



Spotlight on Terrorism and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

December 23-30, 2025

Overview¹

- ▶ IDF forces continued operating within the area of the Yellow Line in the Gaza Strip and eliminated terrorists who posed a threat; an IDF officer was wounded by an explosive device. Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad claimed they did not know the exact location of the body of the last murdered Israeli hostage.
- ▶ Hamas officially reported the deaths of the former head of its military wing, Muhammad al-Sinwar; the former military wing spokesperson, Abu Obeida; and three others, and announced the appointment of a new spokesperson.
- ▶ Hamas continues governing areas under its control in the Gaza Strip: its security forces said they were pursuing Israel's "mercenaries," and the police spokesperson claimed police forces had returned to full activity.
- ▶ According to reports, Hamas will choose a new political bureau head, with Khalil al-Hayya and Khaled Mashal as the leading candidates. Members of the new leadership in the Gaza Strip have reportedly been elected but their identities have not been disclosed.
- ▶ Hamas continued to accuse Israel of delaying the transition to the second phase of the ceasefire agreement and reiterated that the "resistance"² would not disarm. Hamas called on the Palestinian Authority to take responsibility for the Gaza Strip.
- ▶ Hamas issued a document to "justify" the October 7, 2023 attack and massacre as part of its propaganda to promote the narrative of the "achievements" of "al-Aqsa Flood."
- ▶ The authorities in Italy arrested nine Hamas operatives who were engaged in fundraising for Hamas through fictitious associations, including one considered the most senior Hamas operative in the country.

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

² Hamas and the other terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip.

► Two Israelis were killed in a vehicular and stabbing attack carried out by an illegal Palestinian resident in Beit She'an and the Jezreel Valley; four IDF soldiers were wounded in a vehicular attack in the Hebron Hills.

Fighting in the Gaza Strip and the Ceasefire Agreement

The IDF

► IDF forces continued operating within the Yellow Line (the area under IDF control) in the Gaza Strip, attacking Hamas terrorists who attempted to cross the line to kill IDF soldiers or who posed a threat to the forces. More than four kilometers of tunnels were destroyed in the northern Gaza Strip. An IDF officer was wounded by an explosive device used to attack an armored vehicle in Rafah (IDF spokesperson, December 23–30, 2025). Hamas claimed that the explosion which injured the officer was in an area under full IDF control and not its responsibility, adding that it had previously warned of the presence of unexploded ordnance from the war in that area and throughout the Strip (Hamas website, December 24, 2025).

The Last Remaining Murdered Israeli Hostage

► Hamas political bureau member Ghazi Hamad claimed that the movement had no information which would make it possible to locate and return the body of the last murdered Israeli hostage. Another political bureau member, Suheil al-Hindi, claimed Hamas was making efforts to reach the body to obviate the "occupation's excuses" for not implementing the ceasefire agreement (al-Jazeera Mubasher, December 24, 2025).

► "Palestinian sources" claimed that an Israeli force had abducted a field operative of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad's (PIJ) military wing, a resident of the al-Zeitoun neighborhood in Gaza City, outside the Yellow Line, because in Israeli assessment he was directly linked to holding the body of the Israeli hostage. "PIJ sources" confirmed that the body was initially in the organization's possession, but was transferred to commanders and operatives of the Hamas military wing in Gaza City. "Hamas sources" claimed that the body had been held for months prior to the ceasefire at a specific site in al-Zeitoun, but that the area had undergone Israeli activity which included extensive clearing and alteration of the terrain, and that all those who had supervised holding the body or knew the burial location were killed during the war (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, December 28, 2025).

The Elimination of Senior Hamas Figures

► On December 29, 2025, the Hamas military wing officially announced the deaths of five senior figures who had been eliminated by Israel since January 2025. The new spokesperson for the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, who also took the name Abu Obeida, issued a video in which he announced the death of his predecessor, Hudhayfa al-Kahlout (Abu Obeida), as well as the deaths of the Hamas former military commander Muhammad al-Sinwar; the former Rafah Brigade commander Muhammad Shabana; the head of combat and administrative support headquarters, Hakam al-Issa; and the operations commander and commander of the military production unit, Raed Saad (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, December 29, 2025).



Right: Hamas death notice for the five who were killed (Hamas Telegram channel, December 29, 2025). Left: The new Abu Obeida (al-Aqsa TV, December 29, 2025)

The Gaza Strip

The Situation in the Gaza Strip

► The spokesperson of Hamas Civil Defense in the Gaza Strip, Mahmoud Bassal, said that two people had died since the last storm began on December 26, 2025, a child who drowned in a water pool and a woman who was killed when a wall collapsed. He claimed that at least 25 people had been killed in the storms in the Gaza Strip in recent weeks, including six children, and that 18 buildings collapsed completely and more than 110 buildings collapsed partially, while more than 90% of displaced persons' tents were damaged or flooded. He called on the international community to provide the Gazans with assistance before the humanitarian crisis worsened (Shehab Agency, December 29, 2025).



Flooding in the Gaza Strip (Quds Agency, December 29, 2025)

► Hamas continued to ramp up its propaganda regarding the damage to the public health system in the Gaza Strip. Zaher al-Wahidi, head of the "information unit" at the ministry of health in Gaza, claimed there was a "medication crisis," allegedly including shortages of painkillers and antibiotics, medications for heart disease, ophthalmology, orthopedics, chronic illnesses and oncology (Shehab Agency, December 25, 2025). The director of the Shifa Medical Center in Gaza City, Muhammad Abu Salmiya, claimed that several hospitals and other health facilities might soon close due to a[n alleged] shortage of diesel fuel, and accused Israel of preventing the diesel shipments from entering the Strip (*al-Araby al-Jadeed*, December 25, 2025).

► The director of the Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO), Amjad al-Shawa, claimed that 1.5 million Gazans had lost their homes in the war, noting that more than 300,000 tents were required to house the displaced, while only about 60,000 had entered the Strip. According to him, the main humanitarian challenge was that UNRWA was [allegedly] prevented from bringing in humanitarian aid, which had added to the burden on non-governmental organizations after the destruction of their headquarters and the decline in funding for their activity (Radio Alam Telegram channel, December 24, 2025).

► The Egyptian committee announced the completion of the construction of a tent camp for residents of al-Zahraa in the central Gaza Strip, after the towers in which they lived were destroyed in the war (al-Bureij News Telegram channel, December 27, 2025).



The new Egyptian tent camp for Gazans from al-Zahraa
(al-Bureij News Telegram channel, December 27, 2025)

Security Governance

► "Palestinian sources" reported that the IDF had begun using militias established in the eastern Gaza Strip to clear areas in order to expand the Yellow Line, especially in eastern Gaza City and the northern Gaza Strip. According to the "sources," militias in the eastern neighborhoods of al-Tuffah and al-Shuja'iya have increased their activity along the Yellow Line, and armed members of the militias advance toward inhabited areas, shoot at houses and tents, and throw grenades to frighten and panic residents and force them to evacuate their neighborhoods (al-Ayyam, December 28, 2025). Reportedly, armed men belonging to the "gang" of Rami Hallas in eastern Gaza City shot and killed a 13-year-old boy in the al-Shuja'iya neighborhood, and another youth was wounded by gunfire fired by members of the "gang." It was also claimed that armed "gang" members had forced families living in a residential block in the al-Tuffah neighborhood to evacuate it completely, threatening to shoot them (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, December 26, 2025).

► An "official Egyptian source" said Egypt was closely monitoring the activity of local armed groups in the Gaza Strip which cooperate with Israel. According to the "source," the activity is a source of concern because Egyptian mechanisms had recently identified an increase in the quality and capabilities of weapons transferred to these groups by Israel, as well as the transfer of heavy engineering equipment to establish facts on the ground before the entry of an international stabilization force. The "source" added that some of the groups operated only

hundreds of meters from the Egyptian border, which could have implications for the security of the Egyptian border and increase chaos (*al-Araby al-Jadeed*, December 25, 2025).

► The Hamas security mechanisms said they continued to pursue "mercenaries" supported by Israel and claimed that some of the "mercenaries'" families cooperated with the Hamas security forces. Allegedly, interrogations of associates of the "mercenaries" revealed details about communication methods, funding sources and weapon storage locations (Raad Force Telegram channel, December 26, 2025). It was also reported that Mahmoud al-Zein Abu Jabha, who allegedly had been involved in the killing of an internal security officer on December 14, 2025, was executed (Amsik 'Amil Telegram channel, December 29, 2025).

► According to reports, the wife and son of Shuki Abu Nasira, who heads an anti-Hamas militia in eastern Deir al-Balah, were arrested in a raid by "resistance" operatives³ while in possession of 700,000 shekels (about \$220,000), which were allegedly intended for transfer to one of the "terrorist groups" [the militias] in the Gaza Strip (Sahm Unit 103 Telegram channel, December 23, 2025). Shouqi Abu Nasira confirmed that operatives from the internal security force and Hamas police raided his home, vandalized property, arrested his wife and took money from her, and his daughter received a summons to appear at Hamas headquarters. He stressed that he was determined to continue opposing Hamas (Jisr News YouTube channel, December 23, 2025). Ghassan al-Dahini, the new commander of the Popular Forces militia in Rafah, then threatened Hamas, saying, "You are the ones who brought women into the matter, and there will be consequences, remember this very well. I will not elaborate further, but remember this: you are the ones who broke all the rules" (Ghassan al-Dahini's Facebook page, December 24, 2025).

Civilian Governance

► There has been harsh criticism by officials and public employees in Gaza over cuts and delays in salaries, with the prevailing complaint being that the salary is low and does not meet basic needs, and is paid using worn banknotes that are not accepted in markets. Many employees expressed resentment on social media and said that even if the advance arrived, it would be so low that they would not be able to use it. Others said that the employee had become a beggar and that the advance would in any case go toward covering debts because of high market prices (Facebook page of the government employees in "Palestine," December 23, 2025).

³ Terrorist operatives.

► The spokesperson of the Hamas police in the Gaza Strip, Aqid (Lieutenant Colonel) Muhammad al-Zarqa, claimed that the police mechanism carried out its duties from the first day of the war and that officers had not left the field for a single moment. He said the nature of the work and methods changed due to field conditions, which at times "forced officers to forgo wearing police uniforms" or being present at official stations, but they operated from alternative locations close to civilians and continued providing minimal services in accordance with the resources available under difficult circumstances. He said that when the ceasefire went into effect, the Palestinian police redeployed throughout the Gaza Strip and officers returned to wearing police uniforms. He said the various police departments continued to carry out their duties, adding that prosecutors would work from police stations until the necessary conditions were met for the full renewal of the activity of judicial system (aljazeera.net, December 26, 2025).

► Given the complaints about the [alleged] severe shortage of medical equipment, Gaza police, in cooperation with the al-Tuffah and al-Daraj police stations, reported the arrest of a cell which had stolen medical equipment worth approximately \$35,000 (Usama al-Kahlout Telegram channel, December 28, 2025).

► The situation in the Strip is fueling fights and armed clashes between civilians, which also led to the involvement of Hamas police forces. Following a violent local dispute between the al-Najjar family and a Hamas police officer in the al-Mawasi area, armed Hamas operatives raided the family house, beat them and abducted five of them (Hamza al-Masri Telegram channel, December 26, 2025). The police took control of a family brawl that broke out in one of the displacement centers in western Khan Yunis, during which live fire was used. A joint force of the police and the investigation forces seized three weapons and arrested several of those involved (Hamas ministry of interior Telegram channel, December 27, 2025).

Hamas Elections

► "Sources close to Hamas" reported that the movement's leadership had begun preparations in the General Shura Council to hold elections for the head of the political bureau. The council has about 50 representatives from three areas, the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria, and "abroad," and the elections are expected to take place within "days or weeks." According to the "sources," the two leading candidates are the head of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip, Khalil al-Hayya, who also enjoys broad support in Judea and Samaria, and the

leader of " Hamas abroad," Khaled Mashal, former head of the political bureau (al-Sharq Channel website, December 27, 2025).

► According to " Hamas sources," the elections are expected to take place in the coming week or in the first ten days of January 2026, with the objective of strengthening internal stability and projecting a message of cohesion and the ability to make decisions through consensus. However, even after the election of a new chair, the current leadership council of five senior figures headed by the chair of the Shura Council Muhammad Darwish, will continue to function as an advisory board until the end of its term in 2026. It was further claimed that full elections for the political bureau were expected "in about a year." If al-Hayya wins, a replacement will be appointed for him in the Gaza leadership in accordance with internal procedures (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, December 27, 2025).

► "Sources" also reported that Hamas had completed its internal elections in the Gaza Strip in preparation for elections to the movement's overall leadership. Eighteen members were elected to the political bureau, including the head of the Gaza region and his deputy, the head of the movement's Shura Council, and the assistant to the head of the administrative body. According to one of the "sources," most leadership positions were filled according to a transfer of authority or recommendations within a consensus mechanism intended to ensure organizational stability and the continuity of the movement's "activity." Regarding the military wing, the "source" noted that appointments were carried out on the basis of an internal arrangement rooted in leadership hierarchy. The names of the leadership members were not disclosed, but reportedly there were figures not known from the media, including young leaders, members of the founding generation, released prisoners and figures who worked in the movement's offices and filled positions of a "strategic nature" (Ultra Palestine, December 29, 2025).

Negotiating the Ceasefire Agreement and "The Day After"

► Hamas continued to accuse Israel of "violating" the first phase of the ceasefire agreement and of delaying the transition to negotiations on the second phase. They also remained defiant regarding the demand to disarm the "resistance:"⁴

⁴ Hamas and the other terrorist organizations operating in the Gaza Strip.

- ◆ Hamas political bureau member Bassem Na'im claimed Israel was deliberately delaying the transition to the second phase because it required a full withdrawal, opening of crossings and the start of reconstruction. Naim said talks with American mediators in Miami indicated a positive approach, but a clear answer was needed as to how far Washington was willing to pressure Netanyahu's government to meet the commitments of the first phase and move to the second. Regarding the international stabilization force, Naim said there were still no positive signs of its establishment because the mandate, rules of engagement and scope of the mission were unclear. He said any such force had to focus on separation, supervision and reporting, without intervening in internal Palestinian affairs (Palestine Online, December 24, 2025).
- ◆ Hamas representative in Lebanon Osama Hamdan said that clear guarantees and precisely formulated commitments on Israel's part were required for the second phase of the ceasefire. He said Hamas would not move to the second phase before Israel had fulfilled all the requirements of the first phase. He added that disarming was unacceptable because the weapons were the weapons of the "resistance," and they only existed because of the "occupation." He said Netanyahu understood that the American plan was to disarm the region except for Israel's weapons, in order to realize [the so-called] "greater Israel" (al-Masirah Channel, December 23, 2025).



Osama Hamdan (al-Masirah Channel, December 23, 2025)

- ◆ Hamas political bureau member Muhammad Nazzal claimed it was "illogical" to condition implementing the ceasefire agreement on the return of the body of the last Israeli "abductee who was killed" [murdered Israeli hostage]. He called on the American administration to intervene to advance the agreement and claimed that Hamas had acted "with flexibility" regarding the issues still in dispute. According to Nazzal, the American administration was facing a dead end because countries refused to join the international stabilization force (al-Jazeera Mubasher, December 29, 2025).

- ◆ The new military spokesperson of the Hamas military wing, Abu Obeida, called on all relevant parties to take action to disarm the "occupation" of its "lethal weapons" instead of dealing with the "light weapons" of the Palestinians and forcing them to comply with what had been agreed on. He claimed the Palestinians were defending themselves and would not disarm as long as the "occupation" continued (Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades Telegram channel, December 29, 2025).
- ◆ Deputy PIJ secretary general Muhammad al-Hindi claimed that Israel was procrastinating and did not want to advance to the second phase of the agreement. He claimed it was impossible to hand over the "weapons of the Palestinian people" to Israel, adding that there was a growing need for weapons in light of Israel's continued "violations" of the agreement. He said the weapons would remain in Palestinian hands and would not be transferred to any party. He added that the "resistance" had been flexible regarding a *hudna* (temporary ceasefire) agreement, and had not specified a time-frame for it. According to him, the countries whose names came up as potential participants in the international force in the Gaza Strip refused to carry out Israel's "dirty work" (al-Jazeera Mubasher, December 24, 2025).
- Hamas spokesperson Hazem Qassem called on the Palestinian Authority (PA) to assume responsibility and establish its presence in the Gaza Strip. He said the PA leadership had to take practical steps on the ground to achieve civic and political unity, and noted Hamas' willingness to facilitate the PA's mission in the Gaza Strip in light of the worsening situation, saying that "action now is critical" (al-Arabi Channel, December 29, 2025).
- PA foreign minister Farsin Shahin claimed that the first phase of the ceasefire agreement had not been realized because Israel did not fulfill the clauses remaining after the release of the "prisoners."⁵ She said she hoped that the United States would demand Israel comply with all the clauses and move to the second phase. She claimed that the Gaza Strip "in its entirety" was an inseparable part of the "land of Palestine" and that the PA would not accept any change, adding that Palestinian dialogue would continue to progress under Russian leadership because Russia had "consensus and balanced relations with all sides" (RIA Novosti, December 29, 2025).

⁵ Hostages.

duties and acted with the utmost responsibility [sic] while taking into account the interests of the people," and said it had the right to respond to the "crimes of the occupation." He called on the international community not to halt popular, political and legal activity against Israel and said it was the duty of the Muslim nation to stand united against its "primary enemy, which seeks to turn the states of the region into new opportunities for the establishment of 'greater Israel'" (Izz al-Din Brigades combat information Telegram channel, December 29, 2025).

Hamas' International Activity

► A Hamas delegation led by the head of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip, Khalil al-Hayya, met in Ankara with Turkish foreign minister Hakan Fidan. Al-Hayya claimed Hamas was committed to the ceasefire agreement but warned against continued Israeli "violations" and attacks, which he claimed were intended to prevent a transition to the second phase and undermine existing understandings. He reviewed the worsening situation and claimed that the humanitarian aid entering did not meet minimal needs. They also discussed the situation in Judea and Samaria and in east Jerusalem, and efforts to promote Palestinian national unity in the face of "plots to eliminate" the Palestinian cause. Fidan reiterated Turkey's support for Palestinian rights and commitment to continuing aid (Hamas Telegram channel, December 24, 2025).

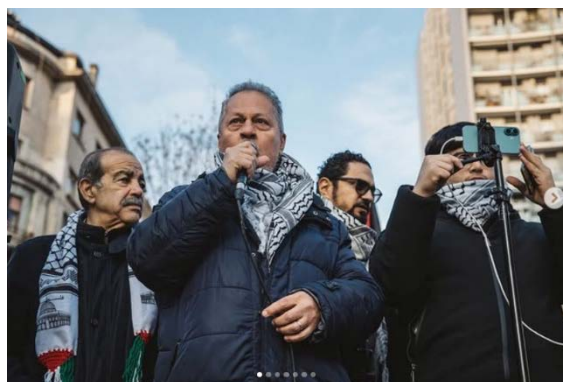


The Hamas delegation and Fidan (Turkish foreign ministry X account, December 24, 2025)

► A Hamas delegation visited Baghdad and held meetings with Iraqi leaders and political figures. The delegation, headed by Hamas representative in Lebanon Osama Hamdan and including political bureau advisor Taher al-Nunu, discussed implementing the ceasefire agreement and various political developments, as well as regional and international ramifications and ways of coping with them. The delegation reportedly related to the situation in the Gaza Strip and the [alleged] "crimes" in Judea and Samaria and east Jerusalem, as well as the situation of the prisoners (Hamas Telegram channel, December 25, 2025). Hamdan

delivered a speech at the annual scientific conference of the Rawafed organization, whose theme was "Al-Aqsa Flood: Memory and Continuity." He said the "resistance" continued, "al-Aqsa Flood" continued, and the ceasefire was temporary only (Rawafed website, December 22, 2025).

► Law enforcement authorities in Italy arrested nine suspects on suspicion of recruiting and transferring funds to Hamas under the guise of humanitarian activity through three associations they had established. According to the police statement, Muhammad Hanoun,⁸ defined as the central financial figure in the network, and his associates had operated for years through associations including the Charity Association for Solidarity with the Palestinian People⁹ in Genoa and Milan to collect donations for "those in need." However, about €7 million were in fact transferred to Hamas or bodies affiliated with it (*La Stampa*, December 27, 2025).



Hanoun at a demonstration in Italy
(website of the Palestinian Association in Italy, January 5, 2025)

Israel, Judea and Samaria

Terrorist Attacks

► This past week there were two terrorist attacks in which two Israelis were killed and four soldiers were wounded:

◆ **Vehicular and stabbing attack in northern Israel in Beit She'an and the Jezreel**

Valley: On December 26, 2025, a Palestinian terrorist driving a car ran over and killed an Israeli civilian in Beit She'an, then continued driving and stabbed an Israeli civilian to death near Ein Harod before being captured near Afula. The terrorist is a resident of Qabatiya who was illegally present in Israel and had previously been involved in

⁸ Muhammad Mahmoud Hanoun, aka Abu Musab, is a member of the Hamas command in Europe, which was outlawed by Israel in December 2013. On October 7, 2024, the United States Department of the Treasury added Hanoun to its sanctions list of terrorist operatives, calling him a Hamas operative based in Italy who heads a purported charity that helped finance Hamas's military wing.

⁹ The ABSPP – Associazione Benefica di Solidarietà col il Popolo Palestinese, was outlawed by Israel in 2006.

throwing Molotov cocktails (Israel Police spokesperson's unit and Israeli media, December 26, 2025). Hamas and the PIJ praised the attack (Telegram channels of Hamas and PIJ's military wing, December 26, 2025).

◆ **Vehicular attack in the Hebron Hills:** On December 26, 2025, a Palestinian driver rammed into an IDF vehicle near the settlement of Adorayim in the Hebron Hills; four IDF soldiers were wounded. The terrorist was detained (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, December 26, 2025).

Counterterrorism

► The Israeli security forces continued counterterrorism activity throughout Judea and Samaria, operating in Qabatiya following the combined attack in Beit She'an and the Jezreel Valley. They detained wanted individuals and sealed the terrorist's home. In other operations, the forces detained four terrorists who were planning an attack and three suspects in rock-throwing incidents along major traffic routes, and demolished the home of a terrorist who carried out a shooting and stabbing attack in which an Israeli civilian was killed at the Gush Etzion Junction in July 2025. In addition, the smuggling of forty handguns across the Jordanian border was prevented (IDF spokesperson, December 23–30, 2025).

► Palestinian Authority prime minister Muhammad Mustafa spoke with the mayor of Qabatiya, Ahmed Zakarneh, and instructed all relevant authorities to address the damage caused by the activity of Israeli security forces (Wafa, December 28, 2025). Qabatiya city council member Riyadh Kamil claimed that the forces had damaged several residents' homes and damaged facilities, while municipal and civil defense forces worked to repair the damage (Radio Alam, December 28, 2025).



Detaining wanted Palestinians in Qabatiya (Quds Agency, December 28, 2025)

The Palestinian Authority (PA)

- ▶ The PA accused Israel of preventing the Authority's deputy chairman, Hussein al-Sheikh, from participating in midnight mass at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem (Wafa, December 24, 2025). However, following American intervention, al-Sheikh participated in the ceremony (al-Jazeera Mubasher, December 24, 2025).
- ▶ Following a wave of protests against the reduction or absence of allowances to families of prisoners and shaheeds, PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas issued a statement addressing the discussion of the issue on social media, which he said at times included incitement and the distortion of facts. He noted his commitment and loyalty to the shaheeds, prisoners and wounded, calling it a national commitment. He said the reform of allowances was intended to unify the protection and welfare system and regulate allowances in a professional and equitable manner (Wafa, December 24, 2025). In response, Hamas spokesperson Hazem Qassem said that the constitutional reform presented by Mahmoud Abbas required broad national dialogue and should not be based on unilateral decisions or external pressures (al-Arabi Channel, December 24, 2025).