



# Operation Iron Swords Updated to 1 p.m., December 28, 2023

### Northern Arena

- 532 attacks
- 129 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 hostages remain in the Gaza Strip

### Rocket Fire

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

## Overview<sup>1</sup>

► **The combat arena:** The IDF forces continued to attack terrorist targets in a number of central locations in the Gaza Strip, among them Daraj and Tufah in the northern Gaza Strip, the al-Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip and Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip, where the IDF expanded its activity. In Rantisi Hospital in Gaza City, the IDF completed the destruction of the underground tunnel complex. Meanwhile, activity began in the area of Khirbat Khiza'a in the southern Gaza Strip near the Israeli border. The Palestinians reported that the IDF's ground maneuver in the central Gaza Strip focused on the Juhor al-Dik area (Wadi Gaza) and the al-Bureij refugee camp, which control the Salah al-Din road, the main road running the length of the Gaza Strip. Hamas' military-terrorist wing announced it was using "new weapons."

► **According to an unofficial estimate, since October 7 approximately 1,300 Israeli civilians and security personnel have been killed, 501 of them soldiers and officers; 129 civilian**

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

**and military hostages are still being held by the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, 16 of them women and children; 121 hostages have been returned to Israel.**

►  **Hamas:** The preoccupation with "the day after" continues. Hamas informed Egypt that a situation in which Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) would not be part of the leadership of the Gaza Strip after the war was unrealistic, and it would better to look for solutions where there would be a consensus and which would be appropriate for the "political composition" of the Strip. Hamas denied reports in the French newspaper Le Figaro stating that half an hour before the start of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, **Saleh al-'Arouri, deputy head of the Hamas political bureau**, received a phone call from **Yahya al-Sinwar**, who asked him to update Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah secretary general. Hamas also denied that Khaled Mashaal had said Hamas was prepared to negotiate with Israel.

► **The northern arena:** Hezbollah accepted responsibility for three attacks. In the afternoon, a barrage of about 30 rockets was launched at Kiryat Shmona. According to Hezbollah, the attack was in response to the killing of civilians in Bint Jbeil. Three hostile aircraft crossed from Lebanon and fell in the area of Mount Dov.

► **Judea and Samaria:** Israeli security forces conducted an extensive operation to confiscate funds intended to finance terrorism and detained suspects for helping to finance Hamas.

► **Iranian officials and senior Hamas terrorists** denied the statement of a spokesman for the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps who said Operation al-Aqsa Flood was carried out to avenge the assassination of Qassem Soleimani, former commander of the IRGC's Qods Force, by the Americans and Israel.

► **The pro-Iranian militias:** The Islamic Resistance Front in Iraq claimed responsibility for attacking a vital target in the Golan Heights.

## The Combat Arena

► The IDF forces continued to attack terrorist targets in a number of central locations in the Gaza Strip, including Daraj and Tufah in the northern Gaza Strip, the al-Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip and Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip, where the forces expanded their activity.



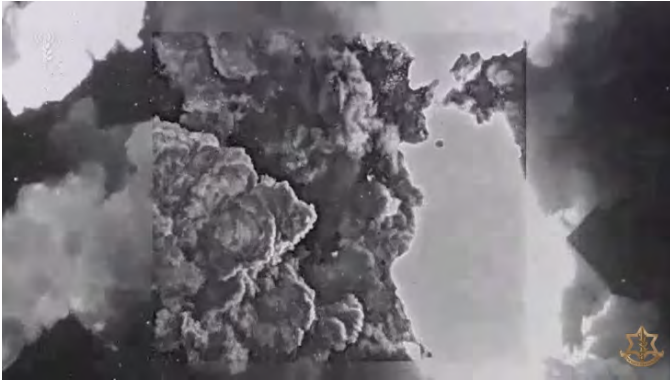
**IDF forces in the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, December 28, 2023)**

► **Lieutenant General Fayez Duwairi, the main military analyst for al-Jazeera TV**, explained that the IDF attacks were currently focused on the Khan Yunis and Deir al-Balah areas. The IDF's integrated ground maneuver in the central Gaza Strip was focused on the Juhor al-Dik area (Wadi Gaza) and the al-Bureij refugee camp, where there was a heavy exchange of fire with "resistance fighters" [terrorist operatives]. He said those areas controlled the Salah al-Din road, the main road running the length of the Gaza Strip (al-Jazeera YouTube channel, December 27, 2023).



**Al-Jazeera's military commentator explains the IDF's ground maneuver (al-Jazeera YouTube channel, December 27, 2023)**

► **The northern Gaza Strip:** Fighting continued in the area of Daraj and Tufah. Over the past day there were a number of clashes between IDF forces and terrorist squads. The forces were assisted by helicopter gunships, which eliminated the terrorists from the air; many weapons were found (IDF spokesperson, December 26, 2023).



**Right: Terrorists shoot at IDF forces from a building in the northern Gaza Strip. Left: The building attacked by a fighter jet (IDF spokesperson, December 28, 2023)**

► **The central Gaza Strip:** IDF forces have been operating in the area of the al-Bureij refugee camp for several days. An al-Jazeera correspondent reported that the IDF attacks focused on the Deir al-Balah and Khan Yunis areas (al-Jazeera TV YouTube channel, December 27, 2023)



**IDF attacks focus on the Deir al-Balah area (central Gaza Strip) and the Khan Yunis area (southern Gaza Strip) (al-Jazeera YouTube channel, December 27, 2023)**

► **Gaza City:** After about a month of fighting, the forces completed the destruction of the extensive underground facility discovered in the area of the Rantisi Hospital in the northern Gaza City a few weeks ago. There were three shafts in the hospital which were connected to an underground tunnel network several kilometers long and passed under the hospital, leading to strategic points in the heart of Gaza City. The tunnel was also used as a military base for conducting the war in the northern Gaza Strip and carrying out terrorist operations (IDF spokesperson, December 27, 2023).





**Aerial photograph of the area of Rantisi Hospital and the locations of the tunnel shafts (IDF spokesperson, December 27, 2023)**



**Right: A tunnel shaft. Left: Part of the tunnel (IDF spokesperson, December 27, 2023)**



**Some of the weapons found in the area of the hospital (IDF spokesperson, December 27, 2023)**

► **The southern Gaza Strip:** The IDF expanded its military activity in the Khan Yunis area, during which the fighters identified an underground facility in a mosque. An IED was detonated in one of the rooms and the terrorists shot at the soldiers. Meanwhile, the IDF began activity in the Khirbat Khiza'a area, where the terrorists who attacked Kibbutz Nir Oz on October 7<sup>th</sup> crossed the border. (IDF spokesperson, December 27 and 28, 2023).



**Weapons found in the mosque (IDF spokesperson, December 28, 2023)**

►An al-Jazeera TV correspondent reported that IDF forces were operating from the north, south and east of the city of Khan Yunis (al-Jazeera YouTube channel, December 27, 2023).



**IDF ground maneuver in the Khan Yunis area (al-Jazeera YouTube channel, December 27, 2023)**



**IDF attack in Rafah (Wafa YouTube channel, December 28, 2023)**

## Managing the campaign

►The Palestinian media reported that 195 Palestinians were killed and 325 wounded in the last day in dozens of IDF land, air and sea attacks. Among the areas attacked were the Shati refugee camp and the neighborhoods of Tufah, Daraj and Sheikh Radwan in Gaza City, Deir al-Balah, the Nuseirat refugee camp, Khan Yunis and Rafah (al-Quds, December 28, 2023).

- ▶ **The Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing**, reported that its operatives had attacked an IDF force barricaded in a house in the Jabaliya area, using an RPO-A infantry rocket flamethrower for the first time (Shehab Telegram channel, December 27, 2023 ). The Brigades also announced that its operatives had launched a SAM-18 missile at a helicopter in the al-Saftawi area in northern Gaza City, and at a helicopter in the eastern part of the Jabaliya refugee camp (Shehab Telegram channel, December 27, 2023). According to various websites, it was the first time they had used the weapon (Palinfo, December 27, 2023).
- ▶ Asked whether the many losses among the Palestinian population could lead to concessions regarding a ceasefire, **senior Hamas terrorist Osama Hamdan** answered that they had resorted to temporary ceasefires which Israel had [allegedly] violated and resumed killing Palestinians. He reiterated that Hamas' insistence on a full and comprehensive ceasefire was not the result of stubbornness or because they wanted more losses, but because they wanted to "close the door to the Israelis so that they do not return to kill Palestinians." He claimed that all the mediators understood the Palestinian's demand and position (al-Sharq News website, December 27, 2023).
- ▶ On another occasion, Hamdan claimed that the "resistance" [terrorist organizations] operated in all the areas where there were IDF forces, even in areas that Israel declared it controlled, such as Beit Hanoun and Juhor al-Dik in the northern Gaza Strip. He claimed Israel was currently discovering that the "resistance" was prepared for a long-term campaign, after thinking that it could realize all its goals by the end of the year.
- ▶ Regarding the relationship between the Hamas leadership "abroad" and the leadership in the Gaza Strip, he claimed that the leadership in the Gaza Strip continued to lead and command, even if "a number" of senior operatives had been killed. He claimed there were ongoing communications between the leadership on the ground, headed by Yahya al-Sinwar and Muhammad Deif, and the leadership "abroad" through means Israel had so far failed to penetrate. He claimed they participated in all discussions regarding decisions, and the leadership "abroad" was updated on all developments on the ground. He said that without a doubt, in managing a campaign of such magnitude there were large operating margins in both management and on the ground, but in the end there was one policy and strategy which determined the basic decisions made for the fighting.
- ▶ He also claimed that there was coordination on the ground between Hamas and the PIJ and that Jerusalem Brigades operatives could be found in an Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades tunnel

and vice-versa. Regarding contact with the leaders of the "resistance axis" in the area, he claimed they were in contact with them, and constant consultations were held, but he could not give details at the moment. Regarding coordination with Hezbollah, he said they were in contact with Hezbollah at the leadership and ground levels, noting that Hezbollah's activity [attacks] in south Lebanon was "important" (al-Mayadeen TV X account, December 27, 2023).

### Israeli casualties

► **According to an unofficial estimate, since October 7 approximately 1,300 Israeli people have been killed. According to the IDF spokesperson, 501 of them are soldiers and officers (of whom 167 have been killed since the start of the ground maneuver on 27 October, 2023); 129 civilian and military hostages are still being held by the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, 16 of them women and children; 121 hostages have been returned.**

### The issue of the hostages

► **Senior Hamas terrorist Mahmoud al-Mardawi** claimed Hamas was open to any proposal, but reiterated that its conditions had to be met before it entered into negotiations, i.e., a ceasefire and the withdrawal of the IDF from the Gaza Strip. He reiterated that the ceasefire was the first step for any negotiation and that their position was clear, it did not make sense to enter into negotiations while Israel was shedding Palestinian blood and exploiting it to improve the terms of the negotiations. He refused to comment on the updated Egyptian proposal for a ceasefire, adding that the issue was currently being carefully considered and they did not want to comment on it.

► **Senior terrorist Zaher Jabarin, who holds the prisoner portfolio in Hamas**, confirmed that Hamas had indeed received a document from Egypt, as well as documents from other countries. He said they were open to all ideas that led to a ceasefire, adding that so far the issue had not been finalized, and reiterated their invariable position that it had to be a permanent ceasefire (Arab World News Agency (AWP), December 28, 2023).

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## The Gaza Strip

### Palestinian casualties

► **Dr. Ashraf al-Qidra, spokesman for the Hamas-controlled the ministry of health in the Gaza Strip** reported that as of the afternoon of December 28, 2023, the number of dead since the beginning of the war stood at more than 21,320 and the number of wounded at 55,603 (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, December 28, 2023).

### The situation in the Gaza Strip

► A brisk movement of residents was reported in the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip as well as the opening of commercial stalls on the main street. It was noted that the Nuseirat refugee camp had become very crowded due to Gazans who evacuated there from the northern and central Gaza Strip because it is considered a relatively safe area, compared to other areas in the central refugee camp region (Wafa YouTube channel, December 27, 2023).



The main street in the Nuseirat refugee camp (Wafa YouTube channel, December 27, 2023)



A tent camp in Deir al-Balah erected for residents evacuated from the al-Bureij refugee camp (Wafa YouTube channel, December 27, 2023)

## Hamas

►The central leadership of the Palestinian Forces Alliance<sup>2</sup> held a meeting in Beirut with representatives of Hamas, the PIJ, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Headquarters, the Popular Struggle Front, the Palestinian Liberation Front, al-Saiqa and Fatah-Intifada in attendance. The participants emphasized the united position of the "resistance" [terrorist organizations] regarding the need to first stop the "Zionist-American aggression," the withdrawal of the IDF forces from the Gaza Strip, the delivery of humanitarian aid and fuel, taking the wounded for treatment abroad and conducting a hostage exchange deal based on "everyone in return for everyone." They emphasized the importance of unifying the Palestinian position and ranks to confront Israel and the need to reorganize the "Palestinian house" after the cessation of the "aggression," and blamed the United States government for the "massacres" of the Palestinians (Palinfo, December 27, 2023).



**The meeting. Hamas is represented by senior terrorists Ali Baraka, Ghazi Hamad, Husam Badran and Osama Hamdan. Other participants in the meeting are Ahsan Attaya from the PIJ and Talal Naji from the PFLP-GH (Palinfo, December 27, 2023; al-'Ahed website, December 27, 2023)**

►The French daily newspaper Le Figaro published an article quoting **senior Hamas terrorist Osama Hamdan** saying that half an hour before the start of Operation al-Aqsa Flood **Saleh al-'Arouri, deputy head of Hamas' political bureau**, received a phone call from **Yahya al-Sinwar, head of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip**, asking him to alert **Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah secretary general** (Le Figaro, December 27, 2023),

►Hamas responded by stating claiming "the article is full of lies and fabrications," claiming the [allegedly] false publication revealed not only the paper's lack of professionalism, but its

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<sup>2</sup> The Palestinian Forces Alliance is a framework of the "rejection organizations" the Palestinian organizations that opposed the Oslo Accords. It was established in 1993 and initially numbered ten organizations. In 1998, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine withdrew from it. The Alliance has not been active since the second intifada.

"Zionism and racism" and the bias in its writing as well ( Hamas Telegram channel, December 28, 2023).

►Interviewed by Le Figaro, **senior terrorist Khaled Mashaal, Hamas leader "abroad,"** said that at the moment they were prepared to negotiate on all issues with Israel through the mediators. He stated that in due time, once a Palestinian state had been established, they would discuss the issue of recognizing Israel (Le Figaro, December 27, 2023). Hamas hastened to publish a "clarification," claiming the interviewer had reported his own personal opinions and private reactions, regardless of Mashaal's clear statements emphasizing Hamas' refusal to recognize the "Zionist entity" ( Hamas Telegram channel, December 27, 2023).

### The issue of "the day after" the war

►An "Egyptian source" involved in the Egyptian efforts for ceasefire talks said that the United States government supported the view that Hamas should not have control of the leadership in the Gaza Strip after the war. The source said that Egyptian officials had held meetings during which they had reached the conclusion that a situation in which Hamas and the PIJ had no part in making decisions in the Gaza Strip after the war was unrealistic, and it would be better to look for solutions that had a consensus and suited the Gaza Strip's "political composition." According to the source, the United States was not enthusiastic about ending the war before there was agreement on a form of government in the Gaza Strip which would ensure Israel's security and that the events of October 7<sup>th</sup> would not repeat themselves. Egypt was trying to formulate a proposal which would leave a place for Hamas in Gaza as a partner, but not as a main actor. He noted that the Egyptian proposal had been revised more than once during the past two weeks, following talks with the involved parties and the other mediators. The source also revealed that in recent days **Yahya al-Sinwar, head of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip** had exchanged communiqués with **General Abbas Kamel, the head of Egyptian General Intelligence,** presenting the position of the military[-terrorist] wing's leadership and the leadership on the ground regarding the general lines they would agree to. The source stated that al-Sinwar's communiqués to Kamel contained nothing new and reiterated the message delivered by Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, during his visit to Cairo (al-Araby al-Jadeed, December 28, 2023).

## The Northern Arena

### Hezbollah's activity

- ▶ Hezbollah continued attacking IDF posts, concentrations of forces on the northern border and civilian targets. During the past day, Hezbollah claimed responsibility for **three attacks**, launching Grad and Burkan rockets, firing artillery and launching drones (Hezbollah's combat information Telegram channel, December 27, 2023).
- ▶ On the afternoon of December 27, 2023, a barrage of about 30 rockets was fired at Kiryat Shmona, damaging property. Hezbollah announced that the rockets had been fired in response to attacks on civilian homes in Bint Jbeil and in support of the Gaza Strip (Hezbollah's combat information Telegram channel, December 27, 2023). In the afternoon, three hostile aircraft were identified that crossed from Lebanese territory and fell in the Mount Dov area (IDF spokesperson, December 26, 2023).



**Right: Hezbollah drone in flight for an attack in the Mount Dov area. Left: A cloud of dust rising after the impact (Hezbollah's combat information Telegram channel, December 28, 2023)**

- ▶ In response, Israeli Air Force fighter jets attacked terrorist targets in Lebanese territory. Several terrorist facilities were destroyed as well as Hezbollah military sites (IDF spokesperson, December 27, 2023).
- ▶ **Al-Manar TV correspondent Ali Shoeib** reported that fighter planes had attacked the town of Ramya in south Lebanon, about a kilometer and a half northeast of Zar'it (Ali Shoeib's X account, December 28, 2023).





**Right: Hezbollah terrorist infrastructure being attacked (IDF spokesperson, December 27, 2023).  
Left: Airstrikes attributed to Israel against the town of Ramya, in south Lebanon  
(Ali Shoeib's X account, December 28, 2023).**

## Hezbollah's use of telephoto cameras

► In connection with the firing of guided missiles at military and civilian targets in Israel, a photo was recently published showing a guided missile launcher with a camera with a telephoto lens next to it, which enables remote photography (Ali Ghandour's X account, retweeted by Ali Shoeib, December 27, 2023).



**Launcher with a guided missile and a camera  
(Ali Ghandour's X account, retweeted by Ali Shoeib, December 27, 2023)**

## Fatalities in Lebanon

► Speaking at the funeral of the three people killed in the attack in Bint Jbeil, **Hassan Fadlallah, a member of the Hezbollah faction in parliament**, said the "resistance" [Hezbollah] would not tolerate attacks on civilians. He noted that every crime increased their determination to remain firm and warned that "no crime against civilians will pass without Israel's paying the price" (al-Nashra, December 27, 2023).

► **Mark Dreyfus, acting Australian foreign minister**, confirmed that two of the fatalities, Ibrahim Bazzi and Shorouk Hammoud, were Australian citizens. He noted that one of them was apparently a Hezbollah operative, stressing that Hezbollah is a terrorist organization and

that association with the organization is a criminal offense for every Australian citizen (ABC News, December 28, 2023).



**The funeral procession: the coffins draped in Hezbollah flags (al-Manar, December 27, 2023)**

## UNIFIL

► UNIFIL announced the wounding of a soldier and damage to a vehicle in an attack carried out by a group of youths in the town of al-Taybeh in south Lebanon. It was noted that the attacks were not only condemnable, but also violated UN Security Council Resolution 1701 and Lebanese law, and that the soldiers' freedom of movement was essential to restore security and stability along the border. UNIFIL made it clear that it would continue its mission and called on the Lebanese authorities to investigate the incident and prosecute those responsible (UNIFIL Telegram channel, December 28, 2023).

## Residents of south Lebanon

► **Nasser Yassin, minister of the environment in Lebanon's transitional government,** said the number of displaced persons from south Lebanon stood at 78,000. He noted 97% of them had rented alternative homes or were staying with relatives, and only 3% were staying in IDP centers (al-Akhbar, December 28, 2023).

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# Judea and Samaria

## Counterterrorism activities

► Operating throughout Judea and Samaria, Israeli security forces, in cooperation with the Israel Police Forces' Lahav 433 Cyber Unit, detained 21 wanted Palestinians suspected of involvement in financing Hamas activity. During the operation, funds used to finance terrorist activity worth tens of millions of shekels, documents, recording systems and telephones were

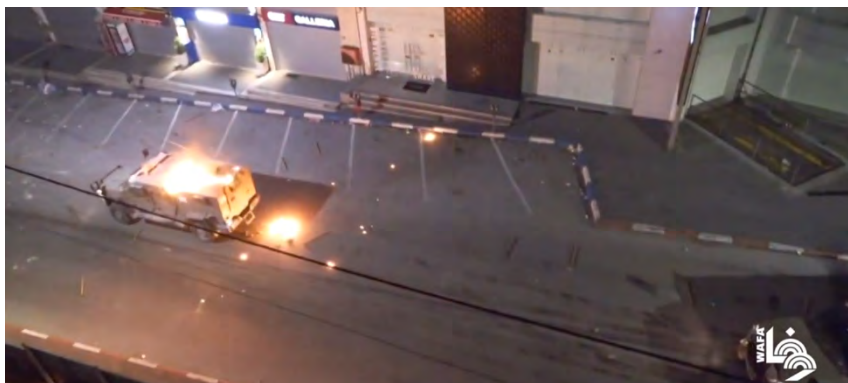
found. Following the operation, the Lahav 433 Cyber Unit opened a joint investigation with the security forces, the Israel Money Laundering and Terror Financing Prohibition Authority and the Tax Authority against Palestinians from Judea and Samaria suspected of involvement in activities to finance Hamas, using digital funds and cash as part of their activity as financial service providers (IDF spokesperson, December 28, 2023). A security source said it was the first operation of its kind intended to hit the funding channels of Hamas and the other terrorist organizations (Israeli media, December 28, 2023).

► During the operation, the forces encountered violent clashes, gunfire and IEDs. In Jenin, Israeli Air Force aircraft fired at armed operatives who endangered the forces (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, December 28, 2023).



#### **Terrorism funds seized (IDF website, December 28, 2023)**

► The Palestinians reported extensively on the activity and highlighted the damage to the exchange offices and the surrounding area. They said Israeli forces had raided five exchange offices and seized about NIS 10 million (about \$2.75 million). They described it as an "economic war" waged by Israel against the Palestinians. During the Israeli forces' activity in Ramallah, Molotov cocktails and heavy objects were thrown at the forces' vehicles from rooftops (Ma'an; al-Arabi TV, December 28, 2023). Two Palestinians were reportedly killed in Ramallah and Nablus during the clashes (Wafa, December 28, 2023).



**Molotov cocktails and heavy objects thrown at Israeli security force vehicles from rooftops during their activity in Ramallah (Wafa YouTube channel, December 28, 2023)**

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## Iran

► **Ali Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader**, prayed at the side of the coffin of Seyyed Razi Mousavi, the senior Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) official assassinated in Syria, at the start of his funeral ceremony. Khamenei conveyed condolences to his family and expressed appreciation for his work. The ceremony was also attended by IRGC Commander Hossein Salami and Qods Force Commander Esmail Qaani (Tasnim, December 28, 2023).

► **Ramazan Sharif, spokesman for the IRGC**, claimed at a press conference that they now regarded Operation al-Aqsa Flood as one of the acts of revenge for the killing of Qassem Soleimani by the Americans and Israel. A few hours later, Hamas issued a denial of Sharif's remarks. Hamas noted in its statement that it had clarified several times the motives and reasons for the outbreak of the operation, first and foremost "the dangers threatening al-Aqsa Mosque," and stressed that the Palestinian resistance activities were carried out in response to Israel's presence and ongoing aggression against the Palestinians and their holy places (Hamas Telegram channel, December 27, 2023).

► **Hossein Salami, commander of the IRGC**, reaffirmed the claims made by Hamas, saying at the funeral ceremony for Seyyed Razi Mousavi that Operation al-Aqsa Flood had been a completely Palestinian operation, planned by the Palestinians themselves and carried out by them without interference from any external party. He said that contrary to the IRGC spokesman's statements, Operation al-Aqsa Flood and the revenge for the killing of Qassem Soleimani were two separate matters. Salami added that each of the components of the



"resistance front" was operating independently and making decisions on its own, despite the ties of trust between them and Iran. He said Hamas and the PIJ were manufacturing weapons in the Gaza Strip, their resistance was endless, and the Zionists could not continue operating against the residents of the Gaza Strip. Salami also said Seyyed Razi Mousavi had been one of the IRGC's commanders with the most experience and influence on the resistance front. He claimed his elimination had stemmed from the weaknesses of the "Zionist regime," and that revenge for his death would be the elimination of Israel from the face of the earth (Fars, December 28, 2023).

## Pro-Iranian militias

### Iraq

- ▶The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for a drone attack on the American base near the Erbil airport, according to them, in continuation of the resistance to the American occupation forces in Iraq and the region and Israel's massacres in the Gaza Strip (Islamic Resistance Telegram channel, December 27, 2023).
- ▶After the claim of responsibility was published, the counterterrorism organization in the Kurdish region announced that American-led coalition forces had intercepted a drone in the Erbil area and that no damage had been caused (the counterterrorism organization's Facebook page, December 27, 2023).
- ▶The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for "an attack on a **technological espionage center** affiliated with the Zionist entity" **northeast of Erbil on the morning of December 27, 2023**. It also claimed responsibility for attacking a vital target in the Golan Heights (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, December 27, 2023).

## The Arab Arena

### Saudi Arabia

- ▶In his annual speech to the Shura Council on behalf of his father, King Salman, **Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman** stressed Saudi Arabia was working to formulate an Arab-Islamic outline to stop the "aggression" in the Gaza Strip. He noted that Saudi Arabia's firm approach was based on respect for the national sovereignty of all countries (al-Arabiya, December 27, 2023).

## Syria

► The Syrian foreign ministry sent communiqués to the UN secretary-general and the president of the Security Council about the attack they claimed Israel had carried out in Damascus on December 25, 2023, which caused the death of the military advisor at the Iranian embassy in Damascus, Seyyed Razi Mousavi. According to the communiqué, it was a blatant violation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. The ministry called on the Security Council to take responsibility and put an end to Israel's policy that threatened to ignite the region and push it into an escalation that threatened regional and international peace and security (SANA, December 28, 2023).

► **Faisal al-Miqdad, Syrian foreign minister**, conveyed condolences to Iran at an official memorial ceremony for Seyyed Razi Mousavi at the Iranian embassy in Damascus on behalf of the Syrian government. He said Israel would soon pay for that crime. He also stressed that "this crime" could only have been committed in cooperation with the United States, which was a regular part of the killing and aggression that befell the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip as well as the Syrian people (SNN, December 27, 2023).

## The International Arena

### United States

► The White House welcomed the appointment of Sigrid Kaag as the United Nations Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, calling the move an important step in the administration and UN's efforts in the delivery and distribution of humanitarian assistance in Gaza. The White House said it was looking forward to working closely with her to increase the flow of aid into Gaza (White House website, December 27, 2023).

### Turkey

► **Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan** spoke with **American Secretary of State Antony Blinken** about the developments in the Gaza Strip and stressed the need to reach a ceasefire and begin negotiations for permanent peace as soon as possible (Anadolu News, December 27, 2023).

► **Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan** said in a speech that the Israeli government's actions in the Gaza Strip were "no different from those of Hitler." Erdoğan claimed that Israel had built camps as the Nazis did, and that fascism controlled the United States and Europe,

so no one was allowed to talk about Israeli aggression. Erdoğan also criticized the institutions serving as agents of democracy, such as the UN, the press and the European Union, which, he claimed, had failed on the Gaza Strip issue, just as the international organizations and Western universities had also failed (Anadolu News, December 27, 2023).