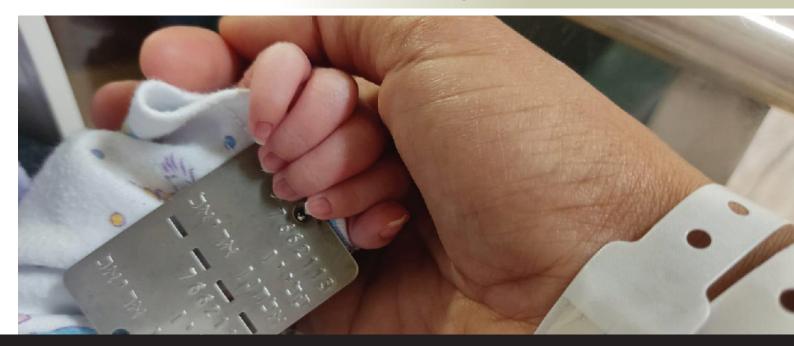
# וביטחוניסטים IDSF

Israel's Defense & Security Forum

## **Israel Weekly War Summary**

Week 20, February 18-24, 2024

Account of the main events in the Israel-Hamas war and hostilities by the Iranian Axis



The newborn daughter of killed IDF soldier Elhanan Klein, resident of Einav in Judea and Samaria that was targeted in a shooting attack upon his return from reserve service in the Gaza Strip | Source: Amit Segal news, https://t.me/amitsegal

#### **Overview**

- In a letter to the UN, Israeli Foreign Minister, Israel Katz, accused Iran of increasing its supply of weapons to Hezbollah and that Israel could not wait for a diplomatic solution much longer.
- The US was the lone vote against a resolution drafted in the UN Security Council by Algeria calling for an immediate ceasefire. The UK abstained.
- The Biden Administration increased its diplomatic confrontation with Israel by declaring American policy for the first time that the US considers Israeli settlements in Judea and Samaria, as inconsistent with international law.
- For the first time since the war started, **Prime Minister** Netanyahu laid down a plan for "the day after" the war in Gaza. The plan includes creating local civil administrations, deradicalizing the population with an educational program delivered by Gulf Arab countries, and a security presence in Gaza and all the area west of the Jordan river (including Judea and Samaria). The plan also calls for the elimination of UNRWA and for Israeli control of Rafah which would prevent weapons smuggling to Gaza.
- Hamas has reportedly lowered some of their demands in hostage negotiations to a six week ceasefire and the release of only 35-40 hostages in exchange for 200-300 terrorists from Israeli jails, yet that still is more than what any Israeli leader could realistically agree. An Israeli official said that the current framework

- reached by the US, Qatar, Egypt, and Israeli officials would be presented to the war cabinet before being presented to the government forum of ministers.
- A terrorist attack on Road 1 from Maale Adumim to Jerusalem killed one and injured 2 others. The homes of the terrorists in Bethlehem were raided by the IDF. Their houses were prepared for their destruction.
- According to a piece published in The New York Times, the IDF believes that there are still around 5000 Hamas fighters active in Northern Gaza and that the IDF will not be able to completely dismantle Hamas' military capabilities. To clarify, Israel has long clarified that the total dismantlement is expected to take time and will not occur in its entirety during this phase of the war, but rather will conduct Phase 3 of "clearing" followed by long-term presence to thwart terrorism plots around the territory.
- PA Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh met with UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland and European Union Representative in Palestine, Alexandre Stutzmann to discuss the day after the war in Gaza and called for a plan like the "Marshal Plan" to be implemented in Gaza.
- Since the beginning of the war, **3,200 suspected have** been apprehended in Judea and Samaria in more than 60 brigade operations which captured 230 weapons and destroyed the homes of 17 terrorists.
- After Israel announced that it would impose limitations on Muslim visitors to the Al Aqsa Mosque during Ramadan, Hamas reverted to its accusations

**that "Al Aqsa is in danger"** to incite terror attacks during the Ramadan.

 Reuters reported that IRGC commander Esmail Qaani met with the Shia militias in Iraq after the bombing that killed 3 Americans and advised them to restrain their attacks as Iran does not want an escalation with the US at the moment.



IDF's air strike on Rafah's Shabura neighborhood, targeting terror infrastructure | Credit: Abu Ali Expresso on Telegram, https://t.me/abualiexpress

#### **International**

- The UK Parliament passed a declarative resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire. During the chaotic debate preceding the vote, the Speaker of the Parliament broke from precedent and allowed two amendments from the opposition which he later explained in a tearful speech that the unusual legislative maneuver was prompted by his fear for the safety of MPs due to threats from Islamists. In the aftermath, more than 50 lawmakers submitted letters of no confidence in Speaker Lindsay Hoyle.
- After the phrase "From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be free", was deemed by some UK officials as hate speech as it calls for the destruction of Israel and the genocide of Jews, the phrase was projected on Big Ben by protesters. The Met Police said that "While there are scenarios where chanting or using these words could be unlawful depending on the specific location or context, its use in a wider public protest setting, such as last night, is not a criminal offence." This continues a worrisome pattern in which the Met Police refuse to enforce or confront the pro-Palestinian protesters. UK Prime Minister condemned the act.
- As the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is hearing the case regarding Israel's legal status ("occupying" according to the language) in Judea and Samaria, the US asked the court not to demand an Israeli withdrawal from the territories as Israeli security concerns need to be taken into account. More than 50 states are due to present their stances during the week-long hearings. The ICJ is expected to issue its opinion by the summer, which could have farreaching political and legal implications. Israel does not intend to send representatives to the hearing as its stance is that the ICJ advisory opinion sought

by the UN General Assembly is illegitimate since numerous UN resolutions, as well as bilateral Israeli-Palestinian agreements, have established that the correct framework for resolving the conflict should be between the parties themselves not through international agencies.

- The US was the lone vote against a resolution drafted in the UN Security Council by Algeria calling for an immediate ceasefire. The UK abstained. The motion was put forward by Algeria. The US was the lone vote against a resolution drafted in the UN Security Council by Algeria calling for a ceasefire in the war. On Friday, four Senate Democrats — Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Ben Ray Luján (D-NM) and Martin Heinrich (D-NM) — urged the Biden Administration for specific commitments from the Netanyahu government prior to any additional transfer or weapons sales claiming to try to avoid "mak[ing] an already catastrophic situation even worse." In a letter addressed to President Biden, the senators expressed their concerns of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and Israel's pending attack on Rafah.
- Brazil's President, Lula de Silva, called Israel's actions in Gaza "genocide" and compared Israel to the Nazis. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu strongly condemned the statement as wrongful, shameful and disrespectful of the Holocaust. Foreign Minister Israel Katz has taken the Brazilian ambassador to Israel to a tour in the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum, following which the ambassador was recalled to Brazil. Hamas congratulated the President and asked the ICJ to take Lula's statements into consideration.
- The Swiss government announced that it plans to put forward legislation which would limit Hamas and its affiliates in operating inside the country. Some of the measures that would be taken include prohibition of entry, deportations, and use of Swiss authorities to monitor money laundering operations used by terror organizations. This could be very impactful as Hamas reportedly holds many of its assets in Swiss banks including the personal finances of top Hamas officials.
- After a successful BDS campaign by Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, 4 Norwegian universities are suspending their academic ties with Israeli universities and colleges.



Mohammad Nazal, a Hamas senior official | Source: almayadeen.net



**Gaza Strip** 

#### **Diplomatic**

The Biden administration upped its diplomatic confrontation with Israel by declaring American policy for the first time that the US considers Israeli settlements in Judea and Samaria, as contrary to International Law. Sectary of State Anthony Blinken made the comments that they are counterproductive to peace and that the US opposes their expansion. The context was the Israeli intention to promote housing units in areas long considered as consensus – around Maale Edumim and Gush Etzion.

President Biden and his team are pushing for the success of the diplomatic talks in Paris surrounding hostage negotiations. While Hamas has lowered their demands, they still include a cessation of hostilities for 6 weeks and the release of 35-40 hostages in exchange for the release of 200-300 terrorists from Israeli jails, conditions that no Israeli leader could comply with. An Israeli official said that the current framework reached by the US, Qatar, Egypt, and Israeli officials would be presented to the war cabinet before being presented to the government forum of ministers.

For the first time since the war started, **Prime Minister Netanyahu laid down a plan for "the day after" the war in Gaza.** The plan includes creating local civil administrations, deradicalizing the population with an educational program delivered by Gulf Arab countries, and a security presence in Gaza and all the area west of the Jordan river (including Judea and Samaria). The plan

also calls for the elimination of UNRWA and for Israeli control of Rafah which would prevent weapons smuggling to Gaza.

In a vote by 99 out of 120 Members of the Israeli Knesset, including the leaders of the government and opposition, Israel backed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's declaration opposing any external, "unilateral" recognition of a Palestinian state and reaffirmed that any permanent arrangement with Palestinians could only be achieved through bilateral negotiations with no preconditions. The statement also said that recognizing a Palestinian state after the October 7th massacre would be a prize for terrorism and would prevent any future peace agreement.

- A panel of UN "experts" called for an arms embargo to be imposed on Israel due to concerns of violations of international law. The experts claimed that the ICJ ruling decision from January 26th said that "there is a plausible risk of genocide in Gaza and the continuing serious harm to civilians". The experts welcomed the suspension of arms transfers to Israel by Belgium, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands and the Japanese company Itochu Corporation. The "experts" include Francesca Albanese "Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967", who was recently banned from entering Israel for justifying the October 7th massacre.
- Israel's Home Front Command released new guidelines permitting residents who live more than 4 km from the border with Gaza to return to their homes. The 17 communities that are withing the 4 km perimeter are allowed to return 'with caution' as they remain in range of possible ballistic projectiles.
- Hamas political bureau member Mohammad Nazal stated that Hamas is waging a campaign in its negotiations with Israel and that the hostages are their strongest card that will eventually subdue Israel and will force it to capitulate to Hamas' demands. Musa Abu Marzouk has said that Hamas has put a price tag of 500 Palestinian prisoners released for every Israeli hostage.



The demolition of the former house of former PA and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat in Gaza | Credit: https://www.innlb.com/, Abu Ali Expresso on Telegram, https://t.me/abualiexpress

#### **Operational**

- According to The New York Times, the IDF believes that there are still around 5000 Hamas fighters active in Northern Gaza and that the IDF won't be able to completely dismantle Hamas' military capabilities. The report suggested that it will be impossible to achieve Israel's war goal in the near future. It said that Israel did not explain where it got its estimates for the number of Hamas terrorists killed and wounded. Thousands of Hamas fighters, attached to remaining battalions or operating independently, remain above and below ground, according to the former and current security officials. The reports suggested that according to IDF intelligence officials Hamas' strategy has been to avoid too many confrontations with the IDF in order to create the illusion that it has been damaged more than the losses it actually suffered. This is meant for Israel to interpret Hamas position currently as weaker than it
- To clarify, the operational plans never predicted a complete dismantlement of Hamas' military capabilities during Phase 2 of the war, but rather deep into Phase 3. As in the 2002-2007 Defensive Shield operation, Phase 2 includes subduing the command and control of the brigades and military bases and infrastructure. Next, Phase 3 includes "clearing" the territory and is expected to take months, even years. It will be followed by long-term freedom of operation by the IDF and the security forces to confront newly-initiated terrorist infrastructure and plots by conducting counterterrorism operations.
- Terrorists attacked IDF soldiers working to clear the Zaitun neighborhood in Gaza which included mortars fired from the eastern part of the city. The IDF found weapons factories in Zaitun and destroyed them.
- Division 162 found and destroyed the underground tunnels from Zaitun that were meant to be connected to the camps in central Gaza including Nusirat and Dir el Balah.



Mohammad Shtayyeh, PA Prime Minister, in an interview during the Munich Security Conference | Source: wafa.ps



#### Lebanon

#### **Operational**

- A large maritime military drill was conducted by the elite unit Shayetet 13 simulating a battle with Hezbollah. The drill included a simulation of shooting down UAVs headed towards Israel Natural Gas rigs at sea, extrication of injured soldiers and refueling of military ships.
- Hezbollah launched a suicide UAV toward Tiberias which landed in an open field. There were no injuries.
- Israel attacked a generator factory used by Hezbollah, deep in Lebanon, near Sidon. This is reportedly, Israel's furthest attack from the border, 50 km into Lebanese territory.
- The IDF attack targets in 5 different districts in Lebanon including terrorist infrastructure and a military compound used by Hezbollah terrorists.
- The IDF conducted an aerial strike on a Radwan commando forces warehouse and a band of terrorists in Southern Lebanon. It also conducted a series of artillery attacks.

#### **Diplomatic**

 In a letter to the UN, Isael's Foreign Minisiter, Israel Katz, accused Iran of increasing its supply of weapons to Hezbollah and warned that Israel could not wait for a diplomatic solution much longer.





#### **Judea and Samaria**

- PA Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh called the world to recognize a Palestinian state. He said that there is no partner for peace from the Israeli side and the Palestinian issue must be resolved. Because Israel would not solve it, the world needs to impose a solution on Israel. Shtayyeh said that Hamas is an integral political force in Palestinian politics and that it could be merged into the PLO if it accepts the PLO political platform.
- PA Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh met with, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland, and European Union Representative in Palestine, Alexandre Stutzmann to discuss the day after the war in Gaza and called for a plan like the "Marshal Plan" to be implemented in Gaza.
- After Israel announced that it would impose limitations on Muslim visitors to the Al Aqsa Mosque during Ramadan, Hamas reverted to its accusations that "Al Aqsa is in danger" to incite terror attacks during the Ramadan.
- Since the beginning of the war, more than 3,200 suspects have been apprehended in Judea and Samaira in more than 60 brigade operations which captured 230 weapons and destroyed 17 terrorists' houses.
- A PIJ terrorist from Jenin was eliminated using a UAV strike. He was responsible for shooting attacks on civilians and IDF outposts. Aerial targeted killings became more common over the past few months in Judea and Samaria, gradually becoming an integral tool of combat by the IDF.
- A terrorist attack on Road 1 from Maale Adumim to Jerusalem killed one and injured 2 others. The homes of the terrorists in Bethlehem were raided by the IDF. Their houses were prepared for their destruction.

### **Iraq and Syria**

After the American decision to target leaders of militias in Iraq, the IRGC moved its top commanders from Iraq and Syria to different places fearing targeted assassinations. In addition, quality weapons used by Hezbollah and other militias including suicide drones and ballistic ground to ground missiles were transported into warehouses used by the Syrian army to prevent damages from Israeli or American attacks. Hezbollah together with IRGC advisors are scouting new areas in Syria for abandoned warehouses and silos that could be transformed into storage facilities for quality weapons. These facilities could also be used as underground factories to produce missiles and suicide drones. The Iranian started supplying generators to these facilities.



Ahmad Alhush, one of the terrorists who carried out the Maale Edumim shooting attack, was a doctor in the Nablus hospital | Source: @push.il on Instagram

#### Yemen

Yemen's internationally recognized government on Saturday urged the international community to act after a Houthi attack on a cargo vessel caused an oil slick in the Red Sea. According to U.S. Central Command, the British-owned Rubymar created an 18-mile-long oil slick after the Feb. 18 attack, while an additional 41,000 tons of fertilizer are in danger of also leaking. The crew has evacuated and the ship is taking on water, Centcom added. The Yemeni government warned the vessel is headed toward an archipelago of Yemeni islands and "threatens a major environmental disaster." Separately, CENTCOM said U.S. forces destroyed seven Houthi antiship cruise missiles that were prepared to launch toward the Red Sea.

- CENTCOM released a statement that the US conducted 6 preemptive strikes in Yemen, 4 against UAV launch sites and 2 against missile batteries intended to be shot at ships passing in the Red Sea.
- The Houthis have accused Saudi Arabia of participating in US-led strikes against them. There are no other sources making that claim, which could indicate that the Houthis are trying to warn the Saudis that the American involvement in the Red Sea would be seen by them as a violation of the truce reached between them. This could lead to attacks against Saudi Arabia which would pressure Washington to tamper down their attacks against the Houthis.
- The Houthis claim to have shot down an American drone, MQ9 REAPER which reportedly costs \$30 million.
- The Houthis shot a rocket towards Eilat which was intercepted by the Arrow air defense system for the 7th time since the beginning of the war.



Iranian Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi, on whom the Interpol issued an arrest warrant for involvement in the 1994 AMIA Jewish Community Center bombing in Buenos Aires, Argentina that claimed the lives of 85 people, meets Osama Hamdan, a Hamas official, and Ali Abu Shahin, a spokesperson for the PIJ in Tehran | Source: alalam.ir



ISIS' poster that calls to attack Jews and Christians around the world | Credit: News Publications Islamic State

#### Iran

According to a report in Reuters, IRGC commander Kaani met with the Shia militias in Iraq after the bombing that killed 3 Americans and asked them to be restrained and tone down their attacks as Iran does not want escalation with the US. This indicates that the US is pursuing a policy of appeasement that could be better replaced by a firm hawkish stance towards Iran, since Iran seems to be flexible as it seeks to avoid escalation. According to a WSJ report, Iranian officials asked Hezbollah not to escalate the war with Israel as it would endanger the main achievements of the war- putting the Palestinian issue on the global stage and creating challenges for normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabia and other regional actors. The officials

asked Hezbollah not to create the conditions which would allow Netanyahu to have an excuse to open a war against Hezbollah.

- The Iranian foreign minister sent a letter to UN Secretary General Guterres warning of an Israeli offensive in Rafah which would be another step in the "genocide" against Palestinians and it is the UN's mandate to stop the crimes against the Palestinians.
- Reuters reports that Iran supplied Russia with many powerful grounds to ground ballistic missiles to be used in its war on Ukraine. Iran supplied 400 missiles including the Fatah 110 and other short-range missiles that could hit targets from 300-700 KM while being mobile.



Purported Iranian-made ballistic missiles | Source: sotaliraq.com



Brazilian President Lula De Silva during the African Union Summit | Source: https://ar.mehrnews.com/



Mass rallies in the Friday pro-Palestinian protest in Yemen | Credit: Jihad Land on Telegram, t.me/@eretzh



A poster released by the Houthis in Yemen overviewing the cargo ships they purportedly hit in the Red Sea | Credit: Jihad Land on Telegram, t.me/@eretzh



The strike in Sidon, Lebanon that seemed to be targeting a massive weapon warehouse | Credit: Jihad Land on Telegram, t.me/@eretzh



6 IDF soldiers fell this week in the Gaza Strip during combat: Staff Sergeant Maoz Moral, Staff Sergeant Simon Shlomov, Major Eyal Shuminov, Staff Sergeant Avraham Ovgen, Staff Sergeant Ido Eli Zrihen, Staff Sergeant Narya Belete Of Blessed Memory