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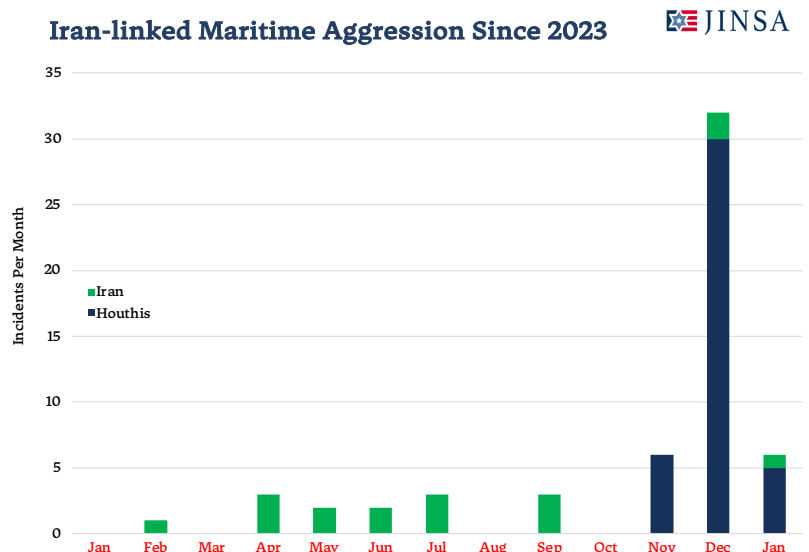
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# Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update January 12, 2024

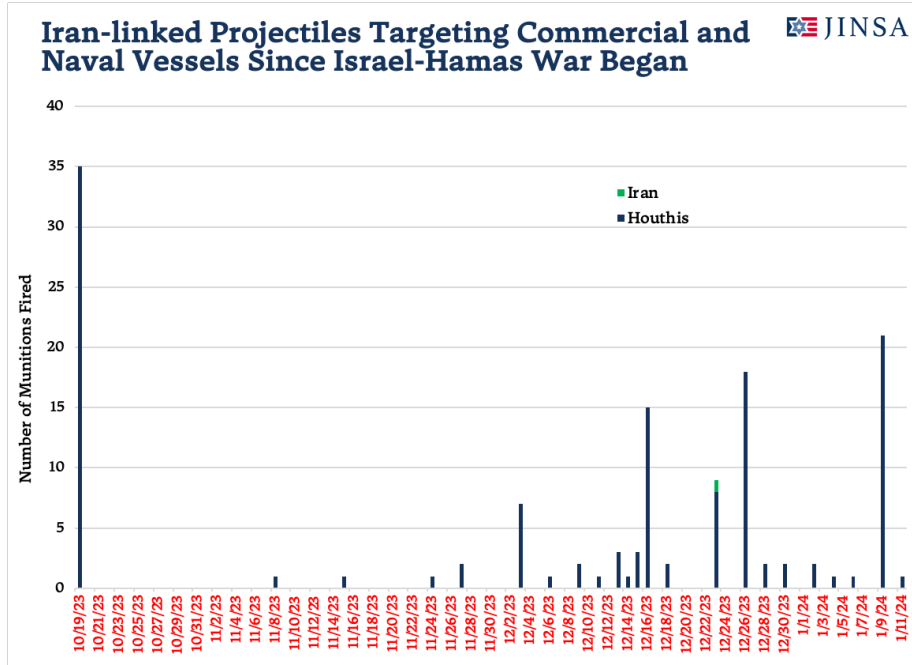
JINSA's [Israel at War](#) webpage is a dedicated resource for analysis, commentary, webinars, and media coverage about the 10/7 attacks and the ensuing Israel-Hamas conflict. An update with the latest information and analysis about the war is below.

## Analysis

- Dozens of strikes on January 11 by U.S. and British aircraft, warships, and submarines against targets in Yemen used by the Iran-backed Houthis were an important, albeit overdue, step toward deterring and degrading the terrorist group's capabilities after at least 40 Iran-backed attacks on ships in the Red Sea. "Deterring and degrading the ability of the Iranian regime and the Houthis to launch these attacks requires consistent and strong military strikes against the Houthi fighters in Yemen responsible for conducting them," as VADM Mark Fox, USN (ret.), VADM John W. Miller, USN (ret.) and Ari Cicurel recently argued in [Breaking Defense](#).
  - » The strikes on January 11 will fail to bolster deterrence against the Houthis if the United States and its partners are not willing to conduct additional operations if the Houthis resume their attacks.
  - » While the statements from the U.S. Department of Defense and U.S. Central Command noted Iran's connection to the Houthis, the White House [statement](#) avoided mentioning Iran. The Houthis would not be able to conduct strikes without the funding, weaponry, and logistical support of the Iranian regime. By avoiding mentioning Tehran's ultimate responsibility for the Houthis' aggression, the White House undermined the deterrent message of its strikes.
  - » Given Iran's large proxy network throughout the Middle East, the United States and its partners should expect retaliatory strikes, in particular in Iraq and Syria, where Iran-backed militias have conducted over 131 attacks on U.S. personnel since October 17.



- » The Houthis have launched at least 131 missiles and drones and at least one missile has originated from Iranian territory since the Israel-Hamas war began.



- During a January 11 JINSA [webinar](#), JINSA Distinguished Fellow IDF MG (ret.) Yaakov Amidror noted, “the accusations [made in the International Court of Justice that Israel is committing genocide] are about the way that Israel is waging war in Gaza. I think that they mention in one sentence the October 7 raid of Hamas into Israel ... it’s not about justice, it’s about politics, and we understand there is no connection between reality and the accusations.”
  - » JINSA Distinguished Fellow IDF MG (ret.) Amikam Norkin said, “the last two weeks, the [IDF’s] Northern Command [has acted] more aggressively in Lebanon. And I think this is the right thing to do now ... we’re still below the line of war, so we can do more. And we need to do everything that we can below the line of war ... we attack more and more targets. Some of them are very important ones ... and every day, we killed some of the Hezbollah terrorists.”
  - » JINSA Senior Vice President for Israeli Affairs IDF MG (ret.) Yaacov Ayish argued, “I think the reason why the IDF and the Israeli government decided to press the accelerator and to put Hezbollah in a dilemma ... is to put Nasrallah in a dilemma. In my opinion, it has a direct linkage to the fact that we feel quite comfortable in Gaza ... it seems like we have the flexibility to be in better readiness for the north.”

## Last 24 Hours

### Attacks Against Israel

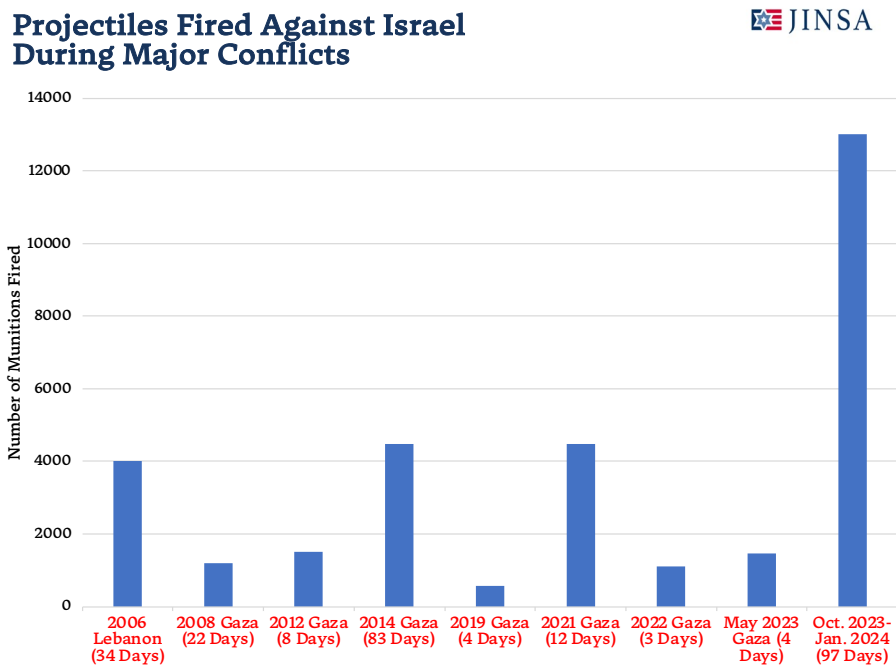
- At least 13,000 rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles have been [fired](#) at Israel during the war.

## Gaza

- According to [reports](#) from January 11, citing the IDF, more than 6,000 tons of concrete and 1,800 tons of steel comprise Hamas’s hundreds of kilometers of tunnels under Gaza, costing tens of millions of dollars.
  - » The IDF said, “the Hamas terror organization chose to invest these precious resources in building a terror infrastructure used to harm Israeli citizens and IDF forces, while cynically exploiting the civilian population in the Gaza Strip.”

## Lebanon

- [Sirens](#) sounded in northern Israel warning of an infiltration.
- On January 11, terrorists in southern Lebanon [fired](#) a barrage of more than 10 rockets toward the Israeli towns of Kiryat Shmona and Margaliot. Three of the rockets were intercepted and several landed in open areas, causing no reported damage or injuries.
- On January 11, Hezbollah [claimed](#) it carried out five attacks against IDF positions in northern Israel, launching missiles and other projectiles near Metula, Yiftah, Adamit, and Malkia.



## IDF Operations

### Gaza

- On January 12, the IDF [said](#) it had destroyed more than 700 Hamas rocket launchers since the beginning of its ground offensive in the Gaza Strip.
- Palestinian reports [indicated](#) that on January 11, eight people were killed by an Israeli strike against a car in the al-Manara neighborhood of Khan Younis in southern Gaza, which Israeli reports called a “targeted assassination.”

## Lebanon

- On January 11, the IDF [conducted](#) airstrikes and artillery shelling against a number of Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon, including military facilities, an observation post, and other infrastructure in response to earlier projectile attacks.

## Humanitarian Efforts

- On January 11, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus [wrote](#) on X, “the [WHO] team reported that Al-Shifa, previously Gaza’s premier hospital, has (partially) reestablished services,” including 60 staff, a surgical and medical section with 40 beds, an emergency department, four operating areas, basic emergency obstetric and gynecologic services, and limited laboratory and radiology operations.
- On January 11, 145 trucks carrying humanitarian aid [entered](#) the Gaza Strip through the Rafah and Kerem Shalom crossings.
  - » Israel had [agreed](#) to begin allowing 200 aid trucks entry into Gaza daily during a truce in November but says that the UN and Egypt have caused bottlenecks hindering aid delivery.

## Casualties and Hostages

- Over 1,200 people in Israel have been [killed](#), and at least 11,000 have been [injured](#) in the war.
  - » 520 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#).
    - 189 IDF soldiers have been [killed](#) during ground combat in Gaza so far.
  - » Numerous foreign nationals have been killed in the war, including at least 33 [American](#) nationals, 34 [Thai](#) nationals, 39 [French](#) nationals, 19 [Russian](#) nationals, 12 [British](#) nationals, 10 [Nepalese](#) nationals, 9 [Argentinian](#) nationals, 6 [Canadian](#) nationals, 4 [Philippines](#) nationals, 4 [Austrian](#) nationals, 4 [Romanian](#) nationals, 4 [Portuguese](#) nationals, 4 [Chinese](#) nationals, 3 [Brazilian](#) nationals, 3 [Belarusian](#) nationals, 3 [Italian](#) nationals, 3 [Peruvian](#) nationals, a [Cambodian](#) national, a [Chilean](#) national, an [Irish](#) national, a [Spanish](#) national, an [Australian](#) national, an [Azeri](#) national, a [Honduran](#) national, a [Swiss](#) national, a [Tanzanian](#) national, and a [Turkish](#) national.
- According to unverified figures from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry, at least 23,708 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza, and 60,050 have been injured during the war.
  - » On December 4, the Associated Press and AFP [reported](#), citing an IDF official, that roughly 15,000 Palestinians have died since the war began and that roughly 5,000 of those killed were terrorists.
  - » On October 25, President Biden [cautioned](#) against trusting Gaza Health Ministry casualty figures, stating: “I have no notion that the Palestinians are telling the truth about how many people are killed ... I have no confidence in the number that the Palestinians are using.”
- According to the Palestinian Authority-run Palestinian Ministry of Health, 342 people have been [killed](#), and an additional 4,148 have been [wounded](#) in the West Bank.
- The IDF [claims](#) that it has killed at least 1,500 infiltrators from Gaza since the start of the war.

- So far, [105](#) hostages in Gaza have been released, [one](#) has been rescued by the IDF, and [seven](#) have been [found](#) dead, one was [mistakenly](#) killed by the IDF, and one was [killed](#) during an IDF attempt to rescue him.
  - » 81 Israeli hostages have been released.
  - » 46 hostages with foreign nationalities—some also holding Israeli citizenship—have been released.
    - Thus far, 23 [Thai](#) nationals, 6 [Argentinian](#) nationals, 5 [German nationals](#), 3 [French](#) nationals, 4 [Russian nationals](#), 1 [Dutch](#) national, 1 [Filipino national](#), 1 [Mexican](#) national, 1 [Uruguayan](#) national, and 1 [American](#) national have been released.
    - Hamas has released [36 children](#) and still holds two as hostages.
- Terrorists in Gaza currently [hold](#) 136 hostages, according to Israeli government spokesperson Eylon Levy, a figure that includes the dead bodies of 25 hostages and four abducted prior to October 7.
  - » Many of the hostages are foreign or dual nationals, including up to 8 [American](#) nationals, 6 [German](#) nationals, 13 [Thai](#) nationals, 4 [Portuguese](#) nationals, 3 [British](#) nationals, 2 [Italian](#) nationals, 4 [Romanian](#) nationals, and 2 [Mexican](#) nationals.
  - » According to IDF spokesperson Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the 136 hostages [includes](#) two Israeli civilians and the bodies of two IDF soldiers held in Gaza since 2014 and 2015.

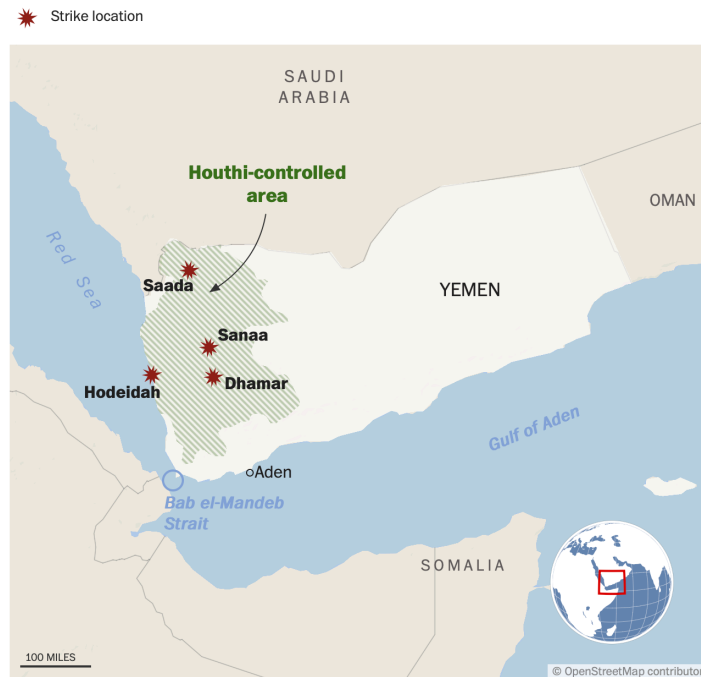
#### *Iranian Involvement and Response*

- On January 12, Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanaani [said](#) Iran “strongly condemns” the joint U.S. and UK strikes against the Houthis, and “we consider it a clear violation of Yemen’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, and a breach of international laws, regulations, and rights.”
- On January 11, the leader of the Iran-backed Houthis, Abdulmalik al-Houthi, [promised reprisals](#) in response to the U.S. and UK strikes against Houthi targets in Yemen, saying, “any American aggression will never go without a response. The response to any American attack will not only be at the level of the operation that was recently carried out... but it will be greater than that.”
- On January 11, U.S. Central Command [wrote](#) on X that at about 2 a.m. Sanaa time that day, the Houthis launched an anti-ship ballistic missile into international waters in the Gulf of Aden, and one commercial vessel said that it observed the missile land in the water, marking the 27th Houthi attack targeting international shipping since November 19.

#### *U.S. and International Response*

- At 2:30 am local time on January 12, [U.S. and British](#) aircraft, warships, and submarines “executed deliberate strikes on over 60 targets at 16 Iranian-backed Houthi militant locations, including command and control nodes, munitions depots, launching systems, production facilities, and air defense radar systems,” according to a [statement](#) from U.S. Air Forces Central Commander Lt. Gen. Alex Grynkewich.
  - » President Biden’s [statement](#) about the strikes indicated that they were a “direct response to unprecedented Houthi attacks against international maritime vessels in the Red Sea—including the use of anti-ship ballistic missiles for the first time in history.”

- » U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) said that the [objective](#) of the strikes was “to degrade their capability to continue their illegal and reckless attacks on U.S. and international vessels and commercial shipping in the Red Sea.
- » When asked about possible further strikes against the Houthis, Britain's armed forces minister James Heappey [said](#), “there are none immediately planned, and that’s an important point. Last night was a limited, proportionate, necessary response.”
- » A multinational coalition of Australia, Bahrain, Canada, and the Netherlands also provided support for the strikes.
- » According to the Houthis, the strikes [killed](#) five people and wounded six.



Source: Houthi leaders

Source: [The Washington Post](#)

- Amid the Houthis’ repeated attacks on shipping in international waters, Egyptian Suez Canal authority head Osama Rabie [said](#) on a talk show the night of January 11 that Egypt’s revenues from the Suez Canal have decreased 40 percent since the beginning of 2024 compared to 2023. He also noted that shipping traffic was 30 percent lower between January 1 and January 11 than it was during the same period in 2023.
  - » He said, “a very large portion of the goods will return (to the Canal) once this matter is finished.”
- On January 11, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken [said](#) that forging a pathway to a Palestinian state is the best way to counter Iranian malign activity.
  - » Blinken told reporters in Cairo, Egypt that the region faces two potential paths forward, the first of which would see “Israel integrated, with security assurances and commitments from regional countries and as well from the United States, and a Palestinian state — at least a pathway to get to that state,” and the second of which “is to continue to see the terrorism, the nihilism, the destruction by Hamas, by the Houthis, by Hezbollah, all backed by Iran.”

- » Blinken stated that pursuing the first path is “the single best way to isolate, to marginalize Iran and the proxies that are making so much trouble – for us and for pretty much everyone else in the region.”
- On January 11, National Security Council Spokesperson John Kirby [said](#) to reporters, “we recognize that there are real food security issues in Gaza,” and “we understand there’s a lot of hunger and starvation in Gaza.” He added, “there is [sic] not enough trucks [with aid] getting in, we’re not satisfied with the level right now.” He also said that the United States will continue supplying Israel with the capabilities needed for its self-defense.
- During a visit to Lebanon, U.S. special envoy Amos Hochstein, who mediated the October 22 Israel-Lebanon maritime border deal, [said](#) on January 11, “I’m hopeful that we can continue to work on this effort to arrive together, all of us on both sides of the [Israel-Lebanon] border, with a solution that will allow for all people in Lebanon and Israel to live with guaranteed security and return to a better future.”
- On January 12, Israel [presented](#) its response to South Africa’s allegations on January 11 at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) that it had committed genocide during its operations in Gaza.
  - » Tal Becker, legal advisor to Israel’s Foreign Ministry, [argued](#) that South Africa portrayed “a grossly distorted story ... If there have been acts that may be characterized as genocidal, then they have been perpetrated against Israel. If there is a concern about the obligations of states under the Genocide Convention, then it is in relation to their responsibilities to act against Hamas’s proudly declared agenda of annihilation, which is not a secret and is not in doubt.”
    - Becker argued that the “appalling suffering” of Israeli and Palestinian civilians is part of Hamas’s strategy and that stopping the war would make Israel defenseless.
    - Becker further [explained](#), “if the claim of the applicant [South Africa] now is that in the armed conflict between Israel and Hamas, Israel must be denied the ability to defend its citizens, then the absurd upshot of South Africa’s argument is this: Under the guise of the allegation against Israel of genocide, this court is asked to call for an end to operations against the ongoing attacks of an organization that pursues an actual genocidal agenda.”
    - He [noted](#) that “Israel is committed, as it must be, to comply with the law, but it does so in the face of Hamas’s utter contempt for the law. It is committed, as it must be, to demonstrate humanity. But it does so in the face of Hamas’s utter inhumanity ... The key component of genocide — the intention to destroy a people, in whole or in part — is totally lacking ... What Israel seeks by operating in Gaza is not to destroy a people, but to protect a people — its people, who are under attack on multiple fronts — and to do so in accordance with the law, even as it faces a heartless enemy determined to use that very commitment against it.”
  - » Prof. Malcolm Shaw [argued](#) that “not every conflict is genocidal. The crime of genocide in international law and under the Genocide Convention is a uniquely malicious manifestation and stands alone among violations of international law as the zenith of evil, the crime of crimes, ultimate in wickedness ... If claims of genocide were to become common currency of armed conflict wherever that occurred, the essence of that crime would be lost.”
    - In response to South Africa presenting statements by Israeli officials that it claimed indicated an intent to commit genocide, Shaw [said](#) that “to produce random quotes which are not in conformity with government policy is misleading at best.”



- » Responding to South Africa’s claims that Israeli efforts to evacuate civilians were part of a plan to destroy the Palestinian people, Dr. Galit Ragan [noted](#) that this “in fact proves the exact opposite” and asked, if Israel wanted to commit genocide, “would Israel delay its ground operation for weeks, would it invest massive resources to tell civilians where, when and how to [evacuate], to leave areas of fighting?”
- » Dr. Christopher Staker [argued](#) that “provisional measures would stop Israel defending its citizens, more citizens could be attacked, raped and tortured [by Hamas], and provisional measures would prevent Israel doing anything ... If granted, it would mean that when a recognized terror group commits terrorist attacks on another state, a third party seeking provisional measures can stop a party from defending itself.”
- » Presenting Israel’s closing arguments, Dr. Gilad Noam [said](#), “entertaining the applicant’s request would weaken efforts to punish genocide and instead of [the court] being an instrument to prevent terrorist horrors would turn it into a weapon in hands of terrorist groups who have no regard for humanity and rule of law.”
- » During a [video statement](#) about the hearing, Prime Minister Netanyahu noted that “a terror organization carries out the worst crime against the Jewish people since the Holocaust, and now comes along someone to defend them in the name of the Holocaust ... What chutzpah ... Where were you South Africa when millions of people were killed or displaced from their homes in Syria and Yemen, and by whom? By Hamas’s partners.”
- On January 12, *The Times of Israel* [reported](#) that Egypt had established new security measures along the Philadelphi Route, which runs along Egypt’s border with the Gaza Strip, and had increased security patrols by Egyptian special forces.
  - » According to the report, Egypt did so to reduce pressure from Israel, which had asked to have the IDF control the route after the war to prevent weapons from being smuggled across the border to terror groups – a request that Egypt had denied.
- On January 12, Saudi Arabia called for [restraint](#) and “avoiding escalation” after U.S. and British strikes on Houthi targets in Yemen.
- On January 11, the X account of the United Nations Geneva headquarters [wrote](#), “[UN Special Procedures welcomes] the start of hearings before [the International Court of Justice] of a case brought by South Africa concerning allegations that Israel is committing acts of genocide against the Palestinian people. ‘ICJ decisions are final, binding, and not subject to appeal,’ stress the experts.”
  - » The post added, quoting UN Special Procedures, “we commend South Africa for bringing this case to the [ICJ] at a time when the rights of Palestinians in #Gaza are being violated with impunity. We call on all States to cooperate with the Court as it interprets the Genocide Convention.”
- On January 11, U.S. State Department spokesman Vedant Patel [said](#) that Israel’s accusation that South Africa is acting as the legal arm of Hamas “is not a characterization that I would make from up here about our South African partners,” though “the allegation that Israel is committing genocide is unfounded.”
  - » He added, “more humanitarian aid needs to be flowing into Gaza, more commercial goods need to be flowing into Gaza,” and he called Iran’s seizure of a Greek oil tanker part of Iranian acts that are “a menace to the global economy.”



- On January 11, National Chair of South Africa’s Jewish Board of Deputies umbrella group Karen Milner [said](#) in a statement that Pretoria is ignoring “concerns over antisemitism with contempt” and “inverting reality by accusing Israel of genocide.”
  - » The statement also said, “Global Jewry are united that these charges have at their root an antisemitic worldview, which denies Jews their rights to defend themselves. They won’t silence us by denying our reality.”
  - » It added, “Why did President Cyril Ramaphosa not feel ‘duty-bound’ to hand over convicted genocide President of Sudan Omar Al Bashir, when he visited this country? Or see it as a ‘matter of principle’ to hand over Russian President Vladimir Putin to the ICC when he was expected to visit South Africa? Or take a ‘principled stand’ when he met last week, with Mohamed Dagalo of Sudan, the commander of the RSF militia who has just inflicted genocide on the non-Arab communities across Darfur.”
- On January 11, Qatar-based news network *Al Jazeera* [denied](#) Israel’s allegations that two *Al Jazeera* journalists who were killed in an IDF airstrike earlier this week were part of the Gazan terror groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad, saying, “Al Jazeera Media Network strongly condemns and wholly rejects – and indeed expresses its very considerable surprise at – the Israeli army’s false and misleading attempts to justify the killing of our colleague Hamza Wael Dahdouh and other journalists.”

#### *Rising Antisemitism, Islamophobia, Protests, and Attacks*

- On January 12, dozens of pro-Israel protesters [gathered](#) outside of the ICJ in The Hague in support of Israel. The demonstrators constructed a Shabbat dinner table with a seat representing each hostage still held by Hamas and waved banners showing their images.
- Anti-Israel protesters also [gathered](#) outside of The Hague on January 12, chanting, “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free,” and “five, six, seven, eight, Israel is a terror state.”
- On January 11, the executive director of Human Rights Watch, Tirana Hassan, told Reuters that Human Rights Watch supports South Africa’s case against Israel at the (ICJ) alleging Israeli genocide of Palestinians in Gaza.
  - » Hassan said, “South Africa is providing important leadership here. It’s really using this important opportunity ... if Israel does not comply with the measures or orders of the court, then it is up to the international community to ensure that they are leveraging whatever pressure that they can to encourage Israel to actually implement the measures.”
  - » Hassan added, “in the throes of this war, what we have seen is consistent, flagrant violations of international humanitarian law” including “the crime of starvation.”
- On January 10, a group of Jewish students [filed](#) a lawsuit against Harvard University, accusing Harvard of being a “bastion” of antisemitism and “selectively” enforcing anti-discrimination and harassment policies to avoid protecting Jewish students.
  - » The suit says, “Based on its track record, it is inconceivable that Harvard would allow any group other than Jews to be targeted for similar abuse or that it would permit, without response, students and professors to call for the annihilation of any country other than Israel.”

## Recent and Relevant JINSA Products About Israel at War

- Webinar: [Gaza Update](#), with IDF MG (ret.) Yaakov Amidror, IDF MG (ret.) Yaacov Ayish, and IDF MG (ret.) Amikam Norkin, January 11, 2024
- Webinar: [Deterring Iranian-linked Aggression](#), with Gen Kenneth F. McKenzie Jr., USMC (ret.) and Dr. Michael Makovsky, January 10, 2024
- Jonathan Ruhe and Yoni Tobin, [Iran Accelerates into the Nuclear Gray Zone](#), January 10, 2024
- Webinar: [Hamas, Iran, and the Future of Jihadism Post-10/7](#), with Dr. Jacob Olidort, Dr. Aaron Zelin, and Dr. Cole Bunzel, January 8, 2024
- Morgan Lorraine Viña and Yoni Tobin, [Actions by the United Nations Undermine Israel's Right to Self-Defense](#), January 5, 2024
- VADM Mark Fox, USN (ret.) and Jacob Olidort, "[Bahrain: Bold Partner for Middle East Peace](#)," *RealClearDefense*, January 5, 2024