



The Sabra Report

Israel Shifting Hamas War Strategy

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Recap:

Israel is entering a new stage in its war against Hamas. As of Thursday, the total number of Israeli forces killed in Gaza reached 167 [1].

The Context:

- ✧ Israel's war with Hamas began after the terrorist group infiltrated Israel and killed 1,200, mostly civilian, Israelis. Hamas still holds 129 hostages in Gaza. More than 20,000 Gazans, including 8,000 Hamas terrorists, have been killed during the war [2].
- ✧ The IDF is preparing to scale back its offensive and dig in for a prolonged war aimed at toppling Hamas. The army plans to create a kilometer-wide buffer zone within Gaza where troops will launch raids on Hamas's leadership and infrastructure. The troop presence will be significantly smaller than it is today as Israel expects to reallocate soldiers to the north in 2024 [3]. Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said that Gaza's local population would likely soon be able to return to Gaza's north, which was the most populated area before Israel's invasion [4].
- ✧ The strategy shift coincides with US requests that Israel ease up on its high-energy bombardments and troop surges in urban areas [5], although the Biden administration has not put a "timestamp" on the war [6]. Last week the United Nations Security Council agreed to a watered-down resolution, at America's behest, calling for aid to be delivered to the Gaza Strip "at scale."
- ✧ Gallant said that the country was already "in a multifront war" and "coming under attack from seven theaters," naming Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Iran. This week, the United States conducted airstrikes on facilities used by Iranian proxies to target American troops in Iraq [7] and shot down 14 Houthi drones over the Red Sea, while a British warship shot down an attack drone targeting merchant shipping [8].

Conversation Points:

- ✧ What will be required of Israel to defeat Hamas in a prolonged war of attrition?
- ✧ How might Hamas adapt itself to a low-intensity conflict?
- ✧ Which front poses the greatest short-term risk to Israel?
- ✧ Which front poses the greatest long-term risk to Israel?
- ✧ What explains America's patience with Israel during this war?

Notes:

1. [Israel Will Not Soon End Its War with Hamas, Officials Say](#), Isabel Kershner and Thomas Fuller, New York Times, December 26th, 2023.
2. [Abbas says postwar period will be 'test' for US support of PA rule over Gaza Strip](#), GIANLUCA PACCHIANI, Times of Israel, 27 December 2023
3. [TV report: IDF shifting strategy to low-intensity, long-haul Gaza operation](#), Times of Israel, December 26th, 2023.
4. [Israel signals gradual shift in Gaza war, after US defense chief visit](#), Phil Stewart, Reuters, December 18, 2023
5. [TV report: IDF shifting strategy to low-intensity, long-haul Gaza operation](#), Times of Israel, December 26th, 2023.
6. [US presses Israel on civilian deaths, move to 'lower intensity' war in Gaza](#), Al Jazeera, November 24th, 2023.
7. [Israel Will Not Soon End Its War with Hamas, Officials Say](#), Isabel Kershner and Thomas Fuller, New York Times, December 26th, 2023.
8. [In Israel, US defense chief to look to next phase of Gaza war](#), Reuters, December 18, 2023

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