabalia neighborhoods, the forces raided the houses of terrorist operatives, where they found a large number of weapons, maps of tunnel routes and photos of armed children dressed in Hamas uniforms. The search of a building revealed a lathe for the production of rockets, along with hundreds of rockets and a truck to transport them and their launchers (IDF spokesperson, December 19, 2023).



Some of the weapons found (IDF spokesperson, December 19, 2023)



IDF attacks in the northern Gaza Strip (QudsN X account, December 19, 2023)



Right: The Jabalia refugee camp (Wafa YouTube channel, December 19, 2023). Left: IDF attacks in the northern Gaza Strip (al-Arabi YouTube channel, December 20, 2023)

► **Ahmed Kahlout, director of Kamal Adwan Hospital in Jabalia**, who was detained for questioning on December 12, 2023, confessed that he had been recruited by Hamas with the rank of lieutenant colonel and that Hamas turned the hospital, like other hospitals in the Gaza Strip, into a military-terrorist facility under its control. He said the hospital had about 16 employees who were operatives of Hamas' military-terrorist wing, including doctors, male nurses, paramedics, clerks and other personnel. He said Hamas used to hide operatives in the hospital, use it as a base for military-terrorist activities and transport its operatives in hospital ambulances, adding that they had brought a kidnapped soldier to the hospital (IDF spokesperson, December 19, 2023).



Ahmed Kahlout (IDF spokesperson, December 19, 2023)

► **Gaza City:** IDF special forces operated inside a large Hamas terrorist tunnel uncovered in the heart of Gaza City (IDF spokesperson, December 19, 2023).

► **The southern Gaza Strip:** IDF forces extended their operations in the **Khan Yunis** area, reinforced with an additional brigade and engineering forces. They destroyed weapons and attacked a large number of terrorist squads (IDF spokesperson, December 19, 2023). After being attacked with gunfire, IDF fighters raided military headquarters in the Khan Yunis area

from which the terrorists had attacked them and where large quantities of weapons were stored (IDF spokesperson, December 20, 2023).



IDF forces identify (right) and eliminate (left) an armed terrorist in Khan Yunis (IDF spokesperson, December 20, 2023)



The IDF attacks targets in the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, December 20, 2023)

► **Ahmed al-Bata, a correspondent for al-Arabi TV in Khan Yunis**, reported heavy exchanges of fire between IDF forces and "resistance" [terrorist] operatives in northern, central and eastern Khan Yunis. He said IDF forces fired shells and carried out attacks that could be heard throughout the area (al-Arabi YouTube channel, December 20, 2023).



Fighting between the IDF forces and the "resistance" [terrorist operatives] in Bani Suheila, in eastern Khan Yunis (QudsN X account, December 20, 2023)

Israeli casualties

►According to an unofficial estimate, since October 7 approximately 1,300 Israeli people have been killed. According to the IDF spokesperson, 466 of them are soldiers and officers (of whom 134 have been killed since the start of the ground maneuver on 27 October, 2023.); 129 civilian and military hostages are still being held by the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, 16 of them women and children; 121 hostages have been returned.

Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip

►The terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip continue firing rockets at Israel. On the afternoon of December 19, 2023, a barrage of between eight and ten rockets was launched at the center of the country. No casualties or damage were reported. IDF forces operating in Khan Yunis directed a fighter jet to attack and destroy a rocket launching position from which rockets were fired at Israeli territory (IDF spokesperson, December 20, 2023).

The issue of the hostages

►**Taher al-Nunu, the media advisor to senior terrorist Ismail Haniya, chairman of the Hamas political bureau**, said that so far different positions were being voiced, but it was not yet possible to talk about indirect negotiations like those that preceded the temporary humanitarian ceasefire. He said that as far as Hamas was concerned, no new temporary ceasefire was being discussed, only the total cessation of "aggression" against the Gaza Strip (al-Sharq TV X account, December 19, 2023). On another occasion, he said there was no serious proposal regarding a hostage deal with Israel, adding that Hamas was open to initiatives whose objective was to end the war in the Gaza Strip. He claimed there was ongoing communication with Egypt and Qatar, and also claimed "Israel was not serious about releasing the hostages," and there was no benefit [for Hamas] in a temporary ceasefire, after which the Israeli "aggression" would continue. He claimed there was no alternative to a comprehensive ceasefire (al-Sharq TV website, December 19, 2023).

►On another occasion, **Taher al-Nunu** claimed that [senior Hamas terrorist] Osama Hamdan had not contradicted himself when on the one hand he said there would be no negotiations on a hostage deal until the "aggression" ended completely, and on the other hand, that they were open to any initiative aimed at stopping the "aggression." He also claimed that the statements made by the United States and Israeli governments regarding negotiations had

no basis in reality and misled the Israeli public and the families of the hostages. He claimed there were no indirect negotiations with Israel regarding a temporary humanitarian ceasefire, only regarding a complete cessation of the "aggression" and delivering humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip (al-Kawfiya TV YouTube channel, December 19, 2023).

► "An Egyptian source" reported that senior officials in Egypt, in coordination with Qatar, had informed senior American officials about the difficulties of concluding a hostage-release deal similar to the previous one. The stumbling block was the "resistance's" [terrorist organizations'] intransigence and conditions that negotiating a deal would entail an immediate ceasefire, and its refusal to negotiate under fire. Nevertheless, according to the source, the American administration still believed that if Egypt and Qatar exerted greater pressure on Hamas, a new agreement could be reached. A different "Egyptian source" reported that the Hamas leadership had refused to respond to an Israeli proposal which included the possibility of releasing older terrorist leaders and prominent Hamas terrorists who had served long terms in Israeli prisons. The Hamas leadership reiterated its rejection of any proposal which did not include a ceasefire, noting that any future negotiations would not be limited to Hamas prisoners but would include senior officials from all [terrorist] organizations, and "symbols of the "Palestinian resistance" [mass murderers] in general. The source added that Hamas had sent messages to the Israeli government through the mediators, stating that in any future negotiations Hamas would have absolute control over the lists of names and would not agree to receive lists from Israel (al-Araby al-Jadeed, December 19, 2023).

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The Gaza Strip

Palestinian casualties

► **Dr. Ashraf al-Qidra, spokesman for the Hamas-controlled ministry of health in the Gaza Strip**, reported that as of 2:15 p.m., December 19, 2023, the number of dead since the beginning of the war stood at more than 19,667 and the number of wounded at more than 52,586 (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, December 19, 2023). He read the announcement from Tel al-Sultan Maternity Hospital in Rafah, where he is apparently currently working.



Dr. Ashraf al-Qidra at the entrance of Tel al-Sultan Hospital in Rafah (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, December 19, 2023)

► **Senior Hamas terrorist Bassam Na'im** reported that according to ministry of health data, more than 8,000 children and more than 6,200 women had been killed, more than 70% of all the fatalities. He claimed that at least 1,000 Palestinian civilians, including women and children, had been "kidnapped" by IDF forces and that there were reports of [alleged] "death, torture and inhumane treatment of Palestinian detainees held in Israeli prison facilities." In Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem, since October 7 more than 300 Palestinians were killed, among them at least 70 children, and more than 4,500 were detained.

► He said that in light of the [alleged] "deliberate damage" to the hospitals in the Gaza Strip, Hamas was calling on the health agencies of the United Nations, the International Red Cross and international human rights organizations to expose the "catastrophic situation" of the hospitals and the serious consequences for public health. He claimed the international bodies should demand protection for Gaza's medical facilities and maintain a physical presence in all the hospitals in the Gaza Strip to document Israel's [alleged] "crimes and violations." He claimed the Palestinians, especially in the northern Gaza Strip, were "on the brink of starvation" and it was the responsibility of the international community and the UN to exert pressure to ensure the delivery of food, water and medicine to Gaza (julia m.k.'s X account, December 19, 2023).



Bassem Na'im (julia m.k.'s X account, December 19, 2023)

The situation in the Gaza Strip

► Owners of shops selling communication equipment reported that since the beginning of the war, the demand for battery-operated portable radios had increased. They said that due to the lack of electricity and other communication problems, many residents had equipped themselves with portable radios, whose prices had increased due to demand. They reported a shortage because radios and other equipment did not enter through the crossings and some of the goods in the warehouses had been destroyed by IDF attacks (Wafa YouTube channel, December 19, 2023).



Right: Increasing demand for battery-operated portable radios (Wafa YouTube channel, December 19, 2023). Left: Residents of Gaza listening to the radio (al-Ghad TV, December 19, 2023)

► A Ma'an news agency correspondent in Gaza broadcast a program about civilian means of transportation. He said that due to the fuel shortage, the many vehicles damaged in combat zones and residents who had been forced to abandon their vehicles and evacuate, civilians were using alternative means of transportation, such as horse- and donkey-drawn carts, vehicles used for transporting furniture and equipment, and open vans. In addition, many civilians preferred to walk, even long distances (Maan, December 19, 2023).



Transportation in the Gaza Strip (Ma'an, December 19, 2023)

Aid for the Gaza Strip

► Reports continue about the entry of trucks carrying humanitarian aid which arrive from Egypt through the Kerem Shalom Crossing (Wafa YouTube channel, December 19, 2023). After Israeli government approval, the Kerem Shalom Crossing was opened at the beginning of the week to expand the volume of humanitarian aid delivered to the Gaza Strip, following many claims from Arab and international sources that delivering aid to Gaza through the Rafah Crossing alone did not meet the needs of the Gaza Strip.



Trucks enter the Gaza Strip through the Kerem Shalom Crossing (Wafa YouTube channel, December 19, 2023)

Hamas

► **Senior terrorist Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau**, arrived in Cairo to discuss to discuss the war and other issues with senior Egyptian officials (Hamas Telegram channel, December 20, 2023).

► Meanwhile, according to reports, a PIJ delegation headed by **senior terrorist Ziyad al-Nakhalah, PIJ secretary general**, would leave for Cairo early next week at the invitation of the Egyptians (Filastin al-Yawm TV Telegram channel, December 20, 2023); Ziyad al-Nakhalah

confirmed the visit. He said they would go Cairo to stop the aggression, achieve the withdrawal of IDF forces and reconstruct the Gaza Strip. He claimed prisoners would be exchanged according to the principle of "everyone in return for everyone" as part of a "political process" agreed upon by the Palestinian people, represented by their "political forces," led by Hamas (PIJ information bureau Telegram channel, December 20, 2023).

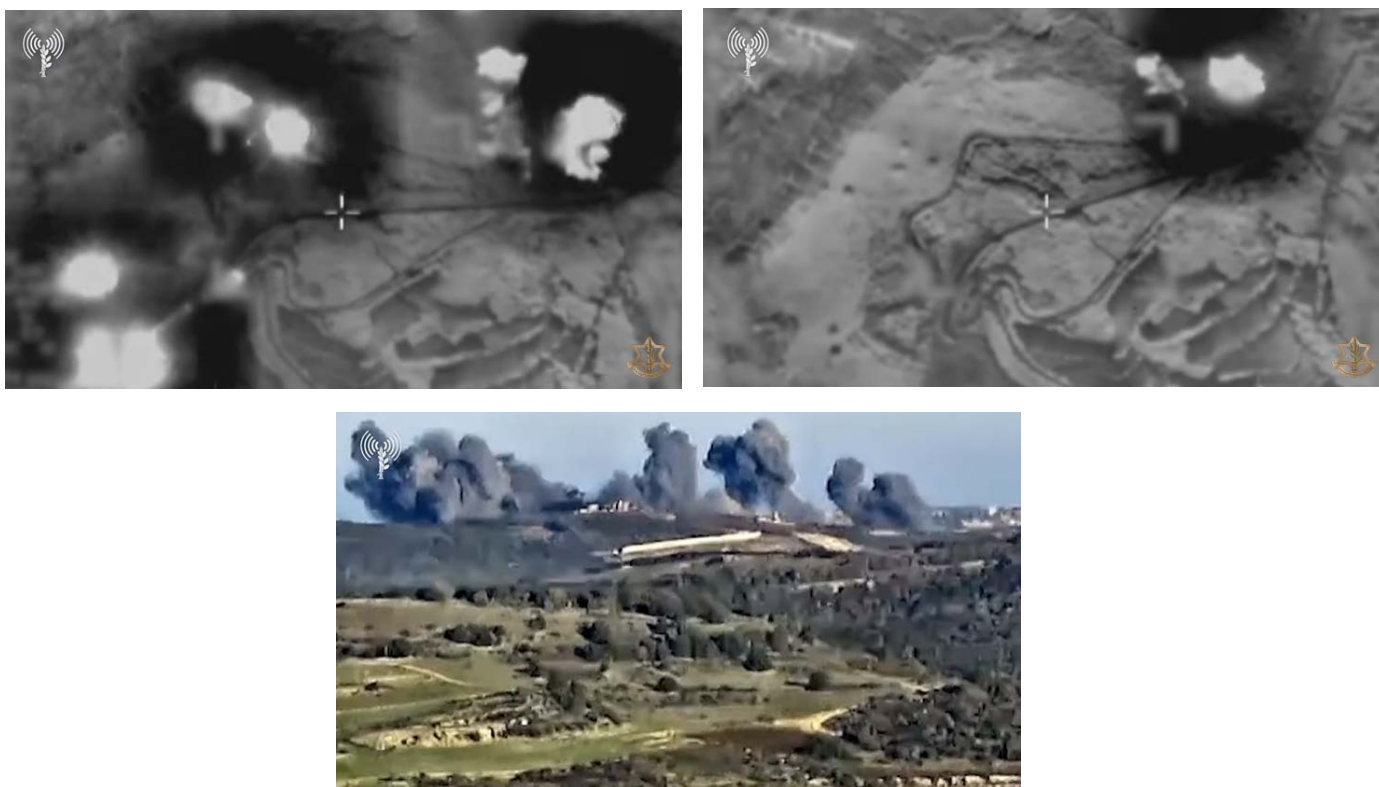
- ▶ **Hezbollah targets attacked in Lebanon (IDF spokesperson, December 20, 2023)**

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The Northern Arena

Hezbollah attacks

- ▶ Hezbollah continued attacking Israel. During the past day, Hezbollah claimed responsibility for two attacks (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, December 19, 2023). Two IDF soldiers were wounded in one of the attacks (IDF spokesperson, December 19, 2023). According to Hezbollah, one attack was in response to an Israeli UAV attack on civilians, which killed a Lebanese citizen resident of Rabb al-Tlatine (about a kilometer and a half – a little less than a mile – west of Kibbutz Misgav Am) (Al Hadeel News X account, December 19, 2023).
- ▶ On the evening of December 19, 2023, Israeli air defense intercepted six rockets launched from Lebanese territory, as well as a suspicious aerial target that was crossing Lebanese territory towards Israel. An Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked the launcher and the terrorist squad in Lebanese territory that fired the rockets. A Hezbollah military structure was attacked where a squad of Hezbollah terrorist operatives was located (IDF spokesperson, December 19, 2023).



Hezbollah targets attacked in Lebanon (IDF spokesperson, December 20, 2023)

Hezbollah casualties

►Hezbollah reported the death of six operatives, all residents of south Lebanon (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel , December 19-20, 2023):

- ◆ Ahmed Hussein al-Hajj Ali, aka Yusuf Muntaser, from al-Halousia and a resident of al-Abasia.
- ◆ Muhammad Hassan Jaafar Makki, aka Zulfiqar, from Mahrounah.
- ◆ Muhammad Naama Srour, aka Ali a-Hurr, from Aita al-Sha'ab.
- ◆ Ali Imad Musa, aka Shahid, from al-Qasbia and a resident of Tyre.
- ◆ Wassim Hayder Murtada, aka Ali Abu al-Hassan, from Aita al-Jabal.
- ◆ Hassan Ali Ibrahim, aka Abu Hadi, from Blida.



Hezbollah casualties (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, December 19-20, 2023)

Nabil Qaouq, a member of Hezbollah's Central Council, speaking at a ceremony in Tyre to commemorate a Hezbollah operative who was killed,² said that the Israeli leadership's threats did not change anything and that the "resistance" [terrorist organizations] in Lebanon, the Gaza Strip, Yemen and Iraq had led Israel "to defeat." He added that extending the aggression against the Gaza Strip would not eliminate Hamas, release or return captives without a price, change the "resistance equations" in south Lebanon or protect Israeli ships in the Red Sea, it would have only one result, the worsening of Israel's crisis and an increase in the number of its dead and wounded. He said that during the 74 days since the start of the "aggression," Hezbollah in Lebanon had continued the campaign in support of the Gaza Strip [and would continue,] regardless the victims or threats. He added that the "resistance's" decision was to respond quickly and decisively, without hesitation or delay, to any attack on Lebanese civilians (Lebanese News Agency, December 20, 2023).

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² Radwan Ali Hamoudi

Judea and Samaria

Terrorist attacks

► On the morning of December 20, 2023, a Palestinian tried to run over an IDF force operating at the Beit Einun junction (north of Hebron) with his vehicle. In response, the force shot and killed him (Israeli media, December 20, 2023). The Palestinian media reported that the driver was Basel al-Muhtasib, 28, from Hebron (Arabs48 website, December 20, 2023).



**The scene of the attack at the Beit Einun junction (north of Hebron)
(QudsN X account, December 20, 2023)**

Counterterrorism activities

► The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities throughout Judea and Samaria, detaining 17 wanted Palestinians, 11 of them Hamas operatives. Since the beginning of the war in the Gaza Strip, about 2,400 wanted Palestinians have been detained, of whom about 1,200 were Hamas operatives (IDF spokesperson's X account, December 20, 2023).

► On the night of December 19, 2023, Israeli security forces operating in **Hebron** mapped the house of a terrorist who carried out the shooting attack at the Tunnel Checkpoint (November 16, 2023), killing an IDF soldier. In the village of **Ni'lin** (west of Ramallah), four wanted Palestinians were detained, and weapons and ammunition were seized. In **Surif** (north of Hebron), illegal vehicles were seized. In **Tammun** (south of Tubas), there were exchanges of fire between armed operatives and the Israeli forces (IDF spokesperson's X account, December 20, 2023).

Solidarity with the Gaza Strip

► Dozens of Palestinians held a demonstration in front of the Egyptian embassy in Ramallah, demanding the permanent opening of the Rafah Crossing to bring in aid to residents of the

Gaza Strip. According to an Egyptian diplomat who received them on behalf of Ambassador Ihab Suleiman, not everything could be recounted, but Egypt was exerting substantial efforts and pressure. He said the extent of the aid had changed since the beginning of the war, but it does not match the extent of the humanitarian tragedy in the Gaza Strip (al-Araby al-Jadeed, December 19, 2023).



The demonstration near the Egyptian embassy in Ramallah (Right: al-Araby al-Jadeed, December 19, 2023; left: yenisafak website, December 19, 2023)

► Palestinian youth activists and networks in Jerusalem issued calls to participate in the “million-man march” of the “Friday of breaking the siege of al-Aqsa” on December 22, 2023. They demanded that all mosques be closed and that everyone go to al-Aqsa Mosque for the Friday prayers (QudsN, December 19, 2023; Hurriya News, December 20, 2023).



Call to go to al-Aqsa Mosque (Hurriya News, December 20, 2023)

Palestinian Authority (PA)

► Palestinian Authority (PA) Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh met with the German minister for economic cooperation and development, with the German representative to the PA in attendance. Shtayyeh said the priority now was to immediately stop the "Israeli aggression" in the Gaza Strip, Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem, bring in medical aid, and restore electricity and water to Gaza. He added that the massive destruction in the Gaza Strip and talk

of reoccupying it or cutting off parts of it and establishing buffer zones were part of the Israeli government's ongoing strategy to destroy the possibility of establishing an independent Palestinian state. He called on Germany to recognize the state of "Palestine" and for recognition as a full member state of the UN (Wafa, December 19, 2023). Before meeting with the German minister, Shtayyeh met with Italian parliamentarians and stressed the need for an immediate cessation of the war in the Gaza Strip, the opening of the crossings and the delivery of humanitarian aid (Wafa, December 19, 2023).



Right: Shtayyeh meets with the German minister. Left: Shtayyeh meets with members of the Italian Parliament (Wafa, December 19, 2023)

PA-Hamas relations

► **Mahmoud al-Habbash, Mahmoud Abbas' advisor on religious affairs and Islamic relations**, said Hamas was endangering the interests and unity of the Palestinian people. He claimed that nearly 100,000 residents of the Gaza Strip had been killed and wounded and buildings had been destroyed. He noted that someone would have to be held accountable, but now they did not want to discuss details. According to al-Habbash, Hamas ignored the calls to end the schism after the Palestinian leadership presented a vision for ending it at a meeting held in al-Alamein, Egypt (al-Arabiya, December 19, 2023).

► **Husein al-Sheikh, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee**, referred to statements he had allegedly made according to which Hamas had cut off contacts with the PLO and that there were currently no formal contacts, saying that his statements had been distorted, that the Palestinian Authority was the first to defend the "resistance" [terrorism] and he himself had spent 11 years in an Israeli prison. He also said that if reform in the PA was necessary, it would be decided only by the Palestinians and not according to an American-Israeli model. Al-Sheikh noted that contrary to Israeli reports that a new agreement for transferring funds to the PA had been signed, there was no such agreement, and claimed that they did not accept

any Israeli or American conditions in this regard. Regarding the Oslo Accords, al-Sheikh said Oslo was dead and buried (al-Jazeera TV, December 19, 2023).

► **Ismail Haniyeh's media advisor Taher al-Nunu** noted that they had neither connection nor disconnection with the PA, Hamas had not decided to sever ties and the PA had not contacted them since the beginning of the war. He stressed that they distinguished between the PA and Fatah, and criticized several PA positions raised over the past two days, saying that it would have been better if the PA had remained silent. He claimed the future of the Gaza Strip would be determined by the Palestinians alone, and Hamas would respect the Palestinians' desire to elect the leadership of their choice. He said it was an internal Palestinian issue that could be discussed calmly based on a common national basis, and not according to dictates from Israel or the American administration (al-Sharq TV website, December 19, 2023).

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Iran

► **Hossein Amir Abdollahian, Iranian foreign minister**, spoke with **his Syrian counterpart, Faisal al-Miqdad**, and discussed regional developments, especially "the continuation of the Zionist regime's crimes against the residents of Gaza." They also discussed diplomatic efforts to immediately stop "killing civilians, especially women and children" and to bring humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip (Fars, December 19, 2023).

◀ On the night of December 19, 2023, the Iranian foreign minister left for Doha, the capital of Qatar, to discuss the latest developments in the Palestinian arena. This was his fourth visit to Qatar since the outbreak of the war in the Gaza Strip (IRNA, December 19, 2023). Upon arrival he met with **senior terrorist Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau**, to discuss developments in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria (Iranian foreign ministry website, December 20, 2023). Abdollahian said no one had any doubt that the "resistance" [Palestinian terrorist organizations] and the Palestinian nation had proven the superiority of their strength and will over the "killing machine of the Zionist regime," despite the great pain and more than 20,000 dead in the past 75 days. He condemned the United States' support for Israel and stressed its legal and international responsibility for the "war crimes and genocide" against the Palestinians. He added that Iran would continue its diplomatic efforts to support the

Palestinians to put an end to the "criminal aggression of the Zionist regime against the Gaza Strip," end the siege and deliver humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. He said Iran was confident that the Palestinian people would not allow anyone to force political plans on them (Tasnim, December 20, 2023).



**Haniyeh meets with the Iranian foreign minister
(Iranian foreign ministry website, December 20, 2023)**

► Abdollahian also met in Doha with Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani (IRNA, December 20, 2023).

Pro-Iranian militias

Iraq

► On the morning of December 20, 2023, a security source reported an attack on the Ain al-Assad base in western Iraq (Shafaq News, December 20, 2023). The Islamic Resistance has not yet issued a claim of responsibility for the attack, which is the first since December 15, 2023, during the provincial elections that were held in Iraq and ended on December 19, 2023.

Yemen

► Following the announcement on the establishment of the multinational naval force, **American Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin** held a virtual conference with ministers and representatives from 43 countries, including European Union and NATO officials, to discuss the growing threat in the Red Sea. Austin stressed that the United States was committed to ensuring freedom of movement in the waters of the region and that Houthi attacks undermined maritime security. He condemned the attacks, saying they were unacceptable and endangered innocent people. He called on the participants to join the American initiative and other initiatives and work together with the American Navy to restore security in the Red

Sea and deter the Houthis from further attacks (American Department of Defense website, December 19, 2023).

► Following that, a joint statement was issued by the United States, the European Union, NATO and several other countries condemning the Houthis' interference in maritime rights and freedom in the maritime areas around the Arabian Peninsula, particularly in the Red Sea. According to the statement, the attacks threaten international trade and maritime security. The countries called for the immediate release of the *Galaxy Leader* and its crew and an end to such attacks, stressing that the Houthis' conduct threatened the movement of food, fuel and humanitarian supplies to many destinations around the world (EU website, December 20, 2023).

► "Sources" described as "knowledgeable" were quoted as saying that the United States and its allies were considering the possibility of attacking the Houthis, with the understanding that the multinational naval force would not be enough to eliminate the threat to the sea route. One of the sources stressed that the Pentagon was planning to suggest to American President Joe Biden to resort to a strong response to the pro-Iranian militias (Bloomberg, December 19, 2023).

◄ Following the intensification of Houthi attacks against commercial ships, Italy announced it would send a warship to the Red Sea to help protect the Red Sea shipping route (Reuters, December 19, 2023).

The Arab Arena

Qatar

► **Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman** spoke with **UN Secretary General António Guterres** to discuss developments in the Gaza Strip and ways to achieve a ceasefire. Abdulrahman stressed that humanitarian corridors had to be opened to ensure that the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip receive aid (Qatari foreign ministry X account, December 19, 2023).

Jordan

► **Ayman al-Safadi, Jordanian foreign minister**, met in Jordan with **British Foreign Secretary David Cameron** to discuss the situation in the Gaza Strip and efforts to stop the

war, protect civilians and transfer humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip (Jordanian foreign ministry X account, December 20, 2023).

Syria

► **Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal al-Miqdad** spoke with his Iranian counterpart **Abdollahian** and discussed the situation in the Palestinian arena, especially in the Gaza Strip, including the consequences of "the crimes and the increase of attacks by the Zionist entity." The parties condemned Israel's Western-backed policy and in particular the destruction of hospitals and schools. The two also discussed steps to be taken to stop the "aggression" and called on the world to deliver humanitarian aid to the Palestinians (SANA, December 19, 2023).

The International Arena

United Nations Security Council

► The Security Council meeting to vote on the proposed UAE resolution calling for a cessation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip, which was supposed to take place on December 18, 2023, was postponed to December 20, because the text of the document to be submitted had not yet been agreed upon (Agence France-Presse, December 19, 2023). The UAE's proposal reportedly includes opening additional crossings for bringing in humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip and ways to monitor the aid (UAE mission to the United Nations X account, December 19, 2023).

United States

► **American Secretary of State Antony Blinken** spoke with **Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman al-Safadi**. Blinken stressed America's commitment to pressure Israel to protect civilians and allow continuous aid into the Gaza Strip. He also praised the partnership between the countries and Jordan's efforts to prevent the spread of the conflict (American Department of State spokesperson's X account, December 20, 2023).

► **Antony Blinken** also spoke with **Sameh Shoukry, the Egyptian foreign minister**. The two agreed to continue rejecting any idea which involved uprooting Palestinians. Shoukry stressed the need to increase access to humanitarian aid in the Gaza Strip and expressed his desire for continued coordination and consultation with the United States (al-Qahera Network, December 19, 2023).

Turkey

► On his return from a visit to Hungary, **Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan** declared that Turkey could make a substantial contribution to the Palestinian reconciliation and that reconciliation was imperative. Erdoğan noted that it was not true that Fatah and Hamas were not holding meetings, they met, but he said it was also possible to go further than that. According to Erdoğan, Hamas is not a terrorist organization but a political party, and they were now engaged in removing the wounded and sick from the Gaza Strip for treatment. Then, when the Israeli attacks ended, they would work to revitalize the Gaza Strip (Anadolu News, December 19, 2023).

Global Jihad

► The Army of the Nation in Jerusalem³ (Jaysh al-Ummah fi Bayt al-Maqdis), an al-Qaeda-affiliated Salafist-jihadi organization operating in the Gaza Strip, issued a statement on December 8, 2023, disseminated on December 19, 2023, claiming that its operatives were involved in the October 7 attack and massacre ("breaching the borders and killing Jews") and firing mortar shells and rockets at Israel. When the ground maneuver began, the organization's operatives planted IEDs to attack IDF forces and attacked them with anti-tank missiles and machine gun fire.

► According to the organization, so far two operatives have been killed: Abu Mujahid al-Ghazawi (i.e., the Gazan), killed in the October 7 attack, and Ahmed Saleh Hamid, aka Abu Shadi, the nephew of the organization leader Abu Hafs al-Maqdisi, who was killed in clashes with an IDF force in the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood in Gaza City (Telegram, December 19, 2023). IDF forces found documents in the Israeli communities near the Gaza Strip attesting to affiliation with al-Qaeda and a flag of the organization. The items may have belonged to operatives of the Army of the Nation in Jerusalem.

► The statement also includes a call on the Palestinian people to attack Jews and a call on the Islamic nation to join the battlefield against Israel and against targets of the United States ("the snakehead") in Islamic countries, such as attacking American military bases, embassies and airports used by them.

³ For further information, see the ITIC's Information Bulletin from February 7, 2008, "[A group called "Army of the Nation, Jerusalem" is yet another global jihad offshoot in the Gaza Strip.](#)"

AlOmma Army
In Bait Al-Maqdes

جيش الأمة
في بيت المقدس

القيادة العامة
رقم البيان: (٤٤)

الجمعة: ٢٤ جمادى أول ١٤٤١هـ
الموافق: ٨ ديسمبر ٢٠٢٠م

معركة طوفان الأقصى: لا يضرهم من خذلهم

﴿وَمَا لَكُمُ لَا تَقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالسُّبْحَانَ مَنْ أَرْسَلَكُمْ إِلَيْهِ وَالَّذِينَ أَلَمُوا الْأَرْضَ لَمَخُولُونَ﴾
﴿أَتَرْتُمُنَّ مَن ظَلَمُوا فَزَيَّرُوا أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَأَسْمَلُوا لَهَا مِن لَّدُنكَ رِبًّا وَأَعْمَلُوا لَهَا مِنَ الْكُفْرِ نَصِيرًا﴾

بعد مرور أكثر من شهرين على بدء معركة طوفان الأقصى، سطو فيها مجاهدو جيش الأمة في بيت المقدس أروع البطولات في صفحات العز والجد، بذلوا فيها أعلى ما يمكن من التضحية والشهادة وللشريعة وللمستضعفين، رغم قلة عددهم وعذبتهم، فأكرم الله المجاهدين باقتحام الحدود والسدود، وقتل اليهود، في سبيلهم السباع من أكتنوب، فأنقذوا في أعماق الله أيما الخان، فسقط في تلك اللحظة الفارس المقدم أبو مجاهد الغزالي أحد فرسان الشريعة - تقبله الله - ليروي بدمه شجرة التوحيد.

ثم قامت وحدات المدفعية بدك مستشفيات اليهود ومقتنياتهم وكذلك المواقع العسكرية بعشرات الصواريخ وقذائف الهاون من العيار الثقيل، ومع بدء التوغل البري لقوات اليهود في شمال قطاع غزة ومدينة غزة، استقبلها مجاهدو جيش الأمة بعبواتهم الناسف ومضادات الدروع ورسائلهم، فأروهم بين قتيل وجريح، وقتل على الرهدة الاشتباكات الأخ المجاهد، أحمد صالح حميد "أبو شادي" - تقبله الله - وهو نجل شقيق الشيخ المجاهد أبو حفص المقدسي، حين اشتبك بشكل مباشر مع قوة راجلة في حي الشيخ رضوان بمدينة غزة، ويفضل الله وحده لا يزال أسود التوحيد من أبناء جيش الأمة مع المخلصين من إخوانهم المجاهدين يدافعون عن حياض الأمة، ويسطرون صفحات العز والأجاء، في مقارعة الأعداء.

ولنا أمامنا القتل اليهودية، والإبادة الجماعية، وتقول اليهود في دماء المسلمين: أطفالهم وسنابلهم وشيوخهم، وما يجري من مسلسل تهجير ممنهج لهذا الشعب المسلم الأبي، تتوجه إلى شعبنا الفلسطيني في غزة بأجزل عبارات الشكوى والانتان على صبره وولائه، وعلى ما سطره من أروع مشاهد البذل والتضحية والعمل، والتسليم والرضى بقدر الله، مشاهد يرى منها الأعمى والبصير، مؤاخاة المهاجرين والأصيار، واقتسام المسكن والمآع ولقمة الخبز، فكتب الله أجركم، وعلى الجانب الآخر فقد بان للمخدوعين من أبناء امتنا بمقارعة الغرب الصكاف

Text of the statement by the Army of the Nation in Jerusalem (Telegram, December 19, 2020)