



October 16, 2023

Key Points:

- On day 10 of Israel's War with Hamas, rocket fire has slowed considerably as Hamas appears to be losing control over Gaza.
- With a ground invasion imminent, US President Biden is said to be considering a visit to Israel in the coming days.
- At home, Israeli citizens and corporations have been rallying to support soldiers as well as all those affected by the fighting.
- Jewish Federations along with 50 partner organizations have launched [#BlueRibbonsforIsrael](#). [Learn more here](#).

The Home Front

Funerals continue to take place across Israel, as more victims are identified. Of the 1300 Israelis killed, 291 soldiers are among the confirmed dead - of whom 75 are from the Golani Brigade which was deployed on the Gaza border on the day of the invasion. See [here](#) for a list of the names of those murdered that have been released so far, and [here](#) for a site in Hebrew with the names and photos of fallen soldiers.

For infographics with the latest numbers from the conflict, see [here](#).

Yesterday, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met with the families of some of the hostages (see video [here](#)). The official number of hostages being held by Hamas is now believed to be 199 (see more [here](#)). And see [here](#) for information (and an infographic) on foreign citizens among the hostages. Stories about those being held by Hamas are emerging all the time. [This](#) elderly couple, now captives in Gaza, took upon themselves to transport Arab patients from Gaza to hospitals in Israel for treatment. They would wait at the Gaza border crossing every day and drive patients to Israeli hospitals, and then would take care of them in Israel until their treatment was over.

With growing reports coming to light of the unspeakable atrocities committed by Hamas last Saturday, Israeli authorities have been torn as to whether to release some of the harrowing images. On the one hand, the government wants to maintain the dignity of those who died, but at the same time feels it is important for the world to understand what took place. It has now been confirmed that horrific photos were shown to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken of babies who were burned alive, and others who were decapitated. See more about this issue [here](#).

Rocket fire has slowed considerably, but has been punctured by barrages, including to Tel Aviv and other locations in the center of the country.

There has been a gradual return to in-person schooling, in safer areas in Israel. Meanwhile hospitals have restarted performing non-elective surgeries in areas not directly affected by the fighting. A large area around the Gaza Strip remains a closed military zone, to which entry by civilians is prohibited. See map [here](#).

In the North, the government implemented a plan to evacuate residents of 28 small towns and kibbutzim along the Lebanese border. Earlier, the IDF had declared an area of two and a half miles from the border a closed zone while allowing residents to remain if they so chose. The evacuation took place against the backdrop of Hezbollah continuing to fire rockets and test Israel. In one of the attacks yesterday, an anti-tank rocket was launched at an army outpost near the Lebanese border, and an Israeli officer was killed. Earlier today, the IDF spokesperson said that any major attack from Lebanon would be met by a “lethal” response.

Israeli Response

Most reports indicate that Israeli ground forces may enter Gaza at any moment. Yesterday, Chief of the General Staff Hertzi Halevi visited troops poised to attack, and reviewed plans with commanders. See images [here](#) as well as [video](#) footage.

Israeli airstrikes against Hamas targets in Gaza overnight were the heaviest attacks since fighting began last week. The bombings were most intense in Gaza City. See [here](#) for high-resolution footage of an F16I air force jet carrying out missions against Hamas, and video of high-precision strikes can be seen [here](#).

The IDF also says it has targeted and killed numerous Hamas leaders involved in the massacres of October 7. See details [here](#).

Some reports indicated that Israel agreed to hold fire in southern Gaza for a few hours this morning while the border with Egypt is opened. This would allow the entry of humanitarian aid to the Strip, as well as an opportunity for foreign nationals to leave. Israel has officially denied that it agreed to the gesture, although no Israeli attacks have been reported in the area.

Following the IDF warning issued to Gazan civilians to evacuate the north of the Strip, Israel estimates that more than 650,000 of the area’s one million residents have left their homes. Some 70 people were killed, many of them children, when an attack occurred in one of the “safe corridors” that Israel had provided to those Gazans fleeing. The IDF says it did not carry out any strikes in the area and that Hamas was responsible for the attack. Hamas has been using various means to stop Gazans from leaving their homes. According to Israeli sources, Hamas wants to keep Gazan residents in place to use them as human shields and for propaganda purposes. Listen [here](#) to a phone conversation between Israeli authorities and a Gazan citizen explaining that he is trying to escape the fighting, but that Hamas has confiscated his id papers and car keys in order to prevent him from leaving. Israel also reopened the water supply to the southern part of the Gaza Strip as an additional incentive for Gazans to move south, enabling the IDF more freedom of movement once it launches a ground war.

Tales of heroism continue to emerge. See [here](#) for a new collection of stories, including

a 70-year old reserve soldier who continues to fight, and [here](#) for the account of a Beduin officer who continued to fight, even as a rocket killed his niece. See too [this](#) story about a young Arab Israeli man serving in the IDF; and [this](#) story from BD News. The tale of Ha'aretz reporter Amir Tibon's rescue by his 62-year old father will be recounted by Amir in a special webinar with CJP - the Jewish Federation of Boston at **12 Noon ET tomorrow (Tuesday, October 17)**. Register [here](#).

Hundreds of documents and materials about Saturday's attacks have been collected by the IDF, including cell phones, communication equipment, cameras, and dozens of intelligence reports that were widely distributed to the terrorists. The military has assembled a task force to analyze the equipment recovered from the Hamas invaders. Among the documents collected were detailed orders to attack communities near the Gaza Strip, including orders to commit atrocities against both civilians and soldiers. In addition, a pamphlet and breakdown of the combat doctrine used by the Hamas forces that carried out the terror attack was found. The documents contained orders for coordinated actions, listed the stages of attack and detailed code words. One section list guidelines for kidnapping civilians from communities near the Gaza Strip. Soldiers also located the body of a Hamas terrorist within Israel with a detailed plan for a terrorist attack on Kibbutz Alumim. Among other the items found were an ISIS flag, an Iranian flag and a flyer given out to Hamas terrorists with key phrases in Arabic and their Hebrew pronunciation such as "give me the car keys", "get on the floor", "I will kill you" and "take your pants off." See images of captured materials [here](#). And see an article [here](#) about how Hamas prepared for its invasion.

Similarly, Israel's President Isaac Herzog tonight presented to audiences on CNN a booklet found on captured Hamas terrorists, entitled "The Warrior's Guide - Jihad Version." In the pamphlet, terrorists are advised in detail on how to carry out kidnappings. According to the description, the kidnappers are required to create chaos and intimidation, coercing and blindfolding captives, and using electric shocks among other methods. The materials also instruct Hamas members to execute any person who may pose a threat or distraction. They were also instructed to collect the captives and use them as human shields if necessary without distinction of religion, age, race or gender.

In his interview, the President said, "We are faced with an extremely cruel, inhumane enemy which we have to uproot with no mercy. This was found on the body of one of the terrorists, this booklet is an instruction guide, how to go into civilian premises, into a kibbutz, a city, a moshav, how to break in. And first thing what do you do when you find the citizens? You torture them? This is the booklet - it says exactly how to torture them, how to abduct them, how to kidnap them. So therefore the story is not Israel versus Palestinians, or Judaism versus Islam - God forbid - the story is about humans, humanity, are we with the good or with evil, that's where humanity should stand. And the battle that we are carrying out now, as a nation rising up as a lion is against evil, and we will uproot evil so that there will be good for the entire region and the world."

According to Hamas sources, some 2,329 Palestinians – many of them Hamas representatives – have been killed in Israeli strikes, in addition to the 1,500 terrorists killed during the initial invasion into Israel on Saturday.

International Response

Multiple sources are reporting that US President Joe Biden is considering a trip to Israel

on Wednesday or Thursday this week, in what would be a powerful symbol of support for the Jewish state. According to unnamed US Administration officials, a trip would be a chance for Biden to personally affirm to the Israeli people the US is standing firmly behind them.

Israel's Coordinator for Captives and Missing Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Gal Hirsch, met today with Deputy US Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs Steven Gillen, who arrived in Israel with his team.

Meanwhile German Chancellor Olaf Scholz will arrive in Israel tomorrow on a solidarity visit.

Also today, the Jerusalem Catholic Patriarch Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa offered to be personally exchanged for the hostages being held by Hamas.

Yesterday, the Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas seemed to publicly criticize Hamas, saying that the group's policies and actions "do not represent the Palestinian people," and that the Palestine Liberation Organization is the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. A short while later, all posts and references to the comments were removed, effectively backpedaling on his condemnation of the massacres.

Efforts on the Ground

Israelis of all stripes have come together to support soldiers and bolster morale in the country (see [this](#) inspiring video). Many have been especially comforted by [images](#) of the ultra-Orthodox population pitching in on national efforts. One report suggests that this is the first conflict when more people have voluntarily returned to a country at war than those who have left.

Most Israeli entertainers are spending their days performing for soldiers on the front. [Listen](#) to this special duet with singer David Broza, and an Israeli soldier. Fauda star Idan Amedi has joined his reserve unit and is now fighting real terrorists, not just on the screen (see [here](#)).

Israeli conglomerate, the Bazan Group announced that it is preparing a \$40 million USD aid package for civilians who have been affected by the fighting. The company will focus its efforts in three main areas – mental health, housing solutions, and assistance and activities for the absorption of evacuees in community centers throughout the country. Funds will go to organizations that provide emotional and psychosocial support, mattresses for soldiers, and to host residents from areas of the conflict at the Kedma Hotel, and community centers. In addition, equipment, transportation, and activities for children will be arranged for those who have been evacuated to other centers.

Yesterday, Israel's Socio-Economic Cabinet met to discuss a range of issues that will address the overall civilian aspects of the war, including assuring continuity of civil functioning, an economic response to business owners and the public sector, rehabilitating communities in the area adjacent to the Gaza Strip, establishing a streamlined Socio-Economic Cabinet and public diplomacy.

The Jewish Agency for Israel

More than 680 grants by the Agency's Fund for the Victims of Terror have been

delivered, and an additional 1,500 are in process.

A total of 1,739 olim have been evacuated from the south, to elsewhere in the country. Some 100 teacher - soldiers from the Home Front Command have received training and will now be stationed full-time at absorption centers to provide support to olim.

The Agency is also looking into the possibility of relocating kibbutz evacuees to one of its Amigour elderly care facilities in the center of the country.

Of the 5,700 Masa Fellows who started the program this year, approximately 1,000 have left the country in the past week. Many Masa Fellows who remain are participating in volunteer activities including packing food parcels, babysitting, deliveries and more.

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC)

JDC continues to work to try to meet the needs of vulnerable citizens impacted by the war. Recent activity includes:

JDC and its partners in the Eshkol Regional Council in the Gaza periphery are mapping and contacting all local elderly citizens to understand their needs and address them. Some 2,500 elderly have been contacted thus far.

The Ultra-Orthodox volunteer hub in Bnei Brak, led by JDC in collaboration with the Ministry of Labor, has 800 volunteers working in collaboration with 20 government offices and organizations. Among other activities, Haredi volunteers are taking part in digging graves for soldiers at Mt. Herzl and identifying the bodies of victims. In addition, 80 participants from JDC's program for Career Guidance and Financial Literacy for Ultra-Orthodox Haredi youth at risk are volunteering to prepare, package and deliver food for soldiers.

As a result of collaboration among fellows in JDC's Professional Leadership Program, which comprises 800 professionals from the Israeli government and leading NGOs, a mechanism was put in place for Israelis who lost their identification documents during the attacks to fast-track the renewal of their personal documentation.

The Israel Trauma Coalition (ITC)

Jewish Federation partner ITC is working closely with several groups, including ZAKA, MDA and other first responders, hospital teams and crisis response teams to ensure ongoing trauma care. A new ITC National Resilience Center has been established, that will provide therapeutic sessions to those who reside in places where there are no resilience centers.

In a difficult, yet remarkable display of dedication and resiliency, none of the three dozen people volunteering at the Israel Defense Forces' Shura Body Identification base has asked to be replaced. The facility is ordinarily run by the IDF Chief Rabbinate and deals with soldiers who have been killed in battle. Among those present now are pathologists, Zaka volunteers, dentists, photographers, IDF Chief Rabbinate staffers, Home Front Command soldiers, and representatives of the Health and Social Welfare Ministries. A social worker stationed there called the Shura base "a sane place. It has an air of holiness. Nobody working here cries. They supply support with great sensitivity. This strengthens us. It's hard to sleep, but we will feel the trauma later, when our job is all over. We will work until we finish."

According to ITC, “As these workers inherently understand and feel, these atrocities will forever be etched as a national trauma. But the real effects will come later. Currently, we are not seeing a post-traumatic reaction, but what is called an 'acute reaction to the situation.’”

Jewish Federations

Jewish Federations have launched an unprecedented \$500 million campaign to support Israel. See more [here](#).

Jewish Federations along with 50 partner organizations have launched [#BlueRibbonsforIsrael](#), a unity campaign in support of the safe return of the hostages taken by Hamas terrorists in Israel. It symbolizes solidarity with the hostages, their families, and all who care about their safety. [Learn more here](#).

For those in Israel – or with family or friends there – who are looking for help, critical information about the situation on the ground, or other assistance, see [this](#) resource page put together by Jewish Federations.

See also [this](#) Jewish Federations information page on requests for personal protective equipment which are circulating and [this](#) update regarding volunteering.

Readers can access a Jewish Federations toolkit of resources [here](#).

The Community Mobilization Center is monitoring major developments in Israel and North America related to Israel’s war to defend herself against Hamas, and will rapidly disseminate resources to help mobilize and support our local communities as they work to build and sustain civic and political support for Israel in this conflict. Read the latest Dispatch from the Community Mobilization Center [here](#).

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.



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