



## Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update December 7, 2023

Ari Cicurel  
*Assistant Director of Foreign Policy*

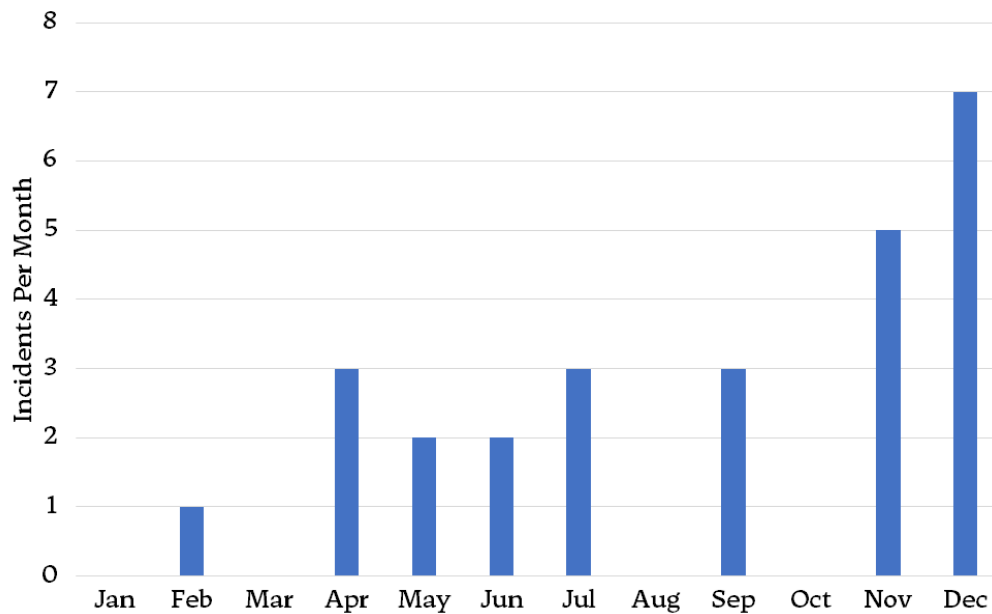
Yoni Tobin  
*Policy Analyst*

Anna Schafel  
*Programs and Outreach Associate*

*JINSA's [Israel at War](#) webpage is a dedicated resource for analysis, commentary, webinars, and media coverage about the 10/7 attacks and the ensuing Israel-Hamas conflict. An update with the latest information and analysis about the war is below.*

### Analysis

- Senator Bernie Sanders's (I-VT) December 5 [letter](#) to colleagues arguing that "it is appropriate to support defensive systems that will protect Israeli civilians against incoming missile and rocket attacks, but ... it would be absolutely irresponsible to provide [Israel] an additional \$10.1 billion in unconditional military aid" overlooks that defensive systems such as Iron Dome cannot defend Israeli civilians from future ground attacks similar to Hamas's October 7 massacre.
  - » The letter also falsely asserts that Israel is waging "all-out war against innocent men, women, and children who had nothing to do with the Hamas attack." In fact, as JINSA's Director of Research Jacob Olidort and Policy Analyst Yoni Tobin [note](#), the IDF has taken multiple measures to protect civilians amid the fighting, including canceling airstrikes due to potential civilian casualties and dropping leaflets, sending text messages, and making phone calls to warn civilians to evacuate.
    - The IDF has also established humanitarian corridors for civilians to evacuate combat areas, designated [safe zones](#) for civilians, and sent fuel and medical equipment to Gazan hospitals.
  - » The letter also fails to acknowledge that Hamas violates the law of armed conflict (LOAC) by placing rocket launchers, other weapons, command and control facilities, and munitions at sensitive sites and in residential areas, as JINSA Distinguished Fellow LTC Geoffrey Corn, USA (ret.) [notes](#).
- The Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen expanded their already record setting pace of maritime aggression this month by flying a drone dangerously close to a U.S. Navy vessel in the Red Sea on December 6. This, along with the ballistic missile that the terrorist group launched against Israel that day, is a continuation of a clear campaign by the group and their benefactors in Tehran to pressure the United States and Israel.

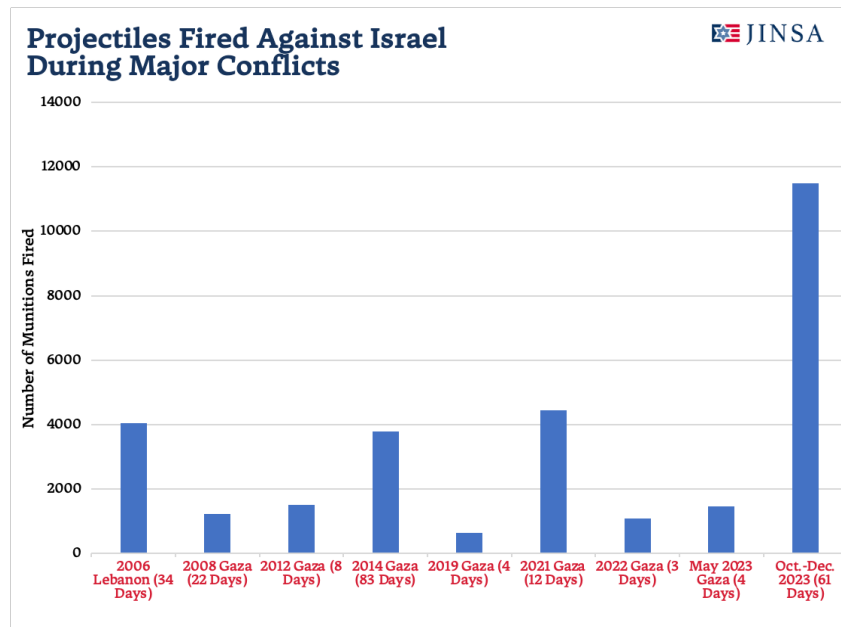


## Last 24 Hours

### Attacks Against Israel

- Roughly [11,500](#) rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles have been fired at Israel during the war.
  - » Over the last 24 hours, rockets [struck](#) Beersheba, and sirens [sounded](#) in Eilat, Eilat, Ashkelon, Zikim, Nir Oz, Sderot, Magen, Shtula, Tel Sheva, Kissufim, Yad Mordechai, Karmia, Nir Itzhak, Sufa, Reim, Netiv HaAsara, Ein HaBsor, Omer, Gatzerim, Malkia, Matat, Margalot, Kerem Shalom, and other towns in southern Israel.
  - » Hamas [launched](#) rockets towards Israel from within the designated humanitarian safe zone of al-Mawasi in southern Gaza three different times on December 6.
    - Hamas fired a salvo of 12 rockets towards Beersheba from near United Nations facilities and tents in which evacuated civilians were staying.
    - Hamas separately fired one rocket from al-Mawasi which misfired and landed in Gaza, and later separately launched a salvo of three rockets into Israel from al-Mawasi.
- On December 7, terrorists in Lebanon launched several attacks against northern Israel.
  - » On December 7, an anti-tank missile [was fired](#) at an Israeli civilian vehicle near the Lebanese border. According to Israeli media reports, a man was [killed](#) in the attack, which took place near Moshav Matat in the Upper Galilee.
  - » On December 7, terrorists [launched](#) projectile attacks from southern Lebanon into northern Israel. No casualties or damage were reported.
- On December 6, Israeli media outlets [reported](#) that the Houthis released a statement claiming credit for a [missile launch](#) against Eilat earlier that day and that its “forces are continuing their operations and enforcing our decision to prevent Israeli ships from passing through the Arabian Sea and the Red Sea, in support of the oppressed Palestinian people.”

- Israeli media outlets [reported](#) on December 6 that the late Major General Assaf Hamami, the commander of the Southern Brigade of the IDF's Gaza Division who was killed in the October 7 attack, was specifically targeted by Hamas. Reportedly, hundreds of Hamas terrorists carried photographs of Maj. Gen. Hamami on October 7 along with instructions to locate him.
- In recent years, Hamas had provided Israel with intelligence about Palestinian Islamic Jihad, another Iran-backed terrorist group in Gaza, to reinforce its [deception](#) that it did not want to initiate a major war with Israel, according to reporting on December 6 in *The Washington Post*.



### IDF Operations

- The IDF extended its operations further into Khan Younis in southern Gaza and Jabaliya in northern Gaza over the last 24 hours.
  - » On December 6, the IDF [said](#) that its 98th Division is leading ground operations against Hamas in southern Gaza and “launched a combined attack on the area of the city of Khan Younis, against the ‘centers of gravity’ of the Hamas terror organization.”
    - According to the IDF, the troops broke the Hamas Khan Younis brigade’s defenses before encircling and moving deeper into the city, capturing Hamas strongholds and locating weapons and intelligence materials, and killing “many” Hamas fighters.
    - The IDF also says that the 98th Division has located and destroyed roughly 30 tunnel shafts, and Commando Brigade and Givati Brigade forces have been carrying out “targeted raids in the heart of the city” against Hamas fighters and infrastructure.
    - The IDF said further that the Khan Younis brigade is “one of the two most dominant Hamas brigades,” Khan Younis is Hamas’s “center of gravity,” and “all the leadership of the Hamas terror organization — political and military — grew up in the area of the city of Khan Younis, including Yahya Sinwar, Muhammad Sinwar, and Mohammed Deif. Now the city is surrounded by the 98th Division.”

- » On December 6, IDF Spokesperson Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari [said](#) that the military has also penetrated Hamas's defenses in Shejaiya and Jabaliya in northern Gaza, and "terrorists are coming out from underground and fighting our forces. And our forces are winning in close-quarters combat. They have the upper hand."
  - He said further in response to a question about Prime Minister Netanyahu's earlier remarks that the IDF surrounded Hamas head Yahya Sinwar's home that "Sinwar's home is the Khan Younis area."
  - Hagari also said, "Sinwar is not above ground, but underground. I won't elaborate on where exactly and what we know. Our job is to get to Sinwar and kill him."
- » On December 6, the IDF [discovered](#) a major weapons stockpile located near a school and clinic in northern Gaza.
  - According to the IDF, the weapons stockpile "contained hundreds of missiles and RPG (rocket-propelled grenade) launchers of various types, dozens of anti-tank missiles, dozens of explosive charges, long-range missiles aimed at the center of the State of Israel, dozens of grenades and unmanned aerial vehicles."
- » On December 6, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [said](#) that the Khan Younis house of Hamas's leader in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar, was surrounded but implied that Sinwar was not there.
- » Reports on December 6 [indicated](#) that Palestinians in Khan Younis saw the IDF drop leaflets in the area that quote a verse in the Quran that says, "the flood overtook them as they were wrongdoers."
  - According to journalist Aamer Tabsh, residents think the reference to the flood of Noah "means that something much worse is coming." Others think it alludes to Hamas's name for the October 7 massacre, "Al Aqsa Deluge," and some speculate it alludes to the IDF's potential plans to flood Hamas's tunnels with seawater.
- » On December 5, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [told](#) a press conference that the IDF had killed "about half of Hamas's battalion commanders."
- The IDF [conducted](#) airstrikes on Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon, including rocket launch sites, observation posts, and military infrastructure. The IDF also struck launch sites separately in response to earlier projectile attacks.
  - » On December 7, the IDF [launched](#) strikes using combat helicopters, tanks, and artillery in response to an earlier anti-tank missile attack.
- On December 6, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant [announced](#) while meeting with local mayors and councilmen in northern Israel that Israeli civilians will not be returned home until Hezbollah is driven north of the Litani River in southern Lebanon.
  - » Under UN Security Council Resolution 1701 (2006), Hezbollah is not permitted to have any military presence south of the Litani River, which is located roughly 18 miles north of the Lebanese-Israeli border.
  - » Gallant stated that Israel would try to reach a diplomatic arrangement that would result in UN Resolution 1701 being enforced, but if diplomatic efforts fail, Israel would "act with all the means at its disposal" to push Hezbollah north of the Litani River.
  - » Lebanese media outlet *Al-Akhbar*, which is affiliated with Hezbollah, [reported](#) on December 6 that French intelligence officials met with senior Hezbollah members to

propose a deal under which Hezbollah would withdraw north of the Litani River and Israeli troops would withdraw from areas near the Lebanese-Israeli border within Israel.

- According to [reports](#) from December 6, Gaza residents are growing angry at Hamas amid the Israel-Hamas war, and a December 5 report showed clashes over supplies between members of Hamas and Gazan civilians.
  - » Israel's *Channel 12* said that according to its conversations with residents in Gaza, residents "are praying that Israel will destroy Hamas and are saying it out loud."
  - » According to *Channel 12* reporter Ohad Hemo, "May God take revenge upon Hamas" is a common greeting among residents who evacuated to Rafah in southern Gaza.
    - However, civilians reportedly also told the reporters that "Hamas will not surrender even if we all die."
  - » Reportedly, Gaza residents know that Hamas has been stealing humanitarian aid entering the Strip, and the UN has stopped and delayed some aid deliveries, possibly due to repeated ransacking of the trucks by Gazan civilians.
- On December 6, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [wrote](#) on X, in response to a *Sky News Arabia* report that the Palestinian Authority (PA) is prepared to govern Gaza, "as long as I am the Prime Minister of Israel — [control of Gaza by PA President Mahmoud Abbas] will not happen," and "those who educate their children for terrorism, finance terrorism and support terrorist families, will not be able to rule Gaza."
- During his December 5 joint press conference with Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and Minister Without Portfolio Benny Gantz, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [said](#), "Gaza must be demilitarized. And in order for Gaza to be demilitarized, there is only one force which can ensure this demilitarization—and this force is the Israel Defense Forces."
  - » Netanyahu stressed that "no international force can be responsible for this" because "we have seen what has happened in other places where international forces were brought in for demilitarization purposes."
  - » All three leaders reiterated that bringing home the 138 hostages still held hostage in Gaza is a key priority and stressed that the IDF's ground operations in the Strip are integral to that effort.
  - » Netanyahu said, "we are bringing to a reckoning anyone who abducted ... murdered, slaughtered, raped, and burned the sons and daughters of our people. We will not forgive and will not forget."
  - » He also insisted that "there is no contradiction" between the IDF's war effort and the entrance of humanitarian aid into Gaza.
  - » In response to a question about the United States' recent sanctions targeting unnamed individuals and their families who commit violent acts in the West Bank, Gantz said that the United States should not say "settler violence" because "99 and more percent" of settlers are "normative, law-abiding people."
  - » Gantz condemned the violence, and Gallant said that the IDF, police, and security forces have the sole right to use force. He added, "we have to restrain all illegal violence" and noted that some violent perpetrators live in sovereign Israel.
  - » Gallant also said that "there is only one legitimate thing to do: to win against Hamas, to strike them and eliminate them – destroying their governing and military capabilities, and bringing the hostages home."

### Humanitarian Efforts

- Israel's security cabinet [approved](#) an increase of fuel shipments into the Gaza Strip after the United States reportedly pressured Israel to triple its fuel shipments into Gaza.
  - » Israel's *Channel 12* reported, citing unsourced estimates, that Israel will gradually increase the daily amount from the current 60,000 liters to three times that amount, 180,000 liters. *The Times of Israel* reported that this was in response to the U.S. demand for a tripling of fuel shipments.
- In the coming days, Israel will [open](#) the Kerem Shalom crossing for the inspection of humanitarian aid trucks for the first time since the war began. While Israel will use Kerem Shalom to inspect the trucks, they will still need to enter Gaza through the Rafah crossing.
  - » Israeli officials maintain that the current procedures can accommodate up to 250 trucks entering Gaza per day and that adding inspection at Kerem Shalom would expand that total.

### Casualties and Hostages

- Approximately 1,245 people in Israel have been [killed](#), and another 6,900 have been injured in the war.
  - » 414 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#).
    - 87 IDF soldiers have been [killed](#) during ground combat in Gaza so far.
    - The IDF announced the deaths of [four](#) soldiers killed in Gaza in the last 24 hours, including Sgt.-Maj. (res.) Adi Shani, 39 from Tzur Yitzhak; Staff Sgt. Amit Bonzel, 22, from Shoham; Staff Sgt. Alemnew Emanuel Feleke, 22, from Kiryat Gat; and Sgt. First Class (res.) Maor Gershoni, 24, from Yokne'am Illit.
  - » Numerous foreign nationals have been killed in the war, including at least 31 [American](#) nationals, 34 [Thai](#) nationals, 39 [French](#) nationals, 19 [Russian](#) nationals, 12 [British](#) nationals, 10 [Nepalese](#) nationals, 9 [Argentinian](#) nationals, 6 [Canadian](#) nationals, 4 [Philippines](#) nationals, 4 [Austrian](#) nationals, 4 [Romanian](#) nationals, 4 [Portuguese](#) nationals, 4 [Chinese](#) nationals, 3 [Brazilian](#) nationals, 3 [Belarusian](#) nationals, 3 [Italian](#) nationals, 3 [Peruvian](#) nationals, a [Cambodian](#) national, a [Chilean](#) national, an [Irish](#) national, a [Spanish](#) national, an [Australian](#) national, an [Azeri](#) national, a [Honduran](#) national, a [Swiss](#) national, and a [Turkish](#) national.
- According to unverified figures from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry, approximately 16,248 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza, and at least 42,000 have been [injured](#) during the war.
  - » On December 4, Associated Press and AFP [reported](#), citing an IDF official, that roughly 15,000 Palestinians have died since the war began and that roughly 5,000 of those killed were terrorists.
  - » On October 25, President Biden [cautioned](#) against trusting Gaza Health Ministry casualty figures, stating: "I have no notion that the Palestinians are telling the truth about how many people are killed ... I have no confidence in the number that the Palestinians are using."
- According to the Palestinian Authority-run Palestinian Ministry of Health, 253 people have been [killed](#), and an additional 3,425 have been wounded in the West Bank.



- The IDF [claims](#) that it has killed at least 1,500 infiltrators from Gaza since the start of the war.
- So far, [105](#) hostages in Gaza have been released, [one](#) has been rescued by the IDF, and [seven](#) [have](#) been [found](#) dead.
  - » 81 Israeli hostages have been released.
  - » 46 hostages with foreign nationalities—some also holding Israeli citizenship—have been released.
    - Thus far, 23 [Thai](#) nationals, 6 [Argentinian](#) nationals, 5 [German nationals](#), 3 [French](#) nationals, 4 [Russian nationals](#), 1 [Dutch](#) national, 1 [Filipino national](#), 1 [Mexican](#) national, 1 [Uruguayan](#) national, and 1 [American](#) national have been released.
    - Hamas has released [36 children](#) and still holds two as hostages.
- Terrorists in Gaza currently [hold](#) 138 hostages, including 114 men, 20 women, and two children. 10 hostages are 75 and older, 125 are Israeli, and 11 are foreign nationals, including eight from Thailand.
  - » Many of the hostages are foreign or dual nationals, including up to 9 [American](#) nationals, 6 [German](#) nationals, 13 [Thai](#) nationals, 4 [Portuguese](#) nationals, 3 [British](#) nationals, 2 [Italian](#) nationals, 4 [Romanian](#) nationals, and 2 [Mexican](#) nationals.
  - » The IDF [told](#) the family of Mohammad Alatrash, a 40-year-old father of 13 from the Bedouin village of Sawa, who had been missing since October 7, that he has been confirmed to be among the hostages being held captive by Hamas.
- On December 6, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [stated](#) that he told the Red Cross president to demand Qatar increase pressure on Hamas to allow the Red Cross to visit hostages and provide them medicine.
  - » Israel said several weeks ago that the Red Cross visiting the hostages was part of the hostage swap and combat pause deal, but both Qatar and the Red Cross declined to confirm that this was part of the deal at the time.
  - » Red Cross head of strategic communications Patricia Rey Gonzalez told Israel's *Channel 12* that day that the Red Cross has yet to receive a “green light” to visit the hostages.
- On December 6, Israeli authorities [told](#) the family of Michel Nisembaum that he is likely currently being held in Gaza. Nisembaum, a dual Israeli-Brazilian national, is a resident of Sderot and “encountered terrorists in the area of Kibbutz Mefalsim on the morning of the mass assault.” Israeli officials have been trying to locate him for 2 months.

### *Iranian Involvement and Response*

- On December 6, the USS *Mason* [shot down](#) a drone in the Red Sea that was launched from Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen. The drone was flying in the direction of the warship and the ship [shot](#) the drone down after it was “too close to the Navy vessel to wait,” according to a Department of Defense official cited by *Politico*. No injuries or damage were reported.
- On December 6, Reuters [reported](#), citing a source “based in Tehran,” that Houthi representatives had met with Iranian officials in Tehran in November to coordinate actions in a “controlled” manner that would help force an end to the Israel-Hamas war.

- On December 6, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby [said](#) of Iranian involvement in the spate of recent Houthi attacks that the “weapons that they are using – missiles and drones – are all supplied by Iran. So Iran is absolutely complicit here in what the Houthis are doing.”

### *U.S. and International Response*

- On December 7, the Associated Press (AP)-NORC Center for Public Affairs [reported](#) an uptick in Democratic support for how the Biden Administration is handling the Israel-Hamas War. According to the AP, this rebound occurred when Biden and top administration officials “expressed increased concern about civilian casualties in the Gaza Strip, emphasized the need for a future independent Palestinian state and helped secure the release of hostages held by Hamas during a temporary truce.”
  - » According to the AP polling, 59% of Democrats approve of Biden’s handling of the conflict, as opposed to 50% in November.
- On December 7, *CNN* [reported](#), citing U.S. military officials, that the United States is “considering beefing up protections” for commercial vessels in the Red Sea, including potentially escorting ships through the Red Sea and the Bab el-Mandeb strait.
  - » The report also stated that the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said at an event in Washington earlier this week that seven nations in the Combined Maritime Forces multinational task force have offered to help with increasing security.
- On December 6, the U.S. Senate failed to advance a [\\$110 billion bill](#) that included aid for Israel and Ukraine in a 49-51 vote that did not reach the Senate’s 60-vote threshold needed to advance.
  - » Senate Democrats unanimously voted for the bill, all Republicans voted against the bill, and Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT), who normally votes with Democrats, joined the Republicans in opposing it.
  - » The bill would allocate roughly \$50 billion for security assistance to Ukraine and approximately \$14 billion for security assistance to Israel.
- On December 6, Republican presidential candidates spoke about the war during the GOP primary debate in Alabama.
  - » Former Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley [stated](#) in response to a question about Iran’s involvement in the October 7 attack, “I dealt with Iran every day when I was at the United Nations. They only respond to strength. What they don’t respond to is when you weaken the sanctions ... what they don’t respond to is when they do 140 strikes on our men and women in Syria and Iraq and we do nothing but just some small shots back.” Haley also called for the U.S. to go after Iran’s infrastructure in Syria and Iraq.
    - Haley also stated, “we now know 50 percent of adults 18 to 25 think Hamas was warranted in what they did with Israel. That’s a problem.”
  - » Former Governor Chris Christie was the sole candidate of the four that [said](#) he would send American troops into the Gaza Strip to rescue American hostages if he was elected president. Christie said, “If they had a plan which showed me that we could get them out safely, you’re damn right, I’d send the American Army in there to get our people home and get ’em home now.”



- » Businessman Vivek Ramaswamy [said](#) that if elected president, he would let Israel deal with Hamas itself and emphasized the United States must take a “responsible” position on the war.
  - Ramaswamy said, “What Hamas did was medieval. It was subhuman. But to say that was an attack on America fails a basic test.”
- » Governor Ron DeSantis (R-FL) [argued](#) that Hamas must be defeated completely, and alleged that the Biden administration is “trying to hobble Israel from defending itself. They have a right to eliminate Hamas and win a total and complete victory,” he said, adding that Biden has tried to “kneecap [Israel] every step of the way.”
  - DeSantis also responded to Vivek Ramaswamy’s comments that the 10/7 attack was not an attack on America by saying, “our own people were killed in that attack. And I think it’s absolutely appropriate to point that out and to say we’re in this together.”
  - Asked about Iran-backed attacks on U.S. troops in the Middle East, DeSantis [responded](#) by saying, “You have Iranians that are attacking these troops. [Biden]’s responding with basically pinpricks. You harm an American service member, you’re going to have hell to pay when I’m president. We are not going to let our troops be sitting ducks.”
- On December 6, *Politico* [reported](#), citing a U.S. defense official, that the USS *Mason* shot down a drone in the Red Sea that was launched from Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen. The report cited the official as saying the drone was “too close to the Navy vessel to wait” any longer before shooting it down.
  - » According to [Reuters](#), Saudi Arabia has been pleased with the U.S. responses to the spate of Houthi maritime aggression and urged the United States to restrain itself to limit further escalation.
- On December 6, *Politico* [reported](#), citing three U.S. officials, that senior Biden administration officials oppose striking Houthis in Yemen in response to continued Houthi attacks on commercial vessels and warships for the time being.
  - » The report cited a fourth U.S. official as saying that the U.S. military has drafted options to kinetically retaliate against the Houthis but is not actively pushing senior administration officials to carry out strikes against the Houthis.
  - » The report added that in multiple high-level meetings this week, the Pentagon has neither briefed President Joe Biden on options for targeting the Houthis nor recommended that he do so, according to two U.S. officials.
- On December 6, *Reuters* [reported](#), citing two officials, that Saudi Arabia has sought to restrain the United States from a more forceful response to continued Houthi attacks on commercial ships and U.S. warships in the Red Sea. The report added that Saudi Arabia was pleased thus far with how the United States has responded to the attacks.
- On December 6, U.S. Vice President Harris’s National Security Advisor, Phillip Gordon, [met](#) with Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas and other senior PA officials at the PA headquarters in the West Bank.
  - » According to a White House readout, Gordon emphasized the importance of a Palestinian state being established and underscored the importance of Hamas not controlling Gaza, and the officials also discussed settler violence in the West Bank.
  - » The readout also stated that Gordon “reiterated that a revitalized Palestinian Authority must have the capacity to govern both Gaza and the West Bank, and that Palestinian

Authority Security Forces must be strengthened to eventually assume security responsibilities in Gaza.”

- On December 6, White House National Security spokesperson John Kirby [told](#) reporters that Israeli efforts to “minimize civilian casualties” go beyond the steps most modern militaries would undertake to protect civilians.
  - » Kirby stated, “just in the last few days, dropping leaflets and making available maps of localities where people shouldn’t go and where it would be safe to go. That is in the nature of telegraphing your punches. That’s something not a lot of modern militaries would do – lay out a map and say: here’s where you don’t want to be. That – there’s a certain amount of risk that the Israeli Defense Forces are taking by doing that, and we understand that.”
- On December 6, Russian President Vladimir Putin [visited](#) the United Arab Emirates to attend the United Nations COP28 climate conference and meet with UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahman, and also [traveled](#) to Saudi Arabia to meet with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the two leaders’ first meeting since 2019. According to a Russian readout, agenda items for Putin’s meetings [included](#) the Israel-Hamas war.
  - » Putin said during the meeting that bilateral Russian-Saudi ties had [reached](#) an “unprecedented level” in remarks broadcast on Russian state television.
- On December 5, Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) wrote a [letter](#) to colleagues arguing that the United States should not “be appropriating \$10.1 billion for the right-wing, extremist Netanyahu government to continue its current military strategy. What the Netanyahu government is doing is immoral, it is in violation of international law, and the United States should not be complicit in those actions.”
  - » Sanders justified his position by saying that 16,000 Palestinians have been killed in the last two months, two-thirds of whom are women and children, and over 40,000 have been wounded, 1.9 million people have been displaced and struggle to obtain basic necessities, almost half the housing units in Gaza and many schools and medical facilities have been damaged or destroyed, and Israeli security forces and settlers have killed over 260 people in the West Bank.
  - » He said further, “we are all clear that Hamas, a corrupt terrorist organization, began this war with their barbaric attack against Israel on October 7. Given that reality, Israel has an absolute right to defend itself. It does not, however, have the right to wage all-out war against innocent men, women, and children who had nothing to do with the Hamas attack.”
  - » Accordingly, Sanders argued that “it is appropriate to support defensive systems that will protect Israeli civilians against incoming missile and rocket attacks, but I believe that it would be absolutely irresponsible to provide an additional \$10.1 billion in unconditional military aid that will allow the Netanyahu government to continue its current inhumane military approach.”
- On December 6, journalist Nadav Eyal of Israel’s *Ynetnews* [wrote](#) on X that “the [White House] is exploring the possibility of facilitating an agreement between Israel and Lebanon regarding the land border between the countries, akin to the maritime border agreement signed in 2022 - according to 3 Israeli officials. White House official Amos Hochstein, instrumental in mediating the maritime border deal, is involved.”
  - » According to Eyal, Hochstein is “inspecting the chances for a process to resolve the land border disputes between Beirut and Jerusalem, specifically including areas like Mount

Dov. One Israeli senior official told me that ‘we have said to the Americans we always [welcome] talks with Lebanon.’”

- » Eyal elaborated that “the primary aim of such an agreement would be to address border issues, which Hezbollah cites as its main grievance against Israel in the Lebanese domestic context. However, senior Israeli officials indicate that the true objective is to permanently displace Hezbollah from the border through robust diplomatic efforts, thereby preventing Israel and the IDF from engaging in a military campaign along the northern border.”
- On December 6, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres [invoked](#) Article 99 of the United Nations Charter, which states the secretary-general “may bring to attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion, may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security,” to call for UN Security Council action on the humanitarian situation in Gaza.
  - » Guterres [said](#) in the letter to the president of the UN Security Council, in which he invoked Article 99, that he expects “public order to completely break down soon, due to the desperate conditions [in Gaza],” and humanitarian conditions are “fast deteriorating into a catastrophe, with potentially irreversible implications for Palestinians as a whole” that “must be avoided at all costs.”
  - » Guterres’s invocation of Article 99 was his first since he began serving as UN Secretary-General in 2017. Article 99 has only been invoked a handful of times in history, and [has not](#) been explicitly invoked since 1989.
  - » Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen [wrote](#) on X that “Guterres’ tenure is a danger to world peace. His request to activate Article 99 and the call for a cease fire in Gaza constitutes support of the Hamas terrorist organization and an endorsement of the murder of the elderly, the abduction of babies and the rape of women. Anyone who supports world peace must support the liberation of Gaza from Hamas.”
  - » [Axios reported](#) later that day that Russia and the United Arab Emirates announced they were calling for an emergency UN Security Council meeting on the morning of December 8 to assess how to respond to the Article 99 invocation, and the meeting is expected to take place.

### *Rising Antisemitism, Islamophobia, Protests, and Attacks*

- During the evening of December 7, the “Sons of Mount Moriah” and several other organizations will [march](#) through the Muslim Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem to call for “Jewish control” over the Temple Mount.
  - » The declared goals of the event are to honor the memories of IDF soldiers killed while fighting Hamas in Gaza, “eject the Waqf from the Temple Mount,” and “restore full Jewish control in Jerusalem and the Temple Mount.”
  - » The X account for the “Sons of Mount Moriah” praises the late Jewish supremacist Meir Kahane, and the Kahanist “Jewish Truth” movement will [participate](#) in the march.
  - » Israeli police have given approval for the march but have restricted it to 200 participants.
- In a follow-up to a December 5 congressional hearing during which she responded, “when speech crosses into conduct, we take action” to a question asking whether “calling for the genocide of Jews” runs afoul of Harvard’s code of conduct, Harvard President Claudine Gay issued a [statement](#) on December 6 that said, “there are some who have confused a right to

free expression with the idea that Harvard will condone calls for violence against Jewish students.”

- » The statement also said, “let me be clear: Calls for violence or genocide against the Jewish community, or any religious or ethnic group are vile. They have no place at Harvard, and those who threaten our Jewish students will be held to account.”
- » University of Pennsylvania President Liz Magill also attempted to walk back her remarks, [saying](#), “In that moment, I was focused on our university’s longstanding policies aligned with the US Constitution, which say that speech alone is not punishable. I was not focused on, but I should have been, the irrefutable fact that a call for genocide of Jewish people is a call for some of the most terrible violence human beings can perpetrate. It’s evil — plain and simple.” She added that the university would “initiate a serious and careful look at our policies.”
- » In response to the hearing, the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum in Israel [criticized](#) the presidents of the American colleges, stating, “the positions taken by the three university presidents in their testimonies highlight a basic ignorance of history, including the fact that the Holocaust did not start with ghettos or gas chambers, but with hateful antisemitic rhetoric, decrees and actions by senior academics, among other leaders of society,”
- » White House spokesperson Andrew Bates [responded](#) to the hearing and antisemitism on college campuses, saying, “we just witnessed the worst massacre suffered by the Jewish people since the Holocaust, the latest atrocities in a heartbreaking, genocidal pattern that goes back thousands of years.” He also stated, “it’s unbelievable that this needs to be said: calls for genocide are monstrous and antithetical to everything we represent as a country.”
- On December 5, more than 40 anonymous White House interns [wrote](#) President Biden a letter that said, “we ... will no longer remain silent on the ongoing genocide of the Palestinian people,” and “we were horrified by the brutal October 7th Hamas attack on Israeli civilians, and we are horrified by the brutal and genocidal response by the Israeli government, funded by our American tax dollars, which has killed over 14,000 Palestinian civilians in Gaza, a large percentage of whom are children.”
  - » The letter also insisted that “anything other than a complete halt of Israel’s mass slaughter of innocent civilians in the Gaza Strip will simply not suffice,” and “we urge the Biden-Harris Administration to call for a permanent ceasefire now, a release of all hostages including Palestinian political prisoners, and to support a diplomatic solution that will put an end to the illegal occupation and the Israeli apartheid, in accordance with international law and for a free Palestine.”

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