



October 18, 2023

Key Points

- On day 12 of Israel's War with Hamas, US President Joe Biden has landed in Israel in a highly significant show of solidarity and support. This is the first ever visit of a sitting US President to the Jewish state during wartime.
- Jewish Federations of North America have raised an astonishing \$388 million to support Israel in her hour of need, surpassing two-thirds of the \$500 million campaign announced just last week. For details, [see here](#).
- Despite Hamas claims of 500 Palestinians killed by an Israeli airstrike on a Gazan hospital, the IDF has presented conclusive evidence that the damage was from a Palestinian Islamic Jihad misfired rocket, and that the hospital itself was not hit. The governments of the US and the UK, among others, have agreed with Israel's claims.
- Israel has established a humanitarian zone in southern Gaza where international aid will be provided for fleeing Palestinians.

Key Resources

- [Jewish Federations of North America](#) placed a full-page [ad](#) in the Jerusalem Post to welcome [President Joe Biden](#) to Israel on his mission of solidarity, thanking him profoundly for "his deep and sincere support of Israel during this dark hour."
- For those in Israel 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](#). For full details about the home front and military operations, see [this](#) update.
- Over 120 communities have held solidarity gatherings. [Watch it here](#). For a guidebook on hosting a gathering in your community, [click here](#).

Gaza Hospital Strike

Last night, international media were reporting that an Israeli airstrike had hit the Al-Ahli Hospital, killing some 500 people. The IDF reiterated that it never targets civilians, and announced it was looking into the allegations but was puzzled because there had been no airstrikes in the area at the time.

Within a few hours, and after careful IDF examination of the issue, a clearer picture emerged, including conclusive proof that the damage was caused by a misfired Palestinian Islamic Jihad rocket. Among the evidence presented by the IDF was the following:

- The IDF did not carry out any strikes in the area at the time.
- US President Joe Biden told Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, "I am deeply saddened and outraged by the explosion at the hospital in Gaza yesterday. And based on what I've seen, it appears it was done by the other team, and not you."
- British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly criticized those in the media who blamed Israel for the Gaza hospital blast, tweeting that "too many jumped to conclusions around the tragic loss of life at Al Ahli hospital. Getting this wrong would put even more lives at risk. Wait for the facts, report them clearly and accurately. Cool heads must prevail."
- Airstrikes leave a distinctive crater where they hit, and no such crater can be found anywhere near the hospital.
- Images show that a large fire was caused in the area as a result of the blast (as would be expected from rocket fire), but there is no crater.
- There are clear photos of terrorists launching rockets in a cemetery behind the hospital.
- It is very common for rockets fired at Israel from Gaza to fall short of their targets and land inside the Strip. Some 450 such "failures" (see [here](#)) have been recorded since the start of fighting 11 days ago; and also see [here](#).
- Photos clearly show that the misfired rocket landed and caused extensive damage to the hospital's parking lot as a result of the impact as well as the large amount of rocket fuel that was still in the projectile as it fell short. The rocket did not hit the hospital itself.
- IDF radar detected outgoing rocket fire at the same moment the blast at the hospital occurred.
- Similarly, video footage shows the rocket fire near the hospital, followed by an explosion. (See [here](#)).
- An intercepted call between two Hamas officials shortly after the attack explained that Hamas understood it was an Islamic Jihad rocket that had misfired, but apparently decided to take advantage of the situation and launch a global media campaign against Israel. Listen to a recording of the Arabic conversation [here](#) and see the translated transcript [here](#).
- See photo evidence [here](#) presented by the IDF, and see the full IDF briefing [here](#).

The Home Front

The IDF reiterated earlier today that it believes there may still be some Hamas terrorists hiding out in the south of Israel, and urged caution to all those in the area. Meanwhile, it has been revealed that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' Palestinian Authority will pay some \$3 million to the families of the Hamas terrorists involved in the October 7 massacres. See more [here](#).

Funerals continue for many of the 1400 Israelis killed by Hamas:

- Read about one of the victims, 23 year-old Tifferet Lapidot, [here](#).
- See [this](#) piece about Noa Ben Artzi who described the atrocities first hand, in Washington yesterday.
- [Here](#) you can read an account by the husband of a woman who is being held

hostage in Gaza.

- Read [here](#) a first-hand retelling of the Hamas attack on Kibbutz Nir Oz.
- The Israeli high-tech entrepreneur Eyal Waldman, founder and CEO of Mellanox Technologies, is also a well-known civil society leader. Five years ago, Waldman surprised the technology industry by creating an R&D center in the West Bank, and then two years ago another in the Gaza Strip itself, employing hundreds of Palestinian developers. At the time, he said, "Today we have 25 employees in Gaza. There are talented and smart people out there, economically it pays off. We have good staff... with high motivation, availability and opportunities. And I think it's very important for the two nations to come together. People used to be afraid of each other and didn't talk. But a positive thing is created when people begin to work together and see how tensions decrease and cooperation works. This is good for all sides." Tragically, on October 7, Hamas murdered Waldman's daughter Danielle near Kibbutz Reim, less than a mile from where her father opened a Gaza success story.
- See new stories of civilian heroes that have emerged from October 7, [here](#).
- 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 the fifth straight night, there was no rocket fire from Gaza, but attacks resumed this morning, about thirty minutes before President Biden landed at Ben Gurion Airport. Following last night's false report that a hospital in Gaza had been hit by Israel, a particularly large barrage of rockets was fired against many cities in the center of the country, including many parts of Tel Aviv.

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

There has been a gradual return to in-person schooling, with additional schools resuming in safer areas in Israel today. Areas around the Gaza Strip and also near the Lebanese border remain closed military zones, to which entry by civilians is prohibited. See map [here](#).

In the North, Hezbollah continues to try to provoke Israel. Four Israeli soldiers were lightly hurt in an anti-tank guided missile attack from Lebanon early Wednesday morning, in what was the seventh such attack in 24 hours. According to Ofer Bavly, a former Israeli diplomat and now the representative of JUF- the Chicago Jewish Federation in Israel, a deeper Hezbollah involvement in the war would have far-reaching implications. Two US carrier groups are now in the eastern Mediterranean, which constitutes an unprecedented show of American firepower deployed off Israel's coast. Bavly explains that once President Biden drew a line in the sand and warned third parties not to intervene, Hezbollah must understand that an intensified attack on Israel could lead to an American response which, if deployed, would likely be limited to an air attack, but would be very forceful. According to Bavly, it would then be up to Iran to decide how to react to an American attack on its proxy in Lebanon. See [here](#) for more on IDF warnings to Hezbollah about any further escalation.

Israeli Reponse

Israeli airstrikes against Hamas targets in Gaza continued overnight. Among those terrorists killed were Muhammad Awdallah, the head of the anti-tank guided missile array in Hamas's Gaza City Brigade, and Akram Hijazi, a Hamas naval forces commander. See video image of the strikes [here](#).

The IDF announced the creation of a humanitarian zone in southern Gaza where international aid will be provided, after days of negotiations with Egypt, the US and others to create a safe zone for fleeing Gazans. The IDF says Palestinians should head to the humanitarian zone which is located in the Al-Mawasi area, close to Khan Younis, where “international humanitarian aid will be provided as needed.” The military published a map of the zone (see [here](#)). See the announcement in [English](#) and in [Arabic](#).

In a possibly cryptic message earlier today, an IDF spokesperson said that the military was ready to begin the next stage of its war on Hamas, but said that it may not necessarily be the ground invasion that everyone was expecting. See [here](#) for an analysis of why the ground campaign may not have begun yet. According to a multitude of reports, motivation among soldiers – both those in the standing army, and those reservists called up for emergency duty – is extremely high. See [here](#) for video of IDF forces preparing for battle.

International Response

US President Biden has landed in Israel in a highly significant show of solidarity and support. This is the first ever visit of a sitting US President to the Jewish state during wartime. In his remarks upon arrival, Biden said, “I wanted to be here today for a simple reason: I want the people of Israel and the people of the world to know where the United States stands.... I wanted to personally come and make that clear.”

Biden stressed that Hamas “slaughtered” over 1,300 people, “and that’s not hyperbole, just slaughtered... including 31 Americans. They have taken scores of people hostage, including children. You said, Imagine what those children hiding from Hamas were thinking. It’s beyond my comprehension to imagine what they were thinking.”

“They have committed evils and atrocities that make ISIS look somewhat more rational. Americans are grieving with you, they really are. Americans are worried... because they know this is not an easy field to navigate what you have to do. Israel, as they respond to these attacks, it seems to me that you have to continue to ensure that you have what you need to defend yourselves. And we’re going to make sure that occurs. Hamas does not represent all the Palestinian people and has brought them only suffering....Israel has a value set like the United States does and other democracies, and they’re looking to see what we’re going to do.”

The President concluded with a message to Israelis saying “their courage, their commitment, their bravery is stunning. I’m proud to be here.” See video footage [here](#).

Meanwhile, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz was forced to lie down on the tarmac and cover his head as air raid sirens rang out at Ben Gurion Airport just as the leader of Europe’s largest country was boarding a flight to depart Israel. Chancellor Scholz’s entire delegation was forced to get off the plane when the sirens sounded, as per protocol. See video [here](#).

Efforts on the Ground

Israelis of all stripes have come together to support soldiers and bolster morale in the country, many sharing inspiring tales.

See [here](#) the story of a soldier on the front, watching the birth of his child via livestream.

At least 1,000 yeshiva students have responded to calls from ultra-Orthodox rabbis to enlist. Rabbi Raphael Kroizer, head of the Lemaan Daat Beit Midrash, has publicly called for thousands of yeshiva students to join the military, saying “Our people are in danger... It is incumbent upon us to be there in practice, with true devotion, and to put our lives on the line.”

Israel’s President Isaac Herzog has [issued a message of solidarity and thanks to the Jewish communities around the world](#), which reads:

“Dear brothers and sisters, Jews from all over the world, and all Jewish communities around the world. I have just returned from a kibbutz in southern Israel. The name of the Kibbutz is Be’eri, an incredible community who made the desert bloom, building immense industries, raising crops and families – a story that shows the incredible accomplishments of Israel and our people. Eight decades ago, the Jewish people saw the worst of human cruelty. We stood on our feet, fought for a home, and created something wonderful.

“When I returned from the kibbutz, I had to wash the blood off my shoes.

“ Hamas terrorists murdered more than 100 people there. Ten percent of the Kibbutz. They took others hostage. The houses of the kibbutz are blackened shells. What we have seen in the past week has changed us forever. Israel was founded, as a response to the atrocities of the Holocaust and World War II, as an expression of the values of civilization. These values have been violated with unimaginable cruelty - and live-streamed on social media by our enemies. Children were slaughtered, women raped. More than one-thousand-three-hundred innocent Israeli citizens, Jews, and people from all over the world, from thirty-six countries, were murdered in one day. I have seen things I don’t want to describe.

“This isn’t a fight between one small state and a Palestinian terror group – this is a battle between civilization and barbarity. If you are against the bloodthirsty disregard for human life – you stand with Israel. If you are on the side of human dignity and civilization – you stand with Israel.

“In 1948, when our new state was attacked and outnumbered by the Arab world, when our very existence was in doubt, our brothers and sisters in Jewish communities around the world mobilized and helped save the Jewish state and make it bloom and flourish throughout the ages. And you have continued to stand by us all along the way.

“I know that many of you have families in Israel who are worried. Many of you are watching in agony and pain. Your best friends are in Israel. I know you feel the same grief we do. And I know you share our pride and trepidation as our sons and daughters take the fight to the enemy. I know you share in our frustration and anger when our actions to defend ourselves are questioned – even when we abide entirely by international law.

“So dear friends, there are painful and decisive weeks ahead. Our history teaches us that when the Jewish people is united and resolute, there is nothing that is impossible. I thank you for all you have done to support and stand up for Israel. I am so overwhelmed by the incredible show of support, as if the entire Jewish Mishpacha has woken up again as a lion. And thank you for continuing to stand by us. This is moment of tragedy but also a moment of rebirth. The paradise in Be’eri which was turned into Hell, please God, will turn back into paradise. Am Yisrael Chai.”

The **World Zionist Organization** (WZO) has launched a campaign whereby non-Israelis who own homes in Israel can allow those properties to be used by victims who have lost their residences, as well as families evacuated from the south. The WZO will take responsibility to ensure that the properties are returned to their owners in the condition in which they were given. See details [here](#).

World ORT

Amos Gofer, CEO of World ORT’s Kfar Silver Youth Village – just a few miles from the Gaza border – recent told his story to audiences on Zoom, of what transpired on October 7.

Amos explained how the day unfolded:

“There was an emergency alarm – but it is something we are used to. We woke up and we were calling the people in the boarding school, telling them to take all the students to the safe rooms. A lot of those students are from Russia and Ukraine, children aged 14, 15 – it was very upsetting for them. We understood within a few minutes that this was different because of the magnitude of the bombs and the noise.”

The students were quickly moved to a building which the village uses to keep safe for longer-term operations – with significant provision of food, activities and other essentials. But with many of Kfar Silver’s High School students living in the kibbutzim close to the Gaza border, calls and messages soon flooded in making clear the extent of the situation.

As Amos called police and other security services it became clear that no immediate assistance would be available as forces dealt with the emergency across the south of the country. “We were willing to die for the students,” he explained. “After a few hours I said I’m evacuating all the students and everyone from the village because no one was coming to help us.”

Thanks to the heroic actions of two bus drivers who were prepared to travel to the village despite the rocket attacks, it was possible to evacuate more than 60 students to safer areas in the north of the country. Thankfully, the vast majority of Kfar Silver’s 1,000-plus students were already off-site for the festival of Simchat Torah.

After the evacuation, only a small number of staff members now remain, ensuring that animals on the village’s farm are looked after and that the security of the village is not compromised.

Although thankfully the students and teachers are now in safer areas, tragically many of them have lost family members and friends in the attacks. It is thought that more than 30

people with ORT links have been killed or kidnapped by terrorists. Of those, a number of Kfar Silver graduates have been killed serving in the IDF.

Jewish Federations

Jewish Federations of North America have raised an astonishing \$388 million to support Israel in her hour of need, surpassing two thirds of the \$500 million campaign announced just last week. Already, Jewish Federations have allocated \$10 million to 20 organizations providing emergency relief and support in Israel, including the Jewish Agency for Israel, JDC, World ORT, Israel Trauma Coalition, United Hatzalah, Magen David Adom, ZAKA, Barzilai Medical Center, and the Soroka Medical Center. These funds are being put to a slew of immediate and urgent needs, such as medical care, emergency services, evacuation, transport, housing, supporting victims of terror, trauma relief and psychological support, as well as preparing for medium- and long-term needs. For details, [click here](#).

The announcement follows a gathering of major philanthropists and community leaders in Washington, DC, who also participated in the "Unity in Crisis" event Federations co-hosted alongside the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, AIPAC, AJC, the ADL, among others. See more [here](#).

[Jewish Federations of North America](#) placed a full-page [ad](#) in the Jerusalem Post to welcome [President Joe Biden](#) to Israel on his mission of solidarity, thanking him profoundly for "his deep and sincere support of Israel during this dark hour."

As many funders struggle to distinguish between the multitudes of organizations looking for important resources, the Jewish Funders Network has produced [this](#) important page of guidance.

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](#). For full details about the home front and military operations, see [this](#) update.

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 communication from the Community Mobilization Center [here](#).

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