

December 6, 2023

# Flash Executive Summary Report



Following a seven day pause in military operations by the Israeli Defense Forces and Hamas, resulting in the release of 105 hostages in Gaza and the release of 240 Palestinians held in Israeli detention, Hamas initiated offensive operations on 1 December by firing multiple rockets from Gaza into southern Israel. Israel declared that 1 December began the second phase of their ground offensive in Gaza. The expectation is that the IDF will continue to conduct clearing operations of seized terrain in Northern Gaza; concurrently they have begun targeting Hamas terrorists and Hamas infrastructure in southern Gaza. Casualties continue to rise on both sides. Since combat operations resumed on 1 December, the UN estimates at least 200 Palestinian civilians have been killed or injured. This is in addition to the estimated 15,000 Palestinian casualties before the pause in offensive operations. The IDF has lost approximately 80 IDF soldiers and more than 2,000 soldiers were wounded since the ground offensive began in Gaza.

Israel estimates 137 hostages remain in Gaza, with 120 men, and 17 women and children. The released hostages are severely malnourished and most, if not, all are suffering from deep emotional trauma. Testimony from the released hostages affirms Hamas' mistreatment and their use as human shields.

Evidence gathered through IDF clearing operations of northern Gaza included the discovery of more than 800 tunnel shafts. Many of these tunnel shafts are inside Palestinian homes, and protected sites such as mosques and hospitals.

During the pause in offensive operations, the U.S. Administration remained consistent in supporting Israel's right to defend itself and eliminate Hamas from Gaza. However, the President, Secretary of State, and Secretary of Defense have increasingly pressured Israel to significantly reduce the number of Palestinian civilian casualties using refined intelligence to support targeting. The U.S. Administration, other Israeli allies and partners, and the UN are insisting that humanitarian aid continue to flow in through Raffa to mitigate the ongoing and worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

In advance of offensive operations commencing, the IDF distributed a map that breaks down the whole of the Gaza strip into hundreds of evacuation zones. The concept being, the IDF will notify Palestinians by SMS text, or leaflet drops of pending operations in a specific zone(s), allowing Palestinians time to evacuate within hours of air strikes and or ground combat operations. The challenge with this concept is that Hamas has access to the same early warning, allowing the terrorists to flee, circumvent and prepare for impending attacks. It is too early to tell if the evacuation zone concept will prove effective in significantly reducing civilian casualties.

In northern Israel, Lebanese Hezbollah resumed attacks against Israel concurrent with Hamas reinitiating rocket attacks on 1 December. The level of fighting is consistent with the pre-operational pause.

West Bank violence also continues to increase. Since October 7th, the Israeli Security Forces (ISF) and West Bank (WB) Jewish settlers have killed more than 240 Palestinians. The ISF have also detained more than 3,000 Palestinians within the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Israel has been very dismissive of the settler violence in the WB or explaining the preponderance of IDF raids conducted since October 7th.



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At present, Israel and Hamas have withdrawn from hostage negotiations. Qatar, Egypt, and the United States are encouraging dialogue to continue despite the resumption of combat operations.

## Way Ahead:

- The IDF will increasingly shift its focus of offensive operations including air strikes and ground combat operations to the central and southern areas of the Gaza Strip. More precise targeting, the use of evacuation zones, the continuing flow of humanitarian aid, and eventually, allowing Palestinians to return to northern Gaza, may reduce civilian casualties and human suffering as the IDF focus on killing or capturing Hamas.
- Lebanese Hezbollah, the Houthi terrorists, and other Iranian proxies will continue to seek opportunities to kill Israelis and attack the U.S. military personnel, infrastructure, and naval vessels in the region.
- There are growing discussions among the international community and within the media regarding the future of Gaza once Hamas' military capability is destroyed.
- We can expect the U.S. Department of State, in direct coordination with Israel and the Palestinian Authority, to increase dialogue regarding the future security and governance planning for Gaza and more broadly the West Bank post-war with Hamas.
- The framework for future governance and security in Gaza and the West Bank should include the Kingdom of Jordan, Egypt, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. These countries and other Arab States in the region are insistent that Israel cannot displace Palestinians from Gaza. Jordan and Egypt share borders with Israel and the Palestinian Territories. There are three million Palestinians in Jordan and approximately 100,000 Palestinians in Egypt. Jordan and Egypt have a vital interest in the establishment of legitimate security and governance in Gaza and stability across the Palestinian territories.
- Saudi Arabia's strategic influence with the Palestinian Authority, advocacy for past Israel and Arab State Normalization Agreements, as well as its leadership role on behalf of Sunni Arab states in the region, should put the Kingdom at the center of planning for the future security and governance of Gaza and the West Bank.

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