



Operation Iron Swords Updated to 1 p.m., January 21, 2024

Northern Arena	Israeli Casualties	Rocket Fire
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 681 attacks• 163 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 continued their integrated ground maneuver in all sectors of the Gaza Strip. In the **Zeitoun neighborhood** of Gaza City, the forces destroyed factories and workshops for the production of weapons. In the **Khan Yunis** area, where the fighting is currently concentrated, they located a tunnel where evidence was found that Israeli hostages had been held there. Senior Hamas members noted with satisfaction that in all the areas cleared by the IDF, the terrorist operatives of its military branch had returned to attack the IDF forces. Hamas continued to deny the existence of contacts for negotiating a ceasefire and a hostage-release deal.

► **According to an unofficial estimate, since October 7, 2023, approximately 1,300 Israeli civilians and security personnel have been killed, 531 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.**

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:** A delegation of senior Hamas members visited Russia and met with the Russian deputy foreign minister. They thanked Russia for its humanitarian aid and diplomatic efforts. The meeting also dealt with the issue of the three Israelis kidnapped by Hamas who hold Russian citizenship.
- ▶ **The northern arena:** Hezbollah claimed responsibility for 11 attacks on IDF forces in northern Israel. The forces responded with airstrikes and artillery fire. Two people were killed in an aerial attack on a vehicle near Tyre, one of them a Hezbollah commander.
- ▶ **Syria:** Five Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps operatives were killed in an attack carried out in the al-Maza neighborhood in Damascus, including a senior intelligence officer of the Qods Force and his deputy. Iran blamed Israel for their deaths and threatened retaliation.
- ▶ **Judea and Samaria:** IDF forces completed 45 hours of counterterrorism activities in Tulkarm. In Hebron the forces demolished the houses of two terrorists who carried out an attack in Jerusalem in which an IDF soldier was killed. Demonstrations of solidarity with the Gaza Strip were held in Ramallah.
- ▶ **The pro-Iranian militias:** The Islamic Resistance in Iraq attacked an American base in Ain al-Assad in Iraq, reportedly the largest attack since the beginning of the attacks against American bases in the region. The Houthis in Yemen attacked an American-owned ship. United States military forces attacked a Houthi anti-ship missile that was ready for launching.
- ▶ **The European Union:** The European Union Parliament passed a resolution calling for a permanent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and the release of all the hostages. The EU's European Council announced the imposition of sanctions on six people linked to Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.
- ▶ **The Sinai Peninsula:** A spokesman for the al-Farouq Battalion, which announced itself on January 17, 2024, issued a video claiming that the organization's operatives had carried out a series of attacks against IDF soldiers, killing and wounding many.

The Southern Arena

- ▶ The IDF forces continued the integrated ground maneuver Gaza Strip in coordination with the Israeli Air Force, which carried out precision attacks directed by the fighters on the ground. Israeli Navy fighters assisted the maneuvering forces and attacked targets from the sea (IDF spokesperson, January 19, 2024). The Palestinian media reported the main centers of fighting included the north of the Gaza Strip, north and east of the **Jabaliya refugee camp, west Gaza**

City where the IDF attacked general intelligence buildings, the Ansar compound, Gaza port, the al-Shati refugee camp, **the al-Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, the al-Amal neighborhood in west Khan Yunis**, Nasser Hospital, in the center of Khan Yunis and to its east (Ma'an, January 21, 2024).



An al-Jazeera presenter describes the fighting in the Jabalia area and the Daraj-Tufah neighborhoods Gaza (right), and the fighting in the al-Qarara area (east of Khan Yunis) and the city of Khan Yunis (left) (al-Jazeera YouTube channel, January 20, 2024)

► **Northern Gaza Strip:** IDF forces continued operations against terrorist squads, including anti-tank squads. The forces located a number of launchers from which rockets had been fired at Israeli territory, which were destroyed by an IDF engineering force (IDF spokesperson, January 20, 2024). Palestinian media reported the renewal of the exchanges of fire in East Jabaliya (Shehab X account, January 21, 2024).



Right: IDF attacks in the Jabaliya area (al-Jazeera YouTube channel, January 21, 2024). Left: IDF attack in eastern Jabaliya (Shehab X account, January 21 2024)

► **Gaza City:** Guided by intelligence information, IDF fighters destroyed workshops for the manufacture of weapons in the Zeitoun neighborhood (south of Gaza City). The fighters located and destroyed dozens of lathes for the production of rockets and other weapons, means for the production of rocket fuel, warheads, launch pits and explosives. They also found quantities of raw materials sufficient for the manufacture of approximately 800 rockets

(IDF spokesperson, January 20, 2024). Hamas' military wing claimed its operatives blew up a tunnel on an IDF force in the eastern part of the al-Tufah neighborhood in Gaza City (Hamas Telegram channel in Judea and Samaria, January 19, 2024).



Lathes destroyed by the forces (IDF spokesperson, January 20, 2024)



Exchange of fire between IDF forces and the terrorist operatives in the Ansar area, southeast of Gaza City (Shehab X account, January 20, 2024)

► **The central Gaza Strip:** IDF forces located and destroyed the center of the Hamas munitions manufacturing industry, which was located near the Saleh al-Din road (the main north-south axis in the Gaza Strip). The complex included factories and lathes, both above and below ground, which supplied ammunition and munitions to Hamas operatives (IDF spokesperson, January 18, 2024).

► **The southern Gaza Strip:** Over the past few days IDF forces have been fighting the Eastern Battalion of the Khan Yunis Brigade of the Hamas military wing. As part of the operation, the forces clashed with terrorist squads, engaging in combat and eliminating many terrorist operatives. The fighters searched a central fighting area of the Hamas terrorists, neutralized tunnel routes, destroyed attack shafts, and located and eliminated observation posts (IDF spokesperson, January 20, 2024). The forces raided a Hamas military post which served as a training camp for the Khan Yunis Brigade and was a meeting place for senior Hamas members.

The fighters located tunnel shafts, dozens of rocket launchers, weapons and a facility that contained models of IDF armored vehicles (IDF spokesperson, January 19, 2024). Palestinian media reported heavy exchanges of fire near Nasser Hospital (Shehab X account, January 21, 2024). A correspondent for al-Ghad TV in Rafah reported on the activity of Israeli Air Force aircraft in the skies over Rafah skies (al-Ghad TV, January 21, 2024).



Right: A tunnel shaft located in the southern Gaza Strip. Left: The Hamas training compound (IDF spokesperson, January 19, 2024)

► **The Israeli Navy:** Israeli Navy forces continued assisting the forces operating on the ground. On the night of January 21, 2024, the Israeli Navy identified a building used by terrorists to ambush IDF forces. The terrorists were attacked and the threat was neutralized (IDF website, January 21, 2024).



The Israeli Navy attacks terrorists who ambushed the ground forces (IDF spokesperson, January 21, 2024)

Palestinian reactions to the fighting

► **Musa Abu Marzouq, a member of Hamas' political bureau,** claimed they continued to protect the Palestinian people, that they manufactured their own weapons and had large quantities of them. He claimed that there was not a single area in the Gaza Strip where the IDF had been able to eliminate the "resistance" [terrorist operatives], and their combat capabilities were greater than those of the IDF (Sputnik website in Arabic, January 20, 2024).

► **Mahmoud Mardawi, a senior Hamas member**, claimed reality had hit Netanyahu in the face, because in the northern Gaza Strip, where Israel claimed only a few fighters remained, there were IDF casualties every time they approached the areas. He claimed Israel had also failed to free any of the hostages without an agreement. Regarding the transfer of the drugs to the hostages, he claimed it was in the hands of the military wing, but did not confirm that the drugs had actually reached the hostages. In response to Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Galant's statement that Hamas had lost control over parts of the Gaza Strip, he claimed that Hamas continued to fulfill its functions, even during the war. Due to "security," the government mechanisms and the ministries, as well as the "resistance," administered the civilian side as much as possible. He noted that the IDF encountered "resistance," IEDs and anti-tank missiles wherever it went. He claimed that in the northern Gaza Strip they had restored their forces and were reestablishing their control, as the IDF discovered wherever it operated (al-Jazeera Mubasher YouTube channel, January 18, 2024).

► In response to the Israeli prime minister's statement that Israel would have security control over the Gaza Strip after the war, **Muhammad al-Hindi, deputy Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) secretary general**, claimed it was empty talk because on the ground Israel had not yet achieved any of its goals and was in "distress," while the "resistance" [terrorist organizations] [allegedly] controlled the area and its morale was high. Asked if the "resistance" was also in distress in light of the continuation of the fighting, he claimed the "resistance" had capabilities and was prepared to continue fighting at this rate for a long time. He reiterated, yet again, that the resistance was in good condition and its morale was high (al-Jazeera Mubasher YouTube channel, January 20, 2024).

Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip

► Over the past few days, rockets have been fired sporadically at the Israeli cities, towns and villages surrounding the Gaza Strip. Several organizations claimed responsibility for the launches:

- ◆ **Hamas' military wing** announced that its operatives had launched a barrage of rockets at the Kissufim post (Hamas Telegram channel in Judea and Samaria, January 18, 2024).
- ◆ **The PIJ's military wing** announced that its operatives had launched rocket barrages at 9 p.m. ("Bahaa time," when the PIJ under the command of Bahaa Abu al-Atta used to

launch rockets) at the cities, towns and villages surrounding the Gaza Strip (Paltoday Telegram channel, January 18, 2024).

◆ **The Mujahedeen Brigades** (the military wing of the al-Mujahedeen Organization, which splintered from the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades), announced that they had launched a barrage of rockets at Kibbutz Nahal Oz (Mujahedeen Brigades Telegram channel, January 19, 2024). On January 21, 2024, they announced that they had launched a barrage of rockets, together with the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades/al-Amoudi Brigade, at Kibbutz Nahal Oz (Mujahedeen Brigades Telegram channel, January 21, 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, 531 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

► The IDF forces raided an underground tunnel in Khan Yunis whose opening was located in the house of a Hamas operative. The tunnel was about 830 meters long (a little more than half a mile) and about 20 meters (about six stories) underground. The entrance to the tunnel was sealed off, and inside there were many obstacles, IEDs, sliding doors and blast-proof doors. The forces found a central space where hostages had been held and five prison cell-like cages with bars. The forces located evidence indicating that hostages had been there, as well as intelligence information and Hamas weapons. According to the evidence, about 20 hostages had been held in the tunnel at different times. Some of them were released and some are still being held in the Gaza Strip. At the end of the investigation, the forces destroyed the tunnel (IDF spokesperson, January 21, 2024).



Right: Part of the route of the tunnel where the hostages were held. Left: A kitchen found in the tunnel (IDF spokesperson, January 21, 2024)



The tunnel and the cages (IDF spokesperson, January 21, 2024)



Right: Pictures found in the tunnel drawn by a girl who was kidnapped. Left: Women's and children's clothing found in the tunnel (IDF spokesperson, January 21, 2024)

► Hamas denied the information given by the released hostages in CNN interviews, who stated they had been held in the rooms of the Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis. Hamas claimed they were lies to justify the destruction of the hospitals in the Gaza Strip (Hamas Telegram channel, January 18, 2024).

► **Musa Abu Marzouq, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, claimed that they did not want to keep the hostages but rather to reach a deal that would meet the expectations of the

"Palestinians." He claimed that eventually Israel would be forced to make a deal with them (RIA Novosti, January 20, 2024).

► **At a meeting attended by Sami Abu Zuhri, head of Hamas' "external" political bureau, and Yusuf Hamdan, deputy head of the North Africa department of Hamas' ministry of Arab and Islamic relations**, with the leadership of the [communist-oriented] Workers' Party in Tunisia, Abu Zuhri said that after more than three months, the "campaign" [Operation al-Aqsa Flood] had succeeded in achieving its goals, shattering Israel's image and genuinely shocking it, and that the events today reflected the degree of confusion in Israel's ranks despite its attempts to eliminate the "resistance" and return the hostages. He pointed out that they still held IDF soldiers hostage, who would not be released unless the Palestinian prisoners were released. He denied there were negotiations mediated by Arab countries, claiming Israel was promoting the reports in the media. Hamas, he claimed would negotiate only after the cessation of "aggression" against the Palestinian people. He claimed the "resistance" [terrorist operatives] in the field was capable of continuing and was forcefully conducting the "campaign." Yusuf Hamdan claimed that the "resistance" had weapons which it had not used yet, and that there were operatives waiting for their turn to fight in the field (Sawt al-Shaab website, January 19, 2024).

► **Mahfuz al-Manor, responsible for the PIJ's connections with the Lebanese**, said that the "resistance" adhered to its positions and demands related to the issue of the hostages, because today it held a trump card, the Israeli hostages. He claimed the Americans had recently made proposals through the Egyptians, the Qataris and others, and there were delegations and messages, but their position remained the same, since it was not possible to talk about the hostages before the end of the "aggression," a complete Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and a commitment to rebuilding the Gaza Strip. He said that when talking about the hostages, they meant "everyone in return to everyone," including those detained during the war in Judea and Samaria and the Gaza Strip (Iran's Mehr Agency in Arabic, January 18, 2024).

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The Gaza Strip

Palestinian casualties

- ▶ **The Hamas-controlled ministry of health in the Gaza Strip** reported that as of 10:30 a.m., January 10, 2024, the number of dead since the beginning of the war stood at 25,105 and the number of wounded at 62,681 (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, January 21, 2024).
- ▶ The government media information bureau in the Gaza Strip announced the death of Wa'el Rajab Abu Fanuna (Abu Imad), CEO of the PIJ-affiliated al-Quds al-Yawm channel, who was killed in an attack in Gaza City. He was [allegedly] the 119th journalist killed in the war (Radio Sawt al-Aqsa X account, January 18, 2024; Arabi21, January 18, 2024). According to reports he was considered one of the most senior media figures working with the PIJ, and was responsible for the Palestine Today satellite channel, Radio Sawt al-Quds, and combat information of the organization's military wing. He was a released prisoner who spent many years in prisons in Israel (al-Boaba website, January 18, 2024). The IDF spokesperson stated that his responsibilities included publishing the organization's propaganda videos and distributing documentation of the hostages as part of the PIJ's psychological warfare (IDF spokesperson, January 19, 2024).



Wa'el Rajab Abu Fanuna (Arab 21, January 18, 2024)

- ▶ **The al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades (AAMB)/Ayman Jawda Squads** announced the deaths of Nidal Khaled al-Daqas and Hassan Ayman al-Dariwi, operatives of central information in the Northern Gaza Brigade (AAMB Telegram channel @AymanGouda, January 15, 2024). They also announced the deaths of Ismail Kamal al-Dhabous, an operative of the rocket unit in the Northern Gaza Brigade, and of Mamduh Izzat Abu Rakba and Abdullah Rafat Abu Namous, operatives in the Northern Gaza Brigade (Telegram channel of @AymanGouda of the AAMB, January 18, 2024).

- ▶ The **AAMB** announced the death of Nidal Kaloub, a field commander, while carrying out combat missions in the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood a few weeks ago (elaqsa_1965, AAMB telegram channel, January 16, 2024).
- ▶ The **Mujahedeen Brigades** announced the death of Mahmoud Kafina (Abu al-Hanoud), the commander of the organization's central district division, who was killed in an attack in the al-Bureij refugee camp (al-Mujahedeen Brigades Telegram channel, January 16, 2024). They also reported the death of Nazia Yusuf Atawa Abu Daraz, a field commander, in an attack in the Abasan area in eastern Khan Yunis (al-Mujahedeen Brigades Telegram channel, January 19, 2024).
- ▶ Regarding Hamas military wing deaths and the Israeli claims that 75% of Hamas' operatives had been killed, **Musa Abu Marzouq** claimed Israel was lying as usual and exaggerated the number of Hamas casualties to show victory and restore the IDF's image. He said they did not announce their number or names of the movement's "activists" [terrorist operatives] who were killed for two reasons, first, to upset Israel's combat plans and second, to protect the lives of the families of the dead, because the IDF attacked the families of the "fighters" for "revenge." He claimed they would announce the names of the dead after the campaign, and in any case, the Israeli numbers were greatly exaggerated, in reality they were much smaller (Sputnik website in Arabic, January 20, 2024).

The situation in the Gaza Strip

- ▶ The Palestinian telecommunications company Paltel announced the gradual return of communication services in several areas of the Gaza Strip (Paltel X account, January 19, 2024).
- ▶ The Palestinian media reported on the return of residents to their homes in al-Zuweida and the al-Maghazi and al-Nuseirat refugee camps in the central Gaza Strip, after the departure of the IDF forces (Wafa YouTube channel, January 18 and 20, 2024).



Gazans return to their homes in the al-Maghazi and al-Zuweida areas ((Wafa, January 20, 2024)

► Sky News in Arabic reported from a "Palestinian source" that the Palestinian Authority (PA) was prepared to take control of the Gaza Strip on the condition that it was rebuilt. According to the source, the PA was not opposed to the presence of an Arab and international body to oversee the reconstruction. The source also stated that there was Palestinian-Egyptian-Israeli coordination regarding the future regulation of Gaza Strip crossings and that they were discussing opening the Kerem Shalom crossing for the passage of people and goods and the closing of the Rafah Crossing (Sky News network in Arabic, January 19, 2024).

UNRWA

► **Philip Lazzarini, UNRWA's commissioner general**, said he had decided to conduct an independent investigation through a third party that would begin as soon as possible to examine Israel's claims regarding the use by Hamas and other [terrorist] organizations of the agency's facilities in the current war. He said the claim that Hamas was using civilians as human shields would also be examined (al-Sharq al-Awsat, January 20, 2024).

Hamas delegation visits Russia

► A delegation of the Hamas leadership led by **Musa Abu Marzouq, Chairman of the ministry of international relations, and Bassem Na'im, a member of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip**, visited Russia. Members of the delegation met with Mikhail Bogdanov, the Russian deputy foreign minister and Putin's special envoy to the Middle East. They discussed ways to reach a ceasefire, and clarified Hamas's position and policy regarding the issue of the hostages. The members of the delegation thanked Russia for its humanitarian aid and diplomatic efforts. Bogdanov expressed Russia's position supporting the rights of the Palestinian people and its efforts vis-à-vis the relevant parties to reach a ceasefire (Sputnik website in Arabic, January 19, 2024). The Russian foreign ministry stated that they had emphasized the need for the rapid release of the civilians captured in the October 7, 2023 attack, including three Russian citizens (Russian foreign ministry Telegram channel, January 19, 2024).



Hamas delegation with Bogdanov (second from the right) (Palinfo, January 19, 2024)

► The Hamas delegation also met with Kazem Jalali, Iran's ambassador to Moscow. Jalali praised the "resistance" of the residents of the Gaza Strip and emphasized Iran's continued support for the Palestinian people and the "resistance movement," and the responsibility of the international community and the UN Security Council to stop the [alleged] "crimes of the Zionist regime" and help the residents of the Gaza Strip (ISNA, January 21, 2024)

► Asked if Hamas would respond to the Russian efforts to bring about the release of its three citizens held in the Gaza Strip, **Musa Abu Marzouq** replied that they had decided not to discuss the hostages until after the ceasefire, and claimed that the Russians understood. He noted that he examined the information about the Russian hostages, and found they were security personnel who work in the IDF or guard settlements, and therefore were soldiers. He noted it was problematic, [falsely claiming] that "most Israelis" held dual citizenship, so it was not just the three who have Russian citizenship that Hamas was asked to provide information about or to release, but there were also six hostages with French citizenship, Americans, as well as South Africans, a Chinese and two Italians. He alleged that some of the captured soldiers were issued foreign citizenships and passports after they were kidnapped to involve foreign countries in requests for their release. He also alleged that they had kidnapped Israelis and not people with foreign nationalities. Regarding the effect of Hamas's position on its cooperation with Russian officials to bring aid to Gaza and find a way to solve the crisis in Gaza, Abu Marzouq claimed it had no effect and would not have any effect. He claimed Putin had issued a directive to all republics and the districts in Russia to provide humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, and it had nothing to do with the issue of the hostages (Russia Today website, January 19, 2024).

► **Izzat al-Rishq, a member of Hamas' political bureau**, referring to the conversation Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held with President Biden, said Biden was a full partner

in the [allegedly] "genocidal" war and wanted to choose the type of state that suited them for the Palestinian people (Izzat al-Rishq's Telegram channel, January 20 2024).

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The Northern Arena

Hezbollah attacks

- Hezbollah continued attacking IDF posts and concentrations of forces on the border of Israel. Between January 18, 2024, at 1 p.m., and 21, 2024, Hezbollah claimed responsibility for **11 anti-tank missile, rocket and Burkan rocket** (whose warheads weigh between 660 and 1100 pounds) **attacks** (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 18 to 21, 2024).
- In response to Hezbollah attacks, Israeli Air Force fighter jets attacked a Hezbollah terrorist facility and launch site in south Lebanon, among them in the Aitaroun, Houla al-Adeisa areas and in the Mount Dov area (IDF spokesperson, January 19, 20, 2024).



Right: IDF attack on a Hezbollah launch site. Left: IDF attack on a Hezbollah terrorist facility (IDF spokesperson, January 20, 2024)



Israeli Air Force attacks in al-Adeisa (Bilal al-Jaber's X account January 19, 2024; al-Sayid Ibrahim – Mahdi's X account, January 20, 2024)



IDF artillery fire in Houla (Ali Shoeib's X account , January 21, 2024)

UAV attack

- ▶ On January 20, 2024, a UAV was used to attack a vehicle driving on the al-Bourj-al-Bazouriyeh highway, east of Tyre. Two people were killed (al-Akhbar, January 20, 2024). Reportedly, one of the dead was Ali Muhammad Haderaj, commander of the Palestine branch of IRGC's Qods Force in Lebanon (al-Arabiya, January 20, 2024). Hezbollah announced the death of Ali Muhammad Haderaj, aka Abbas, from al-Bazouriyeh (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 20, 2024).
- ▶ Hamas' military wing issued a mourning notice for the "fighter in the Islamic resistance in Lebanon," engineer Ali Muhammad Haderaj "Abbas," and praised his role and contribution in helping the Palestinian "resistance" in the Gaza Strip (Shehab Telegram channel, January 21, 2024).



Right: The scene of the UAV attack east of Tyre (Fouad Khreiss' X account, January 20, 2024)
Left: Ali Muhammad Haderaj (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 20, 2024)

- ▶ The other person killed was Muhammad Bakr Diab, reportedly one of the leading people in the technological field in Lebanon. He served in a number of senior positions in the field of digital communications, including CEO of Tecomsa, president of MD, member of DGTN, Lebanon's digital transformation network, member of the Professional Informatics

Committee PCA, member of the Lebanese Informatics and Communications Association ALMA, member of the General Committee of the Arab Internet and Communications Union ARISPA, supporter of innovation and entrepreneurship in Lebanon, and participated in Lebanese technology delegations to conferences and exhibitions around the world (Bint Jbeil News Telegram channel, January 20, 2024).



Muhammad Bakr Diab (Bint Jbeil News Telegram channel, January 20, 2024)

Hezbollah

- ▶ Hezbollah published a statement condemning the United States decision to include the Houthis in the list of designated terrorist organizations and claimed that the decision is a continuation of United States aggression against Yemen in recent years. According to Hezbollah, it is absurd for the United States to attack Yemen and then declare it a terrorist organization. Hezbollah claimed it believed the decision would not undermine the determination of the Yemeni people or their "effective role" in lifting the siege on the Gaza Strip (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 18, 2024).
- ▶ Hassan Nasrallah, the secretary general of Hezbollah, sent a communiqué to the "Gaza, symbol of resistance" international forum held in Tehran, and which was read to the forum by the Hezbollah representative in Iran. It stated that Hezbollah's confrontation with Israel was not a one-day or two-day confrontation, but an ongoing confrontation and that anyone betting on the international institutions to handle the incident would lose. He said the Islamic "resistance" in Lebanon confirmed its commitment to remain support the Gaza Strip "until victory" (al-Manar, January 20, 2024).
- ▶ **Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah deputy secretary general**, claimed that Hezbollah did not relate to the Israeli threats against Lebanon, which promoted nothing, hindered nothing and to which they paid no attention. He said that when Israel decided to expand its "aggression" it would receive an aggressive response, and as it continued its current course of action, so

would Hezbollah. He said Israel had to know Hezbollah was in a high state of preparedness and those who asked it to stop its operations in south Lebanon first of all had to stop Israeli "aggression" against the Gaza Strip. He emphasized that stability in Lebanon and the region could only be achieved through a complete cessation of aggression on the Strip (al-Nashra, January 19, 2024).

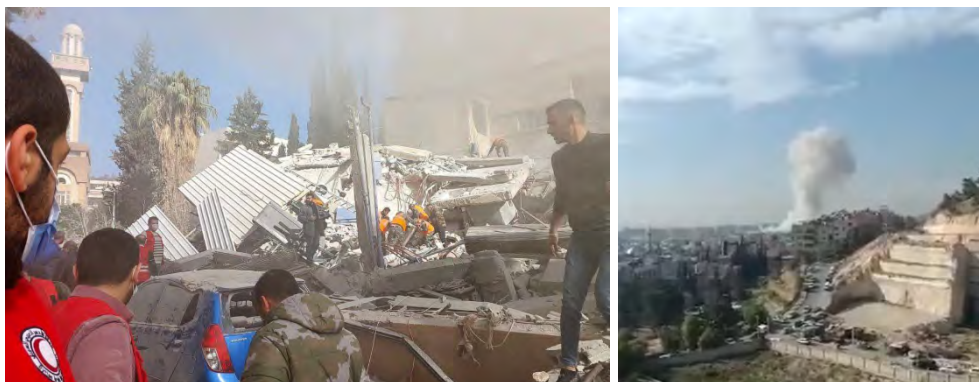
► On another occasion, Na'im Qassem claimed Hezbollah's activity in south Lebanon was "defensive." He said that if they waited for Israel to finish in the Gaza Strip, the next step would be against them in Lebanon, and then [allegedly] against Syria, Iraq, Egypt and other countries, so it was preferable for them to give [the Gaza Strip] early support to prevent Israel from achieving its goals (Na'im Qassem's X account, January 20, 2024) .

► **Muhammad Ra'ed, head of the Hezbollah faction in the Lebanese Parliament**, speaking at a memorial ceremony held in al-Sarafand in south Lebanon, claimed Israel was not prepared to wage war against what they had in store for it. He claimed Israel had to withdraw because it faced the "resistance force," which it had not expected (al-Nashra, January 19, 2024).

Syria

► A Syrian military source stated that on January 20, 2024, at 10:20 a.m., an airstrike from the direction of the Golan Heights attacked a building in the al-Maza neighborhood in Damascus. Some of the missiles were intercepted but the structure was completely destroyed, and a number of civilians were killed or injured (SANA, January 20, 2024). According to another report, the attack targeted a four-story building and that at least five people, who were in a meeting of commanders close to Iran held there, were killed and the building was completely destroyed. It was situated in a security neighborhood, populated by IRGC and Palestinian commanders with ties to Iran (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, January 20, 2024).

► Iran later confirmed that a senior Qods Force intelligence officer and his deputy were killed in an attack in Damascus. One of the dead was Sadegh Omidzadeh, but did not specify his role (Iranian state news agency SNN, January 20, 2024). Omidzadeh, known as Hajj Sadegh, was the intelligence officer of the Qods Force. A commander in an Iraqi militia loyal to Iran, who participated in the meeting, was also killed (Sky News; al-Arabiya, January 20, 2024).



Right: Smoke rises from the strike area (Arab-Military X account, January 20, 2024). Left: The ruins of the building that was attacked (Muhammed Yame's X account, January 20, 2024)



Right: Sadegh Omidzadeh. Left: The five Iranians killed in the attack (IRNA Telegram channel, January 20, 2024)

► The IRGC announced the death of five Iranian "military advisors" in an aerial attack in the al-Maza neighborhood in Damascus. The announcement gave the names of the five dead as Hojjatollah Omidvar, Ali Aghazadeh, Hossein Mohammadi, Saeed Karimi and Mohammad Amin Samadi (Tasnim, January 20, 2024). The Iranian media reported that the commander of the intelligence unit of the Qods Force, Hajj Sadegh Omidzadeh, and his deputy, Hajj Gholam, were also killed in the attack (SNN, January 20, 2024).

► **Ebrahim Raisi, the president of Iran**, condemned the killing of the five IRGC officers in Syria. He claimed the continuation of the [alleged] "terrorist operations" indicated the "Zionist regime's" increasing failure to achieve its goals and its helplessness in the face of the "resistance front fighters." He said that the attack would not go unanswered by Iran (IRNA, January 20, 2024).

► On January 20, 2024, **Hossein-Amir Abdollahian, Iranian foreign minister**, tweeted that the activity of Iran's "military advisors" in "fighting terrorism" and ensuring the security of the region would continue "vigorously" and that such [alleged] "terrorist actions" could not

compensate for the "defeat of the Zionists" in the face of the will of the residents of the Gaza Strip.

► **Esmail Kowsari, a member of the Majlis Committee for National Security and Foreign Policy**, related to the death of the Iranian officers, saying that Israel should expect a strong response at a time and place to be determined by Iran and that "the hand of Iran" could reach Tel Aviv and beyond. In an interview with an Iranian news site, Kowsari said that the Israeli attack in Syria indicated that the IRGC attack on "Mossad headquarters" in Erbil in northern Iraq was effective and caused losses to Israel (didbaniran.ir, January 20, 2024).

► **Nasser Kanaani, spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry**, condemned the killing of the Qods Force officers in Syria and said that Iran reserved the right to respond to the "[alleged] organized terrorism of the [alleged] fake Zionist regime" at the appropriate time and place in addition to measures on the political, legal and international levels. He added that the attack pointed to a deep, organized connection between Israel and "various terrorist groups and ISIS in the region" (IRNA, January 20, 2024).

► **The Syrian foreign ministry** condemned the Israeli attack on a residential neighborhood in Damascus and claimed that it "proved" the [alleged] "criminal nature" of Israel and its leaders in addition to the [alleged] "genocide" taking place in the Palestinian territories. According to the foreign ministry, "aggression" has become a "recognized Israeli approach" as "explained" in the recent hearings of the International Court of Justice. The ministry called on the international community and the Security Council to take immediate action (al-Watan, January 20, 2024).

► **Hamas** condemned the "Zionist aggression" against Iranian military "advisors" in Damascus, calling it "a crime" and a violation of Syrian sovereignty (Hamas Telegram channel, January 20, 2024). The **PIJ** also condemned the incident and claimed it was an attempt by the Israeli government to distract from its military failure on the ground (PIJ Telegram channel, January 20, 2024).

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Judea and Samaria

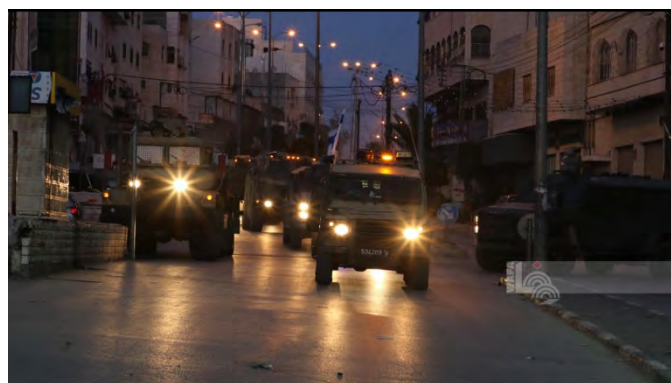
Counterterrorism activities

► In the early morning of January 21, 2024, Israeli security forces in Hebron demolished the houses of Nasr al-Qawasmeh and Abd al-Qader al-Qawasmeh, Hamas operatives who carried

out the shooting attack on the Tunnel Road south of Jerusalem on November 16, 2023, killing an IDF soldier (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, January 21, 2024). The Palestinian media reported that before dawn Israeli security forces entered the city, closed off the area where the two men had lived, and evacuated residents living near the destroyed houses (Wafa, January 21, 2024).



Demolition of the terrorists' houses (IDF spokesperson, January 21, 2024)



Right: Israeli security forces entering Hebron. One of the houses after its demolition in Hebron (Wafa, January 21, 2024)

◀ During the night, Israeli security forces operated in Nablus, where they detained two wanted Palestinians and seized weapons. In the village of Hizma (east of Jerusalem), the forces located and seized weapons, including a Carlo rifle, weapon parts and ammunition (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, January 21, 2024).

▶ The IDF ended a 45-hour operation in Tulkarm. The IDF spokesperson summarized the activity, noting that about 1,000 buildings had been searched and over 400 IEDs had been found. The forces also detained 37 wanted Palestinians, seized 27 weapons and large quantities of military equipment, and destroyed five laboratories for manufacturing IEDs and four command and surveillance centers (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, January 19, 2024).

►According to the al-Shahed website, citing its sources, a large force of the Palestinian Authority's security services dismantled IEDs planted by the "resistance" in the eastern neighborhood of Jenin to deal with the entry of IDF forces. The force withdrew after clashes with residents (al-Shahed website, January 20, 2024). According to social media, the incident apparently took place on January 16, 2024 (Hosam Yahia's X account, January 16, 2024; news.hazem Instagram account, January 16, 2024).



Activity of Palestinian security services (Hosam Yahia's X account, January 16, 2024)

►**PIJ spokesman Muhammad al-Haj Musa** said Judea and Samaria were on the verge of exploding and that the PIJ would continue to support the resistance brigades there. He added that their message to the Palestinian Authority was to work alongside the Palestinian people in these difficult circumstances. He stressed that there would be no talk of negotiations before the withdrawal of IDF forces from the Gaza Strip, adding that only the Palestinian organizations would determine the future of the Palestinian people (Filastin al-Yawm Telegram channel, January 20, 2024).

Solidarity with the Gaza Strip

►On January 18, 2024, the national and Islamic forces held a demonstration in front of the German Representation in Ramallah to protest Germany's support for Israel in the war (al-Araby al-Jadeed, January 18, 2024).



The demonstration in Ramallah (SND website X account, January 18, 2024)

►A demonstration and a march were held in Ramallah after Friday prayers in support of Gaza and the resistance, in response to Hamas' call. **Ramzi Rabah, a member of the PLO's Executive Committee**, who participated in the march, said that the massacres were still going on after 105 days, but that the fighting, steadfastness and resistance continued to create a new history that would end the occupation forever. He stressed that the Palestinian people were determined to continue the campaign until victory despite all the casualties, noting that the campaign was not only in the Gaza Strip, but also in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem, and that what was happening in Tulkarm, Jenin and Nablus was the spread of the resistance (al-Araby al-Jadeed, January 19, 2024).



The march in Ramallah (Palestine Post Telegram channel, January 19, 2024)

Palestinian Authority (PA)

►The PA's foreign ministry issued a statement rejecting the comment issued by the Israeli Prime Minister's Office after Prime Minister Netanyahu's conversation with American President Joe Biden that Israel's security control clashed with Palestinian sovereignty. The ministry stressed that the PA saw this comment as a repetition of the Israeli government's hostile stance towards peace and as a deepening of Israeli colonialism and the apartheid regime. It was also claimed that "repeating this broken record" posed a challenge for the

American government and its efforts to resolve the conflict (PA foreign ministry X account, January 20, 2024).

► **Nabil Abu Rudeina, spokesman for Mahmoud Abbas' office**, said in response to the Israeli prime minister's rejection of the establishment of a Palestinian state that what was required of the United States was to recognize a Palestinian state and not just talk about the two-state solution (Wafa, January 20, 2024).

► **Riyadh al-Maliki, PA foreign minister**, participated in the Non-Aligned Movement² summit held in Uganda and called on participants to support South Africa's lawsuit against Israel (PA foreign ministry Telegram account, January 20, 2024).

► **Ahmed Majdalani, PA minister of social affairs**, was asked in an interview about the negotiations with Hamas on the unification of the Palestinian organizations under the PLO and said that if Hamas disarmed, it would be part of the solution. He said Hamas would have to adapt to its commitment to international law and unarmed resistance. Regarding the EU designation of Hamas as a terrorist organization, he said the sanctions were meaningless and their objective was to placate Israel (al-Hadath TV, January 16, 2024). Hamas condemned Majdalani's remarks, saying he spoke like "the occupation" and that they saw it as an affront to Palestinian national unity. Hamas called for him to be fired from the government and PLO immediately (Quds Press, January 19, 2024).

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Iran

► According to a Reuters report (January 20, 2024), IRGC and Hezbollah commanders are in Yemen to help the Houthis direct their attacks in the Red Sea. Based on four sources in the region and two Iranian sources, the report states that Iran increased its weapons supply to the Houthis following the war in Gaza, supplying them with advanced drones, anti-ship cruise missiles, precision ballistic missiles, and medium-range missiles. The report adds that IRGC commanders and advisors provide the Houthis with technology, information and intelligence support to determine which of the ships in the Red Sea are bound for Israel.

► **Mohammad Reza Falahzadeh, deputy commander of the Qods Force**, told a conference in Tehran that since the outbreak of the war, Israel had wanted to occupy the Gaza Strip,

²The Non-Aligned Movement is an international organization consisting of 120 countries that do not consider themselves belonging to the circle of influence of any superpower.

establish a new Middle East, force the residents of the Gaza Strip to emigrate, eliminate Hamas and release its hostages, but had not succeeded in achieving any of its objectives, while Hezbollah in Lebanon, the "resistance fighters" in Judea and Samaria, the "resistance" in Iraq and the Houthis in Yemen had made many achievements in the campaign against Israel and the United States and would continue the struggle until the elimination of the "Zionist regime" (Tasnim, January 20, 2024).

► **Hossein Amir Abdollahian, Iranian foreign minister**, wrote on his X account (January 19, 2024) that what was happening today in the Gaza Strip was a clear example that Gaza was "the symbol and driving force of the resistance," as it had always been. In a tweet in Arabic, Abdollahian wrote that the "courageous resistance in Gaza" united not only the peoples of the region, but also the peoples of the world in the face of oppression and persecution by the "axis of Zionist arrogance." He added that it was the "resistance" that stood firm even after more than a hundred days of "crimes" by the "Israeli entity" and its allies, and that there was no doubt that Gaza would reap the fruits of the resistance: honor, strength and freedom, as it had always done.

Pro-Iranian militias

Iraq

► The Islamic Resistance in Iraq continued to attack American bases in Syria and Iraq, including an American base near Erbil Airport in northern Iraq and Himu Base in Syria (Islamic Resistance Telegram channel, January 19, 2024). The Islamic Resistance in Iraq also reported that on January 18, 2024, its forces had intercepted an American-owned MQ9 drone over the Diyala Province. The drone came from the Ali al-Salem base in Kuwait (Islamic Resistance Telegram channel, January 19, 2024).

► On January 20, 2024, it was reported that the Ain al-Assad base in Iraq had been attacked with rockets. According to the report, it was the most powerful attack carried out since the beginning of operations against American bases in the area (Saberin New Telegram channel, January 20, 2024). The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for the attack (Islamic Resistance Telegram channel, January 20, 2024).

► The United States Army Central Command (CENTCOM) reported that at around 6:30 p.m. (Baghdad time), many ballistic missiles and rockets were fired by an Iranian-backed group of armed operatives from western Iraq at the Assad airbase. The defense systems reportedly

intercepted most of the missiles, but some hit the base, injuring one Iraqi service member and causing damage (CENTCOM X account, January 21, 2024).

► **According to Yahya Rasool, spokesman for the Iraqi armed forces**, several missiles fell near the Iraqi military headquarters in Ain al-Assad. A soldier was wounded, and damage was caused to the site (Iraqi News Agency, January 20, 2024).

Yemen

► The United States Army Central Command (CENTCOM) reported that on January 18, 2024, at around 9:00 p.m. (Sana'a time), the Houthis fired two anti-ship ballistic missiles at the American-owned M/V Chem Ranger in the Gulf of Aden. No casualties or damage to the ship were reported (CENTCOM X account, January 19, 2024). **Yahya Saria, spokesman for the Houthi armed forces**, announced that Yemeni naval forces had attacked the American ship Chem Ranger in the Gulf of Aden with naval missiles that hit it directly. He noted that the attack had been carried out in response to the attacks of the United States and Britain against them, saying that any attack would be met with a response (Yahya Saria's Telegram channel, January 19, 2024).

◀ The Houthis released a video documenting one of the ships they seized. The video shows the organization's operatives hanging photos of Qassem Soleimani, former commander of the IRGC's Qods Force, and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, former senior operative of the Iraqi pro-Iranian militias, on the Galaxy Leader hijacked by the organization while sailing in the waters of the Red Sea, which were painted red, like blood. In addition, there was an inscription, "Your Flood of Blood," corresponding with "Operation al-Aqsa Flood" (Suhufi Abujud Telegram channel, January 20, 2024).



From the video "Your Flood of Blood," released by the Houthis (Suhufi Abujud Telegram channel, January 20, 2024)

►The United States Army Central Command (CENTCOM) said that at around 3 a.m. on January 20, 2024, its forces had attacked a Houthi anti-ship missile from the air, aimed at the Gulf of Aden and ready to be launched. According to the statement, the missile posed a threat to commercial ships and United States Navy ships in the area, and the missile was launched in self-defense of the ship (CENTCOM X account, January 19, 2024). **White House spokesperson John Kirby** said that the United States had carried out three successful self-defense attacks against Houthi targets in Yemen, and that it was the fourth preventive action carried out by the United States Army in the past week against Houthi missile launchers that were ready for use (Agence France-Presse, January 19, 2024).

►Sky News in Arabic reported that the latest American-led attacks against the Houthis in Yemen had killed more than 75 people. According to the report, based on sources who spoke to the network's correspondent, the airstrikes also killed three IRGC experts and six Hezbollah operatives who assisted the Houthis (Sky News, January 21, 2024).

◄**Abd al-Malik al-Houthi, leader of the Houthis in Yemen**, noted that the aggression against them was a direct violation of Yemeni sovereignty and that the American-British aggression would not affect their military capabilities or attacks. According to him, the United States knows that the more the aggression against them escalates, the more they develop their military capabilities. He further said that their naval position affected and stressed the enemy and that their actions would include American and British ships. He also called for boycotting American and Israeli goods and directly influencing the struggle (al-Masirah, January 18, 2024).

►**Houthi spokesman Mohammad Abdeslam** told Reuters in an interview that the American intervention had escalated the situation, and that the attacks against them were a blatant violation of sovereignty and posed a danger. Regarding Iran-Yemen relations, he said they did not deny that they had relations with Iran and that they had benefited from Iran's experience in manufacturing and military infrastructure. However, he said, Yemen's decisions were completely independent. Asked whether they had received messages from Iran to stop the attacks, he replied that they had received nothing from Iran and that he did not believe that they would receive such a message. He also said they were not interested in further escalation, and if Saudi Arabia and the UAE did not support or participate in any attack, they would remain out of the conflict (Abdeslam's Telegram channel, January 19, 2024).

►"Egyptian sources" revealed that Egypt had held intensive contacts with senior Houthi and Iranian officials to prevent the spreading impact of Houthi attacks on the situation in the region in general and on traffic in the Suez Canal in particular. An Egyptian source noted that contacts were held between Egypt and senior Houthi officials following the attack by the United States and Britain in Yemen on January 12, 2024, in an attempt to assess the response and prepare for the consequences. The source added that during the talks, Egypt confirmed that it would not take part in any international measures taken against the Houthis (al-Araby al-Jadeed, January 19, 2024).

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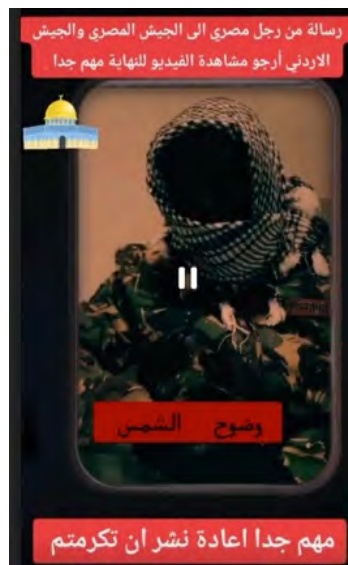
The Arab Arena

Saudi Arabia

►As part of the international economic conference in Davos, Switzerland, **Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan** met with the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross to discuss the war in the Gaza Strip (al-Sharq al-Awsat, January 20, 2024).

Egypt

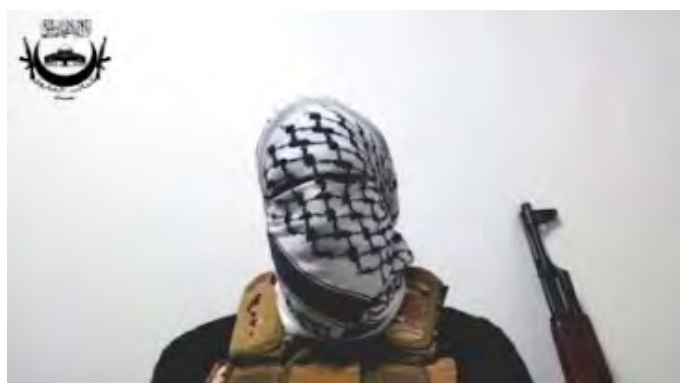
►A video posted on Telegram shows a masked man speaking Arabic in the Egyptian dialect calling on soldiers in the Egyptian and Jordanian armies to join the fighting for the Gaza Strip, topple the "traitor regimes" in those countries and establish a large Sunni Arab state that will abolish the Sykes-Picot Agreement (Telegram, January 21, 2024).



Masked man calls to join the fighting for the Gaza Strip (Telegram, January 21, 2024)

Sinai Peninsula

► **A spokesman for the al-Farouq Battalion**, which announced its establishment in the Sinai Peninsula on January 17, 2024, said in a new video that the organization's operatives had carried out a series of attacks against IDF soldiers, killing and wounding many of them. He noted that the organization would continue to attack Israel and called on all Arab and Muslim nations to take advantage of the situation and participate in the war to "eliminate the occupation," particularly attacking officers in the Egyptian and Jordanian armies. He also noted that the recent war had made clear to the world the weakness of the IDF, saying that since 1967, Israel had not won any war, and therefore the situation had to be seized now to thwart Israel's plan to invade other countries in the region. He said the organization's operatives would fight together with any Arab operative against Israel (al-Farouq Battalion Telegram channel, January 20, 2024).



**From the video of the al-Farouq Battalion
(al-Farouq Battalion Telegram channel, January 20, 2024)**

The International Arena

European Union

► The European Parliament passed a resolution calling for a permanent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and the release of all hostages. The resolution also included a call for the dismantling of Hamas and a condemnation of the terrorist attacks it carried out against Israel. At the same time, the parliamentarians condemned the "disproportionate" Israeli response and expressed the urgent need to transfer humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. The members of the European Parliament also called for an initiative to put the two-state solution back on the agenda and stressed the EU's support for the International Criminal Court (EU Parliament

website, January 18, 2024). The motion was supported by 312 MPs, 131 members voted against it, and another 72 abstained.

► The European Union's European Council announced that it would impose sanctions on six individuals affiliated with Hamas and the PIJ. It was noted that all six supported terrorist acts and that following the sanctions, they would be banned from entering European countries and all their assets would be frozen (European Council website, June 19, 2024).

► **The PIJ** condemned the European Council's decision. According to the PIJ, the decision was not unusual, but it had no value and represented clear sympathy for Israel (the "occupation entity"). The PIJ further said the European decision provided political cover for Israel and for the "Holocaust" it was perpetrating against the Palestinian people (PIJ Telegram channel, January 20, 2024).

United Kingdom

► Matt Jukes, Assistant Commissioner of the London Metropolitan Police, which is also responsible for thwarting terrorism in Britain, noted that the war in the Gaza Strip was a basis for radicalization and an unprecedented threat of terrorist acts in Britain. He said they had received 3,000 reports from the public, 700 of which appeared to be linked to terrorism in Britain, seven times more than in recent years (Sky News, January 20, 2024).

Mexico and Chile

► **Mexico and Chile** submitted a request to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague to investigate possible war crimes in the Gaza Strip and the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023 (AP, January 19, 2024). The PA foreign ministry welcomed the initiative (PA foreign ministry Telegram channel, January 19, 2024).

Turkey

► According to "diplomatic sources," **Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan** met with **Ismail Haniyeh, head of Hamas' political bureau**, to discuss the latest developments in the Gaza Strip. The meeting reportedly dealt with several issues, including the release of the hostages, a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, and increasing humanitarian aid (Anadolu News, January 21, 2024).