



# Spotlight on the Israel-Palestinian Conflict

December 24 – 31, 2024

## Overview<sup>1</sup>

- ▶ **The southern front:** IDF forces continued extensive operations in the northern, central and southern Gaza Strip, eliminating dozens of terrorists and detaining hundreds more during operations at the hospital in Beit Lahia. Palestinian terrorists fired rockets from the Gaza Strip at Jerusalem. Two IDF officers and two soldiers were killed in the fighting.
- ▶ **Ceasefire negotiations and hostage release:** Senior Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) figures continued to accuse Israel of making demands which complicate the completion of the negotiations.
- ▶ **Hamas governance:** A senior journalist affiliated with Hamas' military wing accused the movement of being complicit in a nakba<sup>2</sup> in northern Gaza.
- ▶ **The day after:** The PIJ deputy secretary general accused the Mahmoud Abbas, PA chairman, of rejecting proposals for managing the Gaza Strip after the war.
- ▶ **Israel, Judea and Samaria:** An Israeli civilian was stabbed to death by a Palestinian in Herzliya. Israeli security forces continued counterterrorism operations in Judea and Samaria.
- ▶ **The Palestinian Authority (PA):** PA security forces continued their operations against armed terrorists in the Jenin refugee camp. Three members of the security forces were killed, and several civilians, including a journalist, reportedly died. The spokesperson for the security forces accused Hamas of incitement and compared the movement to ISIS.

## The Southern Front

### IDF operations in the Gaza Strip

- ▶ This past week, the IDF continued extensive operations in the northern Gaza Strip, focusing on the Jabalia refugee camp, Beit Lahia and initiating activity in Beit Hanoun. Ongoing operations continued in the central Gaza Strip and the Rafah area in the south, with attacks on terrorist targets. IDF forces located and destroyed munitions and terrorist facilities, including

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

<sup>2</sup> Catastrophe.

two offensive tunnels each two kilometers long. The forces also targeted Hamas and PIJ terrorist operatives from the air and on the ground, including operatives involved in the October 7, 2023 attack and massacre, as well as operatives planning attacks, some operating near civilians and within civilian areas. Dozens of terrorists attempting to flee the area of IDF operations in Jabalia were eliminated. An IDF officer and two soldiers were killed in combat in the northern Gaza Strip, and an IDF officer was killed in combat in the central Gaza Strip (IDF spokesperson, December 24–31, 2024).

### **Attacks on Hamas terrorists operating in civilian facilities**

► This past week, Israeli security forces attacked operatives and terrorist facilities operating within civilian sites in the Gaza Strip; the operatives were planning attacks on IDF forces and the State of Israel. In all cases, measures were taken to minimize harm to civilians.<sup>3</sup>

◆ On December 24, 2024, IDF forces operated against terrorist operatives and facilities in and around the Indonesian Hospital in Jabalia. The forces eliminated five terrorist operatives and detained others, including an operative who participated in the October 7, 2023 attack and massacre (IDF spokesperson, December 24, 2024). Munir al-Barash, director general of the ministry of health in Gaza, claimed that IDF forces "stormed" the hospital and forced those inside to leave (Reuters, December 24, 2024).

◆ On December 27–28, 2024, IDF forces operated against terrorist operatives and facilities in the Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahia. During the operation 20 terrorist operatives were eliminated and more than 240 Hamas and PIJ operatives were detained, some of whom attempted to disguise themselves as patients and medical staff. Explosives were neutralized (IDF spokesperson, December 27–29, 2024). The Hamas-controlled ministry of health in Gaza reported that IDF forces had deceived the hospital staff and detained several personnel, including the hospital director, Dr. Hussam Abu Safia, who was allegedly beaten before his arrest (Hassan Aslih's Telegram channel, December 28, 2024).

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<sup>3</sup> The use of civilian facilities such as schools and hospitals for terrorist purposes is characteristic of the activities of terrorist organizations in the Gaza Strip, particularly Hamas. The organizations exploit attacks on the facilities for purposes of propaganda and incitement, exaggerating the number of casualties, making claims of widespread harm to civilians, and often concealing the identities of the operatives targeted. In all cases, prior to IDF operations, extensive measures are taken to minimize civilian harm, including evacuating populations and patients from hospitals, the use of precision weapons, aerial surveillance and intelligence information.



**Right: Location of explosive devices planted near the Indonesian Hospital (IDF spokesperson, December 30, 2024). Left: Evacuation from the area of Kamal Adwan Hospital (IDF spokesperson, December 29, 2024)**

## Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip

► This past week, 11 rockets were fired at Israeli territory, two of which targeted the Jerusalem area. Seven rockets were intercepted and four landed in open areas. No casualties or damage were reported (IDF spokesperson and Israeli media, December 24–31, 2024). The PIJ's military wing claimed responsibility for most of the rocket fire (Paltoday, December 30, 2024).

## The Hostages and a Ceasefire Agreement

► This past week, consultations and negotiations for a ceasefire and the release of hostages continued. On December 28, 2024, a Hamas delegation led by Khalil al-Haya, the de facto head of the Hamas political bureau in the Gaza Strip, met in Doha with Mohammed bin Abdulrahman, prime minister of Qatar. According to reports, they discussed the latest developments in the negotiations and ways to advance them toward reaching a "clear and comprehensive" agreement to end the war (Qatar foreign ministry X account, December 28, 2024).

► Hamas and the PIJ continued to claim that they had demonstrated "flexibility" in the talks, while accusing Israel of making new demands and conditions which complicate reaching an agreement:

- ◆ Hamas said that the negotiations, mediated by Qatar and Egypt, were conducted seriously. It claimed the movement demonstrated "responsibility and flexibility," but Israel raised new issues and conditions related to withdrawal, the ceasefire, prisoners and the return of displaced persons, thereby delaying an agreement which "was already within reach" (Hamas Telegram channel, December 25, 2024).

◆ Mohammed al-Hindi, PIJ deputy secretary general, called the negotiations with Israel "serious and intricate," whose objective was to achieve the goals of the "resistance" of ending the "aggression" and ensuring a complete Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. He claimed the "resistance" had demonstrated flexibility regarding the stages and terms but warned against manipulations by Netanyahu's government resulting from internal political necessity (Quds Network, December 25, 2024). On another occasion, he claimed that Israel sought a partial three-stage deal, demanding to know the names of the hostages still alive. However, he claimed the "resistance" could not gather the information while it was being bombarded. He added that the deal would only conclude with a full withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the cessation of "aggression" (Filastin al-Yawm YouTube channel, December 26, 2024).

◆ A "Palestinian source" reported two main obstacles to finalizing the negotiations: Israel's position on withdrawing from the Philadelphi Axis in the first stage and its refusal to release Palestinian prisoners sentenced to life terms, while Hamas insisted on releasing 200 of them in the first stage. Nevertheless, the source said negotiations were progressing with international mediation and denied claims of their collapse (al-Mayadeen Telegram channel, December 26, 2024).

◆ Senior Hamas figure Osama Hamdan accused Israel of preventing a prisoner exchange deal from being concluded, alleging that Prime Minister Netanyahu sought to resolve the issue by killing the hostages. He claimed that the Israeli side had so far rejected three main Hamas demands: a complete ceasefire, full withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and even the presentation of withdrawal maps (al-Jazeera website, December 28, 2024). On another occasion, he accused Israel of changing its stance at every stage of the negotiations and violating previously reached agreements (al-Aqsa TV, December 29, 2024).

◆ Furthermore, "Egyptian sources" denied Israeli claims that Hamas had reneged on understandings related to the negotiations. According to the sources, Hamas had demonstrated "significant responsiveness" and conceded some of its demands, while Israel reintroduced issues that had already been agreed upon, including the distance of its forces from populated areas and the names of Palestinian prisoners whom Israeli delegations had previously agreed to release. They noted that Egypt, in cooperation with

Qatar, continued its efforts to reach an agreement, with positive signs in the past two days allowing for cautious optimism (al-Arabi Channel, December 26, 2024).

## The Gaza Strip

### Palestinian casualties

- ▶ **The Hamas-controlled ministry of health in the Gaza Strip** reported that since the beginning of the war, 45,541 Palestinians had been killed and 108,338 injured (ministry of health in Gaza Facebook page, December 31, 2024).
- ▶ The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reported that in 2024 the population of the Gaza Strip decreased by 160,000, a 6% decline compared to the previous year, due to the deaths of more than 45,000 Gazans and the displacement of approximately 100,000 since the beginning of the war. It was further noted that the population of the Strip currently stood at 2.1 million, including more than one million children under the age of 18 (Wafa, December 31, 2024).

### The situation in the Gaza Strip

- ▶ The Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) reported that during the week ending December 29, 2024, 1,290 humanitarian aid trucks had entered the Gaza Strip bringing food, water, medical supplies and equipment for shelters. Additionally, 1,070 trucks were transferred to warehouses and humanitarian shelters inside Gaza in coordination with aid organizations and the international community (COGAT X account, December 29, 2024). It was also reported that as of December 24, 2024, 252 humanitarian aid trucks from Jordan, Egypt and Israel had been introduced via the Kerem Shalom Crossing, 44 of which entered the northern Gaza Strip. International organizations collected and transferred 127 trucks and 21 empty trucks belonging to the World Food Program (WFP) were brought into the Strip via the Kerem Shalom Crossing to reinforce the logistics of international aid organizations in coordination with the COGAT (al-Munsaq Facebook page, December 28, 2024).
- ▶ The Hamas government media office claimed that seven people in shelters in the Gaza Strip, including at least five infants aged between four and 30 days, had died from hypothermia. Hamas also called for urgent assistance from Arab and Islamic countries to provide shelters, food and medicine to save Gazans from the cold (Quds Agency, December 30, 2024).
- ▶ The Hamas government media office accused the UN World Food Program of deviating from the "accepted" protocol for securing aid trucks, resulting in the deaths of two Gazans and injuries to dozens from live fire. Hamas held the organization responsible for the incident and

called on it to meet its moral and humanitarian responsibilities by improving coordination with relevant parties to ensure the security of aid trucks in accordance with the "risks on the ground" (al-Risalah Telegram channel, December 30, 2024).

## Hamas Governance

► According to reports, Hamas began paying pensions to its retirees living in Khan Yunis and Deir al-Balah. Hamas announced that it had started paying salary advances of 1,300 shekels (about \$350) to its employees in Gaza City and the northern Gaza Strip (Telegram channel of Palestinian government employees, December 28, 2024).

► On December 27, 2024, a WhatsApp voice message circulated on social media from Anas al-Sharif, al-Jazeera's chief correspondent in northern Gaza and a member of Hamas' military wing. He accused those negotiating on behalf of Gaza residents [implying but not specifically naming Hamas] of causing what he described as a nakba in northern Gaza. He acknowledged the implications of his statement and warned that a similar fate threatened Gaza City (Mustafa Asfour's X account, December 27, 2024). Initially, al-Sharif denied the recording, claiming a fabricated audio clip about the ceasefire and negotiations was being attributed to him and being circulated. However, he later posted, "This war must end immediately. We are being annihilated, subjected to bloody destruction which spares no one. We do not want the horrific scenes in northern Gaza to repeat themselves in Gaza City" (Anas al-Sharif's X account, December 27, 2024).



### Anas al-Sharif's Tweet from his X account, December 27, 2024

## "The Day After"

► Mohammed al-Hindi, PIJ deputy secretary general, said that during the Palestinian "factions'" talks in Cairo, the "resistance" had agreed to establish a national unity government to oversee the management of Gaza, Judea and Samaria, but the PA had rejected the proposal. In response, Egypt proposed forming a support committee for Gaza to operate under the

authority of Mahmoud Abbas' government, but the PA rejected that as well. Al-Hindi accused the PA of turning its back on all national initiatives presented by the "factions." Despite the lack of agreement, Egypt began efforts to form the support committee, believing that the door remained open to the PA's future participation (Quds Agency, December 25, 2024).

## Israel, Judea and Samaria

### Terrorist attacks

#### Stabbing in Herzliya

► On December 27, 2024, a Palestinian living in Israel stabbed an Israeli civilian to death. The attack occurred in Herzliya, in the center of the country. Security personnel shot and wounded the attacker, who was subsequently detained (Israel Police Force spokesperson's unit and Israeli media, December 27, 2024).

### Counterterrorism activities

► The Israeli security forces continued their counterterrorism activities in Judea and Samaria, detaining wanted Palestinians and those suspected of terrorist activities, locating weapons and destroying explosive devices and other weapons, and confiscating funds for financing terrorist activities. An IDF officer was injured in an explosion in Tulkarm.

### Palestinians and Jewish settlers clash

► On December 28, 2024, Jewish settlers clashed with Palestinians working on agricultural land near the Jewish community of Ofra and the Arab village of Silwad. According to reports, the Palestinians threw stones at the settlers, some of whom were armed and masked, leading to a riot. Israeli security forces arrived at the scene and detained a Palestinian. "Palestinian sources" reported that two Palestinian farmers had been severely beaten during the clash with the settlers, and vehicles had been damaged (Israeli media and Hassan Aslih's Telegram channel, December 28, 2024).

## The Palestinian Authority (PA)

### Activities of the PA security forces

► This past week, the PA security forces under the directive of Mahmoud Abbas continued their operations against armed terrorists in the Jenin refugee camp for the third consecutive week. According to reports in Palestinian media, since the start of the operation, 11 people had been killed, including five security personnel, six Palestinian civilians, two children, and one "resistance fighter" (Quds, December 30, 2024):

- ◆ The spokesperson for the security forces, Anwar Rajab, reported the deaths of three security personnel during operations in the Jenin refugee camp.
- ◆ On December 25, 2024, it was reported that Hassan Nader Abdallah from Palestinian General Intelligence died after being injured days earlier while attempting to neutralize an explosive device. The Jenin Brigade claimed that actual cause of his death was an attempt by intelligence personnel to arm a drone with a grenade for use against "resistance fighters" in the camp (Jenin Brigade on the Palestinian al-Aqsa Telegram channel, December 26, 2024).
- ◆ On December 27, 2024, Ibrahim Jumaa al-Qadoumi from the PA Preventive Security Forces was killed. Rajab stated that al-Qadoumi "chose to sacrifice himself" instead of shooting at children throwing Molotov cocktails at his location. Rajab said it was like ISIS terrorism, crossing national, religious, moral and humanitarian red lines.
- ◆ On December 28, 2024, Hussein Ahmad Nasser, an officer in the Palestinian "Presidential Guard," was killed by terrorist gunfire (Wafa, December 25–28, 2024).
- ◆ On December 24, 2024, "Palestinian sources" reported that Ahmed Masoud Abu Libda was shot and killed by a sniper PA security force sniper in the Jenin refugee camp while walking with his wife near the new camp area (Quds, December 24, 2024).
- ◆ On December 29, 2024, journalist Shatha al-Sabbagh was shot and killed. Her family accused a sniper from the Omar Abu Layla security forces of targeting her directly while she stood with family members near her home in the Jenin refugee camp (Palestinian Media Center Telegram channel, December 29, 2024). Security forces' spokesperson Anwar Rajab denied that Palestinian security forces had been present at the site and blamed "lawless elements in the camp" for the incident (Radio al-Jalil Facebook page, December 29, 2024). Her death sparked outrage among Palestinians, drawing comparisons to the killing of journalist Shireen Abu Aqleh and accusations of collaboration between the "occupation" and the PA to silence "the truth" in the camp ("Lo Kamala Harris" Telegram channel, December 29, 2024).<sup>4</sup>
- ◆ "Palestinian sources" reported that Mahmoud Abbas rejected all initiatives to end the operation in the Jenin refugee camp. According to the report, three members of the Fatah Central Committee approached him, requesting to halt the operation and turn to

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<sup>4</sup> Shireen Abu Aqleh, a correspondent, was shot during IDF activity in the Jenin refugee camp in May 2022, causing international criticism of Israel.



dialogue, but he refused, stating that a "military solution is the only option" (Quds Agency, December 31, 2024).

◆ Anwar Rajab accused Hamas and the PIJ of inciting operatives to spread chaos and undermine the PA. He said the PA security forces avoided direct confrontation with the "occupation" because their capabilities were inferior to those of Israel, claiming the PA's weapons protected Palestinians and were not aimed against them. He also said Hamas was not "resistance" but a militia that brought destruction to its people. He denied any coordination with Israel before the security operation in Jenin began (al-Jazeera, December 29, 2024).

◆ The Palestinian security force said in an official statement that Operation Homeland Defense would continue until all its objectives had been achieved. The force said the only option for offenders was to surrender to the security forces, adding that fleeing the camp would not protect them from arrest (Palestinian National Security Forces Telegram channel, December 26, 2024).



**Declaration of the PA security forces  
(Telegram channel of the Palestinian national security forces, December 26, 2024)**

◆ The spokesperson for PIJ's Jenin Brigade claimed they had presented several initiatives to the PA in an attempt to reach a compromise and had even made concessions, but were told to either leave the refugee camp or surrender their weapons. He said they would not comply with the demand. He also displayed part of an RPG allegedly fired by security forces and warned Mahmoud Abbas that they would begin deploying explosives (Bethlehem City Telegram channel, December 28, 2024).

◆ As to operations in the Jenin refugee camp, on December 29, 2024, PA security forces raided student dormitories at the Polytechnic University in Hebron and detained students from Jenin (Jenin Post Telegram channel, December 29, 2024). Meanwhile, the governors of the Hebron and Nablus Districts issued an administrative decision

prohibiting any actions or statements, whether via social media, public platforms or other means, that could incite conflict, disturb public peace or affect public security. The decision also ordered the cessation of all forms of incitement against the PA and its security and civil agencies (Facebook page of the governor of the Hebron District, December 29, 2024; hdathbeth Facebook page, December 29, 2024). Hebron Governor Khaled Dudin stated that the decision was not intended to intimidate people and keep them from expressing their opinions, but had been issued after monitoring incitement on social media and in some mosque sermons (al-Araby al-Jadeed, December 29, 2024).