



Spotlight on the Israel-Palestinian Conflict

January 14 – 21 , 2025

Overview¹

- ▶ On January 19, 2025, a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip went into effect, the first phase of a deal to release Israeli hostages. Hamas released three Israeli hostages in exchange for ninety Palestinian women and minors imprisoned in Israel.
- ▶ Senior Hamas officials stated their commitment to the ceasefire agreement, calling it "a victory over Israel." Hamas quickly demonstrated its governance by deploying large security forces in the Gaza Strip, while the Palestinian Authority (PA) demanded it receive responsibility for the Strip.
- ▶ An Israeli was stabbed in Tel Aviv; the terrorist was killed. Israeli security forces continued counterterrorism operations in Judea and Samaria and launched a large-scale operation in Jenin. An IDF soldier was killed and three others were injured in two explosive device attacks during the operation.
- ▶ Jewish settlers rioted in Palestinian villages in the Qalqilya area.
- ▶ The Palestinian Authority security forces continued their activities against gunmen in the Jenin refugee camp after understandings between the sides collapsed. However, the PA's activities ended with the beginning of the Israeli security force operation.

Ceasefire in the Gaza Strip

- ▶ On January 19, 2025, at 11:15 a.m., a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip went into effect, following negotiations mediated by the United States, Qatar and Egypt. The first phase of the ceasefire is scheduled to last 42 days, during which Hamas is expected to release 33 hostages in exchange for more than 1,800 Palestinian detainees and prisoners, increased entry of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip, a redeployment of IDF forces in the Strip and the transfer of displaced persons to the northern Gaza Strip. On the afternoon of January 19, 2025, Hamas' military wing released three Israeli hostages, and during the night of

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

January 19, 2025, ninety Palestinian women and minors were released to Judea, Samaria and east Jerusalem (Israeli media, January 17-20, 2025).



**Displaced Gazans return to their previous places of residence
(Gaza Now Telegram channel, January 19, 2025)**

Hamas

► Senior Hamas figures welcomed the ceasefire and claimed the movement was committed to it. They alleged the ceasefire was an achievement for the "resistance" and a victory brought by Operation al-Aqsa Flood, which began with the attack on Israel on October 7, 2023:

◆ Hamas claimed that Operation al-Aqsa Flood had demonstrated the "cohesion" of the Palestinian "resistance" and that the "resistance" had forced the "occupation" to cease its "aggression" and withdraw. Hamas called for action to end the siege, provide aid, return the displaced and rebuild the Strip (Hamas Telegram channel, January 18, 2025). As the ceasefire went into effect, according to another statement, Hamas claimed it was committed to meeting the conditions. The statement also praised the firm stance of the Palestinian people and welcomed the release of prisoners, and said they were monitoring the entry of humanitarian aid, noting they would "make every effort" to restore normal living conditions in the Strip (Hamas Telegram channel, January 19, 2025).

◆ Khalil al-Haya, head of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip and leader of the movement's negotiation team, praised the firm stance of the Gazans, who had "sacrificed greatly to defend Jerusalem and al-Aqsa Mosque." He praised shaheeds, from the movement's leaders, including Ismail Haniyeh, Yahya Sinwar and Salah al-'Arouri, to fighters, journalists, women and children, stating that Operation al-Aqsa Flood represented a "historic turning point" in the Palestinian "struggle." He said Israel had failed to achieve its goals, while the Palestinian "resistance" had shown its strength and "military creativity." He praised the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the Jerusalem

Brigades and other "resistance" factions. He also thanked Iran, Hezbollah, the Houthis, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq and the countries which supported the Palestinians. Regarding the future, he said the Gaza Strip had to be rebuilt and called for national solidarity and support for Palestinian prisoners expected to be released as part of the agreement. He said the "struggle" would continue until full victory (al-Aqsa, January 15, 2025).

◆ Osama Hamdan, senior Hamas figure in Lebanon, noted that the number of Palestinian prisoners to be released as part of the agreement would satisfy the Palestinian people and the ceasefire would be implemented under the supervision of the mediators. He said the first phase of the agreement would be accompanied by negotiations for the next phase, with the mediators ensuring that the ceasefire would remain in effect during the negotiations, even if they took time. He added that the essence of the agreement was that it would lead to a full withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and a comprehensive ceasefire. He said the current agreement was very similar to the proposal presented by the Biden administration in May 2024 (al-Jazeera Mubasher TV, January 16, 2025).

◆ Husam Badran, a member of the Hamas political bureau, described the agreement as an achievement for all Palestinians, not just Hamas. He said the deal would include prisoners from all the Palestinian factions, prioritize ending the war, the withdrawal of Israeli forces, the return of displaced persons and the entry of aid into the Gaza Strip. He claimed Hamas operated "technical committees" and monitoring teams to implement the agreement, adding that the "struggle" in Judea and Samaria was expected to be "long and brutal" (Hamas Telegram channel, January 17, 2025).

◆ Abu Obeida, spokesman for the Izz al-Din Qassam Brigades, Hamas' military wing, said the Brigades and other "resistance" factions were fully committed to the ceasefire agreement, subject to the "enemy's" commitment to it. He claimed that Hamas and the Gazans had done significant damage to Israel, despite Israel's reliance on "the strongest forces in the world." He praised the coordination between Hamas and other "factions" and claimed the agreement could have been reached more than a year ago, blaming the delay on the Israeli government. He also called for escalating the "resistance" in Judea

and Samaria and thanked the organizations of the "resistance axis"² for their support (Abu Obeida's Telegram channel, January 19, 2025).

► On the eve of the ceasefire Hamas convened a meeting of representatives of Palestinian "factions" in Doha to discuss the implementation of the agreement. The Hamas delegation was led by Muhammad Darwish, chairman of the movement's leadership council, and included Khalil al-Haya. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) delegation was led by Ziyad al-Nakhalah, PIJ secretary general; the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) delegation was led by Jamil Mazhar, deputy secretary general; the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) delegation was led by Majeda al-Masri, the deputy secretary general; the National Initiative delegation was led by Mustafa Barghouti; there were also delegations from the Popular Front - General Command and the Palestinian People's Party. The PA and Fatah delegation was led by Qadoura Fares, head of the commission for prisoners and released prisoners' affairs. Darwish said that Hamas extended its hands toward unity. He said the assembled participants wanted a national unity government but noted that if that were impossible, the Strip should be managed nationally, and everyone should take part in the rehabilitation and efforts "for the people" (Hamas Telegram channel, January 18, 2025).



**The Palestinian terrorist organizations meet in Doha
(Hamas Telegram channel, January 18, 2025)**

Hamas governance

► The Hamas government in the Gaza Strip announced it had completed a plan to restore normality to the Gaza Strip during the ceasefire. The plan included urgent measures on the ground to ensure a gradual return to normal life, including securing affected areas and providing humanitarian aid to civilians. Government teams from various ministries and institutions were prepared to monitor implementing the plan on the ground to ensure civilian

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

safety and attempt to meet basic needs. The police would maintain security and order in the various districts; municipalities would focus on reopening roads, clearing affected areas and restoring infrastructure; and government teams from various ministries would monitor the field and work to ensure all necessary measures were being taken to return life to normal as quickly as possible (Hamas media information office Telegram channel, January 18, 2025).

► On January 18, 2025, the Hamas ministry of interior and national security in the Gaza Strip announced that security forces subordinate to the ministry would begin deploying as the ceasefire went into effect. The ministry called on Gazans to cooperate with the security forces, secure public and private property, and avoid life-threatening behavior (Hamas ministry of the interior in Gaza Facebook page, January 18, 2025). The Sahem Unit of the ministry of interior issued a warning "to all thieves and robbers:" "Prepare yourselves. Our forces are ready, only one day remains and after that, all thieves, traitors and dealers will need titanium knee replacements " (Sahem Unit Telegram channel, January 18, 2025).

► As the ceasefire went into effect, thousands of Hamas police officers began deploying across the Strip as part of the government's plan to maintain security and order. The various municipalities began reconstruction and clearing debris to allow streets to reopen for traffic (Hamas media information office Telegram channel, January 19, 2025).



Right: Hamas police deploy (ministry of the interior in Gaza Facebook page, January 19, 2025). Center: Armed Hamas terrorist operatives with Gazans in Khan Yunis (Quds Agency, January 19, 2025). Left: Removing rubble in Khan Yunis (Khan Yunis municipality Facebook page, January 20, 2025)

The humanitarian situation and reconstructing the Gaza Strip

► A "source in the Hamas ministry of interior " reported that on the first day of the ceasefire, 552 aid trucks entered the Gaza Strip through three crossings, including 50 tankers carrying fuel and cooking gas. Of them, 242 entered through the Erez Crossing to the northern Gaza Strip (Anadolu Agency, January 19, 2025; al-jazeera.net, January 19, 2025). A "senior resistance

source" stated that approximately 500 aid trucks entered the Gaza Strip on the first day of the agreement's implementation, and over 600 trucks entered on the second day (al-Mayadeen, January 20, 2025). Tom Fletcher, UN undersecretary general for humanitarian affairs, reported that more than 630 aid trucks entered the Gaza Strip on January 19, 2025, of which at least 300 went to the northern Gaza Strip (Tom Fletcher's X account, January 20, 2025).



Right: Aid trucks enter the Rafah Crossing (Palestinian Media Center, January 19, 2025). Left: A Hamas security operative secures the passage of aid trucks (al-jazeera.net, January 19, 2025)

► Munir al-Barash, director general of the ministry of health in Gaza, stated that as the ceasefire began, reconstruction began in hospitals in the northern Gaza Strip. He noted that it would proceed gradually, starting with the al-Awda Hospital, which would provide initial treatment for the sick and injured, followed by the Indonesian Hospital and the Kamal Adwan Hospital. He said hospitals would be rehabilitated and reconstructed according to the complexity and severity of their condition, with international assistance. He accused Israel of deliberately targeting hospitals and the public healthcare system and [falsely] claimed that the hospitals had not been used for terrorist activities (Safa, January 20, 2025).

► UN assessments indicate that the reconstruction process for the Gaza Strip will require billions of dollars and take years. The removal of 42 million tons of rubble could take 14 years and cost \$1.2 billion. According to satellite data, two-thirds of the buildings in the Strip were destroyed, and approximately 1.8 million people are in need of shelter. The damage to infrastructure was estimated at \$18.5 billion, with severe damage to essential services, roads and the water supply (al-Iqtisadi, January 16, 2025).

► Rick Peppercorn, WHO representative in "Palestine," stated that the rehabilitation of the public healthcare system in the Gaza Strip would require at least \$10 billion in the coming years, with over \$3 billion needed in the initial phases. He said there had been extensive destruction and noted that the responsibility for reconstruction lay with all member states of the organization, including Israel [sic] (Watan, January 17, 2025).

The involvement of the Palestinian Authority (PA)

► The office of Mahmoud Abbas, PA chairman, claimed the PA had to take full responsibility for the Gaza Strip, as it was an integral part of the occupied Palestinian territory. According to the statement, directed by Mahmoud Abbas, the PA government had completed preparations to assume full responsibility for the Gaza Strip, and its administrative and security teams were ready to ease the people's suffering, return displaced persons to their homes, rehabilitate basic services such as water and electricity, and take responsibility for the crossings and the reconstruction process (Wafa, January 17, 2025).

► On January 19, 2025, the PA government met to discuss the activities of government ministries and institutions in the Gaza Strip. The government approved the establishment of an emergency operations room for the Gaza Strip, which would include representatives from all relevant government ministries and institutions. The relevant authorities were also asked to submit plans to establish an independent commission for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, in coordination with donor parties. Muhammad Mustafa, PA prime minister, said aid and reconstruction efforts would be carried out in cooperation with international organizations to open roads, bring in humanitarian aid, establish field hospitals, provide medical equipment, improve infrastructure, including water and electricity, rehabilitate the education system and the open schools (Wafa, January 19, 2025).



Prime Minister Muhammad Mustafa presents Mahmoud Abbas (right) with the government's plan for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip (Wafa, January 19, 2025)

► Mahmoud al-'Amour, PA minister of economy, met with representatives of private sector institutions in the Gaza Strip to discuss arrangements and procedures to monitor the economic situation, given the complete collapse of economic activity. 'Ahed Faik Bseiso, minister of labor and housing, met with teams from the PA's Gaza, Judea and Samaria reconstruction ministry to discuss a plan for the Gaza Strip which would include registering and assessing damage, removing debris and reconstructing roads and buildings (Wafa, January 19, 2025).

The Southern Front

IDF activity in the Gaza Strip

► Until the ceasefire went into effect, IDF forces continued extensive ground and aerial operations in the Gaza Strip. The forces attacked dozens of terrorist targets, some located in civilian areas.³ Attacked were terrorists, some of whom were involved in the October 7, 2023 attack and massacre, weapon depots, rocket-launching positions and sites for the production of weapons (IDF spokesperson, January 14-19, 2025).

► The Hamas civil defense mechanism in the Gaza Strip reported at least 13 fatalities in Israeli strikes from the time the ceasefire was supposed to begin at 8:30 a.m. on January 19, 2025, until it went into effect at 11:15 a.m. (Shehab Agency, January 19, 2025). "Palestinian sources" reported that seven people were killed in an airstrike targeting a civilian vehicle and a Hamas police jeep in central Khan Yunis (al-Manar, January 19, 2025).



Vehicle attacked in the center of Khan Yunis (Quds Agency Telegram channel, January 19, 2025)

► The IDF spokesperson in Arabic instructed residents not to approach IDF forces in the Gaza Strip during the ceasefire. They were also banned from moving between the southern and northern Gaza Strip until safe passage routes had been announced, as well as from entering areas near the Rafah Crossing and the Philadelphi Axis, which were still considered active military zones. Maritime activities along Gaza's shores, including fishing and swimming, were banned, and the entry of UAVs into buffer zones was prohibited (IDF spokesperson in Arabic, January 18, 2025).

³ Using civilian infrastructure such as schools and hospitals for terrorist purposes is common among terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, particularly Hamas. The organizations exploit attacks on the facilities for propaganda and incitement, exaggerating the number of casualties, making claims of numerous civilian injuries, and, in most cases, concealing the identities of the terrorists targeted. In all cases, prior to IDF operations, numerous measures are taken to minimize the risk of harm to civilians, including evacuating populations and patients from hospitals, using precision munitions and aerial surveillance.



IDF instructions to Gazans, security areas marked in red
(IDF spokesperson in Arabic, January 18, 2025)

Israel, Judea and Samaria

Terrorist attacks

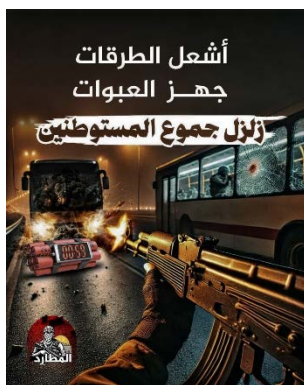
► **Stabbing in Tel Aviv:** In south Tel Aviv on January 18, 2025, a Palestinian who was in Israel illegally, stabbed and critically wounded an Israeli civilian. An armed civilian killed the assailant, a 19-year-old from Tulkarm (Israeli media, January 18, 2025). Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack and stated that the assailant was one of its operatives (Hamas Telegram channel, January 18, 2025).

Counterterrorism activities

► The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria, eliminating more than 10 terrorist operatives from the air and in exchanges of fire, detaining wanted Palestinians and those suspected of terrorist activities. The forces destroyed explosive devices, and confiscated weapons and funds for financing terrorist activities. An IDF soldier was killed and four were wounded in two explosive device attacks. On January 21, 2025, the Israeli security forces began Operation Iron Wall to prevent terrorism in Jenin and the Jenin refugee camp (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, January 14 to 21, 2025).

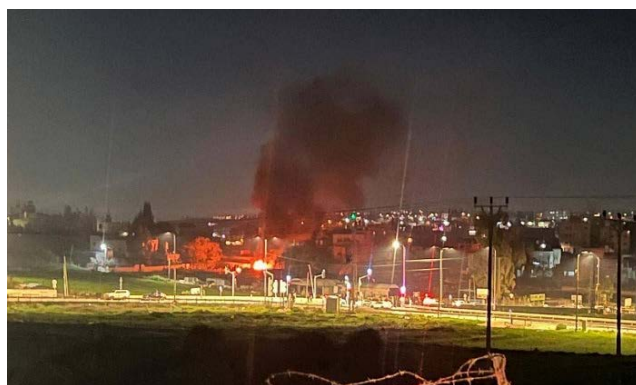
Friction between Jewish settlers and Palestinians

► On January 15, material inciting violence against Jewish settlers in Judea and Samaria was published, calling for them to be attacked. Palestinians were urged to set roads on fire and prepare explosive devices to "make the settler public quake" (Hebron News Network Telegram channel, January 15, 2025).



The incitement material (Hebron News Network Telegram channel, January 15, 2025)

- ▶ On the night of January 20, 2025, dozens of masked Jews entered the western part of the village of al-Funduq, east of Qalqilya, and set fire to buildings, a greenhouse and vehicles. An IDF force present at the scene pursued the rioters toward the nearby village of Jinsafut. During the chase, there was a physical confrontation between a police officer and two Jewish rioters, during which the officer fired a warning shot that injured both individuals (Israeli media, January 20, 2025).
- ▶ Jalal Bashir, head of the village of Jinsafut, reported that the rioters burned parts of houses, a nursery and a carpentry workshop on the main road connecting Qalqilya and Nablus, as well as several vehicles, and that one person had been superficially injured (Wafa, January 20, 2025).



Riots in al-Funduq (Wafa, January 20, 2025)

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

Activities of the Palestinian security forces

- ▶ The activity of PA security forces, directed by Mahmoud Abbas, against armed terrorist operatives in the Jenin refugee camp, continued for the sixth consecutive week. On January 21, 2025, as Israeli security forces began operations in Jenin and the refugee camp, security personnel reportedly withdrew from the camp (Quds Agency, January 21, 2025):

- ◆ Anwar Rajab, spokesperson for PA security forces, claimed the Israeli airstrike on the Jenin refugee camp, which had allegedly harmed Palestinian civilians, undermined efforts to establish order and security and consolidate the PA's control. He claimed it had been a premeditated intervention to destroy the PA's efforts and prevent the restoration of normality for local residents (Wafa, January 16, 2025).
- ◆ According to reports, on the evening of January 17, 2025, understandings were reached between the security forces and operatives of the Jenin Brigade in the refugee camp regarding the forces' activities (Filastin al-Yawm, January 17, 2025). The understanding reportedly included free movement for security operatives, ending the presence of armed men at protests, establishing a joint investigation committee to examine killings in the camp and beginning infrastructure restoration after clearing and neutralizing all explosive devices (Palestine Eagle Telegram channel, January 18, 2025).
- ◆ However, within 24 hours, clashes and exchanges of fire resumed. The PIJ's Jenin Battalion, Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, and the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades – Youth for Revenge and Liberation, accused the security forces of failing to meet their commitments, not lifting the "siege" on the camp and failing to withdraw forces and snipers (Jenin Battalion Telegram channel, January 18, 2025; al-Araby al-Jadeed, January 19, 2025). The gunmen claimed the objective of not lifting the "siege" was to facilitate Israeli security forces' operations and airstrikes. They noted their intention to continue the "struggle" (Discussions of Palestine al-Aqsa Telegram channel, January 20, 2025).
- ◆ Residents of the Jenin refugee camp issued a statement addressed to Kamal Abu al-Rub, the governor of Jenin, and senior district officials, demanding an end to the PA security force operations in the camp, which, along with Israeli attacks, had made their lives unbearable. The residents described a siege, gunfire at homes, a dire humanitarian situation with accumulating garbage, violations of children's right to education and the humiliation of women at the hands of the security forces. They warned that continued oppression would harm the overall Palestinian "struggle" and called on leaders to meet their historical responsibility, lift the siege, halt the violence and provide basic living conditions ("Hornets' Nest" Telegram channel, Jenin refugee camp, January 20, 2025).
- ◆ Spokesperson Anwar Rajab reported that during the operation, forty suspects had been arrested, including arms dealers and those suspected of shooting at security

forces, and "dangerous explosive devices" had been neutralized. He noted that the interrogation of detainees provided information on suspects involved in the killing of security personnel (Aman 24Facebook page, January 21, 2025).



Weapons seized in the Jenin refugee camp (Radio Hayat Telegram channel, January 21, 2025)

Diplomatic activity

► This past week, Mahmoud Abbas held meetings which focused on developments in the Palestinian arena in the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria, as well as on the PA's efforts to assume responsibility for the Gaza Strip after the end of the war:

- ◆ Meeting with Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, president of the International Red Cross, Mahmoud Abbas thanked her for her visit to the Gaza Strip and for monitoring its humanitarian situation, noting the importance of delivering urgent aid to the Strip. He also noted the Palestinian leadership's support for Red Cross activity in Gaza. They discussed the cooperation between the Red Cross and the Red Crescent, and Mahmoud Abbas expressed appreciation for the Red Cross role in monitoring the conditions of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons (Wafa, January 16, 2025).



The meeting between Mahmoud Abbas and Mirjana Spoljaric Egger (Wafa, January 16, 2025)

- ◆ In a phone call with French President Emmanuel Macron, Mahmoud Abbas reiterated the necessity of a complete Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the transfer of responsibility for managing the Strip to the PA. He said the Palestinian government was

ready to assume full responsibility, including managing the crossings and restoring basic services, to facilitate the return of displaced persons and the reconstruction of the area. He also called for the delivery of humanitarian aid to be coordinated with the Palestinian government and urged Israel to stop "violations" in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem, halt settlement construction and settler violence and safeguard holy sites (Wafa, January 18, 2025).

◆ Meeting with Zhai Jun, China's Middle East envoy, Mahmoud Abbas thanked China for its support of the Palestinians and its aid to the Gaza Strip. He said the Palestinian government was prepared to manage the Strip, restore public services, and bring in humanitarian aid. He praised China's role in advancing recognition of the Palestinian state and efforts toward a two-state solution (Mahmoud Abbas's Facebook page, January 18, 2025).

▶ Muhammad Mustafa, PA prime minister, held meetings in Ramallah and Europe, focusing on developments in the Palestinian arena and the preparation of the PA government to assume responsibility for the Gaza Strip:

◆ Meeting in Oslo with Jonas Gahr Støre, Norwegian prime minister, Mustafa said the Gaza ceasefire had to include a complete halt to "aggression," the lifting of the siege, the delivery of humanitarian aid, the unification of Gaza with Judea and Samaria, and comprehensive reconstruction. He praised Norway's support and recognition of the State of Palestine, while Støre noted the need for a rapid ceasefire and a two-state solution (Wafa, January 15, 2025).

◆ Meeting in Brussels with Hadja Lahbib, the EU commissioner for crisis management, equality and preparedness, Mustafa discussed providing immediate humanitarian aid following the end of fighting in Gaza. He called for urgent measures against IDF and settler attacks in Judea and Samaria, including sanctions on settlers and their products. He thanked the EU for its support, while Lahbib assured him that the EU would continue to provide emergency assistance and support UNRWA. Following the meeting, the EU announced a new €120 million (about \$125 million) humanitarian aid package for Gazans (PA prime minister's Facebook page, January 16, 2025).

◆ Meeting in Brussels with EU Foreign Minister Kaja Kallas, Mustafa noted the importance of advancing the political process to end the "occupation," implement the two-state solution and deliver immediate aid to Gaza. He also outlined the government's

plans to begin reconstruction in Gaza immediately after the cessation of "aggression." Kallas noted the importance of the Gaza ceasefire and the EU's willingness to provide support and assistance to the PA and government efforts, particularly in Gaza (Wafa, January 17, 2025).

◆ Meeting in Brussels with Alexander De Croo, Belgian prime minister, Mustafa promoted advancing the establishment of a Palestinian state. He said that alongside the Gaza ceasefire agreement, it was necessary to advance a political course to end the "occupation" (Wafa, January 17, 2025).



Mustafa and Kallas (Wafa, January 17, 2025)

◆ Meeting in Ramallah with Antonio Tajani, Italy's deputy prime minister and foreign minister, Mustafa informed him of the PA's efforts to establish an independent authority for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip and the preparations for holding an international conference for reconstruction, in cooperation with donor countries and international institutions. Tajani noted Italy's commitment to supporting the PA and its plans for economic and humanitarian recovery through additional aid shipments to Gaza and assistance in restoring basic services (Wafa, January 20, 2025).