



| Flash | Israel-Hamas War Resumes

F-2023-12-04a

Classification: TLP:CLEAR

Criticality: Medium

Intelligence Requirements: Geopolitical, Physical Security

December 4, 2023

Scope Note: ZeroFox Intelligence is derived from a variety of sources, including—but not limited to—curated open-source accesses, vetted social media, proprietary data sources, and direct access to threat actors and groups through covert communication channels. Information relied upon to complete any report cannot always be independently verified. As such, ZeroFox applies rigorous analytic standards and tradecraft in accordance with best practices and includes caveat language and source citations to clearly identify the veracity of our Intelligence reporting and substantiate our assessments and recommendations. All sources used in this particular Intelligence product were **identified prior to 12:30 AM (EST) on December 4, 2023**; per cyber hygiene best practices, caution is advised when clicking on any third-party links.⁷

| Flash | Israel– Hamas War Resumes

> Key Findings

- Israel's military activity in the Gaza Strip since the ceasefire ended with Hamas has been concentrated on southern Gaza.
- While Israel's level of military activity since the ceasefire is about the same as it was pre-ceasefire, the casualty numbers are significantly higher because southern Gaza has absorbed most of the population displaced from northern Gaza.
- There could be an escalation in violence against Jewish communities abroad during Hannukah from December 7–15. Within Israel, Hamas may target increased security at checkpoints and roadblocks.
- International shipping assets in the Red Sea are being targeted by Iranian-backed groups that support Hamas.

| Details

Following the collapse of a week-long ceasefire between Israel and Hamas on December 1, 2023, intense fighting quickly resumed in the Gaza Strip. While clashes and airstrikes are still occurring in the northern portion of the enclave,¹ Israeli military operations are notably shifting southward. In the last several days, Israel widened evacuation orders in

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[hXXps://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-says-ground-forces-operating-across-gaza-strip-offensive-builds-2023-12-04/](https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-says-ground-forces-operating-across-gaza-strip-offensive-builds-2023-12-04/)

and around Khan Yunis, the second-largest city in the Gaza Strip.² Residents in the area have been urged to flee towards the Mediterranean or the southernmost city of Rafah.³

By some estimates, more than 170 Palestinians were killed in the hours immediately after the truce expired.⁴ Since that time, the total death toll has increased to nearly 16,000, according to Palestinian sources.⁵ The high casualty figures are likely the result of the densely-populated nature of contemporary southern Gaza, which has absorbed most of the population displaced from northern Gaza since the incursion began. Therefore, casualty figures per day are likely to be higher than they were before the ceasefire, even though Israeli military activity in Gaza is about the same. The elevated casualty figures since the ceasefire ended will likely increase international pressure on Israel to limit collateral damage, which, if it does, will likely make the incursion less effective at destroying Hamas' military capabilities and prolonging the war.

Hezbollah honored the ceasefire as well. However, with its end, deadly clashes resumed between the group's fighters and Israeli troops.^{6,7}

The renewed hostilities will also likely overlap with Hanukkah (December 7-15, 2023). Although public celebrations of the holiday are more muted in Israel when compared with those of other countries (i.e., the United States),⁸ related unrest has occurred in the past, such as in 2021, when Palestinians in Hebron rioted in response to President Isaac Herzog lighting a Hanukkah candle at the Cave of the Patriarchs.⁹ Therefore, it is likely the Israeli security forces will enact increased security measures around contentious sites, including road closures and checkpoints. These locations are potential hotspots for clashes between Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank.

Meanwhile, for Jewish communities abroad, concerns over the "significant resurgence in global jihad against the background of the war, as well as the Hanukkah holiday

² [hXXps://www.cbsnews\[.\]com/news/israel-expands-gaza-ground-offensive-south-widens-evacuation-orders/](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/israel-expands-gaza-ground-offensive-south-widens-evacuation-orders/)

³ [hXXps://www.thedailybeast\[.\]com/israel-orders-evacuation-of-safe-zones-as-southern-gaza-is-bombed](https://www.thedailybeast.com/israel-orders-evacuation-of-safe-zones-as-southern-gaza-is-bombed)

⁴ [hXXps://apnews\[.\]com/article/israel-hamas-war-live-updates-12-1-2023-0c225e35008879ea7574aabb077596f2](https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-war-live-updates-12-1-2023-0c225e35008879ea7574aabb077596f2)

⁵ [hXXps://twitter\[.\]com/sawtlebnan/status/1731716492532593126](https://twitter.com/sawtlebnan/status/1731716492532593126)

⁶ [hXXps://www.reuters\[.\]com/world/middle-east/three-killed-lebanon-israel-hezbollah-resume-fire-2023-12-01/](https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/three-killed-lebanon-israel-hezbollah-resume-fire-2023-12-01/)

⁷ [hXXps://www.naharnet\[.\]com/stories/en/301874-11-israelis-wounded-as-hezbollah-and-israel-trade-fire-anew](https://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/301874-11-israelis-wounded-as-hezbollah-and-israel-trade-fire-anew)

⁸ [hXXps://www.jpost\[.\]com/diaspora/survey-hanukkah-is-more-important-to-american-jews-than-israelis-573128](https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/survey-hanukkah-is-more-important-to-american-jews-than-israelis-573128)

⁹ [hXXps://www.jpost\[.\]com/breaking-news/palestinians-idf-clash-in-hebron-after-herzogs-candle-lighting-687224](https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/palestinians-idf-clash-in-hebron-after-herzogs-candle-lighting-687224)

celebrations” led the Israeli National Security Council to recently elevate travel threat warnings for 80 nations, including many in Europe and South America.¹⁰

| Threat to International Shipping

Attacks against international shipping operations in the Red Sea have become more frequent and more severe in the past several weeks. Following the start of Israel’s bombing campaign, Iran-backed Houthi rebels operating in Yemen began threatening to target Israel-linked shipping in the region. These threats escalated into action on November 19, when the Houthis hijacked a cargo ship owned by Israeli businessman Rami Ungar as it transited the Red Sea.¹¹ Despite a stepped-up security presence by the U.S. Navy and its partners, the Houthis conducted additional drone and missile attacks against Israel-linked cargo ships through the end of November though none caused significant damage or casualties.¹²

Attacks have also targeted U.S. military assets. On November 23, a U.S. warship shot down several Houthi-launched drones in self-defense.¹³ On November 26, a pair of missiles were launched from Houthi-controlled Yemeni territory at a U.S. warship as it responded to the attempted hijacking of another cargo ship by Somali pirates. Both missiles landed in the sea more than 10 nautical miles from the warship.¹⁴

The most egregious attack against shipping operations so far took place on December 3, when three cargo ships in the Red Sea were targeted by missiles and drones likely launched from Yemen. During the hours-long attack, all three cargo ships reported being struck by missiles that caused minor damage and no casualties. A U.S. warship operating in the area shot down several more missiles, some of which may have been

¹⁰ [hXXps://www.israelnationalnews\[.\]com/news/381404](https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/381404)

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[hXXps://thehill\[.\]com/policy/international/4317964-israeli-linked-ship-hijacked-by-yemens-houthi-rebels-with-25-hostages-taken/](https://thehill[.]com/policy/international/4317964-israeli-linked-ship-hijacked-by-yemens-houthi-rebels-with-25-hostages-taken/)

¹²

[hXXps://www.aljazeera\[.\]com/news/2023/11/23/us-warship-cruising-red-sea-shoots-down-attack-drones-fired-from-yemen](https://www.aljazeera[.]com/news/2023/11/23/us-warship-cruising-red-sea-shoots-down-attack-drones-fired-from-yemen)

¹³ [hXXps://www\[.\]france24\[.\]com/en/live-news/20231130-us-warship-shoots-down-drone-launched-from-yemen](https://www[.]france24[.]com/en/live-news/20231130-us-warship-shoots-down-drone-launched-from-yemen)

¹⁴ [hXXps://www.iranintl\[.\]com/en/202311282358](https://www.iranintl[.]com/en/202311282358)

targeting the warship itself. The Houthis claimed the attacks on two of the three ships.¹⁵ Israel has denied any connection to the targets.¹⁶

Similar attacks will likely continue as fighting resumes between Israel and Hamas. The U.S. Navy and its partners may further increase patrols in the Red Sea but will likely be unable to halt attacks altogether. The situation could worsen dramatically if an errant Houthi strike kills crewmembers of targeted cargo ships or U.S. warships. While attacks have thus far been seemingly designed to avoid that outcome, the risk of miscalculation will grow with the volume of attacks. In the meantime, shipping companies will face increased insurance costs as the route through the Red Sea becomes higher risk.¹⁷

¹⁵ [hXXps://www.stripes\[.\]com/theaters/middle_east/2023-12-03/pentagon-warship-attack-red-sea-12243158.html](https://www.stripes.com/theaters/middle_east/2023-12-03/pentagon-warship-attack-red-sea-12243158.html)

¹⁶ [hXXps://bnn\[.\]network/world/israel/idf-denies-connection-with-ships-attacked-by-houthi-movement/](https://bnn[.]network/world/israel/idf-denies-connection-with-ships-attacked-by-houthi-movement/)

¹⁷ [hXXps://geopoliticalfutures\[.\]com/the-high-cost-of-international-shipping/](https://geopoliticalfutures[.]com/the-high-cost-of-international-shipping/)

| Appendix A: Traffic Light Protocol for Information Dissemination

WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?

Red

Sources may use

TLP:RED when information cannot be effectively acted upon by additional parties and could lead to impacts on a party's privacy, reputation, or operations if misused.

Amber

Sources may use

TLP:AMBER when information requires support to be effectively acted upon but carries risks to privacy, reputation, or operations if shared outside of the organizations involved.

HOW MAY IT BE SHARED?

Recipients may NOT share

TLP:RED with any parties outside of the specific exchange, meeting, or conversation in which it is originally disclosed.

Recipients may ONLY share

TLP:AMBER information with members of their own organization and its clients, but only on a need-to-know basis to protect their organization and its clients and prevent further harm.

Note that

TLP:AMBER+STRICT restricts sharing to the organization only.

Green

WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?

Sources may use

TLP:GREEN when information is useful for the awareness of all participating organizations, as well as with peers within the broader community or sector.

Clear

Sources may use

TLP:CLEAR when information carries minimal or no risk of misuse in accordance with applicable rules and procedures for public release.

HOW MAY IT BE SHARED?

Recipients may share

TLP:GREEN information with peers and partner organizations within their sector or community but not via publicly accessible channels.

Recipients may share

TLP:CLEAR information without restriction, subject to copyright controls.

| Appendix B: ZeroFox Intelligence Probability Scale

All ZeroFox intelligence products leverage probabilistic assessment language in analytic judgments. Qualitative statements used in these judgments refer to associated probability ranges, which state the likelihood of occurrence of an event or development. Ranges are used to avoid a false impression of accuracy. This scale is a standard that aligns with how readers should interpret such terms.

Almost No Chance	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Roughly Even Chance	Likely	Very Likely	Almost Certain
1-5%	5-20%	20-45%	45-55%	55-80%	80-95%	95-99%