



The four released female soldier hostages in Hamas's staged spectacle| Source: Hamas West bank on telegram, <https://t.me/hamaswestbank1> Quds Press Agency

Overview

- On Saturday January the 25th Hamas released 4 female IDF soldier hostages- Liri Albag, Naama Levy, Karina Arayev and Daniella Gilboa. Hamas staged an absurd show for the press- they paraded the hostages at gunpoint in front of a crowd of hundreds of jeering Gazans, with Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorists in their uniforms, while forcing the hostages to smile and wave as if they are grateful for the support.
- During the first 72 hours of the "Iron Wall" operation in Jenin, ten militants were eliminated, 20 wanted individuals were arrested, and numerous weapons including pipe bombs were confiscated.
- Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi announced his resignation, effective March 1. Halevi stated that the war is not over and its objectives—destroying Hamas' governance and military capabilities, returning the hostages, and safely restoring residents to their homes—have yet to be achieved.
- Despite American pressure, Israel reached an understanding with Washington to delay its withdrawal from Lebanon due to Lebanon's failure to meet ceasefire agreements.

ISRAEL AT WAR WEEK 68

3

Total Israeli casualties This Week

2

Total Civilians killed this week

1

Total IDF Casualties this week

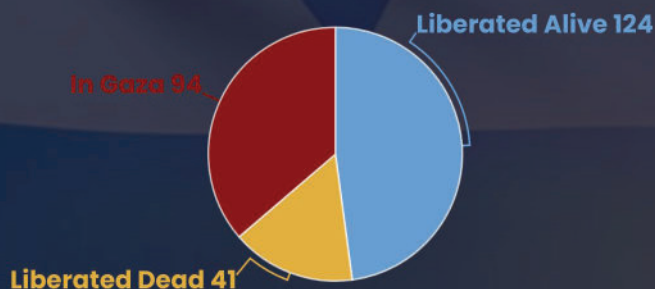
MAIN EVENTS

Four more hostages were returned to Israel bringing down the number of hostages in Gaza to 90.

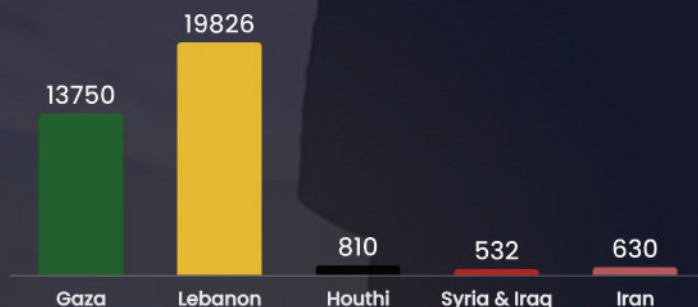
IDF Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi resigns, emphasizing unfinished war objectives: dismantling Hamas, rescuing hostages, and restoring residents.

Under U.S. pressure, Israel delayed withdrawing from Lebanon due to Lebanon's failure to honor ceasefire agreements.

HOSTAGES IN GAZA 90 / 255



ATTACKS ON ISRAEL & ALLIES 35,548



Judea & Samaria + Israel Front

1 / 86
This Week Since Oct.7
1 Civilians and 0 security force fell.

9,000
Since Oct.7
Palestinian Terror Attacks since Oct.7
6,500 Palestinians Arrested

Gaza Front

1 / 1,631
This Week Since Oct.7
1 IDF soldiers fell in battle. 0 Civilian were killed

23,500
Since Oct.7
Hamas terrorists killed. Over 250 Senior officials killed since Oct.7

Lebanon Front

0 / 132
This Week Since Oct.7
1 civilian and 0 IDF soldiers fell.

+3,500
Since Oct.7
Hizbollah terrorists killed, 154 Hezbollah Leadership killed.

Greater Middle East Front

0 / 2
This Week Since Oct.7
0 Civilian killed this week.

+1,972
Since Oct.7
Attacks on Israel. +810 from Yemen, 532 from Iran, +630 from other

Gaza Strip

Hostage Deal

On Saturday January the 25th Hamas released 4 female IDF soldier hostages- Liri Albag, Naama Levy, Karina Arayev and Daniella Gilboa. Hamas staged an absurd show for the press- as they paraded the hostages at gunpoint in front of a crowd of hundreds of jeering Gazans, with Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorists in their uniforms while forcing the hostages to smile and wave as if they are grateful for the support. They built a stage and hung a poster behind the stage with the writing "Palestine- the victory of the oppressed people vs the Nazi Zionism" "Gaza is the Graveyard of Criminal Zionists". In Hebrew they wrote, "Zionism will not win" with insignia from various IDF units as well as the Shin Bet logo. The hostages went on stage all dressed in a beige uniform similar to IDF uniforms. With armed terrorists surrounding them, they were humiliated as they were paraded in IDF-like uniforms, they were forced to wear lanyards around their neck raise their hands as if they were being cheered by adoring fans. Like the last hostage release, Hamas completed the propaganda with certificates of their release, as well as a picture book from their time in Gaza. Hamas also cynically made the released hostages thank the terror group for their "kind treatment" in a filmed video before they were handed off to the ICRC.

Hamas staged this show to demonstrate strength and create the illusion of support among Gazans, that despite the destruction of Gaza they can still manage to pull this type of propaganda. Hamas pushes the narrative that the hostages were maintained in good condition by making it appear that they were happy and were treated fairly. Yet, earlier, when it suited them to press the Israeli public to pressure the government to enter into the deal- they utilized their propaganda to show the dire conditions the hostages were in.

- Between Sunday and Friday, a total of **3,800 trucks entered the Gaza Strip.**
- On Friday, the IDF spokesperson again reported incidents of warning fire directed at residents who approached the forces, reiterating the warning for Gazans not to approach the forces or violate the guidelines.
- IDF Spokesperson Daniel Hagari stated there is a real concern for the lives of the Bibas family.

Violation of the Deal

- **Hamas violated the terms of the agreement** by releasing four female soldiers as hostages instead of civilians as initially agreed, turning their release into a show of victory. Israel is delaying its withdrawal from Al-Rashid Road and allowing Gazans to go northwards until the release of the

fifth hostage, who remains in captivity in violation of the agreement.

- There is still another female soldier that was not released. Hamas has apparently chosen to release soldiers in this round, as opposed to civilians as agreed upon, because the framework of the deal calls for Israel to release the **deadliest Hamas prisoners** with the most Israeli blood on their hands. Hamas wanted to present a picture of victory, demonstrating that it sets the rules and can alter previously agreed-upon terms, and is daring Israel to challenge them.
- **The Prime Minister's Office announced that due to the violation of the deal, the Al-Rashid Road crossing will not be opened until the fifth soldier is returned to Israel** (creating a condition where any violation by Hamas comes with a cost). The fifth hostage is expected to return to Israel, as negotiator are trying to work out her release. It is very unlikely that Hamas would stall her release which would mean giving up on the opening of Al-Rashid Road. This would dramatically strengthen its position ahead of renewed fighting once the ceasefire ends.
- For the commander of Hamas's Gaza City Brigade (Az al-Din al-Haddad), the movement of civilians to the north will enable the recruitment of more militants (according to a Reuters report, **Hamas has recruited 10,000–15,000 new operatives since the start of the war) and the transfer of at least some of the hostages to Gaza City.**
- Events of the past week and the release of seven hostages from Gaza City indicate that many of them were held in the city as human shields. Moving hostages from central areas to Gaza City reinforces their human shield defenses.



The hostages carried by Hamas terrorists. They all have cleaned new clothes as Hamas tries to use the media event to bolster its image as a strong force| Source: Hamas West bank on telegram, <https://t.me/hamaswestbank1>

Released Prisoners as Part of the Deal

- As part of the second phase of the hostage deal, **200 Palestinian prisoners** were released. This included 121 serving life sentences and 79 long-time prisoners. Of these, 70 were deported to Egypt, 114 to Judea and Samaria, and 16 to Gaza.
- During the release, there was an incident at Ketziot Prison where some prisoners refused to board buses to Gaza. The issue was resolved after intervention, with one prisoner opting to stay in prison rather than return to Gaza.

Among the prisoners who arrived in Gaza were individuals from Jerusalem, Nablus, and Jordan. The breakdown of the released prisoners is as follows:

- **137** affiliated with Hamas
- **26** with Fatah
- **29** with Islamic Jihad
- **3** with the Popular Front
- **1** with the Democratic Front
- **4** unaffiliated



The Palestinian terrorists released in the hostage deal transferred from jail | Source: Quds Press News Agency on Telegram, <https://t.me/QudsPressAgency>

Hamas's Strategy

- Al Jazeera plans to air a documentary about the war with exclusive footage of slain Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar during the war. Some of the released footage shows that Al Jazeera had access to Sinwar as he changed his location in Gaza including makeshift command centers that he created with his men. One of these places had Hebrew writing, indicating that the IDF had operated in that building prior to Sinwar. Al Jazeera has collaborated with Hamas and was essentially the extended propaganda arm of the Hamas military machine.
- **Az al-Din al-Haddad, a senior member of Hamas' military wing**, said in the Al-Jazeera program: "We were offered material civilian relief in exchange for distancing ourselves from Al-Aqsa Mosque and the West Bank, but we decided to take the military

option." In the program "*Much is Hidden from View*" on Al-Jazeera, Hamas' operational orders for the October 7 attack were revealed. The directive specified:

- I. Begin recruiting and concentrating forces in stages according to a formal mobilization schedule.
 - II. Attack designated targets per the plan starting precisely at 6:30 AM on October 7, 2023.
- **Hamas is making another attempt to project its control over Gaza even after more than 15 months of war—this time through a "war film."** During the first weekend of the ceasefire, Al-Jazeera published new footage of Hamas leaders who were assassinated, alongside an interview with the commander of the Gaza Brigade, who remains alive.

Operational

- The Givati Brigade completed its mission after three months of fighting in Jabalya. Since October 7, it has lost 86 soldiers and is now preparing for its next assignments.
- Starting Sunday, Al-Rashid Road will be open for Gazans to travel north on foot. According to Axios, an American-Egyptian team is expected to deploy along this road and Salah al-Din Road to monitor and prevent the transfer of weapons northward. The Qataris are also a part of this mechanism. This mechanism was approved by Hamas during hostage deal negotiations, but doubts remain regarding whether weapons smuggling can be completely prevented.

Diplomatic

- **In a rare speech at the Knesset, Minister of Strategic Affairs and Prime Minister Netanyahu's confidant, Ron Dermer announced that there are diplomatic talks with other nations about the "Day After" plan.** In order for these plans to work, he said, details about the negotiations must not be leaked to the media and the public because it would sabotage these efforts. This suggests that Israel together with the US is trying to work out an arrangement in the Post-War Gaza in which the Abraham Accords countries would take part.

Domestic Israel

On Tuesday, January 21, **Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi announced his resignation, effective March 1.** Halevi stated that the war is not over and its objectives—**destroying Hamas' governance and military capabilities, returning the hostages, and safely restoring residents to their homes—**

have yet to be achieved. He plans to conclude his role with the submission of inquiry reports on the October 7 failures and condemned allegations of betrayal or claims of withholding information about the enemy's intent to attack. He recommended an external investigation committee to compliment the military investigation. Following his resignation, the Southern Command commander also announced his intention to step down due to his role in the October 7th failure. Defense Minister Israel Katz is in the process of appointing replacements.

- On January 21, 2025, a **stabbing attack occurred in Tel Aviv's Nahalat Binyamin neighborhood, resulting in injuries to four individuals.** The assailant, identified as **29-year-old Abdelaziz Kaddi—a Moroccan national holding a U.S. green card**—was shot and killed by an armed civilian at the scene

US-Israel Relations

While Trump has foreign policy hawks like Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, Trump has also nominated officials who are oriented towards appeasing Iran and Qatar. For example, the nomination of **Michael P. DiMino as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Middle East) and Elbridge Colby as undersecretary of defense for policy.** Both of them have expressed opinions that the US ought to reach some **accommodation with Iran in order to prevent a conflagration of a possible conflict.**

Michael P. DiMino openly called for withholding weapons from Israel and for putting more pressure on Israel to reach an agreement with Hamas as well as provide more humanitarian aid to Gaza. He is associated with the anti-Israel Quincy Institute, which was labeled as antisemitic by Senator Tom Cotton, and has called on the US to disengage from the Middle East. He is also associated with the isolationist "Defense Priorities" where he served as Former Public Policy Manager & Fellow.

- Trump's new Middle East Envoy, businessman Steve Witkoff, has some **troubling financial connections with Qatar.** In August 2023, the **Qatar Investment Authority (QIA), Qatar's sovereign wealth fund, acquired the Park Lane Hotel in Manhattan from Witkoff for approximately \$623 million.** This sale provided substantial capital to Witkoff's firm, which was in dire need of capital. Qatar often uses this type of economic activity to leverage diplomatic gains. Concerns have been raised over a potential conflict of interest between Qatar and Witkoff. Keeping an eye on how the cease-fire deal, which Witkoff negotiated with Qatar, is enforced will be a good indication of how independent he can operate from Qatar. Will Witkoff pressure Qatar to hold Hamas accountable for violating the

cease-fire agreement, or will he pressure Israel to overlook Saturday's violations?

- In an appearance on Fox, Witkoff **praised Qatar and their efforts in reaching the ceasefire deal,** while acknowledging that he did not even pressure Qatar to ascertain the accurate number of hostages that remain alive. It has been reported that Witkoff will soon act as the US Envoy for Iran, raising additional concerns in Israel.
- U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Rubio emphasized his commitment to addressing the Iranian threat.
- Sources told the *Financial Times* that President Trump **plans to appoint Washington's Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff, to oversee "Iran affairs."** **An Israeli source suggested this signals Trump's interest in exploring diplomatic relations with Tehran before applying military pressure.**
- President Trump, during the signing of executive orders at the White House, stated: **"I can't say whether I will support an Israeli attack on Iran." He expressed hope for a resolution without military action,** saying, "If we reach a deal with Iran, that's fine. If not, that's also fine."
- Secretary of State Rubio temporarily froze all international aid for 85 days, except for aid provided to Israel and Egypt, pending a comprehensive review.



Yahya Sinwar during the war as he appeared in Al Jazeera's program | Source: @ehajjarr on X

Judea and Samaria

- Trump signed an executive order lifting sanctions levied by the Biden administration on Israeli settlers and organizations in Judea and Samaria.
- **Hamas's spokesperson Bassam Naim suggested in a podcast produced by Middle East Eye that Hamas would focus its attention on Judea and Samaria and plans to cause more havoc on that front.**
- On Monday night into Tuesday morning, dozens of Jews entered the villages of Funduq and Jinsafut, setting fire to vehicles and property belonging to Palestinians as an act of revenge for the recent terrorist attack in Funduq that resulted in two killed with many injured. Security forces that arrived to disperse the event faced resistance, resulting in 2 Israeli suspects being injured.
- Two militants involved in the deadly Funduq attack were eliminated in the village of Burqin, west of Jenin. Several weapons were seized, and other terror operatives were arrested.

Operation "Iron Wall"

- Two battalions from the Kfir Brigade, along with Border Police, the Shin Bet, Egoz Unit, and Duvdevan, launched Operation "Iron Wall" in the Jenin refugee camp. They entered with heavy machinery, including D-9 and D-10 bulldozers. During the first 24 hours, they neutralized 10 militants in firefights and airstrikes. Combat engineering forces from the Judea and Samaria Division destroyed numerous explosives planted under roadways. This operation follows the failure of the Palestinian Authority police to defeat the Islamic Jihad in the area.
- **During the first 72 hours of the "Iron Wall" operation in Jenin ten militants were eliminated, 20 wanted individuals were arrested and numerous weapons including pipe bombs were confiscated.** A bomb-making laboratory was also located and destroyed.
- The Palestinian Authority police deployed around the camp, arresting any militants attempting to escape the IDF. Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and Islamic Jihad reported using explosives and small arms fire against the forces. This indicates a level of coordination between the IDF and PA security forces, with the PA beginning operations after IDF troops withdrew from the same areas—a collaboration that is highly uncommon. The militants targeting Israel are also seeking to undermine the PA, which struggles to maintain its grip on power. Both Israel and the PA share a mutual interest in maintaining stability in Judea and Samaria and are cooperating to suppress insurgencies in the region. Islamic Jihad, alongside the Al-Aqsa Brigades and Hamas, has established a joint operations room as the operation to counter "Iron Wall" which is expected

to continue for several weeks, essentially serving as a continuation of the "Summer Camps" operation



At the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad Hassan al-Shibani outlined the new Syrian government's vision for the country's future. | Source: snapshot from various social media posts

Lebanon

Diplomatic

- The IDF was initially supposed to withdraw from Lebanon by Sunday, January 26 as the ceasefire deal included a 60-day phase for pulling out troops. Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer, on behalf of Prime Minister Netanyahu, requested of U.S. President Donald Trump to extend the IDF's stay and establish three permanent outposts in strategic locations within the country.
- Despite American pressure, Israel **reached an understanding with Washington to delay its withdrawal from Lebanon due to Lebanon's failure to meet the ceasefire agreements.** According to the Prime Minister's Office, the phased withdrawal is contingent on the Lebanese Army deploying effectively in southern Lebanon and Hezbollah completely retreating north of the Litani River.
- **Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan** made a historic visit to Beirut, meeting Lebanese President Joseph Aoun and Prime Minister-designate Nawaf Salam. This marked the first high-level Saudi diplomatic visit to Beirut in 15 years.

Operational

- In recent days, the **Israeli Air Force attacked several targets across Lebanon in coordination with the Lebanese army.** Local reports claim that IDF forces have entered additional villages in southern Lebanon and are even constructing a military outpost between the villages of Adaiseh and Taybeh just north of the Israeli city of Metula.

- Over the past week, the IDF continued operations in villages in southern Lebanon, destroying infrastructure used by Hezbollah. Simultaneously, the Lebanese Army and UNIFIL forces deployed in various villages, to begin their role of ensuring that Hezbollah will not return to these villages.
- The Mountain Combat Team operating under the Bashan Division is encircling Mount Hermon in Syria to Mount Dov and Shebaa Farms in Lebanon. According to reports, it includes the 101st Paratrooper Battalion.
- The team is combing through the complex mountainous terrain, even at at more than 7 weeks into the cease-fire agreement, confiscating weapons such as rocket launchers, machine guns, anti-tank weapons, and missiles targeting Israeli territory.
- The 7th Combat Team (7th Armored Brigade) is operating in the eastern sector under the 91st Division. Alongside Yahalom fighters, they destroyed several underground routes used by Hezbollah militants. The 82nd Battalion Combat Team seized a significant weapons cache, including ammunition crates, mortars, RPGs, light weapons, Kornet missiles, and more.
- The Baram Combat Team, operating in the western sector under the 146th Division, combed through rural areas and discovered rocket launchers, ammunition crates, grenades, Kalashnikov rifles, missiles, and hundreds of mortar shells. Since the ceasefire in Lebanon at the end of November, the Baram Combat Team has located over 30 weapons depots and storage facilities.
- The IDF spokesperson reported the discovery of rocket launchers, weapons caches, explosives, RPG launchers, Kalashnikov rifles, Kornet missiles, and sniper weapons in the southern Lebanese village of Ayta ash-Sha'b. These were found in residential buildings, schools, and basements.

Syria

Diplomacy

- **Syrian Defense Minister Marhaf Abu Kasra** stated: "**Diplomacy is preferable to military action**, and mediators are pressing Israel to withdraw from areas it advanced into in southern Syria."
- Syrian Foreign Minister Assad al-Shibani, speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, promised, "The tragedy our people endured will never happen again."
- **Ahmad Al Sharaa' main goal with the new Trump administration is getting sanctions lifted off of Syria** and HTS. After Trump's inauguration HTS and Al Sharaa sent a letter congratulating the new President with a message of **willingness to cooperate and work closely together**.

Yemen

- The White House announced the **designation of the Houthis as a foreign terrorist organization**. Trump's executive order also aims to cut off Houthi funding sources.
- Following the **arrest of seven UN employees in Sana'a**, the UN suspended movements in Houthi-controlled areas to ensure staff safety.



Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan meeting with Lebanon's newly elected President, Joseph Aoun, at Baabda Palace in Beirut. | Source: Abu Ali Express on telegram, <https://t.me/abualiexpress>



Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan meeting with Ahmed Al Sharaa in Damascus | Source: General Command News Ahmed Al-Sharaa | Al-Julani on Telegram, https://t.me/syriaaa_2025