



Operation Iron Swords Updated to 1 p.m., January 18, 2024

Northern Arena	Israeli Casualties	Rocket Fire
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 670 attacks• 162 Hezbollah operatives killed• 23 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:** IDF forces continue the integrated ground maneuver in the Gaza Strip, focusing on the Khan Yunis area. In the northern and central Strip, operations were carried out primarily against terrorist squads and rocket launchers. Palestinians reported heavy fighting in the Khan Yunis area. Senior Hamas members said they continued to wage the campaign forcefully and claimed they inflicted heavy losses on the IDF forces.

► **According to an unofficial estimate, since October 7, 2023 approximately 1,300 Israeli civilians and security personnel have been killed, 529 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 the delivery of drugs:** Qatar's foreign ministry spokesman reported the delivery of drugs and humanitarian aid for the residents of the Gaza Strip and drugs for the hostages. Hamas said that the delivery of the drugs had not changed their position and insisted that any negotiations regarding the hostages would take place only after a ceasefire.

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

► **The Gaza Strip:** The ministry of health in Gaza announced the suspension of blood tests due to the lack of equipment. Communication networks have been inoperative for seven days.

► **The northern arena:** Hezbollah claimed responsibility for five attacks on IDF positions on the Lebanese border. Hamas' military wing claimed responsibility for launching rockets at the Western Galilee.

► **Judea and Samaria:** The activity of IDF forces continues in Tulkarm. According to the Palestinians, the activity focuses on the Tulkarm and Nur Shams refugee camps, where heavy exchanges of fire are taking place and troops and vehicles continue to enter the area.

► **The pro-Iranian militias:** The Houthis attacked another ship in the Red Sea. The United States military attacked targets in Yemen for the fourth time. The United States included the Houthis on its list of designated terrorist organizations. Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) criticized the measure.

► **The Sinai Peninsula:** According to reports, a new Islamist organization called the al-Farouq Brigades was established in the Sinai Peninsula to "assist" the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

The Southern Arena

► The Palestinian media reported on a number of combat centers, including the **Jabalia area in the northern Gaza Strip**, mainly in the Tel al-Za'atar neighborhood to the east of the refugee camp, and in the city of Jabalia. In **the central Gaza Strip**, massive IDF attacks were reported in the area of the refugee camps. In **the Khan Yunis area**, the IDF continued attacking the south of the city with the aim of reaching the city center. Attacks and heavy exchanges of fire were reported near Nasser Hospital and the adjacent Jordanian field hospital. In **Rafah** attacks were reported in the east of the city. Palestinians reported dozens of deaths and injuries in the past day caused by IDF attacks (Ma'an, January 18, 2024).



IDF forces in the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, January 18, 2024)

► **The northern Gaza Strip:** IDF forces fought squads of armed terrorists. Several airstrikes were aimed at armed terrorists who posed a threat to the forces (IDF spokesperson, January 18, 2024).



Right: Attack on a Hamas terrorist facility. Left: Attack on a booby-trapped vehicle
(IDF spokesperson, January 18, 2024)

► **Gaza City:** The Palestinian media reported heavy exchanges of fire in northern Gaza City near the headquarters of Hamas general intelligence (known in Gaza as "The Ship," and which was built with the assistance and funding of American intelligence) and the al-Maqousi Towers (QudsN X account, January 18, 2024).

► **The central Gaza Strip:** Israeli Air Force aircraft, in cooperation with ground forces, killed terrorists who tried to launch mortar shells at IDF forces in Deir al-Balah. The terrorists were in the area from which there had been rocket fire over the past week (IDF spokesperson, January 17, 2024).



Destruction of the launchers from which rockets were fired at Netivot
(IDF spokesperson, January 17, 2024)

► **The southern Gaza Strip:** In Khan Yunis IDF fighters killed about 40 terrorists and located and destroyed weapons. An Air Force fighter jet attacked a launch site in Rafah from which a rocket was fired at Israeli territory (IDF spokesperson, January 18, 2024). According to reports, at noon on January 18, 2024, IDF forces in Khan Yunis killed dozens of terrorists in battle and

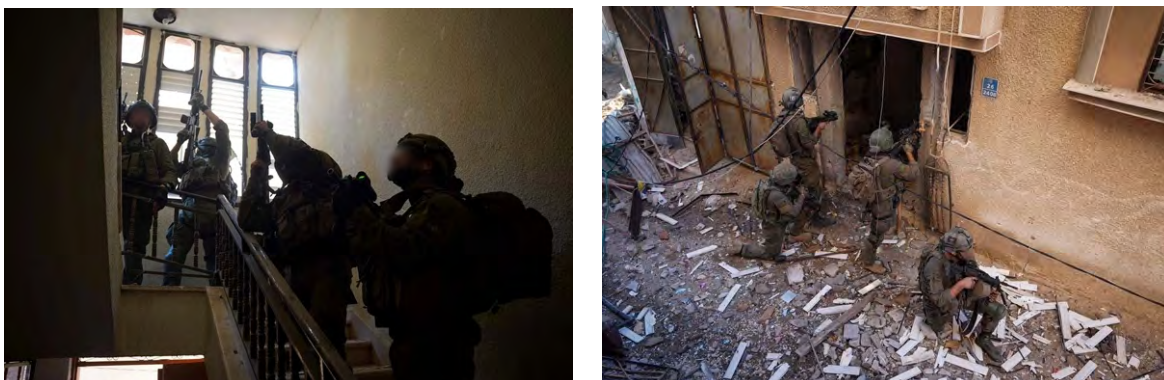
by means of tank fire with air support. The forces raided the Shuhadaa post of the southern battalion of the Khan Yunis brigade and the office of the battalion commander and other commanders. During the operation, the forces located large quantities of weapons and intelligence documents (IDF website, January 18, 2024).



Some of the weapons found (IDF spokesperson, January 18, 2024)



Map of the battalion post (IDF spokesperson, January 18, 2024)



IDF forces in the Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, January 18, 2024)

►A Wafa TV correspondent, situated on an upper floor of Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis, took a photograph which showed that the main entrance to the hospital and the main street

adjacent to it were empty (Wafa YouTube channel, January 18, 2024). **Ibrahim Qanan, a correspondent for the al-Ghad TV channel in Khan Yunis**, who usually reports from the hospital complex, has not broadcast recently, apparently due to the attacks and fighting near the hospital area. Heavy exchanges of fire were also reported in southern Khan Yunis between IDF forces and the "resistance" [terrorist operatives] (al-Ghad TV, January 18, 2024).



The main entrance to Nasser Hospital and the main street next to it almost completely
(Wafa YouTube channel, January 18, 2024)



Photographing IDF attacks from an upper floor of Nasser Hospital
(Wafa YouTube channel, January 18, 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, 529 of them are soldiers and officers (197 were killed 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

►According to senior Hamas member Osama Hamdan, Hamas' military wing and the [so-called] "Palestinian resistance" continue to wage the campaign with all their "strength, wisdom [sic] and ability," and inflict losses on the IDF, every day shattering its dreams of

controlling the territory, and realizing the Hamas statement that Gaza would be a cemetery for the invaders. He claimed the attempt made by Israel and the United States to market what they call "the third phase," as if the "killing of civilians" would stop, was an attempt to mislead public opinion. "The third phase," he said, was a different name for the continuation of the killing and destruction. He also claimed that the Israeli government and the IDF had reached a dead end without a horizon, and their [alleged] "frustration and despair" were increasing regarding their stated goals and the knowledge that defeating Hamas or breaking the "firm stand of the Palestinians" was nothing but a pipe dream (Hamas Telegram channel in Judea and Samaria, January 17, 2024) .

The delivery of drugs to the Gaza Strip

► Qatar's foreign ministry announced that two planes had landed at El Arish Airport in Egypt, bringing the drugs purchased by Qatar and France for the Gaza Strip (Qatar foreign ministry account X, January 17, 2024). The medicines were taken to the Kerem Shalom crossing for inspection by the IDF forces and from there to the Rafah Crossing for delivery to the Gaza Strip. During the night, Majed al-Ansari, spokesman for the Qatari foreign ministry, reported the delivery. He said that Qatar, its regional partners and the international community continued mediation efforts at the political and humanitarian levels (foreign ministry X account, January 17, 2024).

► **Taher al-Nunu, media advisor for Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau**, said that even after the delivery of the drugs their position was as clear as it had been after the end of the [temporary] ceasefire, they would not discuss the hostages until after a [complete] ceasefire. He claimed Israel was trying to deceive the Israeli public, as though the drug deal meant there was progress on the issue of the hostages while it continued its "aggression." He said that either the "aggression" continued or they would negotiate the issue of the hostages, but that Israel would not receive any of its people as long as the "aggression" continued (al-Jazeera Mubasher website, January 18, 2024).

A ceasefire

► **Senior Hamas member Osama Hamdan** said that regional peace, security and stability could only come through an immediate and final cessation of the "aggression" against the Palestinians, the end of the "occupation" of Palestinian land and the holy places, the prosecution of Israel's leaders in international courts, and giving the Palestinians the opportunity to establish an independent and sovereign state with Jerusalem as its capital.

Regarding the talk about the efforts of the United States and the Western countries to establish a Palestinian government, he reiterated that the establishment of a Palestinian government and the management of the Palestinian "situation" was a national Palestinian matter, with no participation of the United States or anyone else (Hamas Telegram channel in Judea and Samaria, January 17, 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 61,504 (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, January 17, 2024).

The situation in the Gaza Strip

►The **ministry of health in Gaza** warned it would no longer be possible to conduct blood tests in laboratories because of a shortage of materials. An outbreak of jaundice was reported, caused by the overcrowding in the shelters and low level of hygiene (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, January 17, 2024).

►A correspondent for al-Ghad TV in Rafah reported the delivery of medicines to the Kuwaiti Hospital in Rafah. He said the medical aid received was not the Qatari aid, which was supposed to arrive later (al-Ghad TV, January 17, 2024).



A correspondent for al-Ghad TV in Rafah reports on the introduction of medical aid to the Kuwaiti Hospital (al-Ghad TV, January 17, 2024)

►At a press conference in Beirut, senior Hamas member Osama Hamdan, described the situation in Gaza. He [falsely] claimed Israel (which he referred to as "the [alleged] Nazi occupation") continued to systematically deny food and water to more than two million

Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip, where more than 800,000 Palestinians were hungry because Israel [allegedly] prevented the delivery of humanitarian aid, food, fuel, gas and other supplies necessary for normal life. He also claimed that the displaced persons were suffering a "real tragedy" due to the shortages of food, water, medicine and shelter, and 400,000 of had contagious diseases, [allegedly] because they had been forced to move from their homes. There were about 61,000 wounded, and they were prevented from leaving Gaza for treatment. There were [allegedly] more than 7,000 missing persons, 70% of them children and women, under the rubble who could not be removed because of the continued attacks, and the shortage of fuel and necessary equipment (Hamas Telegram channel in Judea and Samaria January 17, 2024).

►According to reports, there have been no communications or Internet services in the Gaza Strip for seven consecutive days (Wafa, January 18, 2024).

Statements by senior Hamas members

►Referring to the report that the European Union intends to announce sanctions against Hamas because the October 7, 2023, attack and massacre, Taher al-Nunu, media advisor to Isma'il Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau, claimed that "unfortunately, some Western countries were trying to prove their absolute loyalty to the United States government and its absolute bias in favor of Israel." He said he did not understand, given the trial at the International Court of Justice against Israel for its [alleged]] crimes against the Palestinians, the intention to impose sanctions on the victims, the Palestinians, who had the right, according to all international treaties, to "resist [attack] and defend themselves" (al-Jazeera Mubasher website , January 18 2024).

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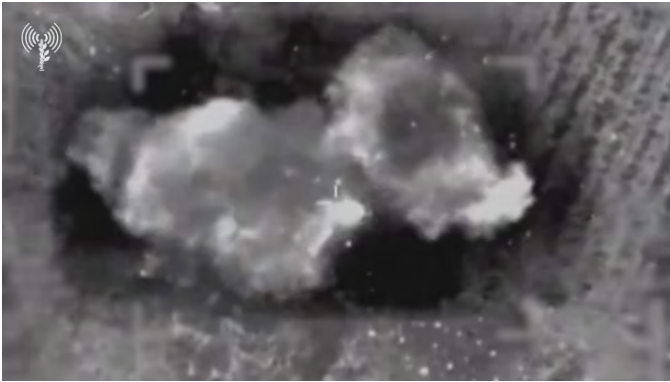
The Northern Arena

Hezbollah attacks

►Hezbollah continued attacking IDF posts and concentrations of forces on the border of Israel, and claimed responsibility for five anti-tank missile, rocket and Burkan rocket attacks (whose warheads weigh between 660 and 1100 pounds) (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 17, 2024).

►In response, Israeli Air Force aircraft and IDF artillery attacked launch teams, active launchers and terrorist facilities in south Lebanon, including several terrorists who fired rockets at Rosh

HaNikra. Among the launchers destroyed was the one used to fire rockets at the Har Dov area, and a launcher in the al-Hiyam area was destroyed before it could be activated (IDF spokesperson, January 17, 2024).



Right: Identifying the terrorist squad that launched rockets at Rosh HaNikra. Left: Attacking the squad (IDF spokesperson, January 17, 2024)



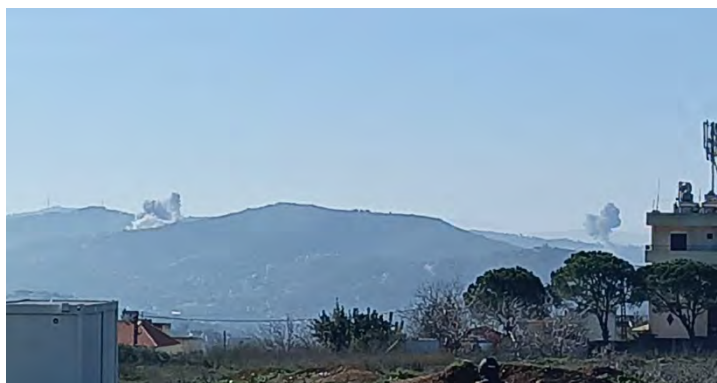
Attacking a Hezbollah terrorist facility (IDF spokesperson, January 17, 2024)

► Hezbollah reported that on January 18, 2024, at 8:34 a.m., an IDF UAV fired missiles at Souq al-Khan, about ten kilometers northeast of Metula and the Kawkaba road in the Hasbaya district (al-Manar, January 18, 2024). According to reports, two missiles were fired at a vehicle on a side road between Souk al-Khan and a Lebanese army position; the driver of the car escaped (Fouad Khreiss' X account, January 18, 2024).



A crater caused by the attack on Souk al-Khan (Fouad Khreiss' X account, January 18, 2024)

► **Ali Shoeib, a correspondent for the al-Manar network**, published the results of the Israeli Air Force strikes in Houle, about three kilometers west of Kiryat Shmona. A large crater can be seen near the house (Ali Shoeib's X account, January 17, 2024). A photo was also published of Israeli Air Force strikes in al-Adeisseh, about three kilometers southwest of Metula Khan (Fouad Khreiss' X account, January 18, 2024).



Right: The crater formed in Houle by the attack (Ali Shoeib's X account, January 17, 2024). Left: Israeli Air Force strikes in al-Adeisseh (Fouad Khreiss' X account, January 18, 2024)

Hamas attacks

► The Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military wing, claimed responsibility for attacking the Liman camp in the Western Galilee with a barrage of 20 rockets launched from south Lebanon. The operation was carried out, according to the announcement, as a response to the [alleged] "massacre" of Gazan "civilians" and the killing of the leaders and their "brothers" in the Shi'ite Dahiyeh neighborhood of Beirut (Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, January 17, 2024).

► The Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades announced the death of operative Walid Ahmed Hassanein, from the al-Mieh Mieh refugee camp in Sidon, who was killed fighting in Operation al-Aqsa Flood (Shehab, January 17, 2024).



Walid Ahmed Hassanein (Palinfo, January 17, 2024)



Right: A mourning notice for Hassanein issued by the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades in south Lebanon (al-Quds, January 17, 2024). Left: The announcement of his death (Palinfo X account, January 17, 2024)

Hezbollah

►According to a "senior Lebanese official," Amos Hochstein, the American envoy, made several proposals to Hezbollah during his visit to Beirut on January 12, 2024, speaking through Lebanese intermediaries. One of the proposals was for Hezbollah to reduce its attacks on the border in exchange for the reduction of Israeli operations in the Gaza Strip. Another was for Hezbollah to withdraw its forces to a distance of seven kilometers from the border. The source reported that Hezbollah called the ideas "unrealistic," stating it was not prepared to remove its weapons or withdraw its forces from the border area. However, the "source" reported that Hezbollah was prepared to listen, and the organization's openness to diplomatic contacts could indicate its lack of desire to enter a large-scale war (Reuters, January 18, 2024).

The Lebanese government

► **Najib Mikati, the head of Lebanon's interim government**, met with **Antonio Guterres, the UN secretary general**, on the sidelines of the International Economic Forum in Davos. Mikati spoke of the need to establish a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and deliver humanitarian aid. He called on the countries involved in the issue to pressure Israel to stop its attacks on south Lebanon and the ongoing violations of Lebanese sovereignty. He reiterated Lebanon's commitment to the articles of Resolution 1701 and other international resolutions, and called for pressure to be exerted on Israel to fully implement the resolution (Mikati's X account, January 17, 2024).

► Interviewed by the Lebanese LBCI network, **Abdullah Bou Habib, Lebanese foreign minister**, said that Lebanon aspired to a cease-fire agreement with Israel as part of an integrated package. He claimed Hezbollah was a Lebanese organization which was aware of the country's interests and rejected the launching of rockets by non-Lebanese organizations [sic]. He pointed out that the internal war in Lebanon was destroying the country and if they had to choose between a regional war and a civil war, they would choose the second option. He pointed out that most of the time Hezbollah's position differed from the government's position, and emphasized the Lebanese government's willingness to negotiate with the United States. He said he did not see a war on the horizon, adding that a comprehensive solution would include the return of the hills of Kafr Shuba and the Shebaa Farms, and the implementation of Resolution 1701. He did not think Iran would intervene in a regional war, but a war in Lebanon would not be easy for Israel because it would be a regional war, in which the missiles would be launched at Israel from all directions (LBCI, January 17, 2024).

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Judea and Samaria

Counterterrorism activities

► The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities throughout Judea and Samaria, detaining 51 Palestinians (Wafa.ps, January 18, 2024).

► The Palestinian media reported that for the second consecutive day, Israeli security forces continued their activity in the Tulkarm area. The activity focused on the Tulkarm and Nur al-Shams refugee camps. Heavy exchanges of fire were taking place, and the flow of forces and vehicles to the area continued. Armed Palestinians threw IEDs at the forces. Severe damage

to infrastructure in the Tulkarm area and the blowing up of Palestinian buildings and businesses were reported. Medical sources reported one fatality in the Nur al-Shams camp from Israeli security force gunfire, bringing the number of fatalities in the Tulkarm area since the beginning of the security activity to six (al-Ghad TV; Ma'an, January 18, 2024).



**Israeli security forces' activity this morning in the Tulkarm refugee camp
(QudsN X account, January 18, 2024)**

► In addition, Israeli security forces reportedly operated in the village of Idna (west of Hebron), detaining the mother of one of the Palestinians who had tried to infiltrate the community of Adora to carry out a terrorist attack (January 12, 2024) (al-Quds, January 18, 2024).

Palestinian Authority (PA)

► **Nabil Abu Rudeina, spokesman for Mahmoud Abbas' office**, referred to the events in Nablus, saying that “the occupation army’s [the IDF] series of crimes of daily killings” in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria was a “comprehensive war of annihilation [sic]” against the Palestinian people. He blamed the American administration for the escalation of the “aggression” against the Palestinian people and its consequences as a result of its blind support for Israel and called on it to intervene immediately to stop “the aggression and massacre” (Wafa, January 17, 2024).

► **PA Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh** met with **Australia's foreign minister**. Shtayyeh called for an end to the war in the Gaza Strip, stressing that the international community had to translate its words into action. He also called for sanctions and punishment for Israel and its settlements in Judea and Samaria (Muhammad Shtayyeh’s Facebook page, January 17, 2024).



Shtayyeh meeting with Australia's foreign minister
(Muhammad Shtayyeh's Facebook page, January 17, 2024)

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Iran

- ▶ **Ali Akbar Ahmadian, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council**, gave a speech at Tehran's Azad University about the developments in the Gaza Strip, saying that in recent weeks, Israel had claimed control of the northern Gaza Strip, but Hamas had continued attacks from that area in recent days. He said the "resistance" activity in the Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Yemen and Iraq against Israel and the United States was inspired by the Islamic Revolution in Iran and that the United States recognized the "resistance movement" and Iran's presence in the region. Ahmadian added that the Islamic Revolution was also able to reach a common understanding with Sunni groups, including Hamas and the Taliban (ISNA, January 17, 2024).
- ▶ **Hossein Amir Abdollahian, Iranian foreign minister**, met on the sidelines of the economic summit in Davos with his Saudi counterpart, **Faisal bin Farhan**, to discuss the war in the Gaza Strip and strengthening cooperation between the countries (IRNA, January 17, 2024).
- ▶ **Abdollahian** also met with **British Foreign Secretary David Cameron**. After the meeting, on January 17, 2024, Cameron wrote on his X account that he had emphasized to his counterpart that Iran had to stop supplying the Houthis with weapons and intelligence and use its influence to stop their attacks on the Red Sea. He stressed that Iran had to stop exploiting the regional situation to violate the sovereignty of other countries.
- ▶ "Exclusive sources" told the Hezbollah-affiliated al-Mayadeen network that the attack on the two Israeli-owned ships in the Indian Ocean on January 4, 2024, had been carried out by the IRGC. According to the sources, the attack was carried out in response to the killing of Saleh al-Arouri and Seyyed Razi Mousavi, the Iranian military advisor in Syria, on December 25,

2023, attributed to Israel. According to the report, the Chem Silicon, owned by Ace, which sails under the Liberian flag, and the Pacific Goll, which belongs to Eastern, were attacked by the IRGC: one northwest of the Maldives and the other 200 miles off the coast of India (al-Mayadeen, January 17, 2024).

Pro-Iranian militias

Iraq

► The secretary-general of the Iraqi Kataib Hezbollah (Hezbollah Brigades) militia sent a communiqué to Abd al-Malik al-Houthi, leader of the Houthis in Yemen, saying that they promised to treat any attack against him from any country or entity, large or small, as a direct attack against them. They also said they did not shy away from challenges, no matter their type, size, or the side they came from (Kataib Hezbollah Telegram channel, January 17, 2024).

Yemen

► The United States Army Central Command (CENTCOM) reported that on January 17, 2024, at around 8:30 p.m. (Sana'a time), a drone was launched from Houthi-controlled areas that hit the American ship M/V Genco Picardy flying the Marshall Islands flag in the Gulf of Aden region. The ship reported no casualties or significant damage and continued on its way (CENTCOM X account, January 18, 2024).

► **Yahya Saria, spokesman for the Houthi armed forces**, announced that Yemeni naval forces had attacked the American ship GENCO Picardy in the Gulf of Aden with several naval missiles. He said that they would respond to the American and British attacks, that every new attack would be met by a response, and that their operations against Israeli ships would not stop until the “aggression” against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip stopped (Yahya Saria's Telegram channel, January 17, 2024).



**American-owned ship damaged in the Red Sea
(India's WOW Network, January 17, 2024)**

► The United States Army continued its attacks against Houthi targets. The United States Army Central Command (CENTCOM) announced that on January 17, 2024, at 11:59 p.m. (Sana'a time), they attacked 14 missiles ready to be launched in Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen. It was also reported that the missiles posed an immediate threat to merchant ships in the Red Sea and could be launched at any time, and therefore the United States military exercised its right to defend itself. According to the statement, the attacks, together with other actions they had taken, would reduce the Houthis' ability to continue their attacks against international shipping in the Red Sea (CENTCOM X account, January 18, 2024). According to an American official, this was the fourth round of American airstrikes against the Houthis (CBS, January 18, 2024). The Houthis reported airstrikes in the areas of al-Hudaydah, Taiz, Dhamar, al-Bayda and Saada (al-Masirah, January 18, 2024).

► **American National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan** issued an official announcement on the return of the Houthis to the United States Department of State's list of designated terrorist organizations (White House website, January 17, 2024). According to the Americans, the designation would be removed if the Houthis stopped their attacks. It was also reported that the designation would take effect in 30 days (Agence France-Presse, January 17, 2024).

► **Houthi spokesman Muhammad Abdeslam** said in response that their inclusion on the list of terrorist organizations would not affect their position and that they would continue to attack ships en route to Israel (Reuters, January 17, 2024). In another statement on the subject, he said that there would be no expression on the ground of the American decision, and that this step would not deter them or change their position supporting the Palestinian people. He also said that there were no Iranian supply lines to Yemen and that what was said about it was not true (al-Jazeera, January 17, 2024).

► **Muhammad al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthi political bureau**, noted that the American decision was proof of the bankruptcy and failure of the coalition in the Red Sea, and that the day would come when the Americans would regret the beginning of the “aggression” against Yemen (al-Arabi, January 17, 2024). Referring to France's decision not to participate in the attacks against the movement, he said that it was a positive decision and that they hoped the other countries would follow suit (Muhammad al-Bukhaiti's X account, January 17, 2024).

► **Hamas** strongly condemned the inclusion of Ansar Allah (the Houthis) on the list of terrorist organizations by the United States, saying they regarded it as a political decision and a blatant bias towards Israel. According to the announcement, it was an attempt to defend Israel and

back its continued “aggression” in the Gaza Strip (Hamas Telegram channel, January 17, 2024).

► **Sami Abu Zuhri, head of Hamas' political department “abroad,”** said it was the American administration that was employing terrorism and leading global terrorism, and that it had to stop its crimes and interventions in the region. The behavior of the American administration, according to Abu Zuhri, reflects its hostility towards the peoples of the Islamic nation, and its role is reduced to supporting the interests of Israel (“the Zionist enemy”) and increasing its power in the region (Sami Abu Zuhri's X account, January 17, 2024).

► **The PIJ** also condemned the inclusion of the Houthis on the list, saying it was absolutely certain that the objective was to punish the Yemeni people collectively. They expressed their appreciation for the efforts of Yemen, Ansar Allah and all the resistance forces in their support of “Palestine” (PIJ Telegram channel, January 17, 2024).

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The Arab Arena

Egypt

► Sudanese activists posted on social media that the Egyptian security forces had detained Sudanese businessman Abd al-Baset Hamza, whom the United States accused of involvement in financing Hamas. No official Egyptian response has yet been published (al-Araby al-Jadeed, January 17, 2024). The United States Treasury Department imposed sanctions on him on October 18, 2023, as part of sanctions announced against nine individuals and one entity linked to “Hamas' secret investment portfolio.”



Abd al-Baset Hamza (al-Arabi al-Jadeed, January 17, 2024)

Jordan

► **Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman al-Safadi** met in Jordan with **Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan** to discuss developments in the Gaza Strip and efforts to stop the war and protect civilians (Jordanian foreign ministry X account, January 18, 2024). At a joint press conference held after the meeting, al-Safadi said the talks reflected the unity of the Jordanian-Turkish position regarding the war in the Gaza Strip, according to which they rejected any displacement of Palestinians and demanded an end to the fighting. He noted that the conflict could drag the region into a widespread escalation, adding that the crisis was caused by Israel's position that refuses to stop the war and grant the Palestinians their rights. Fidan said Jordan represented stability in the Arab world and that they wanted to maintain regular coordination with it (al-Mamlaka, January 18, 2024).

The International Arena

Russia

► **Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov** said at a press conference that Russia was ready to play a role in ensuring the resolution of the conflict in the Middle East. According to Lavrov, in order to reconcile relations between Israel and the Palestinians, direct dialogue must be held, and a Palestinian state must be established. He said they wanted Israel to live in security, but that the conflict would continue if a Palestinian state was not established. He noted that at the next Security Council meeting he would present proposals for resolving the conflict (Sputnik Telegram channel in Arabic, January 18, 2024).

Global Jihad

New network announced in the Sinai Peninsula

► According to a video posted on social media, a new Islamic network in the Sinai Peninsula called the al-Farouq Brigades (Kataib al-Farouq²) has been established. The video shows three

² Al-Farouq is a term attributed to the second Islamic caliph, Umar bin al-Khattab, who inherited the caliphate from Abu Bakr. The meaning of the term is "the one who distinguishes between truth and falsehood," with Islam representing truth and all other beliefs representing falsehood. Sunni Islam attributes the term to Umar bin al-Khattab, whereas Shi'ite Islam attribution it to Ali bin Abi Talib, the fourth caliph.

masked gunmen. One of them, his voice distorted, read out a statement saying that the organization was established in the Sinai Peninsula to support the "courageous resistance of Gaza" and that the organization had been responsible for the exchange of fire in the Nitzana area (the Israeli-Egyptian border) on January 15, 2024.³ He threatened to operate against Israel on the Israeli-Egyptian border and called on anyone carrying weapons in the ring countries surrounding Israel to act to help the Gaza Strip as part of "jihad." The announcement also called for a boycott of American products. In the background of the three speakers in the video hangs a picture of an Egyptian policeman who carried out the attack on the Egyptian border in June 2023, killing two IDF soldiers (Ibrahim al-Masri's X account, January 17, 2024).

► So far, the nature of the organization and who is behind it is unclear. There is a possibility that it is an organization affiliated with Hamas (possibly Hamas operatives who infiltrated the Sinai Peninsula), the Muslim Brotherhood (Hamas' parent movement), or possibly an Egyptian or local tribal network.



**The three operatives who appeared in the announcement video
(Ibrahim al-Masri's X account, January 17, 2024)**

³ Referring to an exchange of fire in the Nitzana area, apparently due to drug smuggling.