



October 19, 2023

Key Points:

- On day 13 of Israel's War with Hamas, US President Joe Biden has concluded his visit and his strong show of solidarity. This morning, the UK's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak landed in Israel on his own mission of support.
- As a result of an agreement brokered between Israel, Egypt and the United States, a "sustainable" passage of humanitarian aid into Gaza will likely open tomorrow.
- Full details of these, and other developments below.

Key Resources From Jewish Federations

- 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.
- Read the latest communication from the Community Mobilization Center [here](#).
- As many funders struggle to distinguish between the multitudes of organizations looking for important resources, the Jewish Funders Network has produced [this](#) thorough page of guidance.
- Over 120 communities have held solidarity gatherings. [Watch here](#). For a guidebook on hosting a gathering in your community, [click 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."
- Jewish Federations have launched [The Blue Ribbon Campaign](#), which symbolizes support and solidarity for the safe return of the hostages taken by Hamas. Wearing a ribbon publicly unites people of all religions, races, nationalities, ethnicities, ages, and generations and demonstrates for the people of Israel that they are not alone and that good people across the globe are with them and their families during this dark time.

The Home Front

According to Israel's Ministry of Health, 309 people injured in the October 7 attacks are

still hospitalized. Of these, 80 are in serious condition, 159 are in moderate condition, and 70 are in good condition. A total of 4,629 injured individuals have been treated at hospitals around the country from the terror strikes.

The IDF has also updated its figures and now says that 203 people were kidnapped into Gaza, and 306 soldiers have been confirmed killed.

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

- Yesterday, a bittersweet wedding took place for Yonatan Perez, the son of the head of the World Mizrahi Movement, Rabbi Doron Perez. Yonatan's brother Daniel, a tank commander, has been missing since taking part in the battles of October 7. The groom, Yonatan, was also involved in the fighting. Heeding the call of his commander, he hurried to the south where he is being hailed as a hero for taking part in the rescue of some 20 women soldiers. During the four-hour battle when he was shot in the leg, Yonatan also killed numerous terrorists. See more [here](#).
- Read [here](#) and watch an interview with the parents of a 19-year old woman missing since the fighting began, when she served as a soldier on a base in the south.
- JK Rowling, the famed author of the Harry Potter series, has posted on social media, paying respects to a 12-year-old girl on the autism spectrum (and Harry Potter fan) who was murdered alongside her grandmother, by Hamas terrorists on October 7. See [here](#).
- In a heartbreaking report, the Israeli milk bank has been active in providing breast milk to babies who were orphaned by the massacre, whose mothers were kidnapped or injured as well as mothers deployed by the IDF.
- See [here](#) the difficult story of nine relatives living in Kibbutz Be'eri who were all kidnapped by Hamas during the attacks.
- In [this](#) story from TIME Magazine, read about how the family and friends of Vivian Silver (currently being held hostage by Hamas), hold on to the memory of her work for peace between Israelis and Palestinians.
- 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.

Once again, there was no rocket fire from Gaza overnight, and overall sirens have decreased significantly. Despite this, among other barrages, there have been rocket attacks on Tel Aviv every evening for four straight days. Yesterday, Hamas held its fire for the duration of the Biden trip. As soon as the Presidential visit was over, Hamas launched a barrage of rockets at Israel's center including Tel Aviv and the coastal region.

As mentioned yesterday, there are still some terrorists believed to be hiding out or moving around Israel, probably in the south. One terrorist was apprehended today trying to make his way back into the Gaza Strip.

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.

In the North, Hezbollah continues to hit Israel, in sporadic attacks. The IDF struck

Hezbollah military targets in response, including an observation post near the coast where anti-tank missiles were launched toward Rosh Hanikra on Wednesday (see footage [here](#)). Hezbollah said that it conducted seven attacks directed at Israeli territory yesterday, including anti-tank missile attacks and shooting at soldiers and surveillance equipment. It also confirmed that three of its members were killed in those incidents.

Israeli Response

The IDF says it destroyed hundreds of Hamas sites in the last 24 hours, including anti-tank missile launch sites, tunnel shafts, intelligence infrastructure, terror leaders, and various command centers. See video images of the strikes [here](#).

Among those terrorists killed was Jamila al-Shanti, the widow of Hamas co-founder Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi and the first woman elected to the terror group's political bureau. (Rantisi was killed in 2004 by an Israeli airstrike during the Second Intifada). In 2021, Al-Shanti became the first woman elected to the Hamas political bureau, its highest decision-making body.

In separate strikes, the IDF also killed the head of the military wing of Gaza's Popular Resistance Committees terror group, Rafat Abu Hilal, as well as more than ten members of Hamas's "Nukhba Commando Forces," who led the October 7 massacres.

See [here](#) for a video message, in English, by the IDF Chief of Staff Hertzi Halevi.

Egypt announced the creation of a "sustainable" passage of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing, as hundreds of aid trucks wait at the border. This is apparently as a result of an agreement brokered between Israel, Egypt and the United States. US President Biden praised the Egyptian and Israeli governments for "stepping up" and reaching a deal. Aid is likely to begin to flow tomorrow.

Despite Israel producing concrete proof (see [here](#)) that it was an Islamic Jihad misfired rocket that hit close to a Palestinian hospital on Tuesday night, many around the world continue to question this narrative, pointing a finger of blame at an Israeli air strike. See more [here](#). See also this [video message](#) on this issue from the IDF Spokesperson.

IDF tanks assembling at the border with Gaza ahead of a potential ground invasion have been equipped with anti-drone "cages," similar to those used in the Russia-Ukraine War, according to a report in The Washington Post. The Post published images showing Israeli vehicles with modified coverings whose purpose is to protect soldiers inside from any explosives dropped from drones, presumably a lesson learned by Israel from observing developments during the war in Ukraine.

The beginnings of discussions are starting to take place about long-term scenarios for the Gaza Strip. One of the options being contemplated is for Israel to dismantle Hamas and its infrastructure and then to establish a temporary civilian-international governing structure for Gaza for 5-10 years before the area can be turned over to local leadership or the Palestinian Authority. See more on this issue [here](#).

The death toll in Gaza since Israel declared war has risen to 3,785, including 1,524 children, 1,000 women and 120 older people according to the Hamas-run Health Ministry in Gaza.

International Response

UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak arrived in Israel today on a solidarity mission. He told Prime Minister Netanyahu that "we absolutely support Israel to defend itself in line with

international law, to go after Hamas, to take back hostages, to deter further incursions, and to strengthen your security for the long term.”

Sunak added, “I know you are taking every precaution to avoid harming civilians, in direct contrast to the terrorists of Hamas, which seek to put civilians in harm’s way. We also recognize that the Palestinian people are victims of Hamas too I am proud to stand here with you in Israel’s darkest hour as your friend. We will stand with you in solidarity, we will stand with your people, and we also want you to win.”

Following US President Biden’s visit to Israel yesterday, and his strong show of solidarity and support for the Jewish state, the White House announced today that the President will make a special address from the Oval Office to discuss Israel and Ukraine. This unusual move follows Biden’s groundbreaking trip - the first ever visit of a sitting US President to Israel during wartime. During his trip, the President pledged to give Israel “whatever it needed” in its battle against Hamas and warned the country’s enemies against regionalizing the war.

In addition to the two US carrier groups, Ford and Eisenhower off Israel’s shores, the US Navy has announced that it is sending the USS Mount Whitney, a command ship which is also the flagship of the US Sixth Fleet. The UK has also sent a carrier group.

Evidence has come to light that the Hamas terrorists used some North Korean weapons during their October 7 invasion. North Korea has repeatedly denied that it sells weapons to Hamas. See more [here](#).

[A CNN poll, conducted October 12-13](#), found that over two-thirds of American respondents believe the Israeli military response in Gaza was either “fully justified” (50%) or “partially justified” (20%). Even among Democrats, the support for Israeli military countermeasures was nearly as high: Thirty-eight percent said they would be “fully justified,” while 30% said they would be partially justified. Nearly three out of four respondents (71%) feel “a lot of sympathy” with Israelis, while 41% say the same about the Palestinians.

Meanwhile, some 76% of respondents [in a new Quinnipiac poll](#) think supporting Israel is in the national interest of the United States — including 84% of Republicans, 76% of Democrats and 74% of independents. Only 20% of Americans said that America was “too supportive” of Israel — with the greatest degree of opposition (30%) centered among the youngest voters aged 18-34.

JTA has produced the following updates about how the war is affecting Jewish communities outside of North America:

- How [many European countries are increasing security at Jewish institutions](#), fearful that the conflict could lead to a spike in antisemitism.
- [U.S. and Israeli embassies in Argentina received bomb threats](#).
- [France banned pro-Palestinian rallies](#) as antisemitic incidents have spiked there.
- Police are investigating [Molotov cocktail bombs thrown at a German synagogue](#).
- Colombia’s president, who has continuously posted pro-Palestinian content online, [is threatening to cut ties with Israel](#).
- The community of Porto, Portugal, is rattled after [their synagogue was vandalized with anti-Israel graffiti](#).
- In one heartening story, [hundreds of Germans surrounded a synagogue in](#)

[solidarity with Jews](#).

- In China, [an Israeli embassy employee attacked in Beijing and an Israeli woman with a Chinese mother went viral](#) on China's internet after being captured by Hamas.

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 [this](#) video of a reserve soldier and his message of "just do good."

See [this](#) photo of a Druze woman who closed her Dalyat-el-Carmel restaurant (called "Nora's Kitchen") to volunteer to cook and serve food to reserve soldiers called up to serve on the front.

[This](#) wedding was scheduled for today but was postponed after the groom was drafted. His friends decided to surprise him and made arrangements for the bride to come to their camp near Gaza.

And watch [this](#) moving tribute to Israel by surfers in San Diego.

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](#).

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 over \$50 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.

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](#).

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.