



Spotlight on Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

December 9-16, 2025

Overview¹

- ▶ IDF forces continued operations within the Yellow Line in the Gaza Strip and eliminated terrorists who posed a threat. Two IDF soldiers were wounded by an explosive device. A senior member of Hamas' military wing, Ra'ad Sa'ad, one of the planners of the October 7, 2023 attack and massacre, was eliminated, and Hamas threatened retaliation.
- ▶ The Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) continued to claim that Hamas was holding the body of the last murdered Israeli hostage.
- ▶ Hamas' governing mechanisms in the Gaza Strip claimed that the rainy weather had caused the deaths of 13 civilians, the collapse of buildings and the destruction of thousands of tents.
- ▶ Militias opposed to Hamas claimed responsibility for killing a senior figure in Hamas' security apparatuses in the central Gaza Strip.
- ▶ Hamas continued to promote the "achievements" of the October 7, 2023 attack and massacre. An Amnesty report accused Hamas and the PIJ of committing war crimes during and after the attack, including sexual violence and inhumane detention conditions of hostages.
- ▶ A terrorist was killed after a stabbing attack in Hebron. There were no casualties.
- ▶ The chairman of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, claimed a Palestinian state would be a factor of regional stability.

The Ceasefire Agreement

The IDF

- ▶ IDF forces continued operations within the Yellow Line (the area under IDF control) in the Gaza Strip, in accordance with the ceasefire agreement, and eliminated terrorists who crossed the Yellow Line or approached it and posed a threat. Two IDF soldiers were wounded by an explosive device while clearing an area in the southern Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, December 16–9, 2025). "Palestinian sources" reported that the IDF had fired artillery in the

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

northern and southern Gaza Strip and that there were aerial sorties east of Gaza City, east of Khan Yunis and in the Rafah area in the south, and that buildings were blown up and demolished east of Khan Yunis (al-Risalah Net, December 13, 2025).

► "Palestinian sources" accused Israel of using the Yellow Line for psychological warfare and calling the "resistance"² the cause of the loss of about 58% of the Strip's territory instead of "an instrument of liberation." According to the "sources," the Yellow Line cuts through entire neighborhoods and cities in the north and south of the Strip, is gradually expanding westward with shelling and the creation of ongoing danger zones, and is accompanied by Israeli talk of a "new border," initiatives for reconstruction and the creation of demilitarized zones for local militias opposed to Hamas (*al-Akhbar*, December 12, 2025).

► On December 13, 2025, Ra'ad Sa'ad, aka Abu Mu'adh, a long-time operative in Hamas' military wing who was head of the production headquarters of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and was one of the architects of the October 7, 2023 attack and massacre, was eliminated in an Israeli strike in southwest Gaza. Three Hamas operatives who were with him in the vehicle were also eliminated (IDF spokesperson, December 13, 2025). The head of Hamas' political bureau in the Gaza Strip, Khalil al-Hayya, confirmed his death (Hamas Telegram channel, December 14, 2025). Hamas figure Muhammad Nazzal threatened Israel, saying that the movement had "the right to respond to the crime of the occupation" and the "field leadership" would choose the time and place (al-Ghad channel, December 15, 2025).



Ra'ad Sa'ad's "ID card" (IDF spokesperson, December 13, 2025)

Returning the Body of the Last Murdered Israeli Hostage

► "Palestinian sources" denied reports of tension between Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) following the latter's refusal to transfer the body of the last murdered hostage held in the Gaza Strip to Hamas. "PIJ sources" claimed that the body was in fact in Hamas'

² Hamas and the other terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip.

possession and coordination with Hamas was excellent, with no disagreements or tensions. "Hamas sources" said there were three or four possible locations for the body in the al-Shuja'iya and al-Zeitoun neighborhoods of Gaza City, adding that searches were being conducted but so far without results, partially due to the heavy destruction. The "sources" claimed that all field the commanders and operatives who had participated in the abduction and holding of the body had been killed (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, December 13, 2025).

► PIJ spokesperson Muhammad al-Hajj Musa claimed the organization had handed over the bodies of all the "captives" [murdered hostages] it held. He claimed Israel's allegation that the PIJ knew where the last body was and refused to provide information was false. He added that the PIJ had closed the "prisoners" file and the facts on the ground proved that "the resistance speaks the truth [*sic*] and the occupation lies" (Ultra Palestine website, December 12, 2025).

The Gaza Strip

The Situation in the Gaza Strip

► Hamas exploited the rainy weather and flooding in the Gaza Strip to promote its "Gaza is drowning" narrative:

- ◆ According to Hamas' government media information office, the weather was responsible for the deaths of at least 11 Gazans who died of hypothermia or were killed when houses collapsed and walls fell. Reportedly, at least 13 houses collapsed and more than 27,000 tents of displaced persons were flooded and swept away (Telegram channel of the government media information office, December 13, 2025).



Cartoons by Alaa al-Laqta, Hamas' in-house cartoonist. Right: A storm approaching the shores of Gaza (Alaa al-Laqta's X account, December 9, 2025). Left: Gaza before the ceasefire agreement "drowning in blood" and after the agreement, in rain and mud (Alaa al-Laqta's X account, December 12, 2025)

- ◆ Civil Defense in the Gaza Strip reported that many tents were swept away by the rain and that many Gazans had been left without proper shelter, and that despite repeated calls for help issued in advance, entire camps were flooded in the al-Mawasi area of Khan

Yunis, in extensive areas of Deir al-Balah, in the central market in al-Nuseirat and in the al-Yarmouk neighborhoods and the port of Gaza. According to reports, since the start of winter more than 2,500 distress calls had been received (Telegram channel of the al-Nuseirat refugee camp, December 11, 2025). It was also claimed that more than 300,000 tents had been flooded or torn and that more than 80% of public and private buildings had been destroyed or severely damaged, including an almost complete collapse of the sewage system (al-Aqsa Network, December 13, 2025).



The Asqalan displaced persons' camp in western Deir al-Balah was entirely flooded, rainwater turning the tents into pools of mud (Filastin al-'An Telegram channel, December 12, 2025)

Security Governance

► "Three Egyptian security and military sources" noted that the delay in moving to the second stage of the American agreement in the Gaza Strip strengthened the presence of armed militias supported by Israel and operating in areas under IDF control. According to the "sources," the militia activity has increased since the start of the ceasefire and currently there are about 1,000 fighters, an increase of 400 since the ceasefire. The leader of one of the militias, Hossam al-Astal, said his group had recruited new members since the ceasefire and now had hundreds of operatives. "A source close to the Popular Forces militia established by Yasser Abu Shabab" also noted that the group had recorded a significant increase in the number of its operatives, without specifying how many. A "diplomat who requested anonymity" said that the emergence

of the militias raised concerns about the stability of the Gaza Strip and increased the risk of internal Palestinian conflict (Reuters, December 10, 2025).



The militias opposed to Hamas issued photographs of food packages they had distributed to Palestinians living in areas under their control (Right: Facebook page of the Popular Army in the northern Strip district led by Ashraf al-Mansi, December 9, 2025. Left: Facebook page of "The New Gaza under the leadership of the General Commander Hossam al-Astal," December 13, 2025)

► The Hamas ministry of the interior reported that an internal security officer, Lieutenant Colonel Ahmed Zamzam, was shot and killed in the al-Maghazi refugee camp and one of the suspects had been arrested. It was further claimed that initial investigations [allegedly] indicated that he had been killed by agents of the "occupation," under direct guidance of Israeli intelligence services (Telegram channel of Hamas' interior and national security ministry, December 14, 2025). Ghassan al-Dahini, commander of the Popular Forces militia, announced that the special operations wing of the militia's counterterrorism department had been responsible for killing him (Ghassan al-Dahini's Facebook page, December 14, 2025). However, "sources on the ground" reported that the killers belonged to the new militia of Shouki Abu Nuseira operating in eastern Khan Yunis (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, December 15, 2025). Hamas' security apparatuses also claimed that during interrogation one of the detainees said that Abu Nuseira had assigned the task of killing Zamzam to him and two accomplices (Khallik wa'i Telegram channel, December 15, 2025).

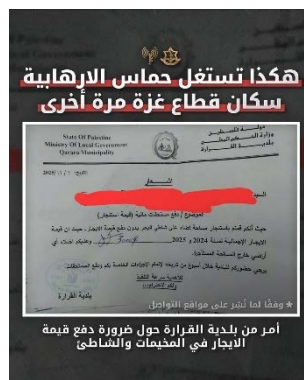
► Hossam al-Astal, who heads an armed militia in eastern Khan Yunis, issued a video marking Hamas' founding day and declared, "There is no longer a founding day for Hamas and there is no longer Hamas." He added that with the establishment of "the New Gaza," there would be a new future in which Hamas would not participate (Hossam al-Astal's Facebook page, December 14, 2025).

► Fadi al-Dughma, a Palestinian network activist living in Antwerp who reports on the Gaza Strip, issued a warning to the public that Hamas was summoning residents to the outpatient

clinics of Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis under the pretense of a "job interview" to recruit them to the movement's ranks. Many people who responded to the warning reacted with extreme anger, including cursing Hamas, calling for revenge and accusing Hamas of exploiting economic distress and endangering young people, while others attacked al-Dughma and accused him of incitement and division and called him an "Israeli agent" (Fadi al-Dughma's Facebook page, December 16, 2025).

Civilian Governance

► The IDF spokesperson in Arabic revealed a letter attributed to the al-Qarara municipality in the Khan Yunis area, according to which displaced residents are required to pay high sums for renting space on the beach and to arrive within a week to settle the payments. According to the IDF spokesperson, Hamas' leadership is exploiting the distress of Gaza Strip residents, especially the basic need for shelter, and is now demanding "rent" from Gazans when Hamas itself caused the destruction and displacement of the residents and is now charging the victims money for the results of its actions (X account of the IDF spokesperson in Arabic, Avichay Adraee, December 10, 2025).



Photograph of the letter (IDF spokesperson in Arabic, Avichay Adraee, December 10, 2025)

Negotiating the Ceasefire Agreement and "The Day After"

► Hamas accused Israel of delaying the implementation of the first stage of the ceasefire agreement and the transition to the second stage. They also reiterated their position against disarming the "resistance"³ and claimed that the international force which was supposed to deploy in the Gaza Strip should focus only on maintaining the ceasefire and not be involved in disarmament:

³ Hamas and the other terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip to destroy the State of Israel.

◆ Hamas leader abroad Khaled Mashal said disarming the "resistance" was "inconceivable in Palestinian culture" and disarmament meant "removing the Palestinians' soul." He said that experience with the "occupation" showed that when Palestinians were disarmed or lost their weapons, "killing occurred." He added that Hamas wanted guarantees which would prevent a recurrence of Israel's war against the Gaza Strip and then "the weapons could be kept without being used." Mashal said Hamas had proposed the idea of a long-term *hudna* [temporary cessation of fighting, up to ten years], adding that there was no objection to international stabilization forces' being deployed along the border and separating the Gaza Strip from the "occupation" (Hamas in Judea and Samaria Telegram channel, December 10, 2025).

◆ The head of Hamas' political bureau in the Gaza Strip, Khalil al-Hayya, called for completing the first stage of the agreement, which includes the entry of aid and equipment for reconstructing infrastructure, opening the Rafah Crossing in both directions, and then moving to a second stage whose goal is a full Israeli withdrawal and the launch of the reconstruction project, while claiming that Hamas and the "factions"⁴ adhered to the agreement. He rejected an external trusteeship or mandate over the Palestinians and outlined a mechanism in which a Peace Council would oversee the implementation of the ceasefire, financing and supervising the reconstruction, but the civilian administration of the Strip would be transferred immediately to an independent Palestinian technocrat committee. Al-Hayya also limited the role of the international force to maintenance of the ceasefire and the Strip's border, with no activity inside the Strip and no interference in its internal affairs, while reiterating that the weapons of the "resistance" were "a right under international law for peoples under occupation" and were linked to the establishment of a Palestinian state. His main objective was the promotion of Palestinian unity through cooperation with forces and "factions," while calling on Fatah and the Palestinian Authority to agree on a national program, rehabilitate the PLO and restore political life through elections, while expanding the political, media and legal struggle in the international arena and making the issue of the prisoners a priority (Hamas in Judea and Samaria Telegram channel, December 14, 2025).

⁴ Terrorist organizations.

- ◆ Hamas figure Muhammad Nazzal claimed that the "occupation" continued to evade its commitments under the ceasefire agreement. He called for negotiations with the mediators and guarantors to answer questions regarding the process. He claimed that they had not been briefed on the countries which would participate in the international force and that Hamas' position regarding the force would be determined according to the missions assigned to it (al-Aqsa TV, December 11, 2025).
- ◆ Hamas representative in Lebanon Osama Hamdan said the movement was holding talks with Qatar, Egypt and Turkey regarding negotiations on the second stage of the ceasefire agreement. He said the Palestinian "factions" viewed the international force as a guarantor for the implementation of the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, noting that they adhered to "our right to resistance, foremost armed resistance" (al-Jazeera, December 14, 2025).
- PIJ spokesperson Muhammad al-Hajj Musa claimed no "resistance" movement gave up its weapons and that even a rational "resistance" movement would not do so. He added that "the weapons will not leave our hands, and we will not hand them over to anyone." He said they had informed the mediators that the PIJ was not responding to the "violations of the occupation," but the "resistance" would not allow the killing to continue (Ultra Palestine website, December 12, 2025).
- "Two senior American officials" said the United States Central Command would host a conference in Doha on December 16, 2025, for representatives of more than 25 countries to plan the international stabilization force in the Gaza Strip. They said international forces might deploy in the Gaza Strip as early as January 2026 to establish the UN-approved stabilization force, adding the force would not fight Hamas. They said the possibility of appointing a two-star American general to head the force was being considered (Reuters, December 12, 2025).
- Reportedly, attempts by the inner circle of Palestinian Authority chairman Mahmoud Abbas, especially his sons, have recently intensified for presenting their candidate for the position of Governor of Gaza or chairman of the technocrats who will administer the Strip during the transition stage. According to commentator Wissam Afifa, the leading candidate is Samer Khoury, a businessman and chairman of the international Consolidated Contractors Company (CCC), whose family is from Safed. Khoury, born in Beirut in 1960, has extensive experience and knowledge of management, finance and cross-border projects and is close to Abbas' sons (Wissam Afifa's Facebook page, December 7, 2025).

Hamas and the October 7, 2023 Terrorist Attack and Massacre

► For the first time, Amnesty International accused the "Palestinian resistance" in the Gaza Strip of committing war crimes during and after the October 7, 2023 attack. The organization stated that evidence was collected indicating that Palestinians, including Hamas and PIJ operatives, carried out sexual violence against hostages during the October 7 attack, although "in the [alleged] absence of sufficient direct evidence" Amnesty refrained from determining its precise scope. The report also described inhumane detention conditions of hostages, including deprivation of food and medical care, viewing the conditions as causing severe physical and emotional harm. According to the report, Hamas and other Palestinian [terrorist] organizations did not seriously investigate the crimes that were committed, did not acknowledge the scope of the violations and at times even boasted of acts considered war crimes, while the official Palestinian authorities did not take real steps to bring those responsible to justice (Amnesty International, December 11, 2025). Hamas rejected the report and claimed that it was "biased and driven by suspicious considerations." Hamas further claimed statement that the report was "full of distortions" and contradicted findings of human rights organizations, including Israeli ones, according to which many homes and facilities that were destroyed were in fact struck by the IDF using tanks and aircraft and that many civilians were killed by Israeli forces' fire. Hamas accused Amnesty of adopting the "lies of the occupation government" and added that the goal of the report was "anti-resistance incitement" and to absolve Israel of responsibility for its "crimes" (Hamas website, December 11, 2025).

► Hamas continued to promote the public relations propaganda campaign⁵ highlighting the significant achievements of from the October 7, 2023 attack [and massacre] operation al-Aqsa Flood) and the ensuing war:

- ◆ Hamas leader abroad Khaled Mashal claimed that the fighting over the past two years had changed the status of the "Palestinian struggle" in the regional and international arena, returned the Palestinian issue to the center of the agenda and revived the discourse on the two-state solution, while expanding support for Palestinian positions among young people in the West. According to him, the "resistance" encouraged open

⁵ For further information, see the November 2025 ITIC report, [Hamas' Battle for Hearts and Minds after the Ceasefire Agreement in the Gaza Strip](#)

criticism of Israel and returned to the Arab and Islamic peoples the compass of solidarity with the Palestinian struggle. He acknowledged that the price was "heavy," with more than 70,000 dead and hundreds of thousands wounded in Gaza and in Judea and Samaria, but called to view the victims as a "duty" and stressed that despite the pain the Palestinian people would move on to the next stage of "liberation" (*Dunia al-Watan*, December 10, 2025).

◆ In a speech by the head of Hamas' political bureau in the Gaza Strip, Khalil al-Hayya, marking 38 years since the movement's establishment, he listed "Hamas' achievements" after October 7, 2023: the shattering of the illusion of strategic deterrence and claims of Israel's security superiority; Israel's isolation in the international arena, including the promotion of lawfare against its leaders and soldiers and its portrayal as a "terrorist entity" threatening regional stability; the collapse of the "Zionist narrative" that for decades led to a change in attitudes among elites and the public regarding the nature of relations with Israel and the justification for supporting it; the normalization process with Arab states became complicated, with criticism of the issue of "Greater Israel from the Nile to the Euphrates;" the return of the Palestinian issue to center stage after years of decline; Hamas' "resistance" project as hope and a model for Arab and Islamic peoples; the fall of Israel's "secure borders" from several arenas and the creation of an internal rift within Israeli society, alongside the erosion of trust in the military, political and security leadership (Hamas in Judea and Samaria Telegram channel, December 14, 2025).



Khalil al-Hayya (Hamas Telegram channel, December 14, 2025)

◆ Hamas representative in Lebanon Osama Hamdan said international recognition of a Palestinian state was the fruit of operation al-Aqsa Flood and claimed that

"resistance"⁶ was a Palestinian popular decision and not a Hamas decision. According to Hamdan, the world had to apologize to the Palestinian people for the "crimes Israel committed against it." He claimed that no senior Hamas figure had opposed the decision of October 7, 2023 and said the movement "is reorganizing itself and its ranks after the deaths of many of its senior figures" (al-Jazeera, December 14, 2025).

Israel, Judea and Samaria

Terrorist attack

► **Stabbing in Hebron:** On December 14, 2025, a Palestinian armed with a knife attempted to attack an Israel Electric Corporation worker at the Zayit Junction near Kiryat Arba. He was shot and killed by an IDF force at the site (IDF spokesperson, December 14, 2025). According to reports, the dead terrorist was the son of the mayor of Nuba, a town west of Hebron (Nuba Municipality Facebook page, December 14, 2025).

Counterterrorism

► IDF forces continued counterterrorism activity throughout Judea and Samaria, operating in central Nablus, Jenin, the Qalandiya refugee camp, villages around Ramallah, Hebron, Tulkarm, Jenin and Tubas. Dozens of Palestinians were detained (Palestinian media, December 16–7, 2025). The PIJ's military wing reported that one of its operatives was shot and killed by Israeli security forces in Silat al-Harithiya (Jerusalem Brigades Telegram channel, December 14, 2025).

► The governor of Tulkarm, Abdallah Kamil, called on the international community to intervene following the IDF announcement of its intention to demolish 25 buildings in the Nur al-Shams refugee camp due to "military needs," starting December 18, 2025 (Tulkarm District Facebook page, December 14, 2025). The chairman of the Palestinian National Council, Rawhi Fattouh, claimed the demolition was "forced displacement and harmed the refugee issue" (Wafa, December 15, 2025).

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

► PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas visited Italy and held meetings with Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani. They discussed the need to implement the second stage of the Trump plan for the future of the Gaza Strip and to halt "settler attacks" in Judea and Samaria. He also thanked Italy for its role in the Peace Council currently being formed and

⁶ Palestinian terrorism and violence whose objective is to destroy the State of Israel.

for providing humanitarian aid, treatment for wounded children, training the Palestinian police and participation in the European monitoring force at the Rafah Crossing. In his speech at the ruling party conference in Italy, he said that a fully sovereign Palestinian state would not constitute a security burden on any side but would be a factor of regional stability and a partner in safeguarding security and building peace (Wafa, December 12, 2025).



Mahmoud Abbas and Italian Prime Minister Meloni (Wafa, December 12, 2025)

► Deputy PA chairman Hussein al-Sheikh met in Doha with the prime minister of Qatar, Muhammad bin Abdulrahman, to discuss strengthening bilateral relations and recent developments in the "occupied Palestinian territories." Bin Abdulrahman reiterated his country's support for "the Palestinian cause and the implementation of the two-state solution" (X account of the Qatari Foreign Ministry, December 15, 2025).

► The chairman of the Palestinian National Council, Rawhi Fattouh, welcomed the UN General Assembly decision calling on Israel, as an "occupying power," to allow full humanitarian access to the Gaza Strip, to respect the immunity of UN facilities and to meet its obligations under international law. Fattouh called on countries around the world to continue supporting UNRWA as the authorized agency to provide relief, health, education and livelihood services to refugees, especially in the Gaza Strip (Wafa, December 12, 2025).