



# Spotlight on the Israel-Palestinian Conflict

December 10 - 17 , 2024

## Overview<sup>1</sup>

- ▶ **The southern front:** IDF forces continued operating in the northern (Jebalya refugee camp and Beit Lahia), central and southern Gaza Strip, and eliminated terrorist operatives hiding in civilian buildings. An IDF officer and soldier were killed in the southern Gaza Strip.
- ▶ **Negotiations for a ceasefire and the release of hostages:** Contacts continued in an effort to formulate an agreement. Hamas claimed they had agreed to significant concessions, including demands for a complete cessation of the war and the full withdrawal of IDF forces.
- ▶ **The "day after":** Fatah and Hamas exchanged accusations over the deadlock in the establishment of a committee to manage the Gaza Strip after the war.
- ▶ **Hamas governance:** A senior Hamas official in the Gaza Strip said they had concepts of plans to combat the gangs who were looting aid trucks.
- ▶ **Israel, Judea and Samaria:** This past week Palestinian terrorists carried out three attacks; an Israeli teenager was killed. Israeli security forces continued counterterrorism operations in Judea and Samaria.
- ▶ **The Palestinian Authority (PA):** PA security forces continued operations against armed terrorists in the Jenin refugee camp. According to claims, the terrorists had pledged allegiance to Iran.

## The Southern Front

### IDF operations in the Gaza Strip

- ▶ This past week, IDF operations continued in the northern, central and southern Gaza Strip. The forces attacked dozens of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) terrorist operatives from the air and on the ground, including operatives involved in the October 7, 2023 attack and massacre, and others planning to attack IDF forces. Some operatives were hiding within the civilian population. An IDF officer and soldier were killed in fighting in the southern Strip (IDF spokesperson, December 10 to 17, 2024).

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► **The northern Gaza Strip:** IDF forces continued operating in the Jebalya refugee camp and Beit Lahia. They eliminated terrorist operatives, some of whom were hiding in a tunnel, located large quantities of weapons and destroyed rocket launchers aimed at Israeli communities near Gaza (IDF spokesperson, December 10 to 17, 2024).



**Rocket launchers found in Beit Lahia (IDF spokesperson, December 13, 2024)**

► Hamas' civil defense forces announced the resumption of services in the al-Balad and al-Nazle neighborhoods in Jebalya. Raed al-Dahshan, director of the civil defense for the Gaza district, said they were operating despite risks to the teams, the IDF's ongoing prevention of their activities and the intensification of "military actions" against residents. He said the activities of the civil defense forces were "purely humanitarian" and called into play in response to calls from local residents (al-Risalah Telegram channel, December 13, 2024).

► **The southern Gaza Strip:** IDF forces continued operations in the Rafah area, eliminating terrorist operatives in air and ground strikes, locating tunnel shafts and destroying terrorist facilities (IDF spokesperson, December 13, 2024). On December 17, 2024, Palestinian media reported that IDF forces operated in the al-Mawasi area on the Rafah coastline under the cover of aerial and artillery strikes. Reportedly, there were casualties and thousands of displaced families were forced to flee the area (al-Risalah, al-Aqsa TV Telegram channel, December 17, 2024).

## Attacks on Hamas in civilian facilities

► This past week, Israeli security forces attacked terrorist facilities in civilian sites in the Gaza Strip and operatives targeting IDF forces and the State of Israel. In all instances, measures were taken to minimize harm to civilians.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Using civilian facilities such as schools and hospitals for terrorist purposes is a commonplace activity of terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, particularly Hamas. The organizations exploit the IDF attacks on "civilian 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.

- ◆ On December 12, 2024, a targeted strike was carried out on a command and control compound which had previously housed the al-Khiriya school in Gaza City. The strike killed at least nine terrorist operatives, most of them members of Hamas' al-Zeitoun Battalion (IDF spokesperson and Shin Bet spokesperson, December 12, 2024).



**Hamas terrorist operatives eliminated in the building formerly used as the al-Khiriya School (IDF spokesperson, December 12, 2024)**

- ◆ On December 14, 2024, an Israeli Air Force aircraft attacked terrorist operatives who were in a building which had previously housed the Jaffa Boys' School in Gaza City (IDF spokesperson, December 14, 2024). Palestinian media reported two fatalities and several injuries (Quds News Agency, December 14, 2024).
- ◆ On December 14, 2024, an Israeli Air Force airstrike neutralized Imad Jaru, operative in Hamas' military wing, who was mayor of Deir al-Balah and chairman of the governmental emergency committee in the central camps (IDF spokesperson, December 14, 2024). Palestinian media reported that the strike targeted the Deir al-Balah municipality building in central Gaza (Telegram channel of journalist Mahmoud al-Louh – Gaza, December 14, 2024; Hamas government media information office Telegram channel, December 14, 2024).

## Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip

- ▶ This past week seven rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip at Israeli communities near Gaza and in the Ashqelon area. Some rockets were intercepted while others landed in open areas. No casualties or damage were reported (IDF spokesperson, December 10 to 17, 2024). The military wings of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) claimed responsibility for the rocket fire (Telegram channels of Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades and the Jerusalem Brigades, December 11 to 13, 2024).

In every instance, measures are taken prior to the strikes to reduce the likelihood of civilian harm, including the use of precise munitions, aerial reconnaissance and intelligence information.

▶ Dr. Salman al-Daya, a professor of Islamic law and a senior religious figure in the Gaza Strip, issued a fatwa against firing rockets from populated areas. According to al-Daya, Israel attacks the locations from which rockets are launched, sometimes without warning, resulting in fatalities, destruction and further displacement. He addressed the operatives firing the rockets, stating that the consequences were "inconsistent with the goals of jihad" (Salman al-Daya's Facebook page, December 13, 2024).

## The Hostages and a Ceasefire Agreement

▶ This past week, efforts continued to forge an agreement for a ceasefire and the release of the hostages. "Sources in Hamas" claimed that agreement was close after they had made "significant concessions," including demands to end the war and the withdrawal of the IDF forces from the entire Gaza Strip.

◆ According to reports, on December 10, 2024, a high-ranking Israeli security delegation, led by the head of the Israeli Mossad, the head of the Shin Bet and the IDF Chief of Staff, visited Cairo to discuss a ceasefire in Gaza and a prisoner exchange deal. The delegation met with Egyptian intelligence officials, led by General Hassan Rashad, to discuss the names of hostages included in the first phase of the agreement, security arrangements at the Rafah border and reducing the IDF's presence at Gazan border crossings. Reportedly, the Egyptians noted the need for unambiguous agreements for the first phase, including negotiations to end the fighting and a full IDF withdrawal from the Gaza Strip (al-Araby al-Jadeed, December 10, 2024).

◆ Senior Hamas figure Mahmoud Mardawi said the organization's objective was for a ceasefire which would allow Palestinians to return to their homes, end the blockade, facilitate the withdrawal of Israeli forces, rebuild the Gaza Strip and provide humanitarian aid. He accused Israel of being unwilling to meet the terms of the deal, including withdrawal and the return of displaced persons. He accused Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu of delaying his decision because of internal and extremist pressures within his government (al-Jazeera, December 11, 2024).

◆ On December 11, 2024, in response to an Egyptian invitation, a PIJ delegation, including Ziyad al-Nakhalah, PIJ secretary general, and his deputy Muhammad al-Hindi, arrived in Cairo (PIJ Telegram channel, December 11, 2024). Al-Hindi claimed he was optimistic about reaching a deal with "the occupation," adding that there was American

and Israeli "willingness." However, he claimed that no completed position had been presented to them (Quds News Agency, December 12, 2024).

◆ Muhammad Nazzal, a member of the Hamas political bureau, claimed Hamas had shown "a highly positive approach to the negotiations" and had worked to remove obstacles to stopping the war in Gaza. However, he noted that it was too early to judge the negotiations. He added that threats from President-elect Trump to turn the Middle East into "hell" if Israeli hostages were not released before his inauguration on January 20, 2025, were laughable. He said, "Is there a greater hell than what Gaza has endured for a year and a half?" (Quds News Agency, December 15, 2024).

◆ A "senior Hamas source" stated that the prisoner exchange deal and ceasefire in Gaza were "closer than ever" if Prime Minister Netanyahu "does not disrupt it," claiming that Hamas and the "factions" had shown "great flexibility." He said the American administration had to pressure Netanyahu to reach a deal, noting that mediators were working towards an agreement and details of the deal should not be disclosed to ensure its success and to prevent it from becoming "an excuse which would enable Netanyahu to evade it" (al-Sharq, December 16, 2024).

◆ "Well-informed sources" reported that the agreement included a ceasefire of six to eight weeks, starting with a two-week period which could be extended for an additional month. During the ceasefire, Hamas and Palestinian "factions" would release at least 20 Israeli "detainees,"<sup>3</sup> including four to five with dual citizenship, primarily Americans. In return, Israel would release Palestinian prisoners, including 100 serving long sentences, and allow the transfer of humanitarian aid of up to 400 trucks, including fuel for essential services. Subsequently, negotiations would begin on the release of military "detainees" in exchange for more prisoners, followed by a deal to exchange bodies of the dead. It was noted that the process would be complex and it would require significant time and coordination (al-Sharq, December 16, 2024).

◆ "Sources" stated that only two points remained under discussion regarding the ceasefire and prisoner exchange deal. They added that a final agreement had been reached for the first phase which would be implemented by the end of December 2024 (al-Hadath, December 16, 2024).

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<sup>3</sup> Hostages.

◆ According to a " Hamas source," the proposal for a 60-day ceasefire included "major concessions" by the movement, which waived demands for a complete end to the war and a full withdrawal of IDF forces from the Gaza Strip. However, "the source" said Hamas still insisted that displaced persons return to northern Gaza as part of the agreement (The Washington Post, December 17, 2024).

## The Gaza Strip

### Palestinian casualties

► **The Hamas-controlled ministry of health in the Gaza Strip** reported that since the beginning of the war, 45,059 Palestinians had been killed and 107,041 injured (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, December 17, 2024).

### Humanitarian aid

► The Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) reported that in the week leading up to December 15, 2024, 1,316 humanitarian aid trucks had entered the Gaza Strip bringing food, water, medical supplies and equipment for shelters. Additionally, 1,318 trucks were transferred to warehouses and humanitarian shelters within the Strip in coordination with aid organizations and the international community (COGAT X account, December 15, 2024).

► On December 14, 2024, in coordination with the Coordination and Liaison Administration for Gaza, essential systems were provided to the Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahia, including 5,000 liters of fuel, hundreds of boxes of medical supplies, hygiene products and food. In addition, 36 patients and their escorts were evacuated by ambulance and designated vehicles to other hospitals in the area. The IDF reported that the objective of the evacuation was to ensure the safety of residents living near humanitarian aid and medical centers (IDF Coordination and Liaison Administration Arabic Facebook page, December 14, 2024).

► The al-Awda Association announced the operation of two mobile medical units to provide healthcare services to people in shelters in the northern and southern Gaza Strip. The initiative, funded by GOAL Global and in cooperation with al-Awda, would deliver basic medical services to affected families, especially given the shutdown of more than 60% of Gaza's hospitals, clinics and health facilities (al-Awda Association Facebook page, December 15, 2024).

## Hamas Governance in the Gaza Strip

► Ismail al-Thawabta, director of the Hamas government media information office, stated that official and security bodies in Gaza were implementing new security plans for the secure entry



of aid trucks into Gaza and to combat the gangs which loot the trucks. He said plans had been prepared to eliminate the gangs as part of "Plan No. 3,"<sup>4</sup> which government authorities were working to implement. He said they were cooperating with the Palestinian clans which were committed not to support those involved in theft, alongside the ongoing work of 18,000 employees of the governmental workforce in Gaza, including security personnel and committees whose mission it was to secure the aid. According to al-Thawabta, they focused entirely on delivering aid fairly to all residents of the Strip (Ultra Palestine website, December 12, 2024).

## Sahem Unit activities

► The Sahem Unit of the Hamas ministry of interior announced it would use live fire against thieves and "highway robbers," whom it claimed were "collaborating with Israel" and attempting to block aid convoys in the Gaza Strip. According to reports, the Unit's personnel, dressed in civilian clothing, would ensure the safe passage of trucks along al-Rashid and Salah al-Din streets (Sahem Unit for exposing thieves and traders [sic] Telegram channel, December 12, 2024).

► The Sahem Unit said in a statement that after the war ended, "execution squares" would be set up for every collaborator, thief and anyone who carried a weapon and used it to rob the weak. Unit operatives also swore they would establish "revolutionary courts" (Sahem Unit for exposing thieves and traders Telegram channel, December 13, 2024).

## "The Day After"

► Fatah and Hamas continued exchanging mutual accusations regarding the deadlock in implementing the understandings brokered by Egypt for establishing a community support committee to manage the Gaza Strip after the war:

- ◆ Fatah spokesperson Abd al-Fattah Doula accused Hamas of failing to develop a national plan to protect the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. He stated that Hamas had to reassess its policies and approach, and allow the Palestinian Authority to protect

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<sup>4</sup> "Emergency Plan No. 3," implemented as of November 17, 2024, focuses on combating looting and the theft of humanitarian, securing aid trucks and monitoring markets, along with dealing with family disputes and taking measures against corrupt merchants. The security mechanisms also take action against collaborators with Israel, investigate suspects and bringing them to justice under local law. Reportedly, the objective of the plan is to restore the social stability and security which were disrupted during the escalation, while dealing with the challenges created by the strikes and clashes in the southern and central Gaza Strip.

the Palestinians. He added that Hamas had to recognize it had lost all its gambles and its attempts had been in vain, and it had to join the PLO.

◆ Ahmed Abd al-Hadi, Hamas representative in Lebanon, acknowledged that Hamas had expected the community support committee in the Gaza Strip to be established rapidly and said they trusted the "brothers" in Fatah to continue working toward forming said committee. He expressed hope that reports about Fatah rejecting the proposal were untrue.

◆ Muhammad Nazzal, a member of the Hamas political bureau, claimed Hamas had responded positively to Egyptian efforts to promote an agreement for the management of the Gaza Strip after the war, indirectly blaming Fatah for failing to reach an agreement. He said that Hamas had been "surprised" when the PLO Executive Committee announced Fatah's rejection of the proposal to establish the support committee, claiming that the Executive Committee "only executes orders" and that the issue was beyond its authority. He said Hamas would continue its efforts to establish a support committee to manage the Strip in coordination with Palestinian "factions" and forces willing to accept its principles (Quds News Agency, December 15, 2024).

## Israel, Judea and Samaria

### Terrorist attacks

► This past week Palestinian terrorists carried out three attacks, which killed an Israeli teenager and injured several Israeli civilians:

◆ **Vehicle attack in Bnei Brak:** On December 10, 2024, an Arab-Israeli terrorist drove his car onto a sidewalk in Bnei Brak, deliberately hitting a pedestrian. The terrorist was detained (Israel Police Force spokesperson's unit, December 10, 2024).

◆ **Shooting in Gush Etzion:** On December 11, 2024, a Palestinian terrorist opened fire on an Israeli bus at the al-Khader Junction near the Tunnel Checkpoint in Gush Etzion. A 12 year-old Israeli boy was shot to death, and two others were wounded. The terrorist fled but surrendered to Israeli forces after a day (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, December 11 and 12, 2024).

◆ **Shooting in Nablus:** On December 11, 2024, shots were fired at an Israeli vehicle which broke through a checkpoint and entered Nablus. Three Israelis were injured (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, December 11 and 12, 2024).



## Counterterrorism activities

▶The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria, detaining wanted Palestinians and those suspected of terrorist activities, and locating weapons and funds for financing terrorist activities (IDF spokesperson, December 10 to 17, 2024). Palestinian media reported three fatalities as a result of security force activities in Qalqilya, Beit Awa and the Askar refugee camp (al-Aqsa TV Telegram channel, ministry of health in Ramallah, December 10 to 17, 2024).

## Activities of the Palestinian security forces

▶On December 14, 2024, the PA security forces launched the large-scale Operation Homeland Defense against armed terrorist operatives in the Jenin refugee camp, following directives from PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas. The security forces clashed with armed terrorists, resulting in the death of a commander from the local PIJ battalion. A spokesperson for the security forces stated that the objective of the operation was to liberate the refugee camp from the control of criminals.<sup>5</sup>

▶Security force spokesman Anwar Rajab claimed the operation had made significant progress in achieving its objectives, which were to restore order, ensure the residents' safety and prevent future "disasters." The operation, he said, would continue until all wanted individuals had been arrested and the rule of law reinstated in Judea and Samaria (Wafa, December 16, 2024). He also reported that the engineering unit had neutralized an explosive device planted in a mined vehicle (Yafa News Agency Telegram channel, December 16, 2024).

▶The PIJ's Jenin Battalion stated that the "resistance" in Jenin had not been established to confront or overthrow the PA, and it had always focused on "the enemy." Battalion operatives claimed that any issues which arose could be resolved through dialogue and not by turning their weapons against one another (Walaat Telegram channel, December 16, 2024).

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<sup>5</sup> For further information, see the December 2024 ITIC report, "[PA Security Forces Operate Against Armed Terrorists in the Jenin Refugee Camp.](#)"



**The Jenin Brigade announcement (Walaat Telegram channel, December 16, 2024)**

- ▶ A "Palestinian security source" stated that following the conclusion of activities in the Jenin refugee camp, a security operation would begin in the Tulkarm and Nur Shams refugee camps (Sky News in Arabic, December 17, 2024).
- ▶ Fatah issued a video allegedly showing armed terrorists in the Jenin refugee camp pledging loyalty to Iran and its leader, Ali Khamenei. Reportedly, its posting angered Palestinians (Fatah X account, December 16, 2024). Ghassan Daghlas, governor of the Nablus District, stated that the "criminals" targeted by the PA security forces were influenced by "Tehran or other sources." He noted the importance of preventing "external projects" which threatened Palestinian security, and warned Jenin residents not to follow those with "external agendas" (Aman24 Facebook page, December 16, 2024).
- ▶ Senior Hamas official Mahmoud Mardawi said that "resistance operations" in Judea and Samaria would not stop, despite the "occupation's aggression and the its security forces' persecution of resistance fighters." He claimed the activities of the PA security forces deserved condemnation and called for an immediate end to the operation, which called "unpatriotic behavior serving the occupation" (Hamas Telegram channel, December 16, 2024).
- ▶ Muhammad al-Hindi, PIJ deputy secretary general, claimed there was no justification for attacking residents of the Jenin refugee camp, who, he claimed, were defending the camp against "the Israeli enemy." He said they did not oppose the PA presence in the refugee camp, provided there was an understanding between the parties, and said "the entity" entering the camp had to leave (al-Jazeera, December 16, 2024).
- ▶ Political commentator Bassam al-Tamimi accused "armed groups" of disrupting public order and violating the Palestinian national consensus by attacking civilians and public institutions in Jenin. He called for dialogue to calm the situation and said he hoped the confrontation would end soon. On the other hand, Suleiman Basharat, director of the Yabous Center for

Research, warned that the PA avoidance of dialogue and preference for confrontation would lead to severe consequences and deep social rifts. He stated that the PA operated with international pressure to assert control in Judea and Samaria to avoid the alternative of full Israeli control (al-Jazeera, December 16, 2024).

## The Palestinian Authority (PA)

### Mahmoud Abbas visits Italy and the Vatican City

► PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas visited Italy and the Vatican City between December 11 and 13, 2024. He met with Italian President Sergio Mattarella, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, Pope Francis, Vatican Prime Minister Pietro Parolin, and Arab ambassadors stationed in Rome and the Vatican. He also inaugurated the new Palestinian legation in the Vatican. He reviewed the situation in the Palestinian arena, including [alleged] "Israeli crimes" in Judea and Samaria, and emphasized the need for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, the entry of humanitarian aid into the Strip, a full Israeli withdrawal and the transfer of control of the Strip to the PA. He also called for the recognition of a Palestinian state and the admission of "Palestine" as a full member of the United Nations (Wafa, December 11–13, 2024).

► While in Rome, Mahmoud Abbas also met with Najib Mikati, prime minister of the Lebanese interim government. They discussed recent developments in the Palestinian and Lebanese arenas and agreed that all efforts had to be made to ensure the success of the ceasefire in Lebanon, stabilize its situation and achieve peace and security (Wafa, December 13, 2024).



Right: Mahmoud Abbas and Gloria Meloni (Wafa, December 13, 2024).

Left: Mahmoud Abbas and Mikati (Wafa, December 13, 2024)

### Palestinian lawfare against Israel

► At its weekly meeting, the PA government noted the need for intensified legal and international efforts to revoke Israel's measures to expropriate 46,000 dunams (approximately 11,370 acres) since the beginning of 2024, including 24,000 dunams (approximately 5,930 acres) of state land. The government enlisted eight Israeli law firms to defend Palestinian rights

in approximately 3,000 cases filed in Israeli courts, in addition to monitoring demolition and expropriation cases against thousands of Jerusalem residents through continued engagement with more than ten law firms (Wafa, December 10, 2024).