



Operation Iron Swords Updated to 1 p.m., January 29, 2024

Northern Arena	Israeli Casualties	Rocket Fire
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 727 attacks• 174 Hezbollah operatives killed• 24 operatives of other terrorist-organization killed• One non-affiliated operative• One Lebanese army soldier killed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approximately 1,300 military and civilian dead (unofficial estimate)• 132 hostages remain in the Gaza Strip	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approximately 11,000 rockets and mortar shells• Approximately 9,000 rockets and mortar shells launched from the Gaza Strip• Approximately 2,000 rockets launched from Lebanon and 30 from Syria

Overview¹

- ▶ **The southern arena:** During the past day IDF forces operated in the northern, central and southern Gaza Strip, fighting in the al-Shati refugee camp in the Rimal neighborhood and near the Shifa Hospital in Gaza City; the Jabalia and Beit Lahia refugee camps in the northern Gaza Strip; the al-Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip, and continued encircling Khan Yunis in the west and east of the city. Residents of Khan Yunis and several neighborhoods in Gaza City were asked to evacuate.
- ▶ **According to an unofficial estimate, since October 7, 2023, approximately 1,300 Israeli civilians and security personnel have been killed, 557 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.**
- ▶ **Negotiations for a hostage deal:** A summit meeting was held in Paris to draw up a hostage deal. The meeting was described as "constructive," but reportedly, significant gaps remain.

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

► **UNRWA:** information revealed about the report submitted by Israel indicates that 12 UNRWA employees actively participated in the terrorist attack and massacre on October 7, 2023, including ten Hamas operatives and one operative from the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). France also announced it was freezing its funding for the agency. The Palestinians are severely critical and claim Israel is trying to leverage the suspension of funds to UNRWA to eliminate the refugee and Palestinian problems. Arab countries are also critical.

► **The northern arena:** Hezbollah claimed responsibility for the unusually high number of 12 attacks, in which two IDF soldiers were injured. In response, IDF forces attacked Hezbollah terrorist targets from the air and with artillery. Three Hezbollah terrorist operatives were killed. An article in a Lebanese media outlet noted that Hezbollah considered Israel's attack on one of its airports to be a declaration of military escalation, and as a message to Israel, Hezbollah escalated its attacks and broadened the variety of weapons it used. In Syria, an airstrike attributed to Israel was reported in southern Damascus.

► **Israel, Judea and Samaria:** Two terrorist attacks were carried out, one a combined attack near the naval base in Haifa and the other a stabbing attack near Tekoa in Gush Etzion.

► **The pro-Iranian militias:** For the first time, a pro-Iranian militia attacked an American Army base on the Syrian-Jordanian border. Three soldiers were killed and 34 were wounded. The spokesman for the Iranian foreign ministry denied Iran's involvement. The Palestinians, who regard the United States as Israel's partner in the activities in the Gaza Strip, noted the event with satisfaction. The governments of Egypt and Jordan condemned the attack and its perpetrators.

► **The Global Jihad:** ISIS claimed responsibility for an attack on a church in Istanbul, stating it was in response to the call of ISIS leaders to attack Jews and Christians everywhere.

The Southern Arena

► Palestinian media reported on several fighting centers over the last day and on dozens of dead and hundreds of wounded. Among the main centers of fighting were Jabalia and the Beit Lahia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip; the al-Nuseirat refugee camp the central Gaza Strip; the al-Shati refugee camp, Rimal neighborhood and near Shifa Hospital in Gaza City; and Khan Yunis, where there were heavy attacks in the west and east of the city and the continued encirclement of Nasser Hospital (Ma'an, January 29, 2024).



Right: Attack on a Hamas terrorist facility. Left: Attacking Hamas terrorists
(IDF spokesperson, January 29, 2024)



Weapons found by IDF forces (IDF spokesperson, January 29, 2024)



IDF forces in the Gaza Strip (IDF website, January 29, 2024)

- ▶ **The southern Gaza Strip:** IDF forces continued clearing the area west of Khan Yunis. Israeli Air Force aircraft, directed by the ground forces, attacked two buildings used as terrorist facilities and where there were armed terrorists. The fighters raided terrorist targets and located large quantities of weapons and technological equipment. Near **al-Amal Hospital** the fighters raided a building used as a hideout by PIJ terrorist operatives and found weapons (IDF spokesperson, January 29, 2024).

- ▶ **Hashem Zaqout, an al-Jazeera TV correspondent in Rafah,** reported that the IDF forces continued to focus their activities on Khan Yunis and were encircling the city for the eighth consecutive day. He said the IDF forces were focusing on the west of the city, where they were surrounding Nasser and al-Amal Hospitals. He reported that conditions in Rafah were difficult because large numbers of displaced persons continued to arrive in the city, living in tents in severe winter weather (al-Jazeera YouTube channel, January 29, 2024).
- ▶ According to reports, the Israeli Air Force distributed leaflets to the residents living near Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis and called on them to evacuate immediately (al-Arabi TV, January 29, 2024).



Right: Hashem Zaqout, an al-Jazeera TV correspondent in Rafah, reports on the situation in the southern Gaza Strip (al-Jazeera YouTube channel, January 29, 2024). Left: An al-Jazeera TV presenter describes the IDF forces' activities in west Khan Yunis (al-Jazeera YouTube channel, January 28, 2024)



IDF attacks in Khan Yunis (al-Jazeera YouTube channel, January 29, 2024)

- ▶ **The northern Gaza Strip:** IDF fighters killed a number of armed terrorists in clashes on the outskirts of the **al-Shati refugee camp**, and found large quantities of weapons. Israeli Air Force planes, directed by ground fighters, attacked a number of terrorist targets, anti-tank positions, tunnel shafts and observation posts (IDF spokesperson, January 29, 2024).

► **Gaza City:** IDF forces operated in **the heart of Gaza City**, attacking terrorist facilities and operatives (IDF spokesperson, January 29, 2024). Al-Jazeera reported that IDF forces were surrounding the area of universities and schools in the southern part of al-Rimal neighborhood in Gaza City, where there are many displaced persons. The IDF is also operating in the Shifa Hospital area (al-Jazeera, January 29, 2024).

► **Elias Kerem, a correspondent for al-Jazeera TV** near the Gaza Strip border on the Israeli side, reported a heavy exchange of fire between the IDF forces and the "resistance members" [terrorist operatives] in southwest Gaza City. He said the IDF forces had told the residents of the western neighborhoods of Gaza City, the al-Shati refugee camp, the al-Rimal, al-Nasr and Sheikh Radwan neighborhoods to evacuate immediately and go in the direction of Deir al-Balah. In his assessment, the IDF intends to carry out extensive activity in those areas (al-Jazeera's YouTube channel, January 29, 2024).



IDF attacks in the Tel al-Hawa neighborhood in Gaza (Shehab X account, January 28, 2024)

► **The central Gaza Strip:** IDF fighters killed dozens of armed terrorists during clashes and located large quantities of weapons (IDF spokesperson, January 29, 2024).

Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip

► On January 28, 2024, at 9 p.m., rockets were launched from the north of the Gaza Strip at the cities, towns and villages surrounding the Gaza Strip, including Ashqelon. The PIJ's military wing announced that it had launched rocket barrages at 9 p.m., Bahaa time (the hour when the PIJ under the command of Bahaa Abu al-Atta used to launch rockets) at Israel (Paltoday Telegram channel, January 28, 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, 557 of them are**

soldiers and officers (222 since the start of the ground maneuver on 27 October, 2023); 132 civilian and military hostages are still being held by the terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip; 121 hostages have been returned.

The issue of the hostages and a ceasefire agreement

▶ A summit meeting was held in Paris on January 28, 2024, with the objective of arranging another hostage deal. It was attended by representatives of Israel, the United States, Qatar and Egypt. The Israeli prime minister's office reported the meeting had been "positive" but there were still significant obstacles which would be discussed at further meetings (Israeli prime minister's office, January 28, 2024).

▶ Before the meeting, **Muhammad Nizal, a member of the Hamas political bureau**, claimed that all the reports in the media about the negotiations were attempts by the Israeli government to reduce the pressure from the hostages' families. He said Israel had so far refused to leave the Gaza Strip, to release all the Palestinian prisoners, and was trying to evade the issue and manipulate the situation. He completely rejected the idea that senior Hamas members or any of its operatives would leave the Strip in exchange for a permanent ceasefire (al-Arabi TV YouTube channel, January 28, 2024).

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The Gaza Strip

Palestinian casualties

▶ **The Hamas-controlled ministry of health in the Gaza Strip** reported that as of 10:10 a.m., January 28, 2024, the number of dead since the beginning of the war stood at 26,422 and the number of wounded at 63,087 (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, January 28, 2024).

▶ The al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades (AAMB) announced the death of Muhammad Nafez Diab (Salem), the commander of its Radwan Battalion, after he was wounded in clashes with IDF forces on January 28, 2024 (@fatehpress Telegram channel, January 28, 2024). Hassam Salem noted Muhammad Nafez Salem (Diab) from the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood had died, joining his 79 family members who were killed in the attack on the family home 47 days ago (Husam Salem's X account, January 28, 2024).

► On January 29, 2024, it was reported that the journalist Issam al-Lulu and a number of his family members were killed in an attack in al-Zuweida in the central Gaza Strip. Al-Lulu was a veteran Palestinian TV broadcaster (Palinfo X account, January 29, 2024; al-Jazeera YouTube channel, January 29, 2024).

► On January 29, 2024, the government information bureau in the Gaza Strip announced that the number of journalists killed in the war had risen to 122, after the deaths of Issam al-Lulu, a broadcaster and presenter on Palestinian TV, and Muhammad Abd al-Fatah Atallah, a journalist who worked for Hamas' al-Risalah media, which previously published a magazine called al-Risalah and today operates alresala.net. According to reports he was killed along with his family in an attack on the al-Shati refugee camp in the west of Gaza City (government information bureau Telegram channel, January 29, 2024; Hassan Aslih's X account X, January 29, 2024).



**Muhammad Atallah (with framed front covers of al-Risalah on the wall behind him)
Hassan Aslih's X account, January 29, 2024)**

Governance in the Gaza Strip

► According to reports from Palestinians in the northern Gaza Strip, uniformed Hamas police officers patrol the area to enforce order and fight exploitation, in light of the shortage of food and basic necessities. On January 27, 2024, a man tweeted that his father, who lives in the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood in Gaza, City, had told him the police were in the northern Gaza Strip, trying to impose their authority and pursue price gougers and thieves (Arab21 website, January 27, 2024).

Aid for the Gaza Strip



Distribution of bags of flour at the UNRWA facility in the Gaza Strip (Wafa YouTube channel, January 28, 2024)

UNRWA

► Details of the report that Israel forwarded to the United States indicated that 12 UNRWA employees had participated in the terrorist attack and massacre on October 7, 2023. Israel stated that ten of those involved were Hamas operatives and one was a PIJ operative. One of the agency's employees kidnapped a woman and another participated in a massacre in a kibbutz. Another UNRWA worker distributed ammunition. Seven of the workers involved in the attack were UNRWA school teachers. Six of them were located in Israeli territory on October 7, by tracking their phones, and others recounted their actions during the massacre in conversations recorded by Israel. Three received text messages to report to assembly points on the morning of the massacre, and one was told to bring anti-tank rockets stored in his home. According to the information in the report, a school counselor from Khan Yunis helped his son kidnap a woman, and a social worker from the Nuseirat refugee camp helped transport the body of an Israeli soldier to the Gaza Strip, distributed ammunition and helped coordinate the movement of vehicles (The New York Times, January 29, 2024).

► France announced that it was joining the countries suspending aid to UNRWA and would not transfer the aid intended for the first half of 2024. France stated that the accusations of the participation of UNRWA workers in the October 7, 2023 attack and massacre were particularly serious (French foreign ministry website, January 28, 2024).

► **Palestinian Authority (PA) Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh** convened an "emergency press conference" in Ramallah to relate to the freezing of aid to UNRWA. He claimed Israel had been working for a long time to eliminate UNRWA, adding that the Palestinians were "surprised" by the number of countries that announced they were freezing

funding to UNRWA. He claimed UNRWA helped 1.7 million people in the Gaza Strip and the suspension of funding was dangerous and should be revoked (Sawa, January 28, 2024).



Muhammad Shtayyeh holds a press conference in Ramallah (Wafa, January 28, 2024)

► **Sami Abu Zuhri, head of Hamas' "external" political bureau**, said that the accusations according to which some countries decided to stop funding UNRWA were based on Israeli claims. He claimed that making such a decision at the same time as the International Court of Justice handed down its ruling was "a clear challenge to the ruling." He claimed that what was necessary was to stop supplying Israel with weapons, not to stop "the supply of food and medicine to innocent people" (Shehab Telegram channel, January 28, 2024).

► **Ali Abu Shahin, a member of the PIJ's political bureau**, said that the Israeli government's attack on UNRWA and the alignment of the Western countries with "Zionist propaganda" were part of the "aggression" against the Palestinians and the refugee issue, and part of the attempt to eliminate the Palestinian cause and to complete [Israel's alleged] "war of extermination" (PIJ media information bureau, January 28, 2024).



Cartoon accusing Israel of sabotaging UNRWA's funding (al-Quds, January 29, 2024)

► **Sameh Shoukry, the Egyptian foreign minister**, held a press conference with **Feisal bin Farhan, the Saudi Arabian foreign minister**, where Shoukry claimed he was surprised by the countries' decision to stop funding UNRWA, adding that the timing of the accusations

coincided with the ruling of the International Court of Justice, which "raised questions" (Sky News in Arabic, 28 in January 2024).

► **Ayman Safadi, the Jordanian foreign minister**, spoke **with Philippe Lazzarini, UNRWA's commissioner general**. Safadi said the agency played a necessary role in bringing humanitarian aid to the residents of the Gaza Strip, who were facing a humanitarian disaster as a result of "Israel's aggression." The two noted the need for the international community to supply the agency with the assistance necessary for it to continue providing services in the Gaza Strip (Jordanian foreign minister's X account, January 28, 2024).

► **Nasser Kanaani, spokesman for the Iranian foreign ministry**, condemned Israel for accusing UNRWA workers of participating in the October 7, 2023, terrorist attack and massacre. He claimed the accusations were intended to justify the measures taken by Israel to limit the activities of the international humanitarian organizations operating in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and cleanse it of the [alleged] "crimes" it committed by killing the employees of the institutions, including UNRWA. He expressed regret at the decision of several countries to suspend their aid to UNRWA and said that instead of announcing the suspension of aid to the agency, they should have stopped the supply of weapons to Israel and their political support for it and its [allegedly] "criminal leaders" (Iranian foreign ministry website, January 28, 2024).

The issue of "the day after"

► Hezbollah-affiliated al-Mayadeen TV reported from "exclusive" Palestinian sources that Egypt had informed the "Palestinian organizations" of its decision not to allow Israel to "invade" the Philadelphia Axis, stating that any "act of aggression" along the Egyptian-Palestinian border was an "act of aggression" against Egyptian national security. The Palestinian organizations praised the Egyptian position. According to the sources, Egypt will prevent the [alleged] "migration plan" [of the Palestinians to Egypt]. The "organizations" regard the Egyptian position as one of the most important positions in preventing "aggression" in the border area (al-Mayadeen TV website, January 28, 2024).

The Northern Arena

Hezbollah's actions

- ▶ Hezbollah continued attacking IDF posts and concentrations of forces along the Israeli border Israel, and claimed responsibility for **12 attacks** using anti-tank missiles, rockets and Burkan rockets (whose warheads weigh between 660 and 1100 pounds) and heavy Falaq-1 missiles (whose warheads weigh 110 pounds) (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 28-29, 2024).
- ▶ In response to Hezbollah's activity, Israeli Air Force warplanes attacked Hezbollah's operational headquarters and terrorist facilities, including military buildings, observation posts and military sites in the area of Marwahin, al-Zahajra, Aita al-Shaab. Other targets in south Lebanon which posed a threat were attacked with artillery and tanks (IDF spokesperson, January 28, 2024).



Right: Attack on a Hezbollah military structure. Left: Attack on a Hezbollah military position (IDF spokesperson, January 28, 2024)

- ▶ Videos and photos documenting the Israeli Air Force strikes were published in Lebanese media and on social networks.



Right: The results of Israeli Air Force attacks in al-Zahajra. Left: Israeli Air Force attack in the suburbs of Rmaych (Fouad Khreiss' X account, January 29, 2024)



Israeli Air Force attacks. Right: Maroun al-Ras (Bilal's X account, January 28, 2024). Left: The Abu Tawil neighborhood in Beita al-Shaab (Hussein Srour's X account, January 28, 2024)

Hezbollah casualties

► Hezbollah reported the death of three operatives (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 28, 2024). Hezbollah recently began noting the dates of birth of the terrorists who were killed.

- ◆ Sadek Muhammad Hashem, aka Taher, born in 1992, from Rashkinay, south Lebanon.
- ◆ Ali Jamal Shakr, aka Mohsen, born in 1988, from the town of al-Nabi Sheet in the Beqaa region in the Lebanon Valley.
- ◆ Hussein Hassan Halawi, aka Nour al-Zahraa born in 1998, from Kafr Kila in south Lebanon.



**The three Hezbollah casualties
(Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 28, 2024)**



**A group photo of the three Hezbollah casualties
(Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, January 28, 2024)**

Introducing new weapons into the campaign

▶ According to the Lebanon 24 website, a few days ago Israel announced it had attacked a Hezbollah airport in the al-Jabbour area of the al-Tufah region in south Lebanon. According to the ITIC interpretation of the article, Hezbollah considered the attack on the airport an Israeli declaration of military escalation. Hezbollah then escalated its attacks and broadened the variety of weapons it was using. Hezbollah revealed the use of an Almas electro-optical anti-tank missile and a heavy Falaq-1 rocket. The disclosure of the weapons was apparently intended to publicly convey to Israel that Hezbollah possessed advanced capabilities with a high level of accuracy. Na'im Qassem, Hezbollah deputy secretary general, stated a few days ago that if Israel broadened its attacks in Lebanon, the organization would broaden its responses using the "fourth range," that is, the use of new rockets and missiles with significant destructive power (Lebanon 24, January 27, 2024).

Statements by senior Hezbollah members

▶ In a speech given at a political meeting in the Dahiyeh, the Shi'ite suburb in southern Beirut, **Hassan al-Baghdadi, a member of Hezbollah's Central Council**, claimed that the ongoing war with Israel in the Gaza Strip and in the south of Lebanon revealed the extent of Israel's distress and the extent of its vulnerability in all the arenas. He added that Israel appeared to the world as the strongest country in the region, but it had revealed its "fragility" when facing the firm stand of the Gaza Strip and of Lebanon where a real war was taking place, only part of which was visible. Al-Baghdadi added that Hezbollah's response to Israel is part was its "deterrent equation" and was related to the nature and scope of the "aggression" (al-Manar, January 29, 2024).

The Lebanese government

► **Najib Mikati, prime minister of the interim government in Lebanon**, met with **Abdullah Bou Habib, the Lebanese foreign minister**, to discuss the results of the UN Security Council meeting in New York. Bou Habib told those present that there was a "historic opportunity to achieve stable peace" along Lebanon's southern border based on Resolution 1701, adding that Lebanon did not want war and had never sought it (NNA, January 28, 2024).

Syria

► According to reports, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps headquarters in the al-Sayyidah Zaynab region, south of Damascus, were attacked from the air (al-Arabiya, January 29, 2024); the attacks were attributed to Israel (al-Jazeera, January 29, 2024). Seven deaths were reported, including four Syrians, and several wounded (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, January 29, 2024).

► **Hossein Akbari, Iran's ambassador to Syria**, denied the report that Israel had attacked an Iranian consultation center in the al-Sayyidah Zaynab area of Damascus, stating that no Iranian "consultation center" was attacked and that no Iranian advisors or citizens had been killed. (Hossein Akbari's X account, January 29, 2024).



The attacks at al-Sayyidah Zaynab. (Right: Daraa Net X account, January 29, 2024. Left: Al-Hadath, January 29, 2024)

► Following the sirens activated in the Katzrin area, interceptors were launched at two suspicious aerial targets (IDF spokesperson, January 28, 2024).

Judea and Samaria

Terrorist attacks

▶ On the morning of January 29, 2024, a vehicle ramming attack was carried out in Haifa, near the Israeli naval base. A man drove his vehicle into an IDF soldier, seriously injuring him. He then crashed his vehicle into the base wall, got out of the vehicle armed with an axe and tried to chase civilians. He managed to run about 200 meters and was shot dead by an officer on his way to the base. The identity of the terrorist is still unclear and the incident is being investigated by security officials (Israeli media, January 29, 2024).



The scene of the attack in Haifa (MDA spokesman's unit, January 29, 2024)

▶ On the morning of January 29, 2024, a Palestinian armed with a knife arrived at an IDF post in the village of Tekoa. The force opened fire and killed him (IDF spokesperson's X account, January 29, 2024). The Palestinian media reported that he was Rani Yasser Khalaf al-Sha'er, 16, from Teqoa (Wafa, January 29, 2024).



Right: The scene of the attack near the village of Tekoa (Araby Post X account, January 29, 2024). Left: The knife found in the terrorist's possession (IDF spokesperson's X account, January 29, 2024)

Counterterrorism activities

► The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria, detaining 19 wanted Palestinians. Since the beginning of the war, more than 2,960 wanted Palestinians have been detained, over 1,350 of them Hamas operatives (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, January 29, 2024).

► Before dawn on January 29, 2024, Israeli security forces operated in the Jenin refugee camp, where they detained two wanted Palestinians, seized weapons and uncovered IEDs planted on the shoulders of the roads. Armed Palestinians threw IEDs and shot at the forces. In an activity in the town of al-Yamoun (west of Jenin) to detain a wanted Palestinian, shots were fired at the forces, who returned fire, killing the wanted man (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, January 29, 2024). An al-Jazeera TV correspondent reported heavy damage to water, electricity and roads caused by the activity of the security forces in the Jenin refugee camp. He claimed the extent of damage to infrastructure caused by Israeli security force activity since October 7, 2023, was estimated at NIS 150 million (about \$41 million)(al-Jazeera YouTube channel, January 29, 2024).



Right: An IED detonated during Israeli security force activity in the Jenin refugee camp (China in Arabic X account, January 29, 2024). Left: Destruction and damage in the Jenin refugee camp (al-Jazeera YouTube channel, January 29, 2024)

► The Israel security forces also operated in the Kasbah in Nablus and in the Balata and Askar refugee camps, where they questioned Palestinians and seized military equipment. They also operated in Kafr 'Aqab (north of Jerusalem) and 'Azzun (east of Qalqilya), where they seized weapons (IDF spokesperson's Telegram channel, January 29, 2024). The Palestinians reported two fatalities in clashes with Israeli security forces in Dura (south of Hebron) and Silwad (north of Ramallah) (Wafa, January 29, 2024).

Reactions to a conference on settlement in the Gaza Strip

- ▶ On January 28, 2024, a conference entitled "Settlement Brings Security" was held with the participation of hundreds of people, including government ministers, Knesset members and rabbis. At the conference, participants were presented with six designated settlement points in the Gaza Strip. Participants signed the "Victory Charter" calling for the renewal of settlement in the Gaza Strip. The conference drew criticism from the Palestinians.
- ▶ The PA foreign ministry issued a statement condemning the "incitement meeting" held by the Israeli government under the slogan "Return of settlements to the Gaza Strip and West Bank." According to the statement, the contents of the conference revealed the true face of the Israeli regime, and the international community had to take a firm stand on the issue and clearly condemn it (PA foreign ministry X account, January 29, 2024).
- ▶ Hamas issued a statement saying that Israel had held a conference yesterday with the participation of government ministers and representatives calling for the annexation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip to Israeli territory and for settlement. According to the statement, the action reflected Israel's contempt for the decisions of the International Court of Justice in The Hague and exposed Israel's intentions to uproot the Palestinians from their land (Hamas Telegram channel, January 29, 2024).

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Iran

- ▶ Citing Iraqi sources, Saudi al-Hadath TV reported that on January 28, 2024, **Qods Force commander Esmail Qaani** arrived in Baghdad and met with the heads of the coordination committee of the pro-Iranian Shi'ite militias and senior Iraqi government officials (al-Hadath, January 28, 2024). At the same time, Ali-Akbar Ahmadian, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, is expected to visit Iraq (Tasnim, January 28, 2024). Both visits take place amid the escalation between the United States and the pro-Iranian Shi'ite militias in Iraq and in the wake of the IRGC attack against targets in the Kurdish region in northern Iraq on January 15, 2024.

Pro-Iranian militias

Iraq

► The Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for a drone attack on an American base near Erbil Airport in Iraq's Kurdish region (Islamic Resistance Telegram channel, January 28, 2024).

► **Qays al-Khazali, leader of the Iraqi pro-Iranian Asaib Ahl al-Haqq militia**, met in Baghdad with a **representative of Houthi leader Abd al-Malik al-Houthi** to discuss regional and international developments and the role of the Yemeni people in the "resistance axis."² Al-Khazali praised the Yemeni people for their support for the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and for threatening American interests in the Red Sea. He added that the "resistance axis" had proven its capabilities and effectiveness in opening multiple fronts in a way that warmed the hearts of the free people and would lead to a great victory. The Houthi representative conveyed the Houthi leader's greetings to al-Khazali, and his gratitude, appreciation and pride for his positions, his important role in supporting the "axis of resistance," the sincere effort he was making, his position alongside Yemen and its people, in addition to his key role in supporting the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip (al-Ahed, January 28, 2024).

Attack on an American base on the Syrian-Iraqi border

► **United States President Joe Biden** confirmed that three American soldiers had been killed on January 27, 2024, in a drone attack on an American base on the Jordanian-Syrian border. He noted that the attack was carried out by pro-Iranian militias operating in Iraq and Syria and that the United States would respond at the time and in the manner they chose (Reuters, January 28, 2024). Reportedly, 34 were wounded. A United States Department of Defense source said the strike had targeted the base's residential area, that multiple casualties had been recorded, and that medical evacuation had been required. It was also reported that they were currently examining the reasons for the failure of the air defense at the base (The Washington Post, January 28, 2024). It was the first time that an American Army base on the Jordanian border has been attacked, and the first time that American soldiers have been killed since the attacks on their bases in the area began.

² Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinian terrorist organizations, the Shi'ite Houthis in Yemen and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq.

- ▶ **Muhannad Mubaidin, spokesman for the Jordanian government,** noted that the attack did not take place inside Jordan, saying that it was directed at the American al-Tanf base on the Jordanian-Syrian border (al-Mamlaka, January 28, 2024).
- ▶ **British Foreign Secretary David Cameron** said they strongly condemned the attack on the base by pro-Iranian militias and urged Iran to calm the situation in the region. He also extended his condolences to the families of the victims and wished a speedy recovery to the wounded (David Cameron's X account, January 29, 2024).
- ▶ **Nasser Kanani, spokesman for the Iranian foreign ministry,** denied any Iranian involvement in the attack. According to the Iranian foreign ministry's statement, Iran has repeatedly warned of the spread of the war in the region due to the continued Israeli attacks against the Palestinians, the American support for Israel, and the violation of the sovereignty of Iraq and Syria by the American forces. Kanani stressed that the "resistance groups" in the region did not receive orders from Iran and that they were independent in their decisions and actions (ISNA, January 29, 2024).
- ▶ **The Iraqi government's information bureau** condemned the ongoing escalation, saying that the developments threatened regional and international peace and security, and that they were following with great concern the dangerous security developments in the region. The bureau also said that they were prepared to formulate basic rules of involvement that would prevent further repercussions in the region and prevent the conflict from spreading (the information bureau Telegram channel, January 29, 2024).
- ▶ **Muhannad Mubaidin, spokesman for the Jordanian government,** said that Jordan condemned the terrorist attack on the Syrian border and that the soldiers who were hit belonged to the American forces that cooperate with the Jordanian army in the fight against terrorism and border security. He extended condolences to the United States for the victims of the attack and noted that it did not cause any casualties in the ranks of the Jordanian army. He added that they would continue to fight terrorism and smuggling at the borders, and they would confront with all their might any threat to state security (Petra, January 28, 2024).
- ▶ **Ahmed Abu Zeid, spokesman for the Egyptian foreign ministry,** issued a statement saying they strongly condemned any terrorist act threatening Jordan's security and stability (Egyptian ministry spokesman's X account, January 29, 2024).
- ▶ **Sami Abu Zuhri, head of Hamas' political department "abroad,"** said that the deaths of the three American soldiers were a message to the American administration that if

the killing of innocent people in the Gaza Strip did not stop, it would find itself in a confrontation with the entire Muslim nation, and that the continuation of the "American-Zionist aggression" against the Gaza Strip could blow up the entire situation in the region (Shehab Telegram account, January 28, 2024).

► **Ali Abu Shahin, a member of the PIJ's political bureau**, condemned the statements made by the American administration about igniting war in the region, saying that the action against the American forces was part of the "natural and legitimate response" to the American presence as an occupying power in the region, and because of its shameless support for the war Israel has been waging against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip for almost four months (PIJ's information bureau Telegram channel, January 28, 2024). **PIJ deputy secretary-general Muhammad al-Hindi** said the United States was a partner in Israel's war of annihilation in the Gaza Strip and was therefore responsible for any escalation in the region. Regarding the American response, he said that in his opinion, the American responses would be carefully calculated because the United States had no interest in the region deteriorating into a regional war (al-Jazeera Mubasher TV YouTube channel, January 29, 2024).

Yemen

► The British Ministry of Defence noted that on January 27, 2024, the crew of the Royal Navy warship HMS Diamond successfully intercepted a UAV launched by the Houthis. It said no damage was caused to the ship or its crew (British Ministry of Defence X account, January 28, 2024). **Grant Shapps, the British defence secretary**, said the attacks on vessels were intolerable and illegal and targeted innocent people and global trade. He noted that they were committed to protecting freedom of navigation in the Red Sea and would be committed to this goal forever (British defence secretary's X account, January 28, 2024).

► **Yahya Saria, spokesman for the Houthi armed forces**, said Yemeni naval forces had fired a naval missile at the United States Navy ship USS Lewis B. Puller while sailing in the Gulf of Aden, a ship whose role was to provide logistical support to the American forces participating in the "aggression" against Yemen. He noted that they would continue their operations in the Red Sea against Israeli ships or those bound for Israel until the "aggression" against the Gaza Strip stopped (Yahya Saria's X account, January 29, 2024).

► "Exclusive Egyptian sources" reported that in light of the decline in ship traffic in the Suez Canal area due to Houthi activity, Egyptian officials had called on the Houthi leadership to reduce their military activity in the Red Sea and suggested carrying it out intermittently

rather than regularly. It was noted that the Houthis rejected the request. The “sources” also reported that Egypt had also expressed its concern to Iran, urging it to play its role in preventing a further deterioration in the security situation, which could lead to an increase in the economic crisis facing Egypt (al-Araby al-Jadeed , January 29, 2024).

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The Arab Arena

Saudi Arabia

► At a press conference held by **Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry and Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan, the Saudi foreign minister** said they had discussed the situation in "Palestine," a permanent ceasefire, and paving the way for a political solution. He said there was a need for an international decision regarding the Palestinians that would be binding for everyone. He also said Saudi Arabia would continue working with Egypt to solve the hostage crisis (Sky News in Arabic, January 28, 2024).

The International Arena

The International Court of Justice

► The permanent representatives in the Arab League convened in Cairo to publish a united Arab position on the International Court of Justice's decision on the temporary measures that Israel had to implement and comply with. **Muhannad al-Aklouk, PA representative in the Arab League**, said they were in a new phase after the court's decision, an opportunity for them to develop the protection of Palestinian rights (Wafa.ps, January 28, 2024).

United States

► Against the backdrop of reports that the United States is considering slowing or delaying the supply of weapons to Israel to bring about the reduction of attacks and bringing aid into the Gaza Strip, **John Kirby, spokesman for the White House National Security Council**, noted that there was no change in American policy towards Israel and that Israel had the right and obligation to defend itself against Hamas while maintaining international

humanitarian law and protecting civilian lives. He also noted that they remained committed to supporting Israel in its struggle against Hamas (Reuters, January 28, 2024).

Global Jihad

► On January 28, 2024, it was reported that the Church of Santa Maria in Istanbul had been attacked. **Turkish Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya** said masked men had broken into the church and shot at a worshipper during Sunday mass, and that Turkish security forces were searching for the perpetrators of the attack (thenationalnews.com, al-Jazeera and Sky News, January 28, 2024). **Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan** expressed condolences for the attack and said Turkey would take all steps to detain the perpetrators as soon as possible (Anadolu News, January 28, 2024).

► ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack, noting that the perpetrators had fled the scene. According to ISIS' statement, the attack was carried out in response to the call of ISIS leaders to attack Jews and Christians everywhere (A'maq News Agency, January 28, 2024).



Right: The two terrorists caught on security cameras just before the attack (thelevantnews.com, January 28, 2024). Left: ISIS' claim of responsibility (Telegram, January 28, 2024)