



Operation Iron Swords Updated to 1 p.m., January 4, 2024

Northern Arena

- 580 attacks
- 147 Hezbollah operatives killed
- 19 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

Overview¹

► **The combat arena:** IDF forces continued the integrated ground maneuver in the Gaza Strip, focusing on the **Khan Yunis** area in the southern Gaza Strip and the **Daraj-Tufah neighborhoods** east of Gaza City. The Palestinian media reported attacks throughout the Gaza Strip, which focused on the area of the **al-Maghazi refugee camp** in the central Gaza Strip. About 128 dead and 261 wounded were reported in Gaza. On the morning of January 4, 2024, rockets were fired at the cities, towns and villages surrounding the Gaza Strip, including Ashqelon; the military-terrorist wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) claimed responsibility.

► **According to an unofficial estimate, since October 7 approximately 1,300 Israeli civilians and security personnel have been killed, 509 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; 121 hostages have been returned to Israel.**

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

► **The Gaza Strip:** According to UN reports, an estimated one million displaced persons have arrived in the Rafah area since the beginning of the war. Senior Hamas terrorists said that there were currently no negotiations for a ceasefire, but in order to stop the “aggression” they would have to return to the indirect negotiating table.

► **The northern arena:** Hezbollah claimed responsibility for an unusually large number of attacks (15), many of which involved Burkan rockets. Nine Hezbollah operatives were killed in Israeli strikes in south Lebanon. Hassan Nasrallah, the secretary general of Hezbollah, said in a speech that "Hezbollah's quick action and intervention in the conflict as early as October 8 were what prevented Israel from attacking them."

► **Judea and Samaria:** Israeli security forces operated in the Nur Shams refugee camp in Tulkarm for the second consecutive day.

► **Iran and the pro-Iranian militias:** Two operatives of the Nujaba movement, a pro-Iranian militia in Iraq, were reported killed in an American attack on the popular mobilization headquarters in Baghdad. The UN Security Council is deliberating the Houthis' terrorist activity in the Red Sea.

The Combat Arena

► The IDF forces continued the integrated ground maneuver the Gaza Strip, focusing on the **Khan Yunis** area in the southern Gaza Strip and the **Daraj-Tufah** neighborhoods east of Gaza City. Israeli air and naval forces continued to assist the ground forces, resulting in the deaths of terrorists throughout the Gaza Strip who were planning to attack the forces. The Palestinian media reported attacks focusing on the area of the **al-Maghazi refugee camp** in the central Gaza Strip. During the past day 128 deaths and 261 injuries were reported (Ma'an, January 4, 2024).



IDF forces in the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, January 4, 2024)



Attacking targets in the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, January 4, 2024)

► **Gaza City:** In recent weeks, IDF forces destroyed a Hamas tunnel which was exposed under the Shifa Hospital. The tunnel network was about 250 meters (about 275 yards) long and led to a number of important Hamas facilities which formed the main center for terrorist operations. The IDF's activity has been conducted without interfering with the operation of the hospital (IDF spokesperson, January 3, 2024).



Right: Destroying the tunnel network. Left: The area of the hospital before and after the attack (IDF spokesperson, January 3, 2024)

► The Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing, claimed that in a joint operation with the al-Mujahideen Brigades, they had shot down an Israeli Hermes 900 UAV in eastern Gaza City, using an anti-aircraft missile (Shehab Telegram channel, January 3, 2024).



**Smoke rising from the Tufah neighborhood in Gaza City after IDF strikes
(Shehab X account, January 3, 2024)**

► **The central Gaza Strip:** Ibrahim Qanan, a correspondent for al-Ghad TV in Khan Yunis, reported intense exchanges of fire between the IDF forces and the "resistance fighters" [terrorist operatives] in the center of Khan Yunis. He reported that since the morning of January 4, 2024, the IDF had been conducting non-stop attacks on the Amal neighborhood, in the west of the city (al-Ghad TV, January 4, 2024).

► **The southern Gaza Strip:** Mahmoud al-Louh, a correspondent for al-Ghad TV, reported heavy IDF fire targeting the al-Maghazi and al-Bureij refugee camps in the central Gaza Strip. He reported that IDF tanks had moved westward and reached the al-Masdar area (on the Salah al-Din road, which runs from the north to the south of the Gaza Strip). He noted that more than half of the residents of al-Maghazi had evacuated to the Deir al-Balah area and the southern Gaza Strip (al-Ghad TV, January 4, 2024).



IDF attacks in the Khan Yunis area (Wafa YouTube channel, January 4, 2024)



Right: Israeli Air Force attack in the Amal neighborhood, west of Khan Yunis (Shehab X account, January 4, 2024). Left: Israeli Air Force aircraft in the skies above Khan Yunis (Wafa YouTube channel, January 4, 2024)

►The Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades claimed that they had carried out a joint operation with the al-Mujahideen Brigades, firing a surface-to-air missile at an IDF helicopter in eastern Khan Yunis (Shehab Telegram channel, January 3, 2024).

Palestinian reactions to the fighting

►A commander in Hamas' military-terrorist wing said that the IDF was using robots which made sounds of tanks, vehicles and gunfire in order to fool the military wing operatives into revealing their location. He said they were alert to the issue and were working to foil the IDF attempts [to entrap them] (Quds Press, January 3 2024).

Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip

►At around 9 a.m. on January 4, 2024, rockets were launched at the cities, towns and villages surrounding the Gaza Strip, including south Ashqelon. The Jerusalem Brigades, the PIJ's military-terrorist wing, announced that before noon on January 4, they had launched the rockets (al-Jazeera Mubasher Telegram channel, January 4, 2024).

Israeli casualties

►According to an unofficial estimate, since October 7 approximately 1,300 Israeli people have been killed. According to the IDF spokesperson, 509 of them are soldiers and officers (of whom 175 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 Gaza Strip

Palestinian casualties

►The **Hamas-controlled ministry of health in the Gaza Strip** reported that as of noon on January 3, 2024, the number of dead since the beginning of the war stood at 22,313 and the number of wounded at 57,296 (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, January 3, 2024).

The situation in the Gaza Strip

►The UN reported that an estimated one million displaced persons had arrived in Rafah since the beginning of the war, and were currently living in conditions of extreme crowding. According to UN reports, towards the end of 2023, the status of approximately 1.9 million people in the Gaza Strip was "displaced persons," i.e. 85% of the total Gazan population. An estimated 1.4 million were sheltered in 155 UNRWA facilities throughout the Gaza Strip (al-Quds, January 4, 2024).



The residents of the Nuseirat refugee camp evacuate after an increase in IDF attacks (Wafa YouTube channel, January 3, 2024)

►As it does every week, Hamas issued its call to the "free Arab and Islamic people around the world" to continue their movements and activities in solidarity with the Gaza Strip during the coming days, especially on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. According to Hamas, they had to express opposition to Israeli "aggression" and the [alleged] "genocide" in the Gaza Strip, and also to condemn the killing of [senior Hamas terrorist] Saleh al-'Arouri and others in Beirut (Hamas Telegram channel, January 4, 2024).

The issue of the ceasefire negotiations

►Asked by an interviewer about the negotiations for a ceasefire after the killing of Saleh al-'Arouri, **senior terrorist Muhammad Nizal, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, said that he did not believe it was worthwhile to talk about negotiations at the current time. Regarding

reports that Egypt had suspended its mediation efforts, he replied that no one had informed Hamas that Egypt had suspended or terminated the negotiations. However, the atmosphere after the killing of Saleh al-'Arouri was "not suitable" for entering into negotiations, but some the parties would have to return to the indirect negotiation table because they wanted to stop the "aggression." Asked if Hamas was suffering hardships because it started a war it was unable to stop, he claimed Hamas was not suffering, and stressed that the movement did not regret the attack [and massacre] on October 7 because it restored the Palestinian issue to the global agenda. Regarding the conditions Hamas had presented to the Egyptian mediator, he said their fundamental condition was that the negotiations had to lead to the cessation of "aggression" and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip. He added that the Egyptian and Qatari mediators had been allowed to publish Hamas' response and conditions (al-Arabiya TV YouTube channel, January 3, 2024).

►On another occasion, **Muhammad Nizal** said it made no sense for them to enter into negotiations after the killing of Saleh al-'Arouri, and that it was currently impossible to return to indirect negotiations, but in the coming days they might reassess the situation and decide to return. He stated that they informed the mediators of their view regarding the negotiations and the end of the "aggression", and were waiting for a response from Israel and the United States (al-Jazeera Mubasher YouTube channel, January 4, 2024).

►**Senior Hamas terrorist Osama Hamdan** said that Hamas and its leaders did not act "impulsively," but with "awareness and maturity" based on the interests of the Palestinians. They wanted to end the "aggression," but after the killing of Saleh al-'Arouri it was clear that Israel could not be trusted and anything it did had to be treated with suspicion. He said the mediators had to take that into account (al-Arabi TV YouTube channel, January 3, 2024).

"The day after"

►Regarding who will rule the Gaza Strip "the day after," a proposal was made in Israel that the heads of recognized clans would rule the Strip, each responsible for a different area in the Strip. The supreme authority of the clans in the Gaza Strip condemned the proposal, claiming its objective was to drive a wedge in Palestinian society. Meanwhile, the supreme authority called on Arab and international parties to act immediately to end the war in the Gaza Strip and to introduce humanitarian aid (Ma'an, January 2, 2024).

►In response to the statements of Gila Gamaliel, Israeli minister of intelligence, who called on the world to support the displacement of the residents of the Gaza Strip, the PIJ emphasized

that the desire to uproot a people from its land was a war crime and that any government that participated in it was complicit (Filastin al-Yawm TV website, January 3, 2024).

Additional reactions to the killing of Saleh al-'Arouri

► **The Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military-terrorist wing**, said that the killing of Saleh al-'Arouri and his brother in Lebanon emphasized that Israel was a danger to the [Muslim] nation and its members had to fight Israel in all arenas and deter it until "the cancer" was eliminated from the land of "Palestine." It also claimed that the "assassination of our leaders is a badge of honor" for [the terrorist organizations] and they would continue the "resistance" [violence and terrorism] to make Israel pay the price for its "aggression" (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, January 3, 2024).

► **Ziyad al-Nakhalah, PIJ secretary general**, spoke **with Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau**, and offered his condolences for the death of Saleh al-'Arouri and the other [terrorist] operatives. Al-Nakhalah emphasized the unity of the Palestinian "resistance movement," in which Hamas and PIJ played a prominent role in dealing with Israeli "aggression" (PIJ Telegram channel, January 3, 2024).

► **Muhammad Nizal** was asked by an interviewer about possible scenarios in response to the killing of Saleh al-'Arouri and Hezbollah's involvement. He replied that the Palestinian "resistance" [terrorist organizations] did not expect anyone else to respond to the elimination of its leaders, but it would itself respond to Israel's "crimes," not only to the elimination of ["resistance"] leaders. He said Hamas was in an open struggle with Israel and that all Hamas' "defensive actions" to protect the Palestinian people were a direct response to Israel's "crimes," whether it was the killing of its leaders or the killing of the Palestinian people (al-Jazeera Mubasher YouTube channel, January 4, 2024).

Hamas-Palestinian Authority relations

► **Muhammad Nizal** was asked by an interviewer about Hamas' relationship with the Palestinian Authority (PA), and answered that since the beginning of the war there had been no official contacts between Hamas and the PA due to the PA's "decisions." He cited as an example the fact that Mahmoud Abbas had not offered condolences for the killing of Saleh al-'Arouri. He claimed Mahmoud Abbas could have called Isma'il Haniyeh or Saleh al-'Arouri's family and offered his condolences. He claimed the PA was not an enemy of Hamas and they were open to talks with any Palestinian organization, including Fatah. He added that the Palestinian "organizations" had held meetings in Beirut a few days ago, attended by Saleh al-

'Arouri and Ziyad al-Nakhalah, to discuss the Palestinian view of the conflict. In a joint statement they said the door was open to talks with Fatah regarding the ending the "aggression" and the Palestinian view of "the day after." However, Nizal accused Mahmoud Abbas of trying to impose conditions on Hamas concerning recognition of Israel (al-Arabiya TV YouTube channel, January 3, 2024).

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The Northern Arena

Hezbollah attacks

►Hezbollah continued attacking IDF posts and concentrations of forces on the northern border. During the past day there was an increase in the scope of operations, and Hezbollah claimed responsibility for carrying out 15 attacks, launching anti-tank missiles, rockets and Burkan rockets (with a warhead weighing 300-500 kg). There has been an increase in the use of Burkan rockets, seven of which were launched on January 3, 2024 (Hezbollah's combat information Telegram channel, January 3-4, 2024). IDF forces responded with artillery fire and airstrikes against Hezbollah targets (IDF spokesperson, January 3, 2024).



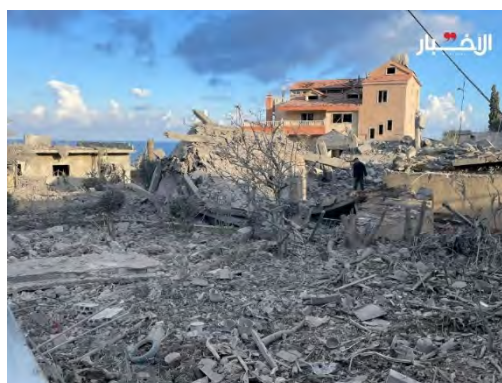
Right: Attack on a terrorist squad operating in the Yaroun area. Left: Attack on a military facility where Hezbollah operatives were present (IDF spokesperson, January 3, 2024)



Attack on surveillance devices in the village of Yaroun (IDF spokesperson, January 3, 2024)

► Hezbollah "sources" said Israel was pulling the organization into a war it did not want, but Israel would not achieve its goal. A "source in Hezbollah's command" said the actions carried out by the organization in the border area with Israel after the assassination [of Saleh al-'Arouri] were not the response to his death and that the response would be powerful. However, the "source" noted that the response would be calculated, because the organization did not want Israel to achieve its goal, which was [allegedly] to drag it into war (al-Araby al-Jadeed, January 3, 2024).

► In Lebanon, pictures were published of the destruction of buildings in the town of Naqoura, near the border with Israel, following an Israeli attack, which reportedly killed four Hezbollah terrorist operatives. According to the reports, the building that was attacked was a local Hezbollah headquarters, and contrary to initial reports, none of the fatalities were senior Hezbollah terrorists or commanders (al-Akhbar X account, January 4, 2024). Correspondent Ali Shoeib posted a video showing the daughter of Hussein Yazbek, one of the Hezbollah operatives killed in the attack in Naqoura, wearing a uniform and holding a picture of her father (Ali Shoeib's X account, January 4, 2024)



Right: The Hezbollah headquarters in Naqoura after the Israeli Air Force airstrike (al-Akhbar X account, January 4, 2024). Left: Hussein Yazbek's daughter (Ali Shoeib's X account, January 4, 2024)

Hezbollah fatalities

► Hezbollah reported the deaths of nine operatives, all from south Lebanon except one from the Beqa'a Valley (Hezbollah's combat information Telegram channel, January 3-4, 2024):

- ◆ Muhammad Hadi Malik Obeid, aka Hussam, from Baalbek in the Beqa'a Valley.
- ◆ Abbas Hassan Jamul, aka Jawad Karbala, from Deir al-Zahrani in south Lebanon.
- ◆ Abbas Hussein Zaher, aka Mukhtar, from the town of Kafr Raman in south Lebanon.

- ◆ Hassan Ali Daqiq, aka Sarraj, from Markaba in south Lebanon.
- ◆ Muhammad Akram Hamad, aka Muhtadi, from Nabatieh et-Tahta in south Lebanon.
- ◆ Ibrahim Afif Fahs, aka al-Sayyid Ayman, from Jibchit in south Lebanon.
- ◆ Hussein Hadi Yazbek, aka Zulfiqar, from Naqoura in south Lebanon.
- ◆ Hadi Ali Rida, aka Zulfiqar, from Tafahta in south Lebanon.
- ◆ Hussein Ali Muhammad Ghazaleh, aka Amir, from Aadloun in south Lebanon.



Hezbollah fatalities (Hezbollah's combat information Telegram channel, January 3-4, 2024)

Residents of South Lebanon

- ▶ According to reports, "following the significant Israeli escalation" and attacks on the homes of civilians that endangered their lives, ten days ago Hezbollah once again asked residents of villages near the Israeli border to leave the area. "Sources" reported that some of the residents refused to leave their homes, some for personal reasons, such as lack of another place to live, or health reasons (al-Sharq al-Awsat, January 2, 2024).
- ▶ Residents of Alma al-Shaab, near the border, issued a statement protesting the fact that as a result of Israeli airstrikes, the town had been cut off from electricity for two months. They called on those "concerned" to restore their electricity (MTV website, January 2, 2024).

►Al-Manar correspondent Ali Shoeib tweeted a picture of a house damaged by an Israeli strike, and wrote, "Our homes are being sacrificed on the road to Jerusalem" (Ali Shoeib's X account, January 2, 2024).



A Lebanese house damaged in an IDF attack (Ali Shoeib's X account, January 2, 2024).

Nasrallah's speech

►On January 3, 2024, **Hassan Nasrallah, secretary general of Hezbollah**, delivered a speech entitled "On the Road to Jerusalem," to mark the fourth anniversary of the death of Qassem Soleimani, commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Qods Force, and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, deputy chairman of general recruitment and commander of the pro-Iranian Hezbollah brigades.

►He began by offering his condolences for the death of Saleh al-'Arouri and praised his work. He also expressed his condolences for the death of Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, as well as on the death of Sayyed Razi Mousavi, a senior IRGC officer who was killed in Damascus. Nasrallah elaborated on Soleimani's activities, claimed that his character was felt in the "campaign" and that the "heroism and achievements" in the Gaza Strip were the result of two decades of hard work by the Palestinian [terrorist] organizations, in which Soleimani and the IRGC participated.

►Regarding the events in the Gaza Strip, Nasrallah emphasized the inability of the international community to protect the Gaza Strip. He added that it also sent a message to Lebanon, because international institutions, international laws and the international community were unable to protect any nation. Regarding Resolution 1701 and recent discourse to implement the resolution to push Hezbollah north of [the] Litani [River], he said "If you are weak, no one in the world will protect you." Nasrallah was proud of a long list of Hamas' "achievements" against Israel, while Israel itself, he claimed, was finding it difficult to present even one picture of victory after three months of conflict. He noted positively the

mortal damage to Israel's strong image in the region and the world, the revival of the Palestinian issue, the prevention of normalization between Israel and other countries, and the deepening of the rift inside Israel, especially between the people and the security forces.

►He claimed that Hezbollah's rapid action and intervention in the conflict on October 8 was what had prevented Israel from attacking them, adding that Israel saw a historic opportunity to get rid of the Hezbollah threat, but was reluctant to do so after losing the element of surprise. On October 8, Hezbollah put its rocket fire units on alert and began to prepare for a war with Israel.

►Nasrallah claimed the "resistance axis"² was not headed by one individual who directed and gave orders, but had a clear strategy and vision, defined enemies, known allies and understood goals. He noted that the "resistance axis" was one of Qassem Soleimani's creations, but each country within the axis acted as it saw fit and decided whether to open or close a fighting front. He claimed the axis was taking "important measures" against Israel and the American bases and praised the Houthis' actions in the Red Sea.

►Hassan Nasrallah ended by relating to the killing of Saleh al-'Arouri, claiming it was "very dangerous", especially since it happened in the Dahia (Beirut's southern Shi'ite suburb, a Hezbollah stronghold). He said it was impossible to remain silent about the killing, it would not go without response or punishment, and those who thought of starting a war against Hezbollah would regret it and pay a high price. He pointed out that if a war was started against Lebanon, Lebanese national interests would oblige them to pursue it to the end, without borders. So far, he claimed, they were fighting at the front taking into account precise calculations, and for that reason they were paying a heavy price in the lives of their young men. However, if Israel was thinking of waging war against Lebanon, then they would fight without any reservations and limitations (al-Manar, January 3, 2024).

►**Ibrahim al-Amin a senior commentator close to Hassan Nasrallah**, wrote about the speech and clarified Nasrallah's threats to respond "without limits or rules." He said Nasrallah had not hidden the real possibility that the escalation on the border would develop into a broad war. Israel, he said, might have miscalculated its ability to deal with Hezbollah's use of firepower which could attack targets deep into Israel. However, he claimed, the equation would not be a building for a building, but tens of thousands of dead in Israel for thousands

² Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinian terrorist organizations, the Shi'ite Houthis in Yemen and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq.

of dead in Lebanon. Every reasonable person had to understand that Hezbollah's weapons in the next war would absolutely not be conventional (al-Akhbar, January 3, 2024).

The Lebanese army

► **Joseph Aoun, the commander of the Lebanese army**, met with **Najib Mikati, prime minister of the interim government of Lebanon**, to discuss the security situation and the affairs of the army (Lebanese government X account, January 3, 2024). He also met with **Nabih Berri, the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament** in the Lebanese village of Ain al-Tineh, to discuss the state of the army and the security developments in light of Israel's continued war against the Gaza Strip and Lebanon (al-Nashra, January 3, 2024).

The Lebanese government

► Following a request from **Najib Mikati**, prime minister of the interim government, **Abdallah Bou Habib, Lebanese foreign minister**, began to prepare a complaint to condemn the "Israeli aggression" the Dahia which caused several casualties and heavy damage to property. Bou Habib directed Lebanon's representatives to the UN and the United States to hold the contacts necessary to submit a complaint regarding "Israeli aggression and the attempt to drag Lebanon and the region into an overall escalation" (Lebanese foreign ministry X account, January 3, 2024).

► **Abdullah Bou Habib** said that it was up to Hezbollah alone to decide whether or not to respond to the killing of Saleh al-'Arouri, but he "hoped and prayed" that there would be no response and that Israel would not repeat the action. He said the Lebanese government was in contact with Hezbollah at all times but could not give it instructions, only try to convince it and tell it what it thought was currently working. Bou Habib added that they hoped Hezbollah would not commit to a more extensive war, claiming they had "many reasons to think that would not happen," because they did not want the events in south Lebanon to develop into a regional war. He stated that in his opinion after decades of war, it was time to try to make peace, and only the United States could lead such a move (CNN, January 3, 2024).

► **Catherine Colonna, the French foreign minister**, told **Najib Mikati, prime minister of the interim government in Lebanon**, that French President Emmanuel Macron had asked her to make it clear that France respected Lebanon's sovereignty. She stated that now more than ever was the time to take responsibility, and "no one will win the escalation." Mikati emphasized the need to stop the ongoing Israeli "aggression" against Lebanon and prevent Israel from making the situation worse (al-Akhbar, January 3, 2024).

Judea and Samaria

Counterterrorism activities

- ▶The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities throughout Judea and Samaria. During the night, 29 wanted Palestinians were detained. Since the beginning of the war, about 2,600 wanted Palestinians have been detained, including about 1,300 Hamas operatives (IDF spokesperson's X account, January 4, 2024).
- ▶The Palestinian media reported that the Israeli security forces' activity in the Nur Shams refugee camp in Tulkarm continued for the second consecutive day, calling it "an extensive security activity." A large number of Israeli troops were deployed, turning the camp into a closed military zone, raiding homes and detaining local residents for questioning. It was also reported that heavy exchanges of fire were taking place between the forces and armed Palestinians. Thirteen wounded have been reported so far (Ma'an and al-Ghad TV, January 4, 2024).



In the Nur Shams refugee camp in Tulkarm (QudsN X account, January 4, 2024). Left: A house being blown up in the Nur Shams refugee camp (Shehab X account, January 4, 2024)

- ▶**Nabil Abu Rudeina, spokesman for Mahmoud Abbas' office**, said Israel's actions in the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem and the Tulkarm and Nur Shams refugee camps would not bring Israel peace and security. He said the United States' ongoing support and protection for Israel encouraged it to continue its activities against the Palestinians (Wafa, January 4, 2024).

Palestinian Authority (PA)

- ▶**The PA foreign ministry** accused Israel of intensifying its "crimes of the migration and displacement" of two million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, most of whom were concentrated in the densely populated southern regions. The ministry accused Israel of cramming the Palestinians into a very narrow area at the same time as it attacked in Gaza, with the intention

of pushing them en masse toward the border. The ministry praised the international positions rejecting the uprooting of the Palestinian people and demanded that their statements be translated into practical steps to exert pressure on Israel (Palestinian foreign ministry X account, January 4, 2024).

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Iran

► **Ebrahim Raisi, Iranian president**, said at the anniversary ceremony of Qassem Soleimani's killing that the "resistance" in the Gaza Strip had demonstrated its capabilities for nearly 90 days despite its limited military capabilities. He said the end of the "Zionist regime" was near and that the only thing that prevented Israel's collapse after Operation al-Aqsa Flood was the United States' military and financial support. He noted Operation al-Aqsa Flood was ongoing and its end would be the end of the "Zionist regime." He warned the United States that it would pay a heavy price for the crimes in the Gaza Strip in which it was directly complicit. He added that the "resistance forces" were more motivated and prepared than ever on the battlefield and that the issue of Palestine and the "liberation of Jerusalem" had become a global issue for all humanity (Tasnim, January 3, 2024).

► **Esmail Qaani, commander of the IRGC Qods Force**, said at the ceremony that the day would come when the United States would have to pay for the consequences of its support for Israel. He said the Gaza Strip no longer had room for Israeli tanks to enter, but it stood firm against the enemy, whose losses were increasing day by day, and Israel would emerge defeated from the battlefield (Tasnim, January 3, 2024).

Pro-Iranian militias Iraq

► The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for drone attacks on the American Green Village base in eastern Syria and the al-Tanf base in Syria (Islamic Resistance Telegram channel, January 3, 2024)

► There were reports of "American aggression" against a Popular Mobilization headquarters in the interior ministry building in Baghdad. Two people were reportedly killed in the attack (Saberin News Telegram channel, January 4, 2024). According to its sources, the al-Mayadeen network reported that initial information indicated that a commander from the Nujaba militia and his aide had been killed (al-Mayadeen, January 4, 2024). Later, the Nujaba movement

announced that Abu Taqwa, commander of the Nujaba-affiliated 12th Popular Mobilization Brigade and his deputy were killed in the attack (Nujaba movement Telegram channel, January 4, 2024). **The spokesman for the Iraqi armed forces** accused the American-led global coalition of carrying out the attack in Baghdad, claiming that it was a blatant violation of Iraqi sovereignty and undermined all understandings between the Iraqi armed forces and the global coalition forces. He stressed that it was a dangerous escalation that exceeded the authority of the coalition (Iraqi prime minister's Telegram channel, January 4, 2024). According to an "Iraqi government source," following the attack in Baghdad, the government intended to summon the head of the global coalition delegation for a talk (al-Sharq, January 4, 2024).

►Previously, **Akram al-Kaabi, secretary general of the Nujaba movement**, said at a conference in memory of Qassem Soleimani and al-Muhandis held in Tehran that the United States had to know that the resistance in Iraq operated according to a calculated strategy, and that if the "American occupation" did not leave Iraq voluntarily, "it will remove rotting bodies from the ground." He called on the Iraqi government to take a clear stand and send a message that would restore sovereignty to Iraq. He said that if the government demanded that the United States leave and it did not, the resistance in Iraq would carry out an unprecedented escalation and expel them by force (Shafaq News, January 3, 2024).

Yemen

►**Yahya Saria, spokesman for the Houthi armed forces**, said they had attacked the CMA CGM TAGE which was en route to the ports of "occupied Palestine." He noted that the ship's crew refused to respond to the calls of their naval forces, who had strongly warned them. He confirmed that they would continue to prevent Israeli ships and ships en route to Israel from sailing until food and medicine were provided to their brethren in the Gaza Strip. He also conveyed condolences to Hamas for the death of Saleh al-'Arouri (Yahya Saria's Telegram channel, January 3, 2024).

The Arab Arena

Egypt

►**Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry** met in Egypt with a delegation of eight members of the American Senate and House of Representatives. Shoukry argued at the meeting that the sensitivity of the situation in the region and in the world required increasing

the mechanisms of coordination and joint work to establish peace and stability in the Middle East. He stressed the need to stop harming civilians and establish an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire, saying that international influencers, headed by the United States, had to take responsibility and stop the Israeli violations in the Gaza Strip. The delegation members stressed the importance of bilateral relations and the strategic partnership between the countries and their desire to consult and cooperate with Egypt on regional and international issues (Egyptian foreign ministry Facebook page, January 3, 2024).

Jordan

► **Ayman al-Safadi, Jordanian foreign minister**, said that setting fire to Judea, Samaria and Lebanon was the goal of the extremist agenda of the Israeli government, which continued to destroy the Gaza Strip to prolong the life of its political leadership and drag the West into a regional war. He said everyone would pay the price for the abandonment of international law and not stopping Israeli extremism (Jordanian foreign minister's X account, January 3, 2024).

The International Arena

United Nations Security Council

► The UN Security Council convened to discuss developments in the Red Sea. The American representative to the United Nations said the threat to navigation rights and freedom of navigation in the Red Sea was an international challenge that required a global response. He noted that the root of the problem was that Iran had been funding the Houthis for many years. France's representative to the United Nations said the Houthis and those who train and support them were responsible for the escalation in the region as well as global stability. He noted that France, as well as all countries, had the right to take steps to ensure security at sea and that the Security Council had collective responsibility for the continuation of the process according to the roadmap of Hans Grundberg, the UN special envoy for negotiations between Yemen and the Houthis. He confirmed that France would continue to contribute to the security of commercial ships, together with its partners. Russia's representative to the UN said that there was no denying that the situation in the Red Sea was a direct result of the violence in the Gaza Strip and Israel's activity. He said the United States was covering up Israel and holding members of the Security Council hostage by vetoing any resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire (UN website, January 4, 2024).

►Previously, 12 countries, led by the United States, issued a joint statement regarding Houthi attacks in the Red Sea. Among them were Australia, Bahrain, Canada, Germany, Japan, and the United Kingdom. According to the announcement, the attacks in the Red Sea threatened the lives of innocent people from all over the world, and they called for an end to the attacks in the Red Sea and the release of the seized ships and their crews. According to the announcement, the Houthis would bear the consequences if they continued to threaten the global economy and free trade (White House website, January 3, 2024).

►In response to the countries' declaration, **Muhammad al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthi political bureau**, said they advised the countries that threatened Yemen in their joint declaration to strive to stop the crimes in "Palestine," not to protect their perpetrators, and to deal with the causes of the problem rather than its consequences. He added that they emphasized that their actions were directed only against ships linked to Israel, not to seize or sink them, but to change their course, thus pressuring them to stop Israel's aggression. He noted that the Yemeni navy's actions were moral and would continue until the "crimes of genocide" in Gaza were stopped and until food, medicine and fuel were brought into its residents (Muhammad al-Bukhaiti's X account, January 4, 2024).

Germany

►Germany advised its citizens in Lebanon to leave the country quickly because a further deterioration or expansion of the conflict in light of al-'Arouri's killing could not be ruled out. Germany stressed to its citizens that the warning applied mainly to south Lebanon and the southern areas of Beirut (German foreign ministry website, January 3, 2024).