



Operation Iron Swords Updated to 1 p.m., January 22, 2024

Northern Arena	Israeli Casualties	Rocket Fire
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 687 attacks• 165 Hezbollah operatives killed• 24 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:** Over the past day, IDF forces fighting in the Gaza Strip focused on the Khan Yunis area, where they expanded their activities in the west and south of the city. Reportedly, Egypt and Qatar are trying to push Israel and Hamas into joining a diplomatic process that will lead to the release of hostages and ultimately to the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip and the end of the war. Senior Hamas members said they that all the issues were still in the process of being generally laid out and at the moment they were not close to reaching an agreement.

► **According to an unofficial estimate, since October 7, 2023, approximately 1,300 Israeli civilians and security personnel have been killed, 532 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.**

► **The Gaza Strip:** Hamas published a document in English and Arabic that "explained" their reasons and the circumstances for launching Operation al-Aqsa Flood. The document is rife

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

with lies and the baseless claim that Hamas did not attack civilians. According to a senior Hamas member, the document will help convince the public that the October 7, 2023 attack was "justified" and that its goal was not to kill and kidnap civilians, but was military.

►**The northern arena:** Hezbollah claimed responsibility for six attacks. According to the organization, an Israeli civilian target was attacked in response to the death of a Lebanese civilian in an IDF attack. Sources close to Hezbollah warned that if Israel crossed the border, there would be an unlimited war in Lebanon.

►**Judea and Samaria:** The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria. Senior Palestinian Authority (PA) figures are looking for a mechanism that will allow them to receive the tax funds from Israel without the deduction of what would be allotted to the Gaza Strip; the PA's senior figures warn of a financial crisis.

►**Israel:** Terrorist attacks planned by two ISIS supporters from east Jerusalem were prevented.

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

The Southern Arena

►Over the past day, IDF forces fighting in the Gaza Strip focused on the Khan Yunis area in the southern Gaza Strip, where the IDF expanded its activities in the south and west of the city. On the night of January 21, 2024, heavy aerial attacks were reported. IDF forces in the northern and central Gaza Strip clashed with terrorist squads who tried to attack them (IDF spokesperson, January 21-22, 2024).



IDF Attack on Hamas terrorist squads (IDF spokesperson, January 22, 2024)

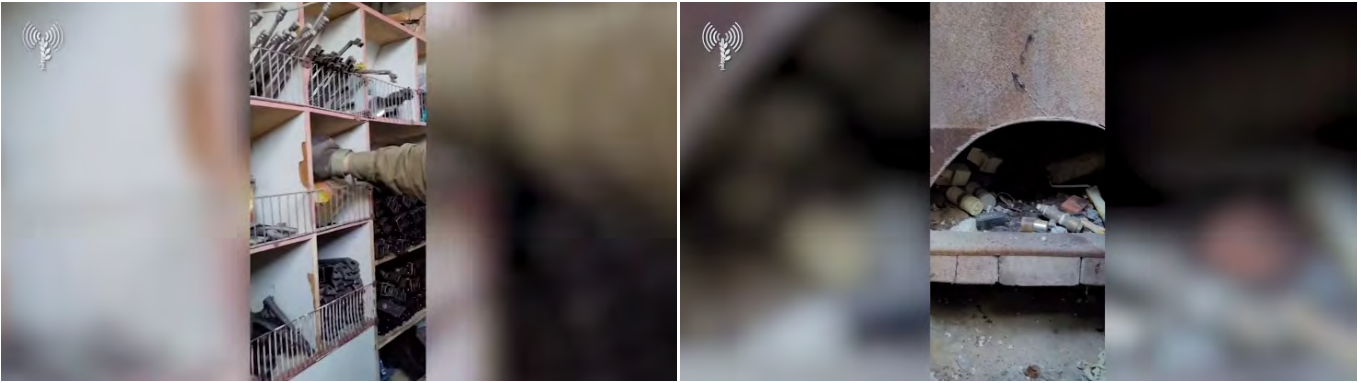


Right: IDF attacks in the Khan Yunis area (Shehab X account, January 21, 2024). Left: Flares in the sky over Khan Yunis (QudsN X account, January 21, 2024)



Smoke rises in Khan Yunis following the IDF attacks (Wafa YouTube channel, January 21, 2024)

► In the **al-Maghazi refugee camp area in the southern Gaza Strip**, the forces raided dozens of Hamas terrorist facilities near and inside civilian buildings. The IDF forces operating at the Hamas headquarters located a factory for the production of weapons. In a nearby olive grove, a loaded rocket launcher was found ready for firing. IDF forces and aircraft destroyed dozens of terrorist facilities, killing more than 30 terrorists who attacked them with RPGs and anti-tank missiles (IDF website, January 21, 2024).



Weapons found in the area (IDF spokesperson, January 21, 2024)



IDF forces in the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, January 21, 2024)

►According to the Palestinian media, the main centers of fighting were **Khan Yunis**, where IDF forces have extended their ground operations in the south and west of the city, and are encircling the al-Aqsa University complex to the west, where large numbers of displaced persons have taken shelter. There is also fighting near Nasser Hospital. Ashraf Abu Amra, a correspondent who reports from the central Gaza Strip, said he could see smoke from the attacks in Khan Yunis (Shehab X account, January 21, 2024). In **Gaza City**, shells were fired at the north and west of the city, and in the **central Gaza Strip** an Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked in the Deir al-Balah area. On the night of January 21, 2024, IDF attacks continued

near Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis. According to reports, the displaced persons sheltering in the hospital panicked and many fled the area. On the morning of January 22, 2024, an increase in attacks in the area was reported (Wafa YouTube channel, January 22, 2024).

►According to reports, 190 people were killed and 340 injured in IDF attacks. It was also reported that due to the spread of the fighting and the number of casualties, wounded Palestinians were being evacuated to the Kuwaiti Hospital in Rafah and not to Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis (Ma'an, January 22, 2024).



Right: IDF attacks in Khan Yunis (Wafa YouTube channel, January 22, 2024) Left: Panic among residents sheltered in the Nasser Hospital complex, who are preparing to evacuate (Wafa YouTube channel, January 22, 2024)

►A correspondent named **Mahmoud Abu Salama** reported from the northern Gaza Strip that the IDF forces recently operating in the area east of the Jabaliya refugee camp had left. As a result, videos were published in the Palestinian media documenting brisk commercial traffic, and many residents were seen in the Jabalia refugee camp market (QudsN X account, 22 January 2024).



The market in the Jabalia refugee camp after the departure of the IDF forces (QudsN X account, January 22, 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, 532 of them are soldiers and officers (199 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.

The issue of the hostages and a ceasefire agreement

►The Wall Street Journal reported that according to its sources," the United States, Egypt and Qatar were trying to push Israel and Hamas into joining a diplomatic process that would lead to the release of hostages and ultimately to the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip and the end of the war. According to the "sources," the mediators proposed a 90-day plan during which Israel would suspend the fighting and Hamas would release all the civilian hostages, and at the same time Israel would release hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, withdraw its forces from the cities in the Gaza Strip, allow freedom of movement, stop UAV surveillance and double the amount of aid entering the Strip. In the second phase, Hamas would release soldiers and bodies and in return Israel would release more Palestinian women prisoners, and in the third phase, Hamas would release Israeli soldiers and the IDF would redeploy part of its forces outside the Strip. The plan also includes the normalization of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia and the resumption of talks for a permanent ceasefire. The "sources" also stated that one of the main obstacles was the internal division in Hamas, despite the fact that **Yahya al-Sinwar, head of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip, and Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau**, have not spoken to each other for almost a month (The Wall Street Journal, January 21, 2024).

►An "Egyptian source" involved in Egypt's efforts to achieve a ceasefire reported that there had been recent efforts to try reaching a position that would contribute to stopping the "aggression" against the Gaza Strip. According to the source, there has been a change about a possible position or agreement, based on stopping the shooting in stages. Each stage will entail a series of commitments by both sides. . He also added that the vision was for a total ceasefire without a renewal of "aggression." According to the source, during recent discussions with senior Israeli government figures, senior figures in Egyptian General Intelligence said it would not be possible to limit mediation to obtaining an agreement for hostages without formulating a complete vision that included all aspects, most importantly

the situation in the Gaza Strip "the day after." The "Egyptian source" reported that during the past few days the Egyptian negotiation-mediation team noticed the Hamas leadership had showed a desire for flexibility regarding details and measures, while still adhering to the principle that a comprehensive ceasefire was the basis for any arrangement (al-Araby al-Jadeed, January 22, 2024).

► **Bassem Na'im, a member of the Hamas political bureau**, claimed that it made no difference if Israel submitted to their demands to stop the aggression sooner or later, because in the end the hostages would be released strictly according to the conditions of the "resistance" [terrorist organizations]. "A senior Hamas member," relating to the nature of the discussions with the mediators, in particular in Cairo, told the newspaper that all issues were still being deliberated and nothing specific had been achieved. According to the "senior Hamas member," they were still laying the general foundations and at the moment it could not be said that they were close to reaching an agreement (al-Araby al-Jadeed, January 22, 2024).

► In response to the plan, **Ghazi Hamad, a member of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip**, said they were very interested in reaching an agreement to end the war, were working day and night and it was their top priority. He claimed they had increased contacts with many parties who offered to intervene, especially Egypt and Qatar, which had invested efforts they appreciated. He stated that everyone agreed that the war should end, there should be a total ceasefire and the withdrawal of IDF forces from the Strip. All issues, he said, were at the stage of consultations and contacts. The basic obstacle was that Israel insisted on continuing the war and believed that through military pressure on Hamas it would be able to chalk up achievements (al-Arabi TV YouTube channel, January 21, 2024).

► During an interview, **Muhammad Nizal, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, responded to remarks made by Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, who said that in exchange for the release of the hostages Hamas demanded the end of the war, the withdrawal of IDF forces from Gaza, the release of all the nukhba murderers and rapists and leaving Hamas intact. Nizal denied that one of Hamas' conditions was to continue managing the Gaza Strip in the post-war period. He said that the management of the Gaza Strip was a Palestinian matter related to the Palestinian organizations, and Netanyahu had nothing to do with it, that condition had not been discussed at all. Nizal emphasized Hamas' position regarding the release of the Israeli hostages, and said that the talks about returning their hostages without negotiations

were pipe dreams. No Israeli hostage would be released except through negotiations. He wondered about Netanyahu's position of refusing to establish an independent Palestinian state, saying that if Netanyahu did not want to establish a Palestinian state, how did he expect Hamas to agree to stop the war, not to continue it and not to repeat what happened on October 7 [.,2023]? (al-Jazeera Mubasher TV website, January 22, 2024).

► **Ali Abu Shahin, a member of the PIJ's political bureau**, said they were familiar with leaks and reports in the media, some of them revealed for internal Israeli purposes, and said in clarification that there had been an Egyptian initiative for some time, which they welcomed and discussed, and to which they gave a positive answer. First Hamas discussed it and the PIJ discussed it, and then they consulted with each other and then they gave their answers. However, he said, that was before Saleh al-'Arouri was killed, and afterwards the PIJ did not receive any formal offer from any source. He claimed talks were taking place regarding the previous proposals, but there had been no new proposal. The only proposal forwarded by Egypt was a position [paper] dealing with the hostage deal, and their answer was to reiterate that their conditions were a total ceasefire and an immediate and complete withdrawal of IDF forces from the Gaza Strip before any deal. He emphasized that they adhered to their original position, that there had to be a comprehensive package that began with a ceasefire, since negotiating under fire was impossible. Regarding the Egyptian-American-Qatari plan, and answered that no new initiative had formally been conveyed to them through the intermediaries (al-Ghad TV YouTube channel, January 21, 2024).

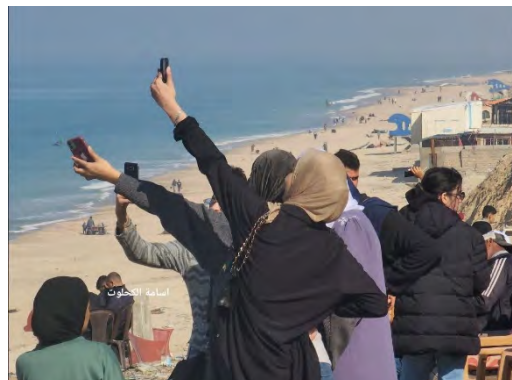
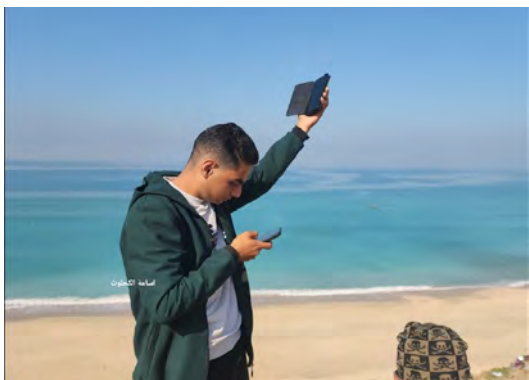
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The Gaza Strip

Palestinian casualties

► **The Hamas-controlled ministry of health in the Gaza Strip** reported that as of 11:45 a.m., January 22, 2024, the number of dead since the beginning of the war stood at 25,295 and the number of wounded at 63,000 (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, January 22, 2024).

The situation in the Gaza Strip



Due to communication and reception problems in the Gaza Strip, displaced persons in Deir al-Balah look for good reception areas at the beach for their mobile phones
(QudsN X account, January 22, 2024)

Hamas' position regarding the October 7, 2023, attack and massacre

- ▶ Hamas published a document in Arabic (18 pages) and in English (16 pages) elaborating on their "reasons and circumstances" for launching Operation al-Aqsa Flood on October 7, 2023. The document is rife with lies, historical distortions and libel. According to Hamas, the document is intended "for the Palestinian people and the free nations of the world" and deals with refuting Israel's claims regarding the October 7, 2023 events in light of "the ongoing Israeli aggression in the Gaza Strip." The document devotes an entire chapter to the "legal [sic] angle" of the October 7, 2023 events. (Hamas Telegram channel, January 21, 2024).
- ▶ According to the document, the "justifications" for Operation al-Aqsa Flood included the Israeli "occupation," the "siege" of the Gaza Strip, the support of the United States and Western countries for Israel, the failure of the Palestinian attempts to "exercise their rights peacefully," and the inability of the UN and its agency [to take action].
- ▶ Regarding the allegations of killing civilians and rape, according to the document they are false and Hamas has "evidence" disproving them. The document falsely claim Hamas "fighters" acted according to the Islamic religious and moral obligation not to harm civilians, especially women, children and the elderly. Hamas operatives killed only armed soldiers and "settlers" [Israeli civilians] who participated in the fighting. Moreover, according to the document, the events of October 7, 2023, "have to be considered in a broader context." It must be remembered that the history, the "struggles of peoples" for "liberation from colonialism and occupation" were only successful thanks to "resistance" [terrorism and violence]. Hamas [allegedly] fights Israel because of Zionism and the occupation, not because they are Jews.

The movement's "struggle" is "legitimate and just" according to the laws of all religions [sic] as well as according to international laws such as the Geneva Conventions. Hamas demands that the countries of the world support and protect the Palestinian people and confront the "crimes of the occupation."

► During an interview **Ghazi Hamad, a member of Hamas' political bureau in the Gaza Strip**, was asked about the document and why it was published only now, 107 days after the start of the war. According to Hamad, from the beginning of the war they had begun taking practical steps to refute the Israeli narrative through statements, speeches, daily press conferences and the like. The document united all the positions to "present and clarify" Hamas' position, and it provided answers to all the questions and doubts and messages of "Israeli propaganda." He claimed, the document would help to convince [the world] that the October 7, 2023, attack was "justified" and part of the "resistance to the occupation." Regarding the fact that the document indicated that unintentional mistakes might have been made during the attack, he claimed they were not ashamed to admit that there were "individual mistakes," and reiterated the false claim that they had not set out to harm and kidnap civilians, and that the purpose was military, but when the fence was breached, many "residents" crossed it and "some of them did what they did" (al-Arabi TV YouTube channel, January 21, 2024).

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The Northern Arena

Hezbollah attacks

► Hezbollah continued attacking IDF posts and concentrations of forces on the border of Israel, and claimed responsibility for **six** anti-tank missile, rocket and Burkan rocket (whose warheads weigh between 660 and 1100 pounds) **attacks** (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 22, 2024).

► In response, warplanes attacked Hezbollah targets in south Lebanon. Two waves of attacks were carried out in the village of Markaba against terrorist facilities, a military structure, observation posts and Hezbollah rocket launching positions. IDF forces fired tanks in a number of areas in south Lebanon, attacking a terrorist operational headquarters and a Hezbollah military structure (IDF spokesperson, January 21, 2024).



Attacking Hezbollah terrorist targets in Markaba (IDF spokesperson, January 21, 2024)



Israeli Air Force attacks on Markaba (Fouad Khreiss' X account, January 21, 2024)

UAV attack

► On January 21, 2024, a vehicle was attacked with a UAV near the checkpoint of the Lebanese army at the intersection of the town of Sarbin, about eight kilometers north of Shtoula. Two people were killed and five were injured, including two civilians who were driving a car nearby and a Lebanese army soldier. According to reports, a senior Hezbollah commander escaped an attempt to kill him (Janovia; Lebanese News Agency; al-Hadath, Sky News in Arabic, January 21, 2024). According to the Saudi Arabian Sky News network, the attack in Kafra was an attempt to kill the commander of Hezbollah's central sector, and his escort, Faisal Suleiman, was in fact killed (Sky News, 21 January 2024).

► Hezbollah announced the death of Faisal Ali Salman Shaar, aka Issa, from Nabatiyeh al-Faouqa in south Lebanon (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 21, 2024).



Right: The scene of the airstrike in Kafra (al-Janubia X account, January 21, 2024). Left: Faisal Ali Salman Shaar (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 21, 2024)

► Hezbollah also claimed responsibility for an attack in the Avivim area that damaged one of the houses and which they claimed caused the deaths and injuries to the occupants of the house. Hezbollah claimed attack was carried out in response to the Israeli attacks on villages and civilians and in response to the death of a civilian named Samer al-Sayid in an attack in Kafr Kafra (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 21, 2024).

► Hezbollah also reported the death of an operative named Sameh Assad Assad, aka Abu Tarab, from Kafr Kila in south Lebanon (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 21 and 22, 2024).



Sameh Assad Assad (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 21 and 22, 2024)

Hamas Fatalities

► The Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military wing, announced the death of **Muhammad Bassem Azzam** from the Mieh Mieh refugee camp in Sidon, who was a military wing operative (al-Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, January 22, 2024).



Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades fatality (al-Manar X account, January 22, 2024)

► Hamas held a memorial ceremony in Sidon for **Walid Ahmed Hassanein**, an operative in its military wing who was killed in a drone attack in south Lebanon on January 17, 2024. The ceremony featured a recorded speech by **Khaled Mashaal, deputy head of Hamas' political bureau**, praising the role of the “resistance” in Lebanon and abroad, and stressing its importance in supporting the “resistance” in the Gaza Strip. **Ayman Shana'a, in charge of Hamas' national relations in Lebanon**, spoke on behalf of Hamas. He stressed that Israel had not succeeded in achieving victory after more than 100 days of fighting, had not succeeded in presenting a single picture of a dead “resistance” commander, and had not succeeded in destroying the tunnels or releasing a single hostage. According to him, the “resistance” was standing firm and was still going out of the tunnels after 107 days. He stressed that any initiative that did not include a complete ceasefire, the withdrawal of IDF vehicles to the lines before October 7, 2023, the opening of the crossings, the entry of humanitarian aid, food, medical aid and fuel, and then talk of a hostage exchange deal on an "all for everyone" basis would be unacceptable (Saida City website, January 21, 2024).



Photo from the memorial service (Saida City website, January 21, 2024)

Hezbollah

► In an article titled "Who said Hezbollah doesn't want war at any cost?" **Ibrahim al-Amin, who is close to Hassan Nasrallah**, wrote that it was Hezbollah that opened fire and had announced from the beginning that it did not want war, but that it would not stop its activity until Israel's "aggression" against the Gaza Strip stopped. According to al-Amin, Hezbollah commanders said clearly that if Israel crossed the line, war would take place without any restrictions. He said Hezbollah was operationally preparing to respond to any Israeli violation of the so-called "rules of conflict" to which Hezbollah had agreed. The response would be implemented even if it meant a large-scale war. He said the ball was currently in Israel's court (al-Akhbar, January 22, 2024).

► **Nabih Berri, speaker of the Lebanese parliament**, warned against Israel's attempts to expand the war because American and international support was on its side. He said they should stay away from any attempts to drag Lebanon into war, and that he stressed to all the mediators and to American envoy Amos Hochstein their adherence and commitment to Resolution 1701, which Israel had to be obligated to implement as well (al-Joumhouria, January 21, 2024).

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Judea and Samaria

Counterterrorism activities

► The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities throughout Judea and Samaria, detaining 15 wanted Palestinians (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, January 22, 2024). In the early morning of January 22, 2024, the Israeli forces operated in Meithalun

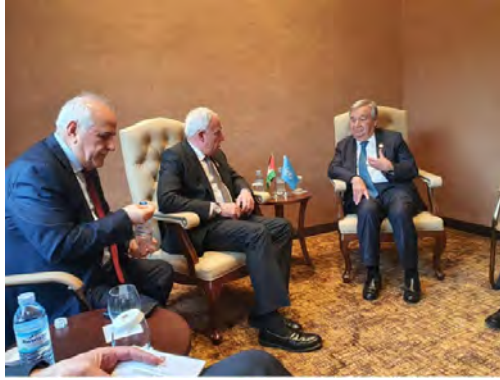
and Nazlat Issa (south of Jenin). During the operation, the forces detained eight wanted Palestinians and destroyed IEDs. In addition, the forces operated in Bitunia (southwest of Ramallah) and Merah Rabah (south of Bethlehem) and seized terrorist funds (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, January 22, 2024).

Palestinian Authority (PA)

►Following the Israeli cabinet's approval of the transfer of tax revenues to the PA through a third country (Norway), **Hussein al-Sheikh, secretary general of the PLO's Executive Committee**, said that the Palestinian leadership was examining all proposals to solve the current financial crisis caused by PA funds' being held by Israel. He also said the Palestinian leadership maintained its commitment to the residents of the Gaza Strip and expressed appreciation for the efforts invested by several countries to end the financial crisis (Hussein al-Sheikh's X account, January 21, 2024). In another tweet, al-Sheikh said they opposed any deduction of their funds by Israel and the imposition of conditions to prevent the transfer of funds to the residents of the Gaza Strip. Therefore, they were calling on the international community to put an end to Israel's conduct and force it to transfer all the funds that belonged to them (Hussein al-Sheikh's X account, January 21, 2024).

►**PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh** addressed the issue at the start of the weekly cabinet meeting, saying that they appreciated the international effort invested in the issue but were waiting for clarifications on the format. In any situation, Shtayyeh said, there would be no solution at the expense of the residents of the Gaza Strip who deserved the assistance and to whom the funds belonged (Muhammad Shtayyeh's Facebook page, January 22, 2024).

►**PA Foreign Minister Riyadh al-Maliki** met with **UN Secretary-General António Guterres** on the sidelines of the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Uganda to discuss ways to end the "occupation" and increase moving towards the two-state solution (PA foreign ministry Facebook page, January 21, 2024).



**Al-Maliki meets with the UN secretary-general
(PA foreign ministry Facebook page, January 21, 2024)**

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Israel

► It was revealed that Israeli security forces had prevented attacks planned by two ISIS-supporting terrorists, aged 19 and 20, from the Ras al-Amoud neighborhood in east Jerusalem. The two were detained on December 26, 2023. A search of their homes revealed various chemicals suspected of being intended for manufacturing IEDs; ISIS and Hamas flags, and a notebook with instructions for making explosives were also found. Their questioning revealed that the two supported ISIS' ideology and had been influenced by ISIS content on social media and even sworn allegiance to the organization. They planned to prepare IEDs and use them to attack Israeli security forces and civilians (Israel Police X account, January 22, 2024).

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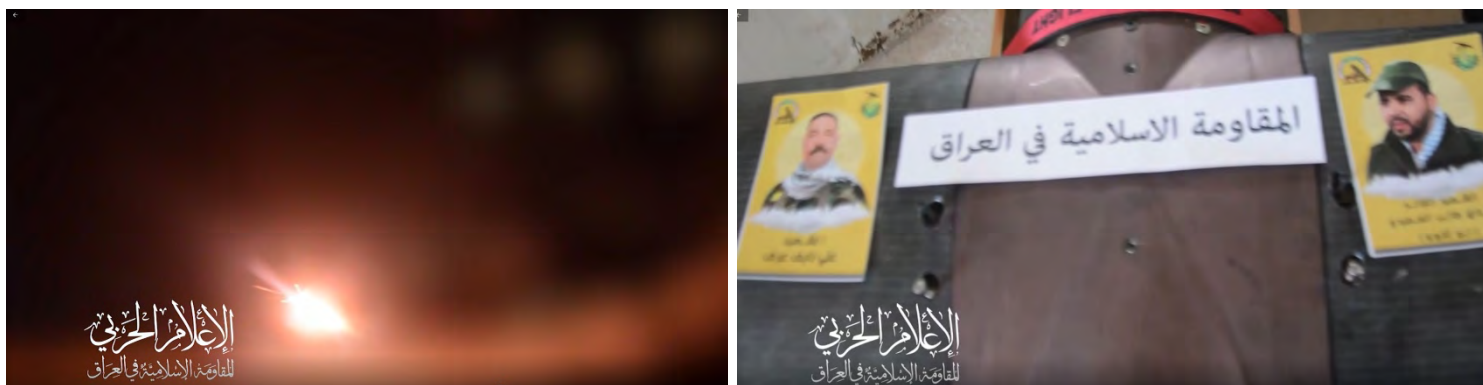
Iran

► Speaking at the start of a cabinet meeting on January 21, 2024, **Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi** addressed the killing of five IRGC officers in Syria, saying that the Zionist regime's carrying out "these criminal and terrorist acts" stemmed from its failure to achieve its declared goals. He said the Zionists were committing these crimes in the hope of diverting regional and global public opinion from their crimes in the Gaza Strip, but they would not succeed in achieving that goal either (Tasnim, January 21, 2024).

Pro-Iranian militias

Iraq

► The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for a drone attack on a "military target" in the Israeli Golan (Islamic Resistance Telegram channel, January 21, 2024). The organization released a video documenting the launch of the drone. The drone apparently bears the inscription "Islamic Resistance in Iraq" and two death notices of two al-Nujaba militia fighters whose deaths, by implication, were attributed to Israel (Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, January 21, 2024).



Right: The aircraft before launch. Left: The moment the aircraft is launched
(Islamic Resistance in Iraq Telegram channel, January 21, 2024)

► In addition, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for drone attacks on two American bases, in the al-Omar oil field and al-Shadadi in Syria (Islamic Resistance Telegram channel, January 21, 2024).

► **Abu Ali al-Askari, spokesman for the Kataib Hezbollah (Hezbollah Brigades) militia,** reported that the Iraqi soldier wounded in the attack of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq against the Ain al-Assad base had been hit by an American Patriot missile, and not by resistance fire. He also noted that the Islamic Resistance would continue to destroy "enemy strongholds" (Abu Ali al-Askari's Telegram channel, January 21, 2024).

Yemen

► **Houthi spokesman Mohammad Abdeslam** said that in accordance with the principle of the law of self-defense, Yemen would not allow its sovereignty to be violated and would not sit idly by in the face of any aggression against it. According to Abdeslam, facing the American attempts to mislead the world about what was happening in the Red Sea, with the Americans trying to fabricate an international crisis to unjustly hold Yemen responsible, the Houthis reiterated that their attacks were only against Israeli ships or those en route to Israeli ports. It

was done to help the Palestinian people exert pressure on Israel to stop its “aggression” against the Gaza Strip (Mohammad Abdeslam's Telegram channel, January 21, 2024).

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The Arab Arena

Saudi Arabia

► In an interview, **Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan** said that there would be no normalization with Israel without a credible way to establish a Palestinian state. He said the only way for the region to see real peace and real integration that provided economic and social benefits to everyone, including Israel, was through peace and a credible process for the establishment of a Palestinian state. He noted that they, like the other Arab countries, were ready to participate in talks on the issue and that he hoped the Israelis would be ready as well. Asked whether Saudi Arabia would be willing to be part of an Arab force that would come in to replace the Israelis and stabilize the Gaza Strip, he said they needed to focus on a solution to the Palestinian problem and not only on the Gaza Strip. Regarding the Houthi attacks on the Red Sea, he said they strongly believed in the freedom of navigation and the need to protect it, noting that they were very focused on calming the situation as much as possible (CNN, January 21, 2024).

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The International Arena

European Union

► **Josep Borrell, EU foreign policy chief**, told a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Brussels that the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip was extremely bad and the way Israel was trying to "destroy" Hamas was wrong. He said he would not talk about the peace process but that there had to be discussions about real, concrete plans for a two-state solution (Reuters, January 22, 2024). It was reported that the EU urged member states to impose sanctions on Israel if Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu continued to oppose the establishment of a Palestinian state. It was also said that they would discuss the issue at a meeting of EU foreign ministers. The EU's demands reportedly include the establishment of an independent

Palestinian state alongside Israel, full normalization, and the development of security and economic cooperation (The Financial Times, January 21, 2024).