



Ari Cicurel
Assistant Director of Foreign Policy

Yoni Tobin
Policy Analyst

Zachary Schildcrout
Policy Analyst

Anna Schafel
Programs and Outreach Associate

Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update January 19, 2024

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

- On January 18, the United States launched its fifth strike against the Houthis in Yemen. After each U.S. strike, the Iran-backed terrorist group has continued its attacks against commercial ships, in particular U.S.-owned vessels. U.S. efforts have neither degraded the Houthis' ability to launch these attacks nor have they deterred the terrorist group, as [President Biden acknowledged](#) on January 18. Instead of solely focusing on targeting the Houthis' capability to launch attacks against ships, the United States should instead focus on deterring the group by degrading its ability to control territory in Yemen.
- During a January 18 JINSA [webinar](#), JINSA Senior Vice President for Israeli Affairs IDF MG (ret.) Yaacov Ayish said, "since October 7, Israel has faced a multi-front war. IDF soldiers are fighting in Gaza, fighting in Judea and Samaria, fighting on the Lebanese front, fighting on the Syria front, and fighting on the Red Sea front ... If this is not a multi-front war, I don't know what is. However, if you are talking about intensity ... this is definitely something that is changing ... from one arena to another."
 - » JINSA Distinguished Fellow IDF MG (ret.) Amikam Norkin said, "today in Gaza, after 100 days, we achieved a lot from a military perspective, and you can see the amount of rockets that they launch every day into Israel goes down dramatically, and the threat from Gaza now is a completely different threat. So, we should prepare ourselves for other fronts."
 - » However, JINSA Distinguished Fellow IDF MG (ret.) Yaakov Amidror cautioned, "today, when Israel is very busy with Hamas, and might be very busy with Hezbollah ... it would be a huge mistake to open a third front [with Iran]."

Last 24 Hours

Attacks Against Israel

- At least 13,000 rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles have been [fired](#) at Israel during the war.

Gaza

- Sirens [sounded](#) in Nahal Oz.

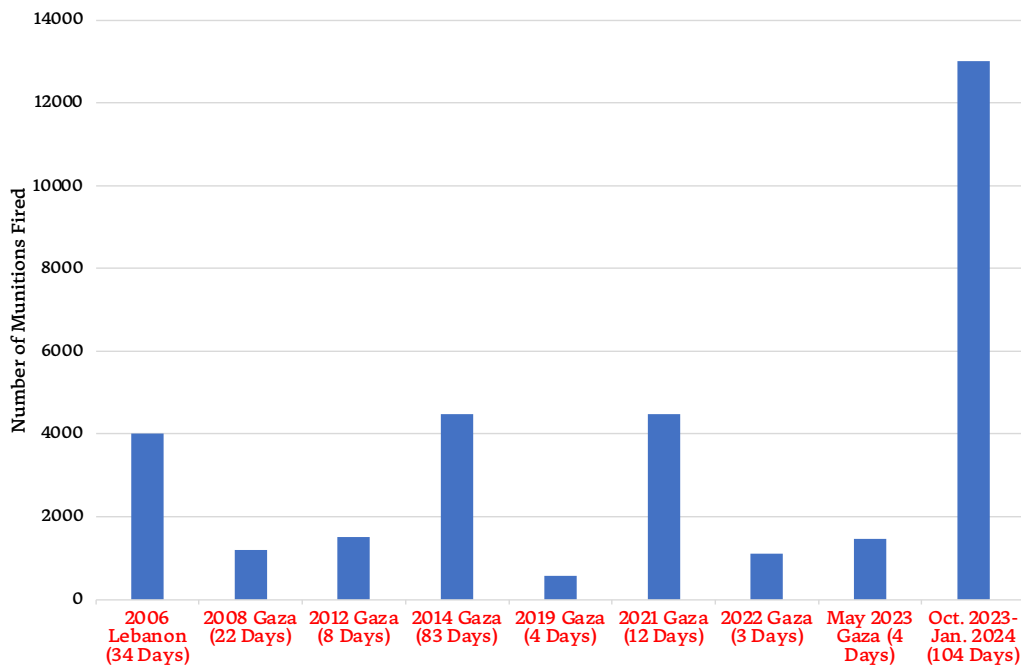
Lebanon

- On January 19, the IDF [intercepted](#) a drone that entered Israeli airspace from Lebanon via the Mediterranean Sea.
- On January 18, Hezbollah [fired](#) rockets and missiles toward Shtula, Malkia, Menara, and Mount Dov in Israel.

Syria

- Sirens sounded in [Yonatan](#).
- Local authorities [said](#) that the sirens in Yonatan on January 18 were triggered by three rockets fired from Syria that landed in open areas.

Projectiles Fired Against Israel During Major Conflicts



IDF Operations

Gaza

- On January 19, the IDF and Shin Bet, Israel's security agency, [said](#) that Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) propaganda chief Wael Abu Fanounah was killed in an airstrike in Gaza. He published PIJ's videos, including hostage videos. Fanounah was originally arrested by Israel in 1989 but [released](#) in 2011 as part of the deal to free Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit in exchange for more than 1,000 Palestinian prisoners.
- On January 19, the IDF's 7th Armored Brigade [raided](#) a Hamas training camp in the southern Gazan city of Khan Younis, where they located replicas of IDF tanks and other IDF vehicles.

- » The training compound, which was used as a meeting point for senior commanders of Hamas's Khan Younis Brigade, also contained dozens of rocket launchers and other weapons as well as several tunnel shafts.
- On January 19, the IDF [said](#) that 179th Brigade reservists located weapons in a building in central Gaza following rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) fire from the building, and 5th Brigade reservists killed several Hamas operatives in northern Gaza.
- On January 19, Palestinian media [reported](#) that 12 people were killed in an airstrike on a residential building near Shifa Hospital in Gaza City.
- On January 18, the IDF [said](#) that it finished destroying Hamas's chief industrial zone for constructing rockets and weapons in central Gaza, including a tunnel network below it. The IDF's 36th Division, the Yahalom combat engineering unit, and the Air Force's Shaldag unit took part in the operations in Bureij, Maghazi, and Nuseirat, destroying dozens of tunnel entrances near Salah a-Din Road connected to hundreds of kilometers of tunnels.
 - » The IDF said that it discovered steel workshops, chemical and explosives factories, and long-range rocket storages both above and below ground.

Lebanon

- On January 19, the IDF [struck](#) a number of Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon, including launching airstrikes against Hezbollah military installations near the town of Ramyah and conducting airstrikes and tank shelling against Hezbollah observation posts and other Hezbollah facilities near the towns of Houla and Kafr Kila.
 - » Lebanese media outlets [reported](#) that on that day the IDF struck 10 different targets across southern Lebanon.
- The IDF [said](#) on January 18 that it used fighter jets to strike Hezbollah rocket launch positions and additional infrastructure in the towns of Aitaroun and Odaisseh, as well as other Hezbollah launch sites in southern Lebanon.

Syria

- On January 19, the IDF [conducted](#) tank shelling against Syrian Army positions in southern Syria in response to earlier rocket attacks.
- On January 18, the Golan Regional Council [said](#) that the IDF responded to the earlier rocket attack from Syria against Yonatan with shelling.

West Bank

- The IDF [said](#) on January 19 that its counter-terror operation in the town of Tulkarem had concluded after about 45 hours.
 - » IDF troops located over 400 explosive devices, combed around 1,000 buildings, seized 27 weapons and other military equipment, and arrested 37 Palestinians. IDF troops also found dozens of explosives hidden under the camp's roads and uncovered and destroyed five explosive manufacturing labs and four facilities used by terrorists to surveil Israeli troops with cameras.
 - » IDF forces also [killed](#) eight gunmen throughout the raids. The IDF said one soldier was seriously [wounded](#) after being shot during the raids.
 - » The IDF also [said](#) on January 18 that it arrested 21 wanted Palestinians overnight in other areas of the West Bank.

Humanitarian Efforts

- In a statement on January 18, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) [said](#) that in the recent deal to deliver medicine to Israeli hostages and Palestinian civilians in Gaza, “the mechanism that was agreed to does not involve the ICRC playing any part in its implementation, including the delivery of medication,” contradicting Hamas’s claims that the organization would do so.
- According to reports from January 18, citing Israel’s *Channel 12*, Israel [agreed](#) to answer an ICRC request for information about 60 Gazans whom Israel arrested following Hamas’s October 7 massacre. Israel’s National Security Minister, Itamar Ben Gvir, is reportedly attempting to impede the efforts to provide information on the grounds that the ICRC has not provided information about Israeli hostages.

Post-War Gaza Planning

- Israeli lawmaker and opposition leader Yair Lapid [told](#) Israel’s *Kan* network on January 19 that he believes the Palestinian Authority could, if it undertakes serious reforms, play a role in post-war Gaza. However, he added that he does not believe a Palestinian state will be established in Gaza after the war.
 - » Lapid stated, “if the Palestinian Authority undergoes a real reform on the issue of incitement and corruption, its civilian apparatus can be used in some of the components in Gaza.” Lapid also said that he “doesn’t think anyone believes that a Palestinian state will be established in Gaza.”
- During a news conference on January 18, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [said](#) that he conveyed his opposition to establishing a Palestinian state to the United States and argued, “in any future arrangement ... Israel needs security control over all territory west of the Jordan [River].”
 - » He added, “this collides with the idea of sovereignty. What can you do?” Netanyahu also noted that “the prime minister needs to be capable of saying no to our friends.”

Casualties and Hostages

- Over 1,200 people in Israel have been [killed](#), and at least 11,000 have been [injured](#) in the war.
 - » 530 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#).
 - 194 IDF soldiers have been [killed](#) during ground combat in Gaza so far.
 - The IDF [announced](#) the death of Staff Sgt. Ori Gerby, 20, from Herzliya.
 - » Numerous foreign nationals have been killed in the war, including at least 33 [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, a [Tanzanian](#) national, and a [Turkish](#) national.
- According to unverified figures from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry, 24,762 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza, and 62,108 have been injured during the war.

- » 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, 360 people have been [killed](#), and an additional nearly 4,000 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, [seven](#) [have](#) been [found](#) dead, one was [mistakenly](#) killed by the IDF, and one was [killed](#) during an IDF attempt to rescue him.
 - » 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](#) 136 hostages, according to Israeli government spokesperson Eylon Levy, a figure that includes the dead bodies of 25 hostages and four abducted prior to October 7.
 - » Many of the hostages are foreign or dual nationals, including up to 8 [American](#) nationals, 6 [German](#) nationals, 13 [Thai](#) nationals, 4 [Portuguese](#) nationals, 3 [British](#) nationals, 2 [Italian](#) nationals, 4 [Romanian](#) nationals, and 2 [Mexican](#) nationals.
 - » According to IDF spokesperson Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the 136 hostages [include](#) two Israeli civilians and the bodies of two IDF soldiers held in Gaza since 2014 and 2015.

Iranian Involvement and Response

- On January 19, a senior Houthi official, Mohammed al-Bukhaiti, [told](#) Russian media that Russian and Chinese ships in the Red Sea would be granted safe passage, while ships “in any way connected with Israel” will continue to be attacked.
- On January 18 at approximately 9 p.m. local time, Iranian-backed Houthi terrorists [launched](#) two anti-ship ballistic missiles that [struck](#) the MV *Chem Ranger*, a U.S.-owned, Marshall Islands-flagged, and Greek-operated tanker ship, in the Gulf of Aden. The strike did not cause any reported injuries or damage.
- On January 18, air defenses [shot down](#) an armed drone fired by an Iran-backed militia over the Erbil airport in northern Iraq, where U.S. personnel are located.

U.S. and International Response

- On January 19, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin spoke over the phone with Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant about “Israel’s shift to low-intensity operations in Gaza, the distribution of humanitarian assistance in Gaza, instability in the West Bank, and a range of regional security matters,” according to a U.S. Department of Defense [readout](#). Austin also

“emphasized the need to accelerate humanitarian assistance across Gaza and protect civilians” and “acknowledged Israeli concerns about the Lebanon border and reiterated U.S. resolve to prevent the situation from escalating,” per the readout.

- According to [reports](#) from January 19, citing Belgium’s *VRT* broadcaster’s correspondence with Belgian government sources, Belgium will provide a warship to an EU effort to protect Red Sea ships from Houthi attacks.
- UN human rights representative Ajith Sunghay [said](#) on January 19 that he met “men who were detained by the Israeli security forces in unknown locations for between 30 to 55 days” in the Gaza Strip, and added that “there are reports of men who are subsequently released, but only in diapers without any adequate clothing in this cold weather.”
- On January 18 at approximately 3:40 p.m. local time, the United States conducted [strikes](#) that destroyed two Houthi anti-ship missiles that were prepared to launch against targets in the Red Sea.
- On January 18, when [asked](#) whether U.S. strikes targeting the Houthis are working, President Biden [responded](#), “well, when you say working are they stopping the Houthis? No. Are they gonna continue? Yes.”
 - » Deputy Pentagon Press Secretary Sabrina Singh told reporters that day that it is up to the Houthis whether or not their attacks cease, [remarking](#) that “the ultimate goal is for these attacks [on shipping] to stop. It’s up to the Houthis to decide when that occurs. It’s their decision to continue to launch these attacks.”
- On January 18, U.S. State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller [criticized](#) Prime Minister Netanyahu’s statement earlier that day against the creation of a Palestinian state.
 - » Miller said, “there is no way to solve [Israel’s] long-term challenges to provide lasting security, and there is no way to solve the short-term challenges of rebuilding Gaza, of establishing governance in Gaza and of providing security for Gaza, without the establishment of a Palestinian state.”
 - » Miller added that “for the first time in its history, you see the countries in the region who are ready to step up and further integrate with Israel and provide real security assurances to Israel and the United States is ready to play its part too, but they all have to have a willing partner on the other side.”
- On January 18, U.S. State Department spokesman Matthew Miller [said](#) that the Biden administration is seeking clarification from Israel regarding video footage published on social media purporting to show Israel blowing up Palestine University’s main campus building in Gaza.
- On January 19, Swiss prosecutors [announced](#) in a statement that a criminal complaint had been filed against Israeli President Isaac Herzog, who is in the Swiss city of Davos to attend the World Economic Forum meeting. Prosecutors announced that it would examine the complaint “in accordance with the usual procedure,” and that it was in contact with the Swiss foreign ministry “to examine the question of the immunity of the person concerned.”
 - » AFP reported that the complaint was filed with both federal prosecutors and local prosecutors in the cities of Basel, Bern, and Zurich by a group of several unnamed people entitled “Legal Action Against Crimes Against Humanity.”
 - » According to the AFP report, the complaint states that diplomatic immunity can be lifted “in certain circumstances” given certain conditions, such as alleged crimes against humanity, and that this case meets those conditions.

- During a meeting with U.K. Ambassador to Lebanon Hamish Cowell on January 19, the head of Lebanon’s Christian political party Lebanese Forces, Samir Geagea, [criticized](#) Hezbollah for turning Lebanon “into a battlefield.” Geagea argued that “instead of fulfilling its duties to serve Lebanon and its people, it handed over decision-making to a faction, allowing the country to turn into a battlefield, a mere commodity in the volatile regional scene.”
- On January 19, reports indicated that Egyptian officials had held [talks](#) over the previous days with the Iran-backed Houthis and Iranian regime officials in an attempt to restore calm in the Red Sea. As part of the talks, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian is expected to visit Cairo soon.
- On January 19, China’s Ministry of Commerce said that it was closely tracking developments in the Red Sea amid the escalation of Houthi attacks against commercial vessels and would provide [assistance](#) to foreign trade, without indicating what that would entail.
- According to [reports](#) from January 18, Arab states are developing a plan to implement a ceasefire in Gaza and the release of hostages held by Hamas in exchange for “irreversible” Israeli steps to create a Palestinian state and normalization of relations among Israel and regional states. The Arab states aim to release the plan within the next few weeks.
- On January 18, at the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Saudi Arabian Ambassador to the United States Princess Reema bint Bandar Al Saud [said](#), “I think the most important thing to realize is the kingdom has not put normalization [with Israel] at the heart of its policy. It’s put peace and prosperity at the heart of its policy,” and “the Kingdom has been quite clear. While there is violence on the ground and the killing persists, we cannot talk about the next day.”
 - » She added, “there’s trauma and pain on both sides. I can’t take that back. But what we can do is ceasefire now.”
- On January 18, the European Parliament [adopted](#) a resolution (312 for, 131 against, 72 abstentions) that endorsed a permanent ceasefire after each hostage is “immediately and unconditionally released” and “the terrorist organization Hamas is dismantled.”
 - » The resolution also denounced “the disproportionate Israeli military response, which has caused a civilian death toll on an unprecedented scale” and called for a “European initiative to put the two-state solution back on track” with an end to the “occupation of the Palestinian territories.”
 - » It also supported the International Criminal Court and International Court of Justice, urging that “those responsible for terrorist acts and for violations of international law ... be held to account.”

Rising Antisemitism, Islamophobia, Protests, and Attacks

- U.S. Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff [said](#) on January 18 during a panel at the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland, that “as American Jews, I think the feeling is one of aloneness and being hated and being unmoored.” Emhoff added, “we kind of saw who our friends were and who our friends weren’t, and there were too many in the ‘weren’t’ category, some who we thought were friends. It’s just shocking.”

- On January 18, Iowa’s House of Representatives [passed](#) a resolution in support of Israel and condemning Hamas’s October 7 attacks. Anti-Israel protesters shouted “shame” and “free Palestine” at the legislators as they voted to pass the resolution.

Recent and Relevant JINSA Products About Israel at War

- Webinar: “[Gaza War Update 1/18](#),” with IDF MG (ret.) Yaakov Amidror, IDF MG (ret.) Amikam Norkin, IDF MG (ret.) Yaacov Ayish, and Blaise Misztal, January 19, 2024
- Webinar: “[Forgotten Threat: Iran’s Accelerating Nuclear Program](#),” with Hon. Stephen Rademaker, Gabriel Noronha, and Blaise Misztal, January 17, 2024
- Ari Cicurel, [Strikes Against the Houthis Should Not Be a One-Off](#), January 12, 2024
- Zac Schildcrout, [U.S. Diplomacy Won’t Deter Hezbollah](#), January 12, 2024