

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	652
Land:	Gaza-Vestbredden
Kilde:	ACLED
Titel:	Palestine - An Uncertain Future for Gaza and the West Bank
Udgivet:	17. januar 2024
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	2. februar 2024

Conflict Watchlist 2024

Palestine: An Uncertain Future for Gaza and the Bank

Posted: 17 January 2024

2023 was one of the most violent years across the Palestinian territories in decades. Following a deadly, coordinated surprise assault by Hamas on southern Israel on 7 October, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) launched an unprecedented air campaign on the Gaza Strip, with Israeli ground troops entering the northern area of the coastal enclave three weeks later. Since then, Israeli forces have expanded their operation into central and southern Gaza; fighting remains ongoing and is expected to still last for several months. Meanwhile, tensions in the West Bank, already [alarmingly high before 7 October](#), have escalated even further in recent months, as clashes between Palestinian armed groups and the IDF have intensified and settlers have ramped up violence.

Violence is expected to continue across the Palestinian territories, including after the current high-intensity fighting in Gaza ends.

The current conflict marks the deadliest phase of violence for Palestinians since the establishment of Israel in 1948,¹ with Gaza's Health Ministry indicating that the death toll has surpassed 23,000 people in less than three months of war.² Although there are no official tallies of the exact number of civilian fatalities within such a toll, the IDF claims that the fatality ratio is two civilians to one militant.³ The [ACLED Conflict Index](#) highlights the severity of the conflict in Palestine, with the country ranking in the top three in the indicators for the deadliness of reported violence, danger to civilians, and diffusion.

Israel's aerial campaign has involved over 3,045 airstrike events in 85 locations from October to the end of 2023. Despite Gaza's small size of just 360 square kilometers, this represents the highest number of airstrike events recorded within any three-month period by a single actor for any country or territory in the Middle East since 2017. While the intensity of airstrikes has decreased in the north during the last weeks of December as the IDF strengthened its operational control of the area, Israel has continued heavy bombardments of central and southern Gaza.

Although the IDF has made major advances, its ground invasion has been cautious and complicated by Hamas' vast network of tunnels and the fact that over 120 Israeli civilians and soldiers are still held captive in Gaza.⁴ Accompanied by heavy air power and artillery support, the IDF moved in hundreds of armored vehicles and thousands of troops into northern Gaza starting on 27 October, initially surrounding Hamas' stronghold Gaza City from three sides. Already by 24 November, when the two sides began to observe a one-week ceasefire, the IDF had established control over the majority of the north,⁵ although sporadic fighting has continued into 2024 in al-Darraj and al-Tuffah neighborhoods. Following the resumption of fighting on 1 December, the IDF expanded its ground operation into central and southern Gaza, and fierce fighting is ongoing around Khan Yunis, where Hamas' senior leaders and four main operational battalions are believed to be hiding.⁶ Israel had previously declared southern Gaza a safe zone for civilians fleeing the north, and the majority of 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza have now relocated to this area, constraining Israel's military maneuvers there.⁷ Furthermore, the extensive network of Hamas tunnels is believed to continue to pose a significant challenge to Israel, with troops combing through areas and blowing up tunnels rather than fighting underground.⁸

The increase in violence in Palestine was not contained to the Gaza Strip in 2023 — it was also notable in the West Bank. Already before the outbreak of hostilities in Gaza, the West Bank experienced a steady rise in settler violence, stepped-up IDF security operations, and the re-emergence of Palestinian armed groups' activities, making 2023 the deadliest year in the West Bank in two

decades. This trend intensified following the outbreak of violence in Gaza, pushing up the total number of people killed in the West Bank to 580 by the end of December. 2023 marked a nearly 200% rise in the number of armed clashes in the West Bank compared to 2022, while violence involving settlers increased by over 60%.

What to watch for in 2024

Israel's military superiority will likely allow it to advance further into Hamas strongholds in the southern Gaza Strip and to extend operations to Rafah and the Philadelphi Route near Egypt's border to destroy the smuggling tunnels. At the same time, Hamas and its allies will likely continue using asymmetrical tactics against Israeli troops, aiming to impose higher costs on Israel's forces as they advance into densely populated areas. Leveraging tunnel networks, Hamas fighters may employ tactics such as the use of minefields and IED traps, anti-tank attacks, and snipers, complicating Israel's efforts to fully neutralize Hamas leaders and combatants, locate concealed tunnels, and secure populated zones. Hamas' ability to sustain fights 'behind enemy lines' will, however, likely diminish as the IDF clears Hamas' centers of gravity.

Israel is facing increasing pressure to end its high-intensity military campaign. Given its relatively small population, it will be difficult for Israel to remain in a state of emergency and endure the economic and social consequences while simultaneously dealing with Hamas in the south and the Lebanese Hezbollah in the north. Additionally, as the humanitarian crisis in Gaza worsens, pressure from the international community is also mounting. International pressure on Israel may intensify due to the increased cost of shipping globally, as Yemen's Houthis continue to pose a challenge to commerce in [the Red Sea](#). It is, therefore, likely that Israel will wind down its major combat operations in the first part of 2024 after it has taken control of the major cities in the southern part of the Gaza Strip, ensuring that the militarily weakened Hamas is removed from governing Gaza. Israel's announcement in early January that it is withdrawing thousands of troops from Gaza is indicative that it is preparing to shift to a lower-intensity phase of its military operation, but more localized operations are expected to continue throughout 2024.⁹

Regardless of any potential Israeli military victory, it is almost certain that Hamas will not disappear from the Palestinian political scene. Hamas is deeply rooted in Palestinian society and draws strength from its Islamic ideology and the narrative of resistance against the occupation. The Gaza conflict may have even reinforced Hamas' resistance ideology among Palestinians, and the group will in some shape or form continue to influence the trajectory of events in Palestine in the future.

Israel's strategy for managing the aftermath of removing the Hamas government is unclear. Israel has announced that it aims to carve out a buffer zone within Gaza, and the IDF will remain responsible for the entire Gaza Strip until a civilian government takes over. Yet it is unclear who can assume this governing role. The United States' plan for the Palestinian Authority (PA) to rule over the entirety of the Palestinian territories appears to be infeasible for the time being. This is due to the weakness and unpopularity of the PA — manifested in its inability to effectively govern the West Bank — as well as the far-right Israeli government's objection to any plan that could revitalize a two-state solution. With the Israeli military likely to remain in charge of the Gaza Strip for the medium term, unrest and insurgency from remaining militants and new recruits is thus expected to follow the end of the current Israeli military operation. Israel will also continue to face the stand-off between the Palestinians in the West Bank and the 200,000 settlers who have exploited the conflict in Gaza to expand attempts to take more territory. The conflict, though reshaped, is therefore expected to go on.

Read More

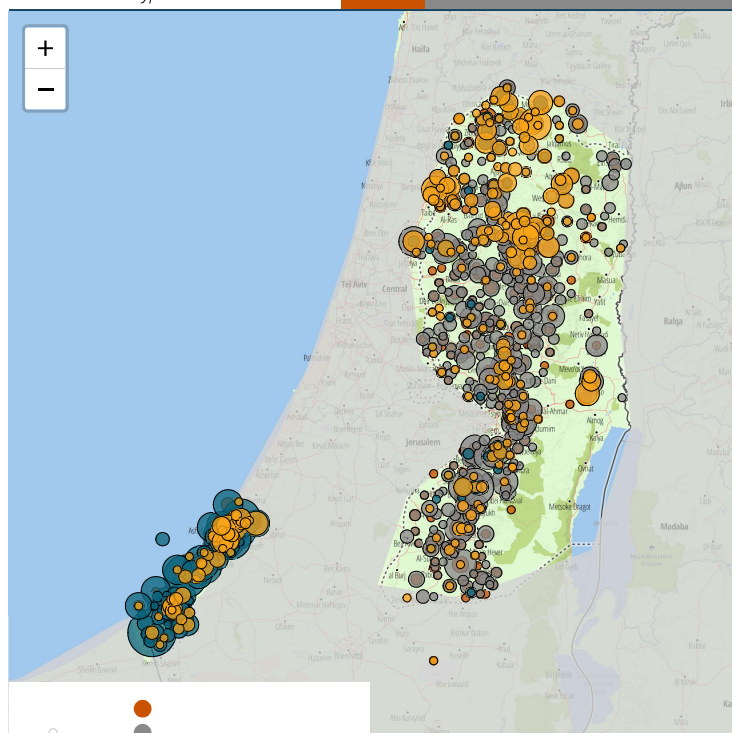
- [Myanmar](#)
- [Palestine](#)
- [Ukraine](#)
- [Mexico](#)
- [Sudan](#)
- [Haiti](#)
- [Yemen](#)
- [Sahel](#)
- [United States](#)
- [Democratic Republic of Congo](#)

Conflict Watchlist 2024: **Palestine**

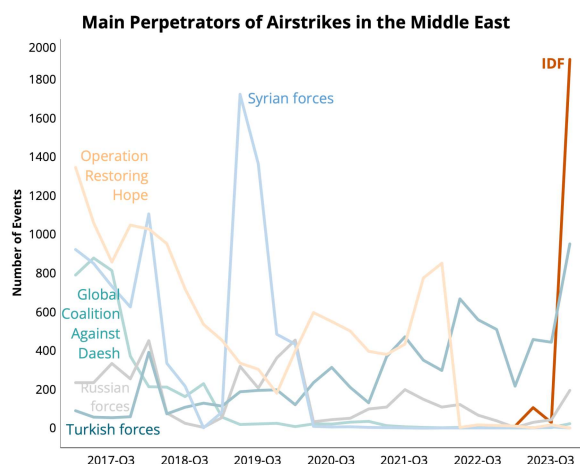
An Uncertain Future for Gaza and the West Bank



9,885 political violence events in 2023
Hover for totals disaggregated by event type



× Airstrikes perpetrated by the IDF in the last quarter of 2023 were the highest by a single actor in a quarter since 2017



Violence significantly increased in the West Bank in

Ameneh Mehvar is a Middle East Regional Specialist at ACLED. She holds a PhD in International Relations and a master's degree in Middle East and Central Asian Security from the University of St Andrews. She is a former ESRC postdoctoral fellow at the University of Birmingham, and has previously worked as a political risk consultant. Her research interests include security studies and the international politics of the Middle East. Ameneh is fluent in Persian, English and German, and has a working knowledge of Arabic.

Nasser Khmour

Nasser Khmour is an ACLED Researcher covering the political violence and protests in Palestine since 2021. He holds an MA in Security and Strategic Studies from the Australian National University. His research interests are Middle East security dynamics and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Nasser is currently based in Basel, Switzerland.

The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) is a disaggregated data collection, analysis, and crisis mapping project. ACLED is the highest quality and most widely used real-time data and analysis source on political violence and protest around the world. Practitioners, researchers, journalists, and governments depend on ACLED for the latest reliable information on current conflict and disorder patterns.

ACLED is a registered non-profit organization with 501(c)(3) status in the United States.

Please contact admin@acleddata.com with comments or queries regarding the ACLED dataset.



