



January 18, 2024

### Jewish Federations

- **Learn more** about the insidious myths around the legality of Israel's war on a Jewish Federations' webinar **on Wednesday, January 24 at 1 pm ET** with Major John Spencer and Lieutenant Colonel Geoffrey S. Corn, who have nearly five decades of combined military experience. [Register here](#).
- Join the **Jewish Agency for Israel's webinar** with David Makovsky, (Ziegler Distinguished Fellow at The Washington Institute) and a renowned scholar and author, exploring **the future of the Middle East and Israel** going forward after the October 7 attacks by Hamas and the ongoing war. **Tomorrow, Friday, January 19 at 11 am ET**. [Register here](#).

### Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Activities

- As fighting continues, Israel's Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said, "There is only one legal response for actions like those perpetrated on the seventh of October – elimination of the organization.... I hear the rumors [about a hostage exchange deal with Hamas without full victory, but] we will continue fighting until victory. Not near, not almost, not basically - but until we smite the Hamas organization, take away all of its significant military capabilities, and remove it from power in Gaza."
- The IDF has reported that the **Gaza tunnel network** is more extensive than previously thought. Current estimates are that there are over 450 miles of tunnels under Gaza with at least 5,700 entrance shafts. Khan Younis alone has over 100 miles of underground tunnels. (For comparison, the New York subway system is just 245 miles in total).
- In the last 24 hours of fighting in Gaza, approximately **60 terrorists** were killed by the IDF. In the city of Khan Younis, troops carried out a targeted raid at the residence of a known terrorist, where [soldiers battled](#) and killed 40 terrorists; they uncovered grenades, AK-47 rifles, military equipment, and technological assets (see [photos](#)).
- In **northern Gaza**, IDF forces successfully thwarted an ambush planned by two armed terrorists. A series of aerial strikes was conducted to neutralize armed terrorists, including those who were operating in close proximity to a school.

### Hamas And Hezbollah

- While Israel seems to have been caught by surprise by the October 7 attacks, leaders of both Hamas and Hezbollah had made their intentions clear for a long time.
- Hamas senior official Yahya Sinwar, who is the mastermind behind the October 7 massacres, spoke openly about his plans to attack Israel at a rally in Gaza in December of 2022. He [said](#), "We will come to you, God willing, in a roaring flood. We will come to you with endless rockets, we will come to you in a limitless flood of soldiers, we will come to you with millions of our people, like the repeating tide."
- Saleh al-Arouri, the most senior Hamas official eliminated in the war to date, spoke to Lebanese TV in August of 2023 [saying](#), "A total war has become inevitable. We all consider it necessary... We are meeting with all the parties that [will take part] in this total war, and we are discussing together the different scenarios and possibilities."
- In an [interview](#) on a Lebanese broadcast just a few weeks after the massacres, Hamas senior official Ghazi Hamad called the existence of Israel "illogical" and vowed that Hamas would repeat the attacks until the annihilation of Israel. "The Al-Aqsa Flood is just the first time, and there will be a second, a third, and a fourth," he said.
- In May 2021, senior Hamas official Fathi Hammad [said](#), "The Jews are a treacherous people. There can be no peace with the Jews. There can be no peace with the Zionists. The only thing we have for the Zionists is the sword."
- Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah has a decades-old history of supporting and advocating for terrorist attacks against Jewish and Western targets., "If they (Jews) all gather in Israel, it will save us the trouble of going after them worldwide." For over two decades he has long advocated for attacks against America. In 2002 he [said](#), "Our hostility to the Great Satan [America] is absolute... Regardless of how the world has changed after 11 September, Death to America will remain our reverberating and powerful slogan: Death to America."
- Last month, Hezbollah official Nawaf Moussawi [said](#), "I have a desire for ground combat that we'll fight with the Zionist enemy... We have some weapons and can have whatever we want sent to us."

## Rockets

- The number of **Hamas** rocket attacks on Israel remains low.
- In the **north**, Hezbollah continues to fire at Israeli targets. Yesterday, IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi said that the likelihood that Israel will be drawn into a war in Lebanon is growing. Halevi said that Israel was "increasing readiness for fighting in Lebanon," even as it seeks to stabilize its northern border and allow tens of thousands of Israelis evacuated from the region to return home.
- In the **Red Sea**, a rocket was fired at Eilat, presumably by the Iran-back Houthis rebels in Yemen, for the first time in six weeks. Sirens sounded in the city as the rocket was intercepted by Israel's air defenses. No damage or injuries were reported.

## Hostages

- Following negotiations mediated by Qatar and France, Hamas is set to **receive medicines for the Israeli hostages** today. Two small planes were sent from Qatar to Egypt carrying French medicines based on a prescription list provided by the hostage families for some 45 of those being held by Hamas. The deal entails the entry of 145 types of medicine. In exchange, Hamas will receive 1,000 doses

of medicine in exchange for each single dose of medicine for an Israeli hostage. It remains unclear how it will be verified that the medications actually reach the hostages, (and the International Red Cross has said that it is not part of the deal).

- Israel's President Isaac Herzog held up [a photo](#) of baby-hostage, **Kfir Bibas**, while speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland yesterday. Kfir turned one year old in captivity yesterday.
- It is believed that **132 hostages** remain in Gaza. The IDF has confirmed the deaths of at least 27 of them, citing intelligence and findings obtained by troops operating in Gaza and elsewhere. Hamas has also been holding the bodies of fallen IDF soldiers Oron Shaul and Hadar Goldin since 2014, as well as of two Israeli civilians, Avera Mengistu and Hisham al-Sayed, who are both thought to be alive after entering the Strip of their own accord in 2014 and 2015 respectively.

### Israel's New Budget

- A new budget for 2024 is likely to be passed in the Knesset in the coming weeks, and must be finalized by February 19. It has already been approved by the Cabinet, although minor changes are still likely.
- The government had earlier passed a two-year budget for 2023-24, but this needed to be radically revised, due to the significant additional costs of the war and other new priorities.
- The new budget is for approximately \$155 billion, reflecting a rise of \$18.5 billion in government spending.
- It has been estimated that the war has been costing Israel around \$250 million per day.
- The significant **increases in spending** include:
  - repayment of debts connected to the war;
  - compensation for those impacted by the conflict,
  - higher allocations for healthcare, police, welfare, and education (as a result of the war);
  - future strengthening of the IDF;
  - \$2.4 billion to support IDF reservists and their families;
  - funding for the public mental-health system;
  - money for rehabilitating the Gaza border area;
  - support for the hi-tech and real-estate sectors.
- These increases will be **funded by**:
  - An increased budget deficit of 6.6% (representing some \$5.3 billion)
  - Across the board cuts in the budgets of all ministries
  - Several tax hikes, including on banking profits
- **Politically**, it has been difficult for Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to secure the agreement of his coalition partners (as well as some of his fellow-Likud ministers) to the vast cuts needed, as many areas that are being slashed are important to the constituents of some parties.

### Stories of Heartbreak, Heroism, and Hope

- **Read about [Tal Maman](#), 38, a father and farmer who fought to protect his kibbutz.**
- **Watch the [story](#)** of 79-year-old Avraham Munder, who has been separated from his family for 103 days as he remains in Hamas captivity. A husband, father and grandfather, Avraham is described by loved ones as a modest man with a lovely voice. He works as a warehouse supervisor on Kibbutz Nir Oz and sings in a

choir. His son Roi was murdered by terrorists on October 7th, and his wife Ruti, daughter Keren, and grandson Ohad were taken captive; they were later released in a hostage deal.

- The father of the late Cpl. Adir Tahar, 19, who was killed on October 7, [told media](#) that a terrorist from Gaza decapitated his son and later tried to sell his head for \$10,000. He added that “by a miracle” it was eventually found by the army and returned to Israel for burial.

### Further Reading

- Challenges and responses to the [Israeli health system](#) during the war
- Even Before the Guns Fall Silent: [Israel’s Political Debates Reawaken](#)
- The [impact of loss](#) on communities in the south

### Jewish Federations’ Resources

- Jewish Federations’ **Israel Emergency Campaign** has now raised a total of \$768 million system-wide; and has allocated nearly \$283 million to a wide range of humanitarian organizations in Israel. See a detailed update on allocations [here](#).
- As reported last week in [eJP](#), Jewish Federations have launched a new fund to help small business owners affected by the war in Gaza.
- As part of the [Second Line](#) initiative, Jewish Federations are partnering with the Israel Ministry of Health, the Israel Trauma Coalition, and Birthright Israel to recruit qualified volunteers to provide both in-person and remote support to both affected populations and local mental health professionals in Israel. Native Hebrew speakers are particularly in demand, although speakers of French, Russian, Ukrainian, Arabic, Amharic, and Spanish will also be considered. Volunteers must be able to travel to Israel for six weeks. This is a golden opportunity for engagement, particularly for communities that can recruit a small group as a cohort. To apply, click [here](#). For more information, contact [Hannah Miller](#).
- Jewish Federations’, 10/7 Project is a collaboration with AJC, AIPAC, ADL, and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. The [10/7 Project](#) is an organized effort to **counter the disinformation** about the attacks of October 7th and Israel’s response, especially aimed at the key media and government influencers. [See here](#) for more information about the 10/7 project, as well as [this news bulletin](#).
- **Resources:** Readers can see links to resources, background, research and other information on the current war [here](#); can access a Jewish Federations toolkit [here](#), and can refer to the Community Mobilization Center [Resource Hub](#) for the latest talking points and tools.
- See these **resources** by Jewish Federations that give insight into some areas of Federations’ emergency allocations:
  - [Volunteers](#)
  - [Women](#)
  - [Pastoral Guidance](#)
  - [Bedouin Communities](#)
  - [Food Security](#)
  - [People with Disabilities](#)
- **Details:** For information on the latest overall numbers from the conflict, see [here](#).
- **Webinar:** The Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI): Daily webinars sponsored by Jewish Federations and the Jewish Agency are offered. A rotating team of

analysts of Israeli military affairs, the US-Israel relationship, Israel's political system, and of the country's diverse society will speak every **Sunday to Thursday from 11-11:30 am ET**. No registration is required. Join [here](#).

- **Volunteering:** Read [this](#) updated Jewish Federations' update on the latest volunteering opportunities in Israel right now.
- **Local Authorities:** Jewish Federations have produced a document answering questions about funding impacted localities and municipalities in Israel. See [here](#).
- Read the latest communication from the **Community Mobilization Center** [here](#).
- **Previous updates** can be found [here](#).

### **Jewish Federations**

Our Israel Office, having activated emergency protocols, is working closely with our partners on the ground, and is in close contact with the Government of Israel and the IDF. We will continue to update as the situation develops.