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Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update January 22, 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.

Beginning January 22, JINSA will release the Swords of Iron Update on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

Analysis

- Hamas's preposterous claim in its recently [released](#), 16-page English document that "the Palestinian fighters were keen to avoid harming civilians" on October 7 suggests that the terror group is sensitive to the widespread criticism in Western countries of its actions and seeks to deflect attention from its atrocities.
 - » As scholar Aaron Zelin noted during a January 8 JINSA [webinar](#), "there has been an evolution in the way [Hamas has] discussed the attacks ... in the beginning ... there was a lot of boasting around the attack and excitement ... however, quickly, as they realized that there was this negative press considering how horrific it was, you started to see a lot of obfuscating of it."
- Hours after a reported Israeli strike in Syria killed five officers of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the Iranian regime launched a large barrage of as many as 15 ballistic missiles and rockets at Iraq's Ain al-Asad Airbase, where U.S. personnel are located. The Iranian regime's attack may indicate that it believed its retaliation against U.S. personnel in Iraq would trigger a smaller response than if it had targeted Israel and/or pressure Washington to convince Israel to limit the scope of its operations.
 - » In 2021, members of Iran's elite Quds Force, Lebanese Hezbollah, and Iran's other proxies in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen agreed to retaliate for Israeli strikes by attacking U.S. forces in Syria, according to [The New York Times](#). The Iranian-linked groups determined that the U.S. responses would be less forceful than Israel's.
- The United States continued to launch preemptive strikes against Houthi missiles that were being prepared to target ships in Middle Eastern waters. However, previous U.S. strikes against Houthi missiles have neither degraded the Iran-backed terrorist group's capability to conduct further attacks nor deterred it from continuing its aggression. Instead, U.S. efforts should focus on deterring the group by also targeting its ability to maintain control over territory.

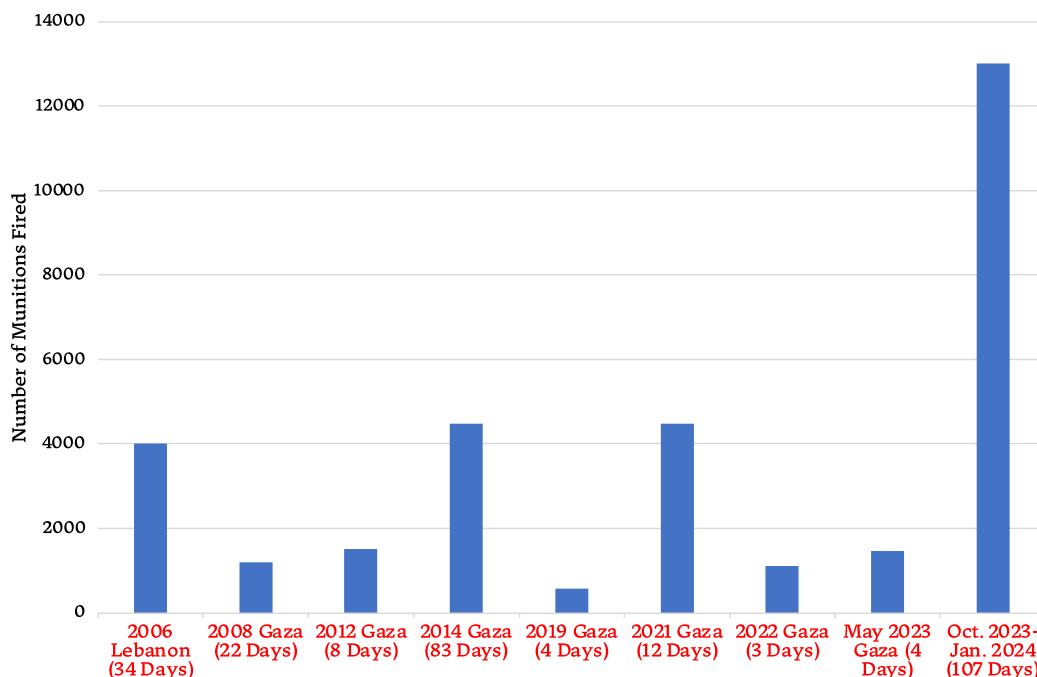
- » On January 18, President Biden [admitted](#) that U.S. strikes were not “stopping the Houthis” from conducting further attacks.
- Israel rejected a 90-day multi-phased proposal by the United States, Egypt, and Qatar under which Hamas would release all hostages from Gaza and Israel would wind down combat operations, withdraw to the Gaza border, release Palestinian prisoners, allow double the amount of aid into Gaza, and move toward Israeli normalization with Arab nations, including Saudi Arabia. Such a deal would have enabled Hamas to survive the war, claim that it had achieved the release of thousands of Palestinian prisoners, and reconstitute itself in Gaza, posing a continuing threat to Israel.
 - » The U.S.-Arab proposal comes amid [reports](#) of tensions between senior Israeli political and military leaders about the compatibility of Israel’s goals both to neutralize Hamas and secure the release of the hostages.
 - » It also comes against the backdrop of U.S. [pressure](#) on Israel to accept a two-state solution.

Last 72 Hours

Attacks Against Israel

- At least 13,000 rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles have been [fired](#) at Israel during the war.
- According to reports from January 22, Israeli police [arrested](#) two residents of East Jerusalem on December 26, a 19- and 20-year-old, who bought chemical materials to construct explosives for targeting civilians and security forces on behalf of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist group.

Projectiles Fired Against Israel During Major Conflicts



Gaza

- Sirens sounded in [Sufa, Kissufim, and Ein HaShlosa](#).
- Hamas [released](#) a 16-page document in English entitled “Our Narrative, Operation Al Aqsa Flood” in which the terror group claimed that it did not purposely kill civilians during its October 7 massacre of mostly civilians in Israel because “avoiding harm to civilians, especially children, women and elderly people is a religious and moral commitment by all the Al-Qassam Brigades’ fighters.”
 - » Hamas added, “the Palestinian fighters were keen to avoid harming civilians, despite the fact that the resistance does not possess precise weapons,” and “in addition, if there was any case of targeting civilians, it happened accidentally [sic] and in the course of the confrontation with the occupation forces.”
 - » Hamas also said, “maybe some faults happened during Operation Al-Aqsa Flood’s implementation” because of “the rapid collapse of the Israeli security and military system, and the chaos caused along the border areas with Gaza.”
 - » Hamas blamed Israel for the civilian casualties, claiming, “the brutal killing of civilians is a systematic approach of the Israeli entity, and one of the means to humiliate the Palestinian people,” and “the mass killing of Palestinians in Gaza is a clear evidence of such approach.”
 - » The group praised its own treatment of the Israeli hostages, saying, “as attested by many, the Hamas movement dealt in a positive and kind manner with all civilians who have been held in Gaza.”
 - » Hamas argued further that it only harbors grievances toward the “Zionist entity” and not Jews – although it laments that “the Jews managed to seize control” of Palestinian land before 1948 – and falsely claimed that Israel is planning to destroy the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. Hamas also called on “all people across the globe” to “back the resistance of the Palestinian people.”
 - » Hamas urged “the free peoples of the world ... to initiate a global solidarity movement with the Palestinian people and to emphasize the values of justice and equality and the right of the peoples to live in freedom and dignity.”
 - » Meanwhile, Fatah Central Committee member Abbas Zaki said to *Al Jazeera* on January 20 that “nobody attacked Israel” on October 7. Fatah is the chief faction of the internationally-recognized Palestinian Authority (PA) that governs areas of the West Bank in which the vast majority of West Bank Palestinians live.

Lebanon

- Rockets struck [Mount Dov](#) and [Shomera](#), and sirens sounded in [Shomera](#), [Haifa](#), [Zarit](#), [Arab al-Aramshe](#), [Eilon](#), and [Idmit](#).
- On January 22, three missiles [fired](#) from southern Lebanon landed in open areas near the Israeli town of Shomera, causing no reported injuries or damage.
- On January 20, a projectile [fired](#) from southern Lebanon landed in an open area near Mount Dov, causing no reported damage or injuries.
- On January 19, rocket sirens [sounded](#) in the city of Haifa for only the second time during the war, which the IDF [said](#) was triggered by an interceptor missile launched toward a “suspicious aerial target,” likely a drone. The previous sirens, which sounded in the city on October 11, were determined to be a false alarm.

- Hezbollah official Naim Qassem [said](#) on January 19 that “if Israel decides to expand its aggression, it will receive a real slap in the face in response,” and that border stability rests on “the end of the aggression in Gaza.”
 - » He added, “the enemy must know the party is ready, that we are preparing based on the principle that an endless aggression can happen, just like our will to push back the aggression is infinite.”

IDF Operations

Gaza

- The IDF announced on January 22 that it was [withdrawing](#) its Kfir Brigade from the Gaza Strip temporarily for rest and training. The IDF said that after a period, the brigade will continue operational activity, although it was unclear whether this would be in Gaza or elsewhere.
 - » The brigade had been operating in the Bani Suheila area of Khan Younis in southern Gaza and had killed dozens of terrorists and located large weapons and explosives caches. Previously, the brigade had operated in the Gaza City neighborhood of Sheijaya in its first-ever ground maneuver.
- On January 21, the IDF [said](#) that Yiftah Brigade troops raided a Hamas compound in Maghazi in central Gaza and destroyed materiel, including machinery, weapons, rockets, and launchers. The soldiers took rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) fire, returned fire against the perpetrators, and requested an airstrike, killing Hamas operatives.
- According to a January 21 [report](#) from Israel’s *Zman Yisrael*, the World Bank sent a report about the extent of the destruction in Gaza late last week to diplomatic missions around the world, which found that around 60 percent of Gazan residences have sustained significant damage in the war and that 45 percent of Gazan residences are now uninhabitable.
- On January 21, the IDF [announced](#) that it was investigating the approval process for its January 17 controlled explosion of a building on the campus of Israa University in the Gaza Strip. The Biden administration had previously requested clarification from Israel regarding the detonation.
 - » In response to an inquiry, the IDF said that “the collapse of the building and the approval process for the explosion are being investigated by the IDF” and that the findings would be presented to IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi in the coming days.
 - » The IDF’s preliminary probe of the detonation found that the building and surrounding area had been used “for military activities against our forces.”
- The IDF [said](#) on January 21 that the Israeli Navy and the 179th Reserve Armored Brigade struck a building in which several Hamas members were preparing to attack Israeli troops.
 - » The IDF also said that the Air Force and Commando Brigade jointly killed several Hamas members in southern Gaza, and the 401st Armored Brigade killed approximately 15 Hamas operatives in Daraj and Tuffah in Gaza City.
- According to [reports](#) from January 21, U.S. intelligence agencies reportedly estimate that Israel has killed 20-30 percent of Hamas members in Gaza and, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, believe that Hamas possesses enough ammunition to fight Israel for several additional months.
- Roughly 130 IDF reserve officers and commanders signed a [letter](#) to the Israeli war cabinet and IDF Chief of Staff Herzi Lt. Gen. Halevi that was publicly released on January 21 arguing that Israel has not translated its tactical accomplishments into strategic success and

demanding that Palestinians not be allowed to return to northern Gaza until all Israeli hostages are released.

- On January 21, the IDF [released](#) a video showing the inside of Hamas tunnel in southern Khan Younis, where 20 hostages had been held by the terror group. The IDF had previously released [images](#) on January 20 showing the tunnel, which was located under a Hamas commander's home in Khan Younis. Some of the hostages who were held there had been released. The IDF indicated that it had killed Hamas terrorists in the tunnel and that the tunnel contained explosive devices and blast doors.
 - » The IDF said that troops fought gunmen entering the tunnel but that no hostages were still there. The entrance to the tunnel was found inside the home of a Hamas terrorist and descended 66 feet below ground.
 - » In the tunnel, IDF troops found drawings by Emilia Aloni, a five-year-old who had been taken hostage by Hamas and freed in November during a temporary ceasefire.
- On January 20, the IDF [said](#) that four anonymous senior IDF commanders' arguments put forth in [interviews](#) with *The New York Times* that destroying Hamas and freeing every hostage are incompatible goals were "not known," "do not reflect the IDF's position," and that securing release of the hostages is a "major effort" of the war.
- On January 20, the IDF [said](#) that troops from the 646th Reserve Paratroopers Brigade and the 179th Reserve Armored Brigade raided a Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) rocket manufacturing facility in Gaza City's Zeitoun neighborhood.
 - » The troops located and destroyed dozens of machines as well as chemical and explosive materials used to make rockets, and also located and eliminated a number of rocket launchers loaded with long-range projectiles nearby.
 - » According to the IDF, the PIJ could have used the equipment at the facility to manufacture approximately 800 rockets.

Lebanon

- On January 21, the IDF [conducted](#) two waves of airstrikes against Hezbollah targets in the southern Lebanese town of Merkaba, striking a military facility, observation posts, and other terror infrastructure.
- On January 21, the IDF [conducted](#) airstrikes and tank shelling in southern Lebanon, striking a Hezbollah command center and another Hezbollah facility.
- On January 21, Reuters [reported](#), citing two security sources, that two Hezbollah operatives were killed in an Israeli drone strike on a vehicle in the Bint Jbeil region of southern Lebanon.
 - » The report stated that a senior Hezbollah member managed to escape the strike, but that two of his aides were killed. Reuters [reported](#) that several other people were injured in the strike.
 - » Hezbollah stated that one of the Hezbollah members killed was Ali Haderaj. According to Israel's *Kan* network, Haderaj [coordinated](#) Hezbollah and Hamas's electronic warfare and air defense activities in Lebanon.
- On January 20, the IDF [carried out](#) a series of strikes overnight against Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon. The IDF launched airstrikes against an observation post, a rocket launching post, and other terrorist infrastructure, conducted artillery shelling against a threat along the Lebanese-Israeli border, and struck launch sites in response to earlier projectile attacks.

- On January 20, the Hezbollah-run *Al Mayadeen* news outlet [reported](#) that an Israeli drone strike hit a vehicle near the southern Lebanese city of Tyre.
- According to a January 20 [report](#) in *The Washington Post*, Israel views the end of January as the target for a deal with Lebanon over the border. A senior U.S. official claimed that Israel has not set a “hard deadline” but views the window of opportunity for a deal to be closing.
- Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant [said](#) while visiting the Lebanese-Israeli border on January 19 that “as long as fighting continues in the south, there will be fighting in the north,” and that Israel “will not accept this reality for an extended period, there will come a moment when if we do not reach a diplomatic agreement in which Hezbollah respects the right of the residents to live here in security, we will have to ensure that security by force.”

Syria

- On January 20, an alleged Israeli strike [killed](#) five IRGC officers, including Gen. Sadegh Omidzadeh, the intelligence deputy of the IRGC’s expeditionary Quds Force in Syria, and his deputy, according to Iranian state-run media outlet *Nour News*. The IRGC later released a conflicting statement, identifying the five officers killed as Hojjatollah Omidvar, Ali Aghazadeh, Hossein Mohammadi, Saeed Karimi, and Mohammad Amin Samadi, without providing ranks or further information.

West Bank

- On January 21, the Israeli cabinet [agreed](#) to approve a plan to transfer frozen Palestinian tax revenues earmarked for the Palestinian Authority to Norway. As part of the plan, Norway agreed to only transfer the funds to the Palestinian Authority with Israel’s permission, although *Sky News Arabia* reported that Israel has already agreed to release some funds through the Norwegian-run fund to the Palestinian Authority.
 - » The frozen funds are Palestinian Authority tax revenues, which are collected by Israel on the Palestinian Authority’s behalf.
 - » The deal includes the provision that the funds will not be transferred unless Norway is given the express permission of the Israeli Finance Minister and a provision that if the agreement is violated, Israel will immediately freeze all Palestinian tax revenues.
 - » The Palestinian Authority [agreed](#) to receive a partial transfer of the funds, according to a January 22 *Sky News Arabia* report, under the arrangement. The Palestinian Authority had previously rejected deals to receive only a portion of the frozen funds.
- Reuters [reported](#) on January 19, citing the Palestinian Authority-run Palestinian Ministry of Health, that a Palestinian-American teenager was killed by Israeli security forces that day in the West Bank. The report stated the victim’s uncle told Reuters that the incident involved stone-throwing by Palestinians, and Palestinian news agency *Wafa* reported that the teenager was killed by IDF gunfire.

Humanitarian Efforts

- On January 21, Israeli charity Yad Sarah, one of Israel’s largest medical aid volunteer groups, [reported](#) that it was experiencing shortfalls in “critically needed” medical supplies due to ongoing Houthi attacks on Red Sea shipping.
 - » Yad Sarah director-general Moshe Cohen told *The Times of Israel* that “the attacks by Houthi rebels in the Red Sea pose a life-endangering delay of critically needed supplies for the unprecedented number of casualties of war in Israel.”

- » Cohen said that due to Houthi attacks, 64 containers of medical supplies—including oxygen concentrators and rehabilitation equipment—slated to arrive in January had to be rerouted, adding three to five months to the shipment’s arrival time.
- On January 19, Israel’s *Channel 12* [reported](#) that the medications for hostages per a January 12 a Qatar-brokered [deal](#) had arrived at the agreed-upon collection point in Gaza, where the Hamas-run Gaza Health Ministry is slated to transfer the medications to the hostages after the International Committee of the Red Cross [indicated](#) on January 18 that it would not play a role in the transfer.
 - » The report quoted an Israeli source as speculating that it will take some time for the medications to reach the hostages and that Israel will have to rely on the word of Qatari mediators to verify that the medications reached the hostages.
- On January 19, British Defense Minister Grant Shapps [said](#) that the United Kingdom is exploring new ways of shipping humanitarian aid from Cyprus to the Gaza Strip, including shipping aid “to Israel directly and even through [the Kerem Shalom crossing on the Israel-Gaza border] that the Israelis have opened.”
 - » Shapps, who made the remarks after speaking with Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides that day, said the options being explored would enable larger quantities of aid to enter Gaza and at a faster rate, but would require “quite a lot of organization work.”
- On January 19, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) spokeswoman Tess Ingram [said](#) that there is “a baby born into this horrendous war every 10 minutes,” and “becoming a mother should be a time for celebration. In Gaza, it’s another child delivered into hell.” She added, “seeing newborn babies suffer, while some mothers bleed to death, should keep us all awake at night.”
- *The Times of Israel* noted that Ingram did not mention 1-year-old Kfir Bibas or any child abducted by Hamas on October 7 and held captive in Gaza.

Post-War Gaza Planning

- On January 21, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [said](#), “there will be no entity in Gaza [after the war] that finances terrorism, educates for terrorism or sends our [sic] terror.” He also said, “I will not compromise on full Israeli security control over all the territory west of Jordan,” and “as prime minister, I stood firm on this position in the face of heavy international and domestic pressures.”
 - » Netanyahu added, “my insistence is what for years prevented the establishment of a Palestinian state that would have constituted an existential danger to Israel,” “as long as I am prime minister, I will continue to firmly stand by this,” and “if someone has a different position, let them show leadership and state their position honestly to the citizens of Israel.”
- The United States, Egypt, and Qatar have pushed Israel and Hamas to accept a 90-day plan to the end of the war, release the hostages, and normalize ties between Israel and Arab nations, including Saudi Arabia, according to a January 21 [report](#) in *The Wall Street Journal*. Prime Minister Netanyahu rejected the proposal because it did not include an end to the war, arguing that “if we agree to this, then our warriors fell in vain. If we agree to this, we won’t be able to ensure the security of our citizens.”
 - » The first phase of the deal would include Hamas releasing the civilian hostages and Israel releasing Palestinian prisoners, withdrawing from territory in Gaza, stopping drone overflights of Gaza, and doubling the amount of aid allowed into Gaza.

- » The next phase would involve Hamas releasing all female IDF soldiers and Israeli bodies, while Israel would release more prisoners.
- » The third phase would include Israel withdrawing to the Israel-Gaza border and Hamas releasing all fighting-age male hostages.
- » Following the third phase, there would be talks about a permanent ceasefire and normalization process for Israel and Arab nations.
- On January 20, U.S. President Joe Biden [spoke](#) to reporters about his January 19 phone call with Prime Minister Netanyahu, saying that a two-state solution is not impossible while Netanyahu is in office and that he hopes that “we’ll be able to work something out.”
 - » Biden said “no, it’s not,” in response to a question about whether a two-state solution is impossible while Netanyahu is in office.
 - » Asked if he was “going to reconsider conditions on Israel aid given what Bibi [Netanyahu] said on a two-state solution,” Biden said, “I think we’ll be able to work something out.”
 - » When asked to [elaborate](#) further about a potential two-state solution, Biden stated, “there are a number of types of two-state solutions. There’s a number of countries that are members of the UN that are still — don’t have their own militaries. Number of states that have limitations. And so I think there’s ways in which this could work.”
 - » After a reporter asked Biden what Netanyahu is open to, Biden responded, “I’ll let you know.”
- Following a January 20 [CNN report](#) that claimed that during the January 19 phone conversation between President Biden and Prime Minister Netanyahu, the prime minister did not rule out the creation of a Palestinian state, Netanyahu’s office [released](#) a statement clarifying his position.
 - » The statement said, “in his conversation last night with President Biden, Prime Minister Netanyahu repeated his consistent position for years, which he also expressed at a press conference the day before: after the elimination of Hamas, Israel must remain in full security control of the Gaza Strip to ensure that Gaza will no longer pose a threat to Israel, and this conflicts with the demand for Palestinian sovereignty.”

Casualties and Hostages

- Over 1,200 people in Israel have been [killed](#), and at least 11,000 have been [injured](#) in the war.
 - » 532 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#).
 - 195 IDF soldiers have been [killed](#) during ground combat in Gaza so far.
 - The IDF [announced](#) the death of Sgt. First Class (res.) Uriel Aviad Silberman, 23, from Nehalim.
 - On January 21, the IDF [announced](#) that Staff Sgt. Shay Levinson, 19, from Giv’at Avni, who was previously thought to have been taken hostage alive by Hamas, had been killed in the terror group’s October 7 attacks, and his body was being held in Gaza.
 - » 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, 25,295 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza, and 63,000 have been injured during the war.
 - » 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, 358 people have been [killed](#), and an additional 4,313 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, [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 [include](#) two Israeli civilians and the bodies of two IDF soldiers held in Gaza since 2014 and 2015.
- On January 22, family members of the Israelis held hostage by Hamas [disrupted](#) a Knesset Finance Committee meeting, demanding the government do more to free their relatives and telling committee members, “you will not sit here while our children die.”
- On January 21, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [said](#) in a video statement that Israel rejects Hamas’s demands for a “surrender” in exchange for the release of the remaining hostages in Gaza and that he has made Israel’s stance clear to U.S. President Joe Biden.
 - » Netanyahu stated, “we brought home so far 110 hostages, and we are committed to bringing them all back,” but “I reject outright the terms of surrender of the Hamas monsters.”
 - » Netanyahu added, “Hamas is demanding the end of the war, the exit of our forces from Gaza, releasing all the murderers and rapists of the Nukhba [forces] and leaving Hamas

intact.” Netanyahu said that acceding to this demand would result in a “fatal blow to Israeli security” and that “the next October 7 [would] just be a matter of time.”

Iranian Involvement and Response

- On January 20 at approximately 6:30 p.m. local time, after Israel had reportedly launched a strike in Syria that killed five members of the IRGC, Iran-backed militants [fired](#) multiple ballistic missiles and rockets at the Ain al-Asad Airbase in Iraq, where U.S. personnel are located. “Most of the missiles were intercepted by the base’s air defense systems while others impacted on the base,” according to a statement from U.S. Central Command. Several U.S. personnel underwent assessments for traumatic brain injuries, and at least one Iraqi service member was injured.
 - » [Reports](#) indicated there may have been as many as 15 projectiles fired during the attack, with two hitting the base.
- On January 20, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi [promised](#) to respond after a reportedly Israeli strike in Syria killed five IRGC officers. Raisi said in a statement that “the Islamic Republic [of Iran] will not leave the Zionist regime’s crimes unanswered.”
- Commanders from the IRGC and Hezbollah are on the ground in Yemen advising the Houthis about its attacks against ships in Middle Eastern waters, according to a January 20 Reuters [report](#).
- On January 19, Pakistan’s foreign office [said](#) that Pakistan and Iran “agreed to de-escalate” tensions during a phone call, and “the two foreign ministers agreed that working level cooperation and close coordination on counter-terrorism and other aspects of mutual concern should be strengthened.”

U.S. and International Response

- On January 20 at approximately 4 a.m. local time, the United States [struck](#) a Houthi anti-ship missile that was prepared to launch against targets in the Gulf of Aden.
- After a ten-day search, U.S. Central Command [announced](#) on January 20 that it had changed the status of two missing U.S. Navy SEALs to deceased. The SEALs went missing during a ship-boarding operation to interdict the transfer of Iranian weapons to the Houthis in Yemen. Vessels from the United States, Spain, and Japan searched an area of more than 21,000 square miles.
- On January 20, the U.S. Office for Palestinian Affairs [called](#) for an “urgent investigation” into the killing of 17-year-old Palestinian-American Tawfiq Hafiz Ajaq on January 19 during IDF clashes with Palestinians in the West Bank town of Al-Mazra’a Al-Sharqiya.
 - » The U.S. Office for Palestinian Affairs [posted](#) on X, “[d]evastated to hear about the killing of a 17 year old U.S. citizen, Tawfic Abdel Jabbar. We call for an urgent investigation to determine the circumstances of his death.”
 - » Associated Press reports [indicated](#) that Israel had agreed to conduct an investigation into the death of Ajaq, who was born and raised in Gretna, Louisiana. Ajaq was hit in the head by live ammunition during an incident the night of January 19 in which Palestinians threw rocks at Israeli soldiers, according to a Reuters report.
- According to the White House, U.S. President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [spoke](#) by phone on January 19 in their first conversation in 27 days, which Hebrew-language media reported was friendly and lasted roughly 40 minutes.

- » National Security Council Spokesperson John Kirby [said](#) during a press briefing that the two leaders discussed efforts to secure the release of every hostage in Gaza and “also reviewed the situation in Gaza and the shift to targeted operations that will enable the flow of increasing amounts of humanitarian assistance, while keeping the military pressure on Hamas and its leaders significant.”
- » Kirby added that Biden praised Israel’s decision to allow flour shipments to Gaza out of Israel’s Ashdod port and reiterated “Israel’s responsibility — even as it maintains military pressure on Hamas and its leaders — to reduce civilian harm and to protect innocent civilians.” Kirby also said that the two sides “are separately working on options for more direct maritime delivery of assistance into Gaza.”
- » Kirby noted that Biden inquired about the hundreds of millions of tax revenues that Israel has not released to the Palestinian Authority, and “the president also discussed his vision for a more durable peace and security for Israel, fully integrated within the region, and a two-state solution with Israel’s security guaranteed.”
- » Israel’s *Channel 12* [reported](#) that Netanyahu updated Biden on the latest IDF operations in the Gaza Strip and told Biden that Israel would not “withdraw from the borders of the fighting.”
- On January 19, U.S. F/A-18 fighter jets that took off from the USS *Dwight D. Eisenhower* aircraft carrier [conducted](#) airstrikes on Houthi anti-ship missile launchers in Yemen that were prepared to fire.
 - » The Houthi-run media agency *Al Masirah* reported that air raids struck targets in western Hodieda’s al-Jabaana neighborhood.
 - » U.S. National Security Council Spokesperson John Kirby [said](#) on January 19 that “this is the fourth preemptive action that the US military has taken in the past week against Houthi missile launchers that were ready to launch attacks,” and “these actions were ... done in self-defense, but it also helps make safer international waters for both naval vessels as well as merchant shipping.”
- On January 19, U.S. antisemitism envoy Deborah Lipstadt [said](#), “Cricket South Africa removed David Teeger, who is Jewish, as the captain of the South Africa U19 cricket team on Jan 19th due to ‘security concerns’ related to anti-Israel protests,” and “‘security concerns’ can and should be addressed by tightening security, not by punishing the object of the threat. When a Jew outside of Israel is held responsible for Israel’s policies, this is antisemitism.”
- White House Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa Brett McGurk will [travel](#) to Egypt and Qatar this week to negotiate the release of the Israeli hostages.
- Danish shipping group Maersk [announced](#) on January 22 that it will divert its ME2 container service away from the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden and instead sail vessels around the Cape of Good Hope. The ME2 service connects Italy and the western Mediterranean Sea to the eastern coast of India and the United Arab Emirates.
- In a January 20 [op-ed](#) for *The Telegraph*, U.K. Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis argued that genocide accusations against Israel are “deployed not only to eradicate any notion that Israel has a responsibility to protect its citizens, but also to tear open the still gaping wound of the Holocaust, knowing that it will inflict more pain than any other accusation. It is a moral inversion, which undermines the memory of the worst crimes in human history.”
- On January 19, the Russian foreign ministry [announced](#) that a Hamas delegation led by senior Hamas political official Mousa Abu Marzouk visited Moscow to meet with senior Russian officials, including Russian deputy foreign minister Mikhail Bogdanov.

- » According to a Russian readout, Russia emphasized the need for Hamas to release hostages held in Gaza.
- On January 19, European Union (EU) foreign policy chief Josep Borell [alleged](#) that Israel financed Hamas in an effort to weaken the Palestinian Authority, saying, “yes, Hamas was financed by the government of Israel in an attempt to weaken the Palestinian Authority led by Fatah.”
- An anonymous EU official [said](#) on January 19 that “what we are doing now – it has been done today and I think it will be announced in the coming hours – [is that] we have adopted a dedicated [sanctions] regime for Hamas. We have listed six people” from Arab or African countries implicated in Hamas financing.
- On January 19, EU foreign policy head Josep Borrell [said](#), “the [Israelis and Palestinians] are too opposed to be able to reach an agreement autonomously,” and “if everyone is in favor of this solution, the international community will have to impose” the creation of a Palestinian state, or the “spiral of hate will continue generation after generation.”
- On January 19, French shipping firm CMA CGM [announced](#) that it was rerouting ships away from the Red Sea and around Africa in order to ensure the safety of its vessels and crew.
- According to [reports](#) from January 19, The Netherlands summoned the Iranian ambassador after a Dutch baby was killed by Iran’s January 15 ballistic missile attack against Erbil in Iraq’s Kurdistan region.
- Palestinian Authority spokesperson Nabil Abu Rdeineh [stated](#) on January 19 that “without the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital on the borders of 1967, there will be no security and stability in the region.”

Rising Antisemitism, Islamophobia, Protests, and Attacks

- On January 22, an anti-Israel protester [threw](#) papers onto a court during a tennis match at the Australian Open, disrupting play. The pages said, “free Palestine,” and “while you’re watching tennis bombs are dropping on Gaza.”
- When asked by *The Guardian* on January 21 about the fact that he has not condemned Hamas’ October 7 attacks, Gary Lineker, *BBC News*’ highest-paid presenter, [responded](#), “I don’t see it as a Jewish thing. I see it as the Israeli government. Obviously, they’re responding to 7 October, but crikey, one atrocity does not deserve 80 atrocities. Or more.”
 - » He added that when some of his Jewish friends asked him to show support for Israel, “I had to say, ‘What?! Look, absolutely no. And nor should you.’”
 - » Lineker had removed and explained as an oversight a tweet he reposted on January 13 that urged FIFA and the International Olympic Committee to [boycott](#) Israel.
- On January 20, an anti-Israel protest at a jewelry fair in Vicenza, Italy, [turned violent](#) after protesters threw smoke bombs and clashed with riot police, who responded with water cannons.
- On January 20, pro-Palestinian students at SOAS University of London [heckled](#) the Palestinian ambassador to the UK, Husam Zomlot, while speaking at an event on campus, yelling, “you have blood on your hands! You’re a PA collaborator ... Shame on you!”
 - » The campus’ Palestine Society also posted a statement on Instagram condemning the university’s decision to invite Zomlot because of the Palestinian Authority’s “collaborating with the Zionist entity.”

- On January 20, Harvard professor Derek Penslar, who was selected as the co-chair of Harvard University’s new antisemitism task force, [signed](#) a letter in August that denounced Israel as an “apartheid regime.”
- According to a January 19 [report](#) from Israel’s *i24 News*, citing the *Harvard Crimson*, a group of 65 Harvard faculty and staff members have formed a group called “Harvard Faculty and Staff for Justice in Palestine (FSJP)” with the objective of forcing Harvard University to sever all ties with Israel.
- On January 19, during a [protest](#) at Columbia University reportedly organized by Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), demonstrators called for an “intifada,” chanted “Yemen, Yemen make us proud, turn another ship around” in support of the Houthis, and chanted “from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.”
 - » A sticker seen on a nearby university trashcan said, “Zionist donors and trustees, hands off our universities,” and protestors screamed, “NYPD, KKK, IDF, they’re all the same” at police officers.

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- Webinar: “[Forgotten Threat: Iran’s Accelerating Nuclear Program](#),” with Hon. Stephen Rademaker, Gabriel Noronha, and Blaise Misztal, January 17, 2024
- Ari Cicurel, [Strikes Against the Houthis Should Not Be a One-Off](#), January 12, 2024
- Zac Schildcrout, [U.S. Diplomacy Won’t Deter Hezbollah](#), January 12, 2024