



Operation Iron Swords Updated to 1 p.m., January 17, 2024

Northern Arena	Israeli Casualties	Rocket Fire
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 664 attacks• 162 Hezbollah operatives killed• 22 operatives of other terrorist-organization killed• One non-affiliated operative• One Lebanese army soldier killed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approximately 1,300 military and civilian dead (unofficial estimate)• 132 hostages remain in the Gaza Strip	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approximately 11,000 rockets and mortar shells• Approximately 9,000 rockets and mortar shells launched from the Gaza Strip• Approximately 2,000 rockets launched from Lebanon and 30 from Syria

Overview¹

► **The southern arena:** The IDF forces continued the integrated ground maneuver in the Gaza Strip, focusing on the Khan Yunis area. In the central Gaza Strip, the IDF forces destroyed a strategic set of tunnels that connected the northern and southern Gaza Strip and were used to transport Hamas operatives.

► **According to an unofficial estimate, since October 7, 2023 approximately 1,300 Israeli civilians and security personnel have been killed, 525 of them soldiers and officers; 132 civilian and military hostages are still being held by the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip; 121 hostages have been returned to Israel.**

► **Agreement for bringing medicines to the hostages:** According to reports, an agreement was reached for medicines and humanitarian aid to be delivered to the civilians of the Gaza Strip in exchange for a supply of medicines to the Israeli hostages. A Qatari military plane carrying tons of medicine arrived at El Arish airport in Egypt. Musa Abu Marzouq, a senior Hamas member, elaborated on Hamas' condition for the agreement, which was a thousand

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

cartons of medicine for the Palestinians and humanitarian aid and food for the Gaza Strip for every carton of medicine for the hostages. Abu Marzouq said the drug shipments would not be inspected by the IDF and the drugs would be delivered to four hospitals in the Strip.

► **The Gaza Strip:** Medical sources report growing concern over sanitation problems because hospital garbage is not being collected. Jordan announced that a member of its team at the Jordanian hospital was hit by IDF fire. Figures at the ministry of national economy in the Gaza Strip are trying to arrange the distribution of food and humanitarian aid to the residents.

► **The northern arena:** Hezbollah claimed responsibility for five attacks on Israel. The IDF responded with heavy fire at Hezbollah targets in south Lebanon.

► **Judea and Samaria:** In a joint operation by the Israeli security forces, a terrorist squad was eliminated from the air near the Balata refugee camp in Nablus. Five Palestinians were killed in the attack, including Abdullah Abu Shalal, the commander of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Battalions in the Balata refugee camp. In an operation in Tulkarm, four Palestinians were killed. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) condemned the activity of the security forces and called on the Palestinians to escalate attacks on the forces.

► **The pro-Iranian militias:** The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for attacking a "vital target" in **central Israel** a few days ago. The Houthis in Yemen reported they had attacked another ship in the Red Sea. The European Union is working to establish a naval force to protect ships from Houthi attacks. The United States government is expected to announce returning the Houthi movement in Yemen to the list of designated terrorist organizations.

► The **European Union** put **Yahya al-Sinwar, head of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip** on the terrorist list. Hamas criticized the step and claimed it had no meaning for them.

The Southern Arena

► The Palestinian media reported that the main centers of fighting in the last day were east of the **Jabaliya refugee camp**, where heavy exchanges of fire took place between the IDF forces and the "resistance" [terrorist operatives]; Gaza City, where several areas were attacked; the **Khan Yunis area**, mainly the center of the city and the neighborhoods of New Abasan and Bani Suheila (southeast of Khan Yunis) and shelling near Nasser Hospital, and in the center of **Rafah** (Ma'an, January 17, 2024). The Palestinians reported 163 deaths and 350 wounded in IDF attacks in the Strip.

► **The northern Gaza Strip:** Hamas' military wing released a video of an Israeli UAV, claiming its operatives took control of it as it was conducting an intelligence mission in the center of the northern Gaza Strip (Hamas Telegram channel in Judea and Samaria, January 16, 2024).



The UAV (al-Manar TV X account, January 16, 2024)



IDF attacks east of the Jabaliya refugee camp (Shehab X account, January 16, 2024)

► **The central Gaza Strip:** IDF forces destroyed a strategic set of Hamas tunnels whose route crossed Nahal HaBesor. The route stretches for hundreds of meters and is about nine meters deep, and it crosses the Salah al-Din axis, the central north-south axis of the Gaza Strip. The tunnels were used by Hamas operatives to transport terrorists between the northern and southern Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, January 16, 2024).



On the right: The route of the tunnels under the Saleh al-Din axis. Left: The inside of the tunnel (IDF spokesperson, January 16, 2024)



The destruction of the tunnel (IDF spokesperson, January 16, 2024)

► **The southern Gaza Strip:** IDF fighters continued to attack terrorist facilities in the Khan Yunis area. They raided the offices of commanders of Hamas military wing's southern battalion of the Khan Yunis brigade, including the office of the battalion commander, where they found weapons; surveillance cameras were also found in the area (IDF spokesperson, January 16, 2024). Bilal Nofal, who was in charge of interrogating Palestinians suspected of spying against Hamas in the southern Gaza Strip, was killed in an IDF targeted airstrike. He had participated in developing Hamas' investigation and learning methods (IDF spokesperson, January 17, 2024). On January 16, 2024, at noon, Hamas operatives fired at IDF forces operating in northern Khan Yunis. IDF systems revealed that the attack came from the area of **Nasser Hospital** (IDF spokesperson, January 16, 2024).

► **Moamen al-Sharafi, a correspondent for al-Jazeera TV,** reported on a heavy exchange of fire between the IDF forces and the members of the "resistance" near Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis. He claimed the IDF forces fired mortar shells and flares near the hospital compound, causing residents to flee the hospital to safer areas, such as the north of the city of Khan Yunis or the area of the Jordanian field hospital in the west of the city (al-Jazeera YouTube channel, January 17, 2024)



Right: Al-Jazeera TV correspondent reporting from Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis.

**Left: Residents flee from the Nasser Hospital complex
(al-Jazeera YouTube channel, January 17, 2024)**



Right: IDF attacks on Khan Yunis (Shehab X account, January 16, 2024). Left: Attack on the area of Batn al-Sameen, in the south of Khan Yunis (QudsN X account, January 17, 2024)



Right: IDF attacks in western Khan Yunis, not far from Nasser Hospital. Left: Attacks in the New Abasan area, east of Khan Yunis (Shehab X account, January 16, 2024)

► **Naval activity:** Israeli Navy forces attacked Hamas operational targets in the Gaza Strip to assist the IDF forces maneuvering on land (IDF spokesperson, January 17, 2024).



Israeli Navy attacks on terrorist targets (IDF website, January 17, 2024)

Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip

►After rockets were fired at the southern Israeli city of Netivot on January 16, 2024, IDF fighters located the launch complex. Three ten-barreled launchers were found, some of them loaded with rockets. The fighters destroyed the complex and the launchers (IDF spokesperson, January 17, 2024).



One of the launch pits (IDF spokesperson, January 17, 2024)

Israeli casualties

►According to an unofficial estimate, since October 7, 2023 approximately 1,300 Israeli people have been killed. According to the IDF spokesperson, 525 of them are soldiers and officers (193 since the start of the ground maneuver on 27 October, 2023); 132 civilian and military hostages are still being held by the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip; 121 hostages have been returned.

Palestinian reactions to the fighting

►Following a statement that the German government was considering transferring tank ammunition to support the IDF's fighting (Reuters, January 16, 2024), **senior Hamas member Bassem Na'im** strongly condemned Germany's decision, claiming it made the country a direct partner in the war against the Palestinians (Hamas Telegram channel, January 17, 2024).

►**Muhammad al-Hindi, deputy PIJ secretary general**, interviewed in Istanbul, claimed Benjamin Netanyahu's statements regarding the occupation of the Philadelphia Axis were nothing but an attempt to woo his extreme right-wing base. He stated that the Palestinian "resistance" would "fulfill its role" against Israel's attempts "to occupy" the Philadelphia Axis, claiming Egypt had to intervene because it was a Palestinian-Egyptian matter and had nothing to do with Israel, which should have no role, authority or presence in the area (Arab Post, January 16, 2024) .

A ceasefire and the issue of the hostages

► **Majed al-Ansari, spokesman for Qatar's foreign ministry**, announced that Israel and Hamas had reached an agreement according to which medicine and humanitarian aid would be delivered to civilians in Gaza in exchange for supplying medicine to the Israeli hostages. According to the announcement, the agreement was reached with Qatari and French mediation and the medicines and aid would be exported from Doha to El Arish and from there would be delivered to the Gaza Strip (Qatari foreign ministry X account, January 16, 2024).

► A correspondent for the al-Arabi channel reported on January 17, 2024, that a Qatari military plane carrying tons of medicine arrived at El Arish airport in Egypt (al-Arabi TV Telegram channel, January 17, 2024). The chairman of the Egyptian Red Crescent stated that two Qatari planes carrying medicine and aid had arrived at the airport in El Arish, according to the agreement announced by Qatar (al-Sharq TV website, January 17, 2024).

► **Senior Hamas member Musa Abu Marzouq** elaborated on Hamas' conditions for the drug deal reached between Israel and Hamas, mediated by Qatar and France. He said the Red Cross had "submitted a request" to provide 140 types of medicine for the hostages and Hamas specified its conditions: for every carton of medicine for the hostages, they demanded a thousand cartons of medicine for the Palestinians, in addition to aid and food. He said the IDF would not inspect the drug shipments, which would be delivered through a country "they trusted." In addition, all the drugs, including those intended for the Israeli hostages, would be delivered to four different hospitals in the Gaza Strip (Musa Abu Marzouq's X account, January 17, 2024).

► Abu Marzouq claimed France had asked to provide the drugs, but Hamas refused because they did not trust the French government, its support for Israel and its position "against Palestinian aspirations for freedom and return." They asked Qatar to supply the drugs because Hamas trusted them, and Qatar agreed. He noted that contrary to Netanyahu's statements, it was Hamas which had determined the quantity, the identity of the intermediary, the distribution mechanism and the introduction of the drugs to the northern Gaza Strip despite Israel's ban and [alleged] "opposition for a hundred days" (Musa Abu Marzouq's X account, January 17, 2024).

► **Muhammad al-Hindi, deputy PIJ secretary general**, stated that the PIJ and Hamas had submitted a joint paper to Egypt which included their positions on the issue of the Israeli hostages, the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and the issue of the hudna (truce), so far, he claimed,

without a response from either Egypt or Israel, but they learned from the media that Israel did not feel the document was suitable. He reiterated that as far as the PIJ was concerned, there would be no hostage deal until after Israel's complete withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and a complete ceasefire. He added that the "drug deal" did not advance the negotiations. He reiterated that what they wanted from the negotiations was the cessation of Israeli "aggression" in the Gaza Strip, the withdrawal of IDF forces from the Gaza Strip and a complete exchange of prisoners, and that the "resistance's" position "consistent and unchanging" (Arabic Post, January 16, 2024).

► **John Kirby, the White House spokesman, reported that Brett McGurk, the United States envoy to the Middle East,** had recently visited Doha and participated in serious, intense discussions for a possible agreement for the release of the hostages (Reuters, January 16, 2024).

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The Gaza Strip

Palestinian casualties

► **The Hamas-controlled ministry of health in the Gaza Strip** reported that as of 10:50 a.m., January 17, 2024, the number of dead since the beginning of the war stood at 24,448 and the number of wounded at 61,604 (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, January 17, 2024).

► A military source at the general headquarters of the Jordanian Army stated that one of the employees of the Jordanian field hospital in Khan Yunis had been injured in an exchange of fire near the hospital and would be airlifted to Jordan to receive the necessary treatment. According to the source, the Jordanian army placed full responsibility on Israel for the safety of the hospital workers and the attack on the hospital was a blatant violation of international law (Petra, January 17, 2024).

The situation in the Gaza Strip

► "Medical personnel" in one of the hospitals in Gaza City warned of a possible outbreak of serious diseases due to the failure to remove medical waste from the hospital premises. They said the waste was dumped and piled up inside the hospital compound without adequate response and treatment, since the Gaza municipality staff, in fear for their lives, could not remove it to the central waste site. According to the "personnel," they lacked cleaning and

sterilizing materials and the hospital was crowded with patients and injured, along with thousands of displaced persons (al-Jazeera YouTube channel, January 17, 2024).



Medical waste on one hospital premises (al-Jazeera YouTube channel, January 17, 2024)



Residents return to their homes in the al-Maghazi refugee camp after the IDF forces left (Wafa YouTube channel, January 16, 2024)

►Sources in the Gaza Strip reported that communication and Internet services in the Gaza Strip were disconnected for the sixth consecutive day (Wafa, January 17, 2024).

►**Rami Dugheish, the director of the ministry of national economy for the central Gaza Strip**, said that as part of market supervision, the audit teams of the ministry of national economy in cooperation with the department of supply investigations at the ministry of the interior had conducted tours of the markets in Deir al-Balah to monitor the prices, mainly of the goods which are imported through the Rafah crossing. He reported that his office had filled tens of thousands of gas tanks by means of two hundred distributors at the gas stations to control the crisis, and supplied gas to the residents. He also noted that the ministry of economy in the district, in cooperation with the international World Food Program and the bakers union, operated automatic and urban bakeries to produce 1,500 loaves of bread daily for sale to residents at a price of ₪5 (about \$1.30) per loaf, in addition to opening seven points of sale for bread at a price of ₪6 per loaf (about \$1.60) (Palinfo, January 16 2024).

Humanitarian aid for the Gaza Strip

► **Ali Qaradaghi, the new chairman of the International Union of Muslim Scholars**,² said in an interview that the Union proposed to the Arab and Islamic countries on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea that they organize and equip 50 large ships with donations of food, medical equipment and tents for the Palestinians, on behalf of organizations Islamic and international charities, and called on the Arab and Islamic countries to protect the ships. He said that during a visit to Malaysia, he had been informed that they were ready to send and protect an additional 50 aid ships (aljazeera.net, January 14, 2024). In another interview he said that the Union had asked Egypt and Sheikh al-Azhar to lead an aid mission on their behalf to Rafah and from Rafah to the Gaza Strip. He said he had sent the message on behalf of the Union more than a month ago, and that he was the first to join the trip not only to Rafah, but to the Gaza Strip (Arab website 21, January 14, 2024) .

Statements from senior Hamas figures

► At the "Palestinian resistance – the symbol of firm stance" conference held in Tunisia, **Sami Abu Zuhri, head of Hamas' "external" political bureau**, claimed that the "resistance" [terrorist organizations] had humiliated Israel and that a thousand of its operatives had "defeated" a country possessing nuclear weapons. He claimed Israel was [allegedly] trying to erase the images of its failure by means of killing, destruction, starvation and withholding food and medicine. He promised they would continue their "resistance" and that the campaign was still ongoing. He also claimed the United States government was a direct partner in the war, whose only concern was to ensure that the conflict does not expand so that Israel could isolate the Gaza Strip. He said that in response they called for the expansion of the conflict, and therefore it was important what arenas such as Yemen were doing. He called on the Arab and Islamic countries to express their positions and from each according to their abilities: one country could offer weapons, another propaganda, a third legal advice, and another cross the borders (Boabat Tunis, January 16, 2024).

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² The International Union of Muslim Scholars, a radical Islamist organization, was founded in 2004 by Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who headed it until 2018 and for many years was considered one of the leading Sharia judges in Sunni Islam. Since its establishment, the Union's headquarters have been in Doha, the capital of Qatar. For further information, see the November 2023 ITIC report, "[The International Union of Muslim Scholars issued a fatwa calling for military Muslim support for the Gaza Strip.](#)"

The Northern Arena

Hezbollah attacks

- ▶Hezbollah continued attacking IDF posts and concentrations of forces on Israel's border. Hezbollah claimed responsibility for **five attacks** with anti-tank missiles, rockets and Burkan missiles (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 16, 2024).
- ▶The IDF continued attacking heavily in south Lebanon. In the evening, fighter jets, tanks and artillery attacked a number of Hezbollah terrorist facilities and military buildings in the villages of Houle, Maruhin and Aita al-Shaab (IDF spokesperson, January 16, 2024).
- ▶The social networks in Lebanon reported on the attack in Houle and the damage caused by the attack.



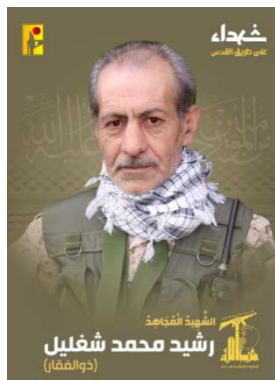
Israeli Air Force attacks in Houle (Fouad Khreiss' X account, January 16, 2024)



Two partially destroyed buildings in Houle, attacked from the air
(Abir Klait's X account, January 17, 2024)

Hezbollah operative killed in the attacks

- ▶Hezbollah reported the death of Rashid Muhammad Shaghilil, aka Zulfiqar, from Tannourine al-Faouqa the Lebanon Valley (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 17, 2024).



Hezbollah fatality (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 17, 2024)

The Lebanese government

► **Najib Mikati, head of the interim government of Lebanon**, who is participating in the economic summit in Davos, gave several interviews to the media. He noted that Lebanon always preferred a diplomatic solution to keep it from becoming embroiled in a war. He said that since the beginning of the war, Hezbollah had behaved "responsibly and wisely" in managing its affairs since Lebanon was its top priority. He stated that the ultimate solution was the "full implementation" of Resolution 1701 to reach real peace between the two sides. He claimed that if there was escalation in the north it was "probably an Israeli choice, not a Lebanese one" (al-Jazeera a YouTube channel, January 16, 2024). In another interview, he said Lebanon had to be far from any escalation, and that the decision for peace was in Lebanon's hands and that war would be a loss for everyone. He said the decision to go to war had been Hezbollah's, which [allegedly] "responded to the Israeli provocations", but Lebanon did not want war and "was committed to international resolutions" (al-Hadath YouTube channel, January 16, 2024).

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Judea and Samaria

Counterterrorism activities

- The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities throughout Judea and Samaria, detaining 85 Palestinians (Wafa.ps, January 17, 2024).
- In a joint operation of the Israeli security forces, a terrorist squad in a vehicle en route to carrying out an attack near the Balata refugee camp in Nablus was eliminated from the air. Four Palestinians were killed, including **Abdullah Abu Shalal, commander of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in the Balata refugee camp**, who was responsible for several attacks in the

past year, including the shooting attack in Jerusalem's Shimon HaTzadik neighborhood in April 2023, in which two Israeli civilians were wounded, and an IED attack against IDF forces in October 2023, in which an IDF soldier was wounded. Large quantities of weapons were found in the vehicle (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, January 17, 2024).

► The Palestinian media reported that the Israeli security forces had surrounded the refugee camp. The forces allegedly towed the vehicle along with the bodies of the dead. Medical sources in Nablus reported that five Palestinians had been killed, including Abdullah Abu Shalal, a wanted al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades commander in Balata, and Mahmoud Abu Hamdan, a senior al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades operative in Balata. Cries of mourning were heard in all the mosques of Nablus (Ma'an, January 17, 2024).



Right: Abdullah Abu Shalal (left) and Mahmoud Abu Hamdan (right) (Tamer's X account, January 17, 2024). Left: The vehicle in which the squad operatives were traveling (QudsN X account, January 17, 2024)

► In addition, Israeli security forces reportedly operated in the Tulkarm refugee camp. Medical sources reported four fatalities after a drone fired at them (Wafa, January 17, 2024).



The activity of the Israeli security forces in the Tulkarm refugee camp (QudsN X account, January 17, 2024)

► **The PIJ** responded to the Israeli security forces' actions this morning in the Balata refugee camp and Tulkarm, claiming that carrying out such killings proved Israel's inability to confront the "resistance" fighters on the ground and the heavy price it was paying as a result of the courageous "resistance." The statement claimed that killings, executions on the ground and all other "means of repression" would only strengthen their resolve. The organization called on the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria to escalate the confrontation with the Israeli forces (PIJ Telegram channel, January 17, 2024).

Palestinian Authority (PA)

► **PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh** said in an interview that the discourse about reforming the PA was a distraction from the main issue, which was stopping the "aggression" and ending the "occupation." He said they had been pushing for a comprehensive reform since 2022. He noted that as a result of the failure of the American administration to stop the war, it was working to throw the ball into the PA's court. He said the American demands included stopping the payment of salaries to the Gaza Strip and to the families of the prisoners, so that the funds would not reach the terrorists and Hamas. Shtayyeh noted that they rejected the proposal and stressed that the salaries were paid to PA officials in the Gaza Strip (al-Araby al-Jadeed, January 17, 2024).

► **Hussein al-Sheikh, secretary of the PLO's Executive Committee**, said that the Palestinian organizations had been holding an indirect dialogue for more than 100 days to examine "the day after the war." According to him, the indirect dialogues touched on several issues, including the issue of the "resistance," and the extent to which each of them benefited the interests of the Palestinian people. Another issue that arose was the situation in the Gaza Strip and the residents of the Gaza Strip as a result of the massive attacks carried out by Israel since October 7, 2023. Another issue was the nature of the dialogue and communication that currently existed between Fatah and Hamas, and the necessity of uniting all the Palestinian organizations under the banner of the PLO (al-Arabiya, January 16, 2024).

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Iran

► **Hossein Amir Abdollahian**, Iranian foreign minister, met on the sidelines of the economic summit in Davos with **Najib Mikati, Lebanon's interim prime minister**. Abdollahian said Iran supported stability and security in Lebanon, which affected the entire region. Mikati stressed

the need to end the war in the Gaza Strip and described the situation in the region as concerning (IRNA, January 17, 2024).

► The Israel Security Agency (ISA) revealed that the questioning of **Basel Mahdi, a PIJ platoon commander** who was detained by the IDF in the Gaza Strip in December 2023, revealed that operatives from the organization had traveled to Iran to train in combat. During his questioning, he said that the operatives had undergone fitness and shooting training in Iran that lasted about two weeks. According to Basel Mahdi, the training was attended by PIJ military operatives from the Gaza Strip, Syria and Lebanon (ISA media, January 16, 2024).

Pro-Iranian militias

Iraq

► The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for attacking a "vital target" in central Israel with an al-Arqaq long-range cruise missile a few days ago (Islamic Resistance Telegram channel, January 16, 2024). Saber News, a Telegram channel affiliated with the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq, reported from "exclusive sources" that the vital target attacked by the Islamic Resistance in Iraq deep inside Israel had been in Haifa (Saber News Telegram channel, January 16, 2024).



The launch of the cruise missile (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, January 16, 2023)

► **Abu Ali al-Askari, spokesman for the Kataib Hezbollah (Hezbollah Brigades) militia**, said the Islamic Resistance in Iraq would increase the pace of its attacks as part of its continued support for the Palestinians. According to him, although they did not know of Iranian attacks against targets in northern Iraq, they did not oppose them. He noted that if they had asked the "brothers in the Revolutionary Guards" what the most preferred target for retaliating against the attack in Kerman was, their answer would have been to attack targets in Saudi Arabia, which is the home of radical Islam, and in the UAE, where Israel has its headquarters

and since it announced the normalization of relations with Israel (Ali al-Askari's Telegram channel, January 16, 2024).

Yemen

► **Yahya Saria, spokesman for the Houthi armed forces**, said they had attacked the Zografia en route to Israeli ports with several naval missiles. He noted that a direct hit had been identified. According to him, they attacked after the crew on board had rejected several warning calls (Yahya Saria's Telegram channel, January 16, 2024). A senior United States Department of Defense official confirmed that the Zografia, which was attacked by the Houthis, was hit but managed to continue on its way. According to the official, the ship reported no casualties (al-Jazeera, January 16, 2024).

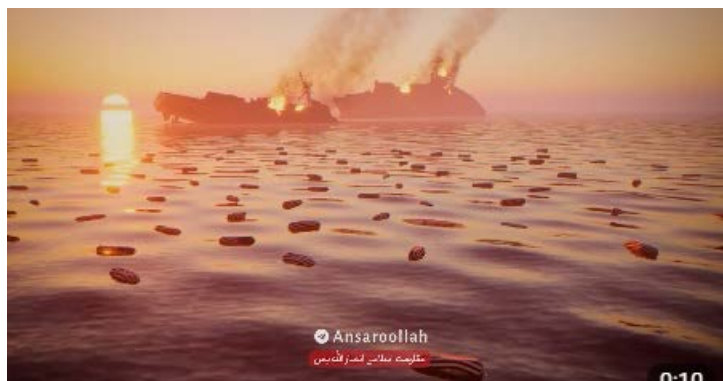
► The United States Army Central Command (CENTCOM) confirmed that on January 16, 2024, at 4:15 a.m. Sana'a time, American forces attacked and destroyed four Houthi anti-ship ballistic missiles that were ready for launch (CENTCOM X account, January 16, 2024).

► **Osama Rabia, chairman of the Suez Canal Authority**, said the Canal Authority had raised the transit fees for the Suez Canal on January 15, 2024. He expressed his hope that the current crisis in the Red Sea would be resolved by the end of the month (Al-Masry al-Youm, January 17, 2024). In another interview, Rabia said the events in the Red Sea adversely affected the number of ships passing through the Suez Canal by 30% and affected income in hard currency by 40% (al-Masry al-Youm, January 16, 2024).

► **Mohammad al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthis' political bureau**, said they had rejected an American proposal according to which the United States would recognize the Houthi government in return for stopping the attacks in the Red Sea. He said the United States had conveyed the message through Oman. He noted that they were currently at war with the United States, Britain and Israel, and that Houthi leader Abd al-Malik al-Houthi had said in response to the proposal that they would not abandon their Palestinian brothers (al-Arabi, January 16, 2024).

► Following the announcement by several shipping companies that they would stop sailing in the Red Sea, **Houthi spokesman Muhammad Abdeslam** said the decision was the result of American pressure and intimidation. He reiterated that they would not prevent passage through the Red Sea from any ship, except those connected to Israel or bound for Israeli ports (Muhammad Abdeslam's X account, January 16, 2024).

►The Houthi movement released a video threatening the United States with attacks in the Red Sea. The video shows coffins of American soldiers sinking in the sea, which was painted red, alongside American ships on fire, with the inscription, "We drowned the people of Pharaoh, and you are witnessing it"³ (Houthi Persian-language Telegram channel, January 16, 2024).



**From the video: Coffins of American soldiers next to American ships on fire
(Houthi Telegram channel in Persian, January 16, 2024)**

- White House spokesperson John Kirby** said the United States was not looking for war with the Houthis and did not want to expand the war in the region, and that the Houthis had time to make the right choice, which he said was to stop their reckless attacks (Reuters, January 16, 2024).
- European diplomatic sources said EU countries supported the idea of creating a naval force to protect ships from Houthi attacks in the Red Sea. According to them, the goal is to establish the task force before February 19, 2024 (Reuters, January 16, 2024).
- Referring to the attacks in Yemen, **French President Emmanuel Macron** said France did not participate in the attacks because they wanted to prevent a regional escalation. He noted that France's approach in the Red Sea was defensive, and they would continue to adhere to this approach (Reuters, January 17, 2024).
- According to reports, the United States administration is expected to announce soon the return of the Houthi movement in Yemen to the list of terrorist organizations. The Houthis were removed from the list of terrorist organizations in 2021 by the Biden administration to facilitate the sending of humanitarian aid to Yemen (AP, January 17, 2024).

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³ Qur'an, Surat al-Baqarah (2), verse 50.

The Arab Arena

Jordan

► **Jordanian Prime Minister Bisher Khasawneh** said that as far as they were concerned, peace with Israel remained a strategic choice, but that an attempt to uproot the Palestinians into Jordanian territory would pose a threat to them. According to him, it is difficult for all Jordanians, after October 7, 2023, to agree to continue regional projects with Israel (Reuters, January 16, 2024).

Iraq

► **The Iraqi foreign ministry** filed a complaint by sending two communiqués to the president of the Security Council and the UN secretary-general about the Iranian attack carried out in Iraq. The ministry added that the aggression was a blatant violation of Iraqi sovereignty (Iraqi News Agency, January 16, 2024).

Tunisia

► **Hatem Almazio, chairman of the Tunisian Bar Association**, said the Tunisian Bar Association would continue to work to file a case with the International Criminal Court (ICC). According to him, a large working group is working between Tunisia and France, the Arab Lawyers Association and Algeria to take legal action against "war criminals in the Gaza Strip." He stressed that the case was complete and was compiled with professionalism, and that it would be submitted to the ICC in late February, immediately following a symposium to be held on February 23-25, 2024, in Tunisia, jointly organized by the Tunisian Bar Association and the Palestinian Bar Association. He added that the lawsuit to be filed with the ICC would be against the "war criminals" and against specific individuals, stressing that there would be a demand to issue international subpoenas against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and "Israeli war criminals." It should be noted that the Tunisian foreign ministry explained Tunisia's failure to join any lawsuit against Israel before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) by saying it would be considered an implied recognition of Israel (al-Araby al-Jadeed , January 16, 2024).



Conference at the Tunisian Bar Association (Arabi21 website, January 16, 2024)

Saudi Arabia

► During the World Economic Forum held in Switzerland, **Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan** was asked whether Saudi Arabia could recognize Israel as part of a broad agreement, and answered in the affirmative. According to him, the attacks in the Red Sea are connected to what is happening in the Gaza Strip, and an immediate ceasefire must be achieved. He also said that what Israel was doing now endangered the chances for peace and security in the region. He said that "regional peace will include the Israelis and the Palestinians, and Israel's security depends on the establishment of a Palestinian state" (al-Arabiya, January 16, 2024).

The International Arena

European Union

► **The European Union** put **Yahya al-Sinwar, head of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip**, on the terror list. Following the move, Sinwar's assets will be frozen in all 27 EU countries, and transactions with him will be prohibited (Reuters, January 16, 2024).

► **Taher al-Nunu, media advisor to Ismail Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau**, accused the EU of bias in favor of Israel in light of the sanctions imposed on Yahya Sinwar. Al-Nunu said the sanctions were ridiculous since everyone [allegedly] knew that "Sinwar had no financial accounts," neither in "Palestine" nor outside it. He added that such a decision would have no value against Hamas, but imposing sanctions on the leaders of the Palestinian resistance who opposed the occupation as a right enshrined in international law was biased in Israel's favor (Palinfo, January 16, 2024).

Germany

► **German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier** spoke with **Tamim Bin Hamad, Emir of Qatar**, and discussed the latest developments in the international and regional arenas, especially the situation in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria. Steinmeier expressed his gratitude to Bin Hamad for Qatar's efforts regarding the release of the hostages (Qatar News Agency, January 16, 2024).

Global Jihad

Pakistan

► Tasnim News Agency, affiliated with the Iranian Revolutionary Guards (IRGC), reported that two important headquarters of the Islamic organization Jaysh al-Adl⁴ (Army of Justice) had been destroyed by missiles and drones in the Balochistan area (Tasnim, January 16, 2024).

► **Jaysh al-Adl** issued an announcement saying that the IRGC had used at least six drones and several missiles to attack operatives' homes in Pakistan's Balochistan Province. The houses of two operatives were destroyed and their family members were killed and wounded. According to the organization, the attack will not stop their jihad, but will only strengthen the organization's determination (Jaysh al-Adl Telegram channel, January 16, 2024).

► Pakistan's foreign ministry strongly condemned Iran's violation of the country's airspace and the Iranian attack that killed two innocent children and wounded three girls. In its statement, the ministry noted that the violation of Pakistan's sovereignty was unacceptable and could have serious consequences, and that the illegal attack was carried out despite the existence of communication channels between the countries and could undermine relations between the countries (Pakistani ministry of foreign affairs X account, January 16, 2024).

⁴ Jaysh al-Adl, Army of Justice, is an organization that opposes the Iranian regime and operates in Sistan and Balochistan Province.