Israel-Gaza War Spillover Risk: Mapping Recent Strikes in Middle East

Experts warn that the Israeli war on Gaza may spill over into a regional conflict amid multiple strikes in several countries.

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As Israel's war on Gaza pushes on in its fourth month, fears of regional escalation are growing, with multiple nations and armed groups targeting each other's territories and common waters, and the United States boosting its military assets in the region.

Last week, Iran launched attacks in Syria and Iraq after members of its elite forces were killed in the Syrian capital Damascus allegedly in Israeli attacks, while the US along with the United Kingdom have carried out several attacks against the Houthis in Yemen.

Tens of thousands of people have been displaced in Lebanon and Israel due to an exchange of fires between Israeli forces and Hezbollah fighters on their border.
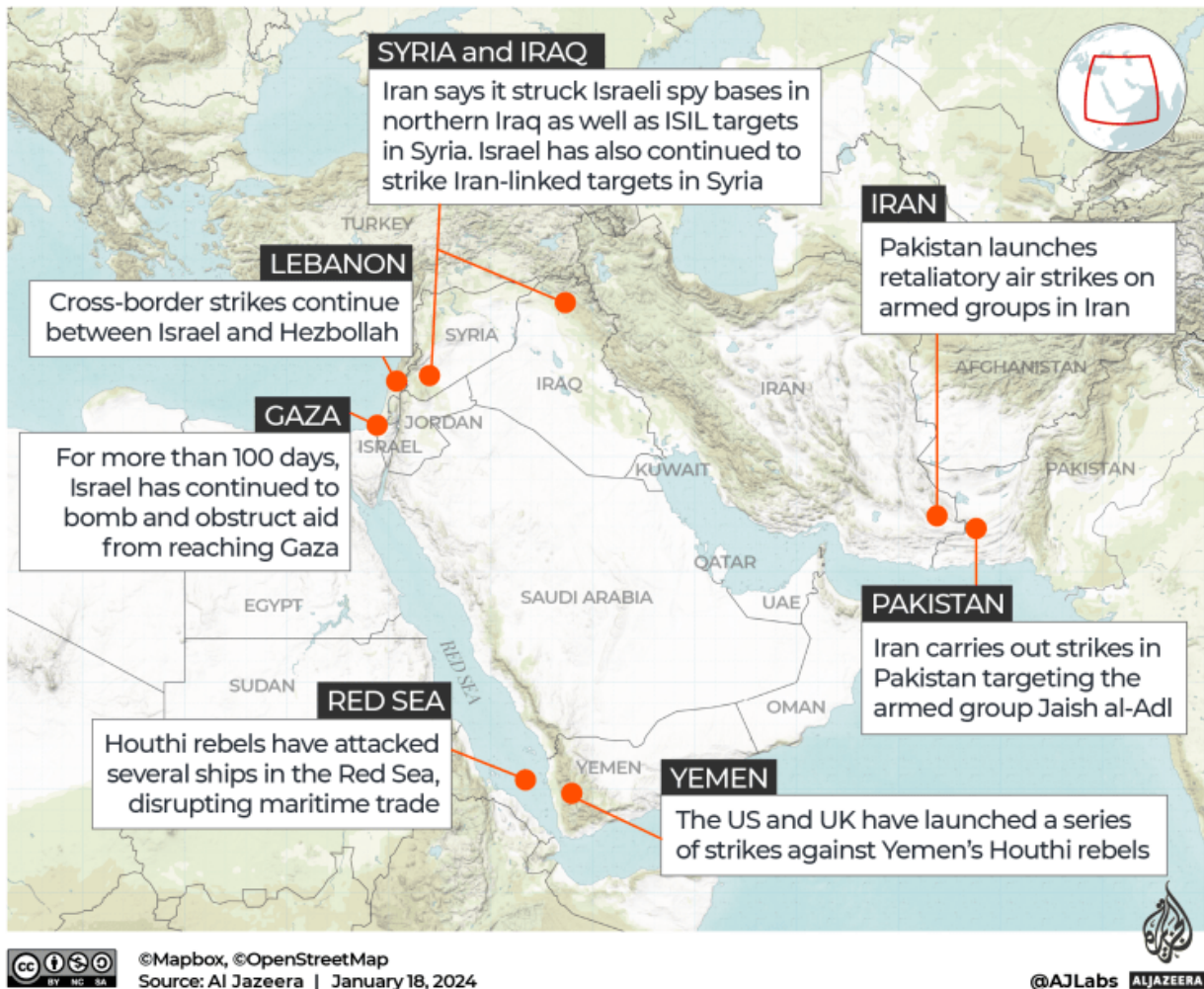
Last week, tit-for-tat attacks between Iran and Pakistan threatened to open a new military front, but diplomacy helped cool the tempers, for now.

Here is what you need to know about the military hostilities that have broken out in the region since the start of Israel's war on Gaza on October 7.

CONFLICT

Tensions rise across the region

A series of recent strikes by several players in the Middle East and beyond has heightened concerns about a wider regional spillover of the war in Gaza.

SYRIA and IRAQ
Iran says it struck Israeli spy bases in northern Iraq as well as ISIL targets in Syria. Israel has also continued to strike Iran-linked targets in Syria

IRAN
Pakistan launches retaliatory air strikes on armed groups in Iran

LEBANON
Cross-border strikes continue between Israel and Hezbollah

GAZA
For more than 100 days, Israel has continued to bomb and obstruct aid from reaching Gaza

PAKISTAN
Iran carries out strikes in Pakistan targeting the armed group Jaish al-Adl

RED SEA
Houthi rebels have attacked several ships in the Red Sea, disrupting maritime trade

YEMEN
The US and UK have launched a series of strikes against Yemen's Houthi rebels

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Source: Al Jazeera | January 18, 2024

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The Red Sea and Yemen

The Iran-backed Houthi group in Yemen has been targeting commercial and military ships linked to Israel in the Red Sea as a response to Israel's war in Gaza.

Houthi officials have demanded that Israel stop the war and allow humanitarian aid to enter the Palestinian enclave. The group's first attack occurred on November 19, 2023, when they took over a cargo ship called the Galaxy Leader, which records suggest is owned by an Israeli businessman.

Attacks in the Red Sea

Houthi fighters have attacked Israel-linked ships in the Red Sea, disrupting maritime trade, in retaliation to Israel's war on Gaza. The map shows attacks from November 19 to January 11.
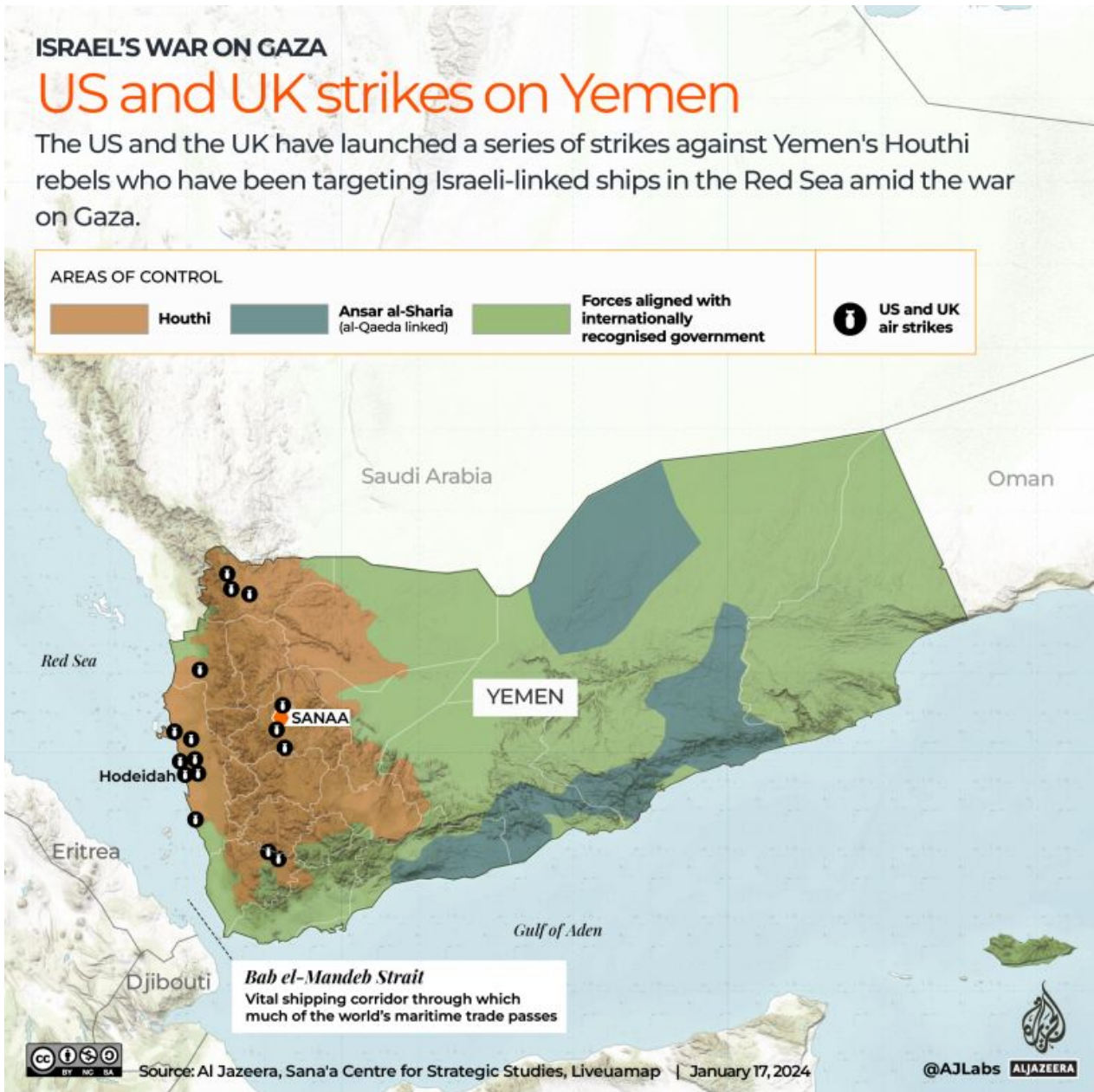

Houthi targeting of commercial ships has prompted multiple shipping companies to suspend operations in the Red Sea, instead embarking on a longer and costlier journey around the African continent.

In response, the US, Israel's closest ally, has carried out several attacks in Houthi-controlled regions of Yemen. Early on Wednesday, the US military carried out more strikes targeting Houthi anti-ship missiles.

ISRAEL'S WAR ON GAZA

US and UK strikes on Yemen

The US and the UK have launched a series of strikes against Yemen's Houthi rebels who have been targeting Israeli-linked ships in the Red Sea amid the war on Gaza.

AREAS OF CONTROL

Houthi | Ansar al-Sharia (al-Qaeda linked) | Forces aligned with internationally recognised government | US and UK air strikes

Saudi Arabia

Oman

Red Sea

YEMEN

SANAA

Hodeidah

Eritrea

Gulf of Aden

Djibouti

Bab el-Mandeb Strait
Vital shipping corridor through which much of the world's maritime trade passes

Source: Al Jazeera, Sana'a Centre for Strategic Studies, Liveuamap | January 17, 2024

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Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah

Almost daily cross-border [artillery firing](#) and drone attacks between Israeli forces and Hezbollah fighters threaten to open another front in Israel's war. Tens of thousands of people on both sides of the border have been forced to flee their homes.

The [Lebanese armed group](#) has said its attacks are an act of resistance in solidarity with the 2.3 million people in Gaza who are besieged and undergoing daily Israeli bombardment that has killed more than 25,000 people. Warning Hezbollah against crossborder attacks, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said his country will turn Beirut into Gaza.

Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah has not declared all-out war against Israel, but said his forces are [not afraid](#) of getting involved in one.

Israeli attacks on southern Lebanon have killed more than 200 Hezbollah fighters, journalists, and civilians while also internally displacing more than 80,000 people from the area, the United Nations reported in December. At least 15 Israelis have been killed in Hezbollah strikes.

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LEBANON-ISRAEL

Cross-border attacks

Tens of thousands of people have been displaced on both sides of the Israel-Lebanon border due to regular exchanges of fire since October 7. More than 200 people have been killed in Lebanon while the Israeli toll stands at 15.

Legend: ● Attacks from Israel ● Attacks from Lebanon

Map labels: LEBANON, SYRIA, Israel-occupied Golan Heights, ISRAEL

Google Earth. Source: Al Jazeera, The Washington Institute | January 23, 2024. @AJLabs ALJAZEERA

Israel-Syria

Israel has launched repeated air raids on Syria since its war on Gaza, reigniting tensions between the two countries. It claims its attacks are a response to threats from Syrian military positions and Iran-linked infrastructure.

Tehran is the main military backer of President Bashar al-Assad in the war that erupted in 2011.

The attacks have primarily targeted the capital city, Damascus, and Aleppo. Last Saturday, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said five of its "military advisers" were killed in an air raid on a residential building in Damascus. Razi Moussavi, a senior adviser in the IRGC, was previously killed in an Israeli attack outside Damascus.

The two countries have been engaged in repeated military confrontations since Israel was first established in 1948. Israel still occupies Syria's Golan Heights, which it captured in the 1967 war.

ISRAEL-SYRIA

Israeli air raids in Syria

Israel has carried out several attacks inside Syria, targeting what it claims are Iran-linked groups. Several members of Iran's elite forces have been killed in Syria since October 7.

Attacks

Source: Al Jazeera | January 23, 2024

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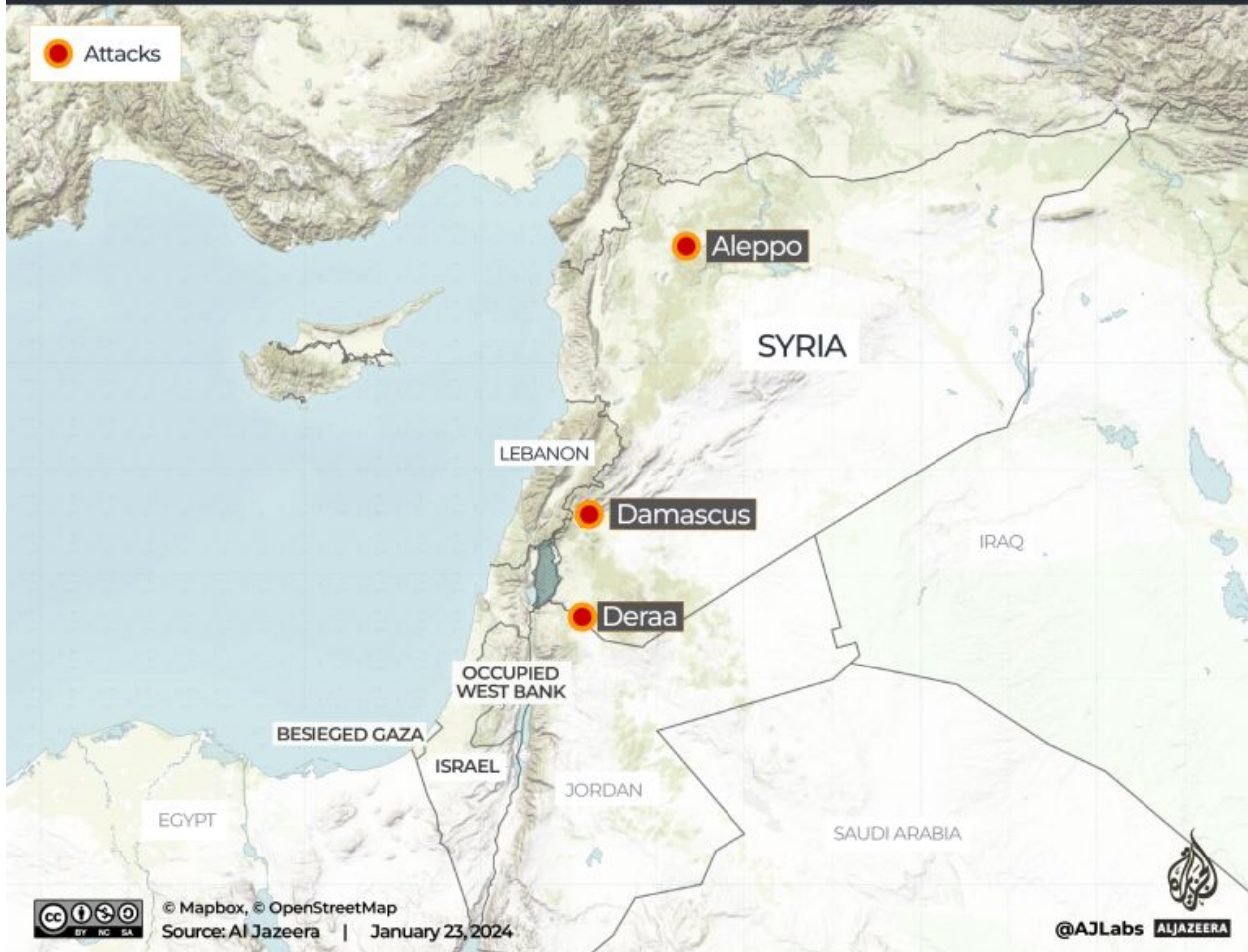
Iran-Iraq

Iraq has criticised Iran after the Revolutionary Guard hit what they called an Israeli espionage centre in the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region. The event prompted Baghdad to recall its ambassador to Tehran, while Iran insisted the attack was intended to deter threats from Israeli spies.

Prior to this, Iran-backed groups have carried out numerous attacks on US military bases in Iraq and Syria. The US has retaliated, [targeting and killing the commander](#) of an Iraqi armed group on January 4. The incident prompted Iraq to reconsider hosting international troops.

The United States on Tuesday carried out strikes in western Iraq against three targets linked to Kataib Hezbollah, an Iran-backed armed group.

IRAQ-IRAN-SYRIA
Cross-border strikes

The US has struck Iran-linked groups in Iraq and Syria. Iran-backed groups have in turn targeted US military bases in Iraq and Syria. And Iran has bombed a site in Iraqi Kurdistan that it claims was an Israeli outpost.

Attacks ● Iran-linked groups ● US strikes

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Source: Al Jazeera, Critical Threats, Institute for the Study of War | January 23, 2024
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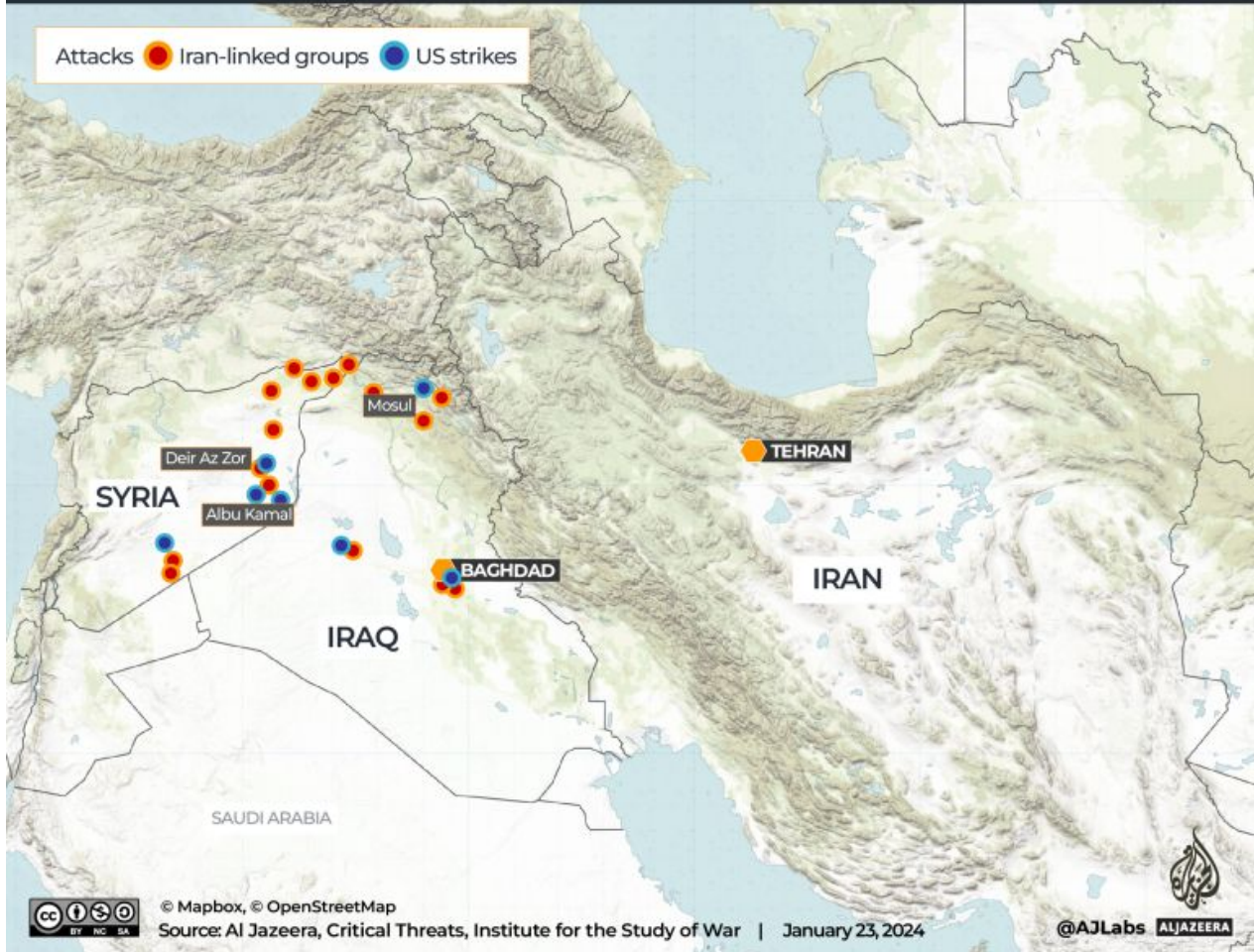
Israel-Gaza

More than 85 percent of Gaza's people have been displaced since Israel launched its brutal war on October 7 in the wake of Hamas's attack inside Israel. Israeli attacks have targeted schools, hospitals and residential buildings, almost completely destroying civilian infrastructure. UN agencies say people are facing a famine-like situation as Israel has rebuffed calls for a ceasefire.

Hamas's surprise attack killed at least 1,139 people, according to an Al Jazeera tally based on official Israeli statistics. Hamas had also taken about 240 people captive. More than 100 were released during a four-day truce between Israel and Hamas in November.

100 DAYS OF ISRAEL'S WAR ON GAZA

1.9 million

PEOPLE HAVE BEEN INTERNALLY DISPLACED

That's more than 8 out of every 10 people in Gaza

Nearly 1.72 million displaced people are sheltering in 155 UNRWA facilities

Source: UNRWA | January 14, 2024

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Iran-Pakistan

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) targeted the Jaish al-Adl armed group in Panjgur, Pakistan's Balochistan province, leading to Pakistani retaliation against armed Baloch separatists in Iran's Sistan-Baluchestan province.

This resulted in a rapid deterioration of diplomatic relations, with ambassadors withdrawn. However, both countries then engaged in de-escalation efforts, with ambassadors returning to their posts by January 26.

PAKISTAN-IRAN ATTACKS

Cross-border strikes

Pakistan's air force has launched "retaliatory" strikes on Iran. Tehran said at least four women and three children were killed. An Iranian missile attack in Pakistan on Tuesday night had killed two children and injured three others. Both countries allege they have targeted "terrorist" hideouts.

Saravan
100km (62 miles) from the border

Panjgur
80km (50 miles) from the border

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Source: Al Jazeera | January 18, 2024
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Could the Situation Escalate Further?

Experts warn that if Israel's war on Gaza does not end, the conflict could spill over, bringing in new players.

"Without a ceasefire in Gaza, it's hard to see how this gets better. And I think the simmering pot is now boiling over, and it's just going to get worse and worse as time goes on. It's really a very dangerous moment," Hassan El-Tayyab, legislative director for Middle East policy at Friends Committee on National Legislation, a Quaker advocacy group in Washington, DC, told Al Jazeera earlier this month.

US foreign policy also seems set on continuing its military activity, after President Joe Biden pledged last week that US attacks would continue in spite of their failure to deter Houthi attacks in the Red Sea.

Iran's entanglement in several of the confrontations has also deepened worries that it could serve as a hub for regional conflict, particularly with its links to armed groups outside its own borders.

Western and regional authorities, as well as analysts, generally agree that Iran aims to steer clear of a direct military clash with the US or Israel.

However, the country appears open to employing its proxies to engage and divert the attention of the military forces of these adversaries within the region.

The primary risk of escalation arises from a potentially misguided attack either executed by Iran and its proxies or by the US and its allies.

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Featured image: The US has stepped up its military deployment across the Middle East amid Israel's war on Gaza [File: US Navy via AP Photo]

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