



October 23, 2023

Key Points

- On day 16 of Israel's War with Hamas, attacks from the north are ongoing, while Israel's retaliation continues.
- Over Shabbat, Hamas released two hostages "on humanitarian grounds." The two were American (Chicagoan) mother and daughter Natalie and Judith Raanan. Ten members of their family remain captive.
- Western countries, led by the United States, continue to strongly back Israel, and its right to self-defense.
- Jewish Federations have allocated more than \$70 million of the \$388 million already raised.
- Full details on these developments, and much more, below.
- Register [here](#) for a webinar on **October 24 at 11am ET - Israel at War: The Jewish Agency's Response**
- JDC will host an Israel Emergency Briefing, featuring updates from the ground in Israel and JDC's efforts to support those affected by the crisis on **Wednesday October 25, at 12:00pm ET**. Register [here](#).

Key Resources from Jewish Federations

- Jewish Federations have produced a new document answering questions about funding impacted localities and municipalities in Israel. See [here](#).
- 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 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

On Shabbat, Hamas released two hostages “on humanitarian grounds.” The two were a mother and daughter, Natalie and Judith Raanan, who hold dual Israeli-American citizenship. Ten members of their family remain captive. Following the release of the two hostages, the IDF spokesperson released [this](#) video statement.

The IDF has updated its numbers and now says that 2 2 2 people were kidnapped into Gaza (including 30 babies and small children), and 306 soldiers have been confirmed killed.

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

- Tragically, the massacres have left 21 children as orphans, with both parents killed by the Hamas terrorists.
- Read [here](#), this difficult, but moving piece by the Jerusalem Post’s editor in chief, on his visit to Kibbutz Be’eri, site of one of the worst of the October 7 massacres.
- During recovery operations since October 7, IDF units have been searching for weapons carried by the Hamas invaders. Over 1,000 guns and rifles of various types, approximately 2,000 grenades, 1,000 RPG rockets and 1,200 explosive devices have been collected. A number of the weapons collected in the field were detonated in a controlled manner (see video [here](#)).
- Also found after the massacre, among the hundreds of personal belongings scattered around the devastated communities and the site of the music festival, was a child’s pink backpack. IDF soldiers who located it took precautions and examined the innocent-looking bag using remote technology and found it contained an explosive device, probably meant to detonate days after the massacre, when the bag would be found. See video [here](#).
- One of the Hamas terrorists killed inside Israel after the massacre of October 7 was carrying a USB stick containing a detailed instruction booklet on how to build an improvised chemical weapon (using cyanide). The booklet was created by Al-Qaeda.
- With 222 hostages still being held by Hamas, around 300 volunteers from multiple Israeli high-tech companies are working together in a “war room” in Tel Aviv, trawling through vast amounts of footage posted on social media in order to identify the Israelis who were abducted and to provide other information. See more [here](#).
- After an Arab bike shop owner in Israel donated children’s bikes to evacuees from communities in the south, his store was torched. See [here](#).
- Many communities are dealing with issues surrounding burial. There are families who have buried loved ones in temporary plots, expecting a permanent burial in their respective community cemeteries in the south at a later date.
- Read (and view) [here](#) a touching interview with the parents of Roey Weiser, a sergeant in the Golani division of the IDF, who was killed in action on October 7.
- At least 19 of the victims came from the Beduin community. See more on this [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.

As we continue to report, every day new stories emerge of heroism from October 7. Read this moving account about “Grandpa Joe,” (summary of Facebook post, as translated by JUF Chicago Jewish Federation representative in Israel Ofer Bavly):

Shlomo Ron was not armed. Shlomo Ron was not in the special-forces or anything close. He was an older man. Rather sickly. A soft man. Shlomo loved the theater, music and books. He loved Hannah, his wife of many years. He loved his daughters. And he loved his little grandson deeply. He also loved the poetry of Rachel and the works of Naomi Shemer. He loved art.

Shlomo and Hannah lived in Nahal Oz. They never left their community, even during the scariest of times. That’s where they lived, that’s where they chose to live. That’s where they were on the morning of October 7, 2023. Their daughters were visiting their home. Their grandson was in their home. It was Simchat Torah. Almost the end of the Sukkot vacation. They must have had a great time together.

Mass murderers raided their kibbutz.

Shlomo was an elderly man with a mustache and glasses. He had a gentle soul. He came out of the safe room where his beloved Hannah and their daughters were hiding together with one of the daughters’ son, his little beloved grandson. He sat in the living room of his house. He sat there all by himself. He waited for the murderers. And they arrived.

When they saw him alone in the living room of his house, the murderers shot him dead. They saw an elderly, sick man sitting in his armchair by himself. And they executed him. An elderly man. A solitary man, they thought to themselves. No reason to hang around any longer. That’s why the murderers left his home and continued on their way.

That had been Shlomo’s plan: To wait for the criminals against humanity alone in his living room. So that they would think he was a lonely, elderly man. Solitary. Living alone. He knew they would murder him. He hoped that after they murder him, they would go on their way. They would think that he lived alone in the house.

Shlomo Ron thus saved the life of his beloved Hannah. He saved the lives of his beloved daughters. He saved the life of his beloved little grandson. They were all saved, sitting quietly in their safe room. They were all saved thanks to Shlomo.

Shlomo Ron was buried in the moshava of Kinneret, near the poet Rachel. Near Naomi Shemer.

Shlomo Ron was a soft man with no physical powers. With no weapon. With no counter-terrorism training. Just an elderly, sick man. Just a soft and gentle Israeli soul with a mustache and glasses. Just an Israeli with a good-natured look in his eyes who loves his wife and daughters and his little grandson. But Shlomo was a national hero.

In other developments, yesterday, a terrorist from the October 7 massacre was captured after hiding inside Israel for two weeks.

Once again, there was no rocket fire from Gaza overnight, and overall sirens have decreased significantly. Despite this, among other barrages, there have been regular rocket attacks on Tel Aviv and other major cities. Since the beginning of the war, the IDF has identified about 550 failed rocket launches that fell inside the Gaza Strip. According to the IDF, Hamas uses the residents of the Gaza Strip as human shields, and launches

rockets from civilian infrastructure, areas and buildings in Gaza. See [here](#) for footage of failed rocket launches that landed inside the Strip and [here](#) for an infographic on the subject.

For information on the latest overall numbers from the conflict, see [here](#).

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 ongoing attacks. Anti-tank missiles and mortar and rockets were launched from Lebanon towards a number of communities including Tziporen, Yiftah, Turmus and Shushan. In response, the IDF struck Hezbollah targets using aircraft, tank fire and artillery.

The military has now ordered the evacuation of a further 14 communities in the region. The government will pay for alternative accommodation in hotels for the evacuees.

Israeli Response

The IDF says it destroyed 320 Hamas sites in the last 24 hours, including tunnels containing Hamas terrorists, dozens of operational command centers, some of which concealed Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists, military compounds, and observation posts. See video of some of the strikes [here](#).

A new IDF mortar system called the “Iron Sting” (developed by Israeli Military Industries and Elbit Systems) was used operationally for the first time a few days ago. The new mortar is said to be the most accurate in the world with a dual guidance system using both laser and GPS. The mortar was used to hit a Hamas rocket launcher with perfect accuracy, immediately after it was used to attack Israel.

The War Cabinet convened on Friday at the headquarters of the IDF Southern Command (Beer Sheva) to discuss plans for the upcoming ground campaign in Gaza. Although it is agreed that the ground campaign is imminent, there is no firm information as to when it will begin. It is estimated that 700,000 Gazans have already left the northern Gaza Strip, while some 350,000 remain in the area. See [here](#) for video and [here](#) for photos of troops in the south training and preparing to enter Gaza. Read [here](#) analysis of what may be delaying Israel’s ground invasion, and see [this](#) article about international legal implications.

Following agreements reached between Egypt, Israel and the U.S., 20 Egyptian trucks entered the Gaza Strip through the Rafah border crossing over the weekend, carrying food, water and medical supplies to southern Gaza. Israel reiterated its warning that none of the humanitarian aid could be taken by Hamas and that no trucks should go to northern Gaza areas. A further 17 aid trucks crossed the border today.

Large numbers of Arab-Israelis who served in the past in a variety of roles in the IDF have been recruited to the reserves to assist efforts to inform the world of what is really happening. See more [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

Following the visits of many of the western world’s leaders, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia

Meloni visited Israel over the weekend. In her remarks she said, “We defend the right of Israel existing, of defending itself, security for its people. And we absolutely understand that terrorism has to be fought. We believe and we think that you are able to do that in the best way, for we are different from those terrorists.” See footage [here](#).

Prime Minister Netanyahu also held a series of conversations with other European leaders, including French President Emmanuel Macron, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez and Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte.

Leaders of the major western nations issued a joint statement today, where they “reiterated their support for Israel and its right to defend itself against terrorism, and called for adherence to international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians.” The statement was signed by U.S. President Joe Biden, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak following a joint phone call they held earlier today.

Over the weekend, the 45th cargo plane of military equipment from the U.S. arrived in Israel. Around 1,000 tons of armaments aimed at bolstering the IDF’s capabilities has already been sent.

The U.S. has also brought forward by one month the commencement of Israel’s joining the Visa Waiver Program. Effective immediately, Israelis will no longer need to obtain a visa to enter the United States, but instead can apply online for a visa waiver. See more [here](#).

Aviation war insurers have given notice to cancel cover for airlines based in Israel (as well as Lebanon) because of the conflict, with some cancellations already taking effect. The Knesset’s Finance Committee last week approved a plan to provide a state guarantee of \$6 billion to cover insurance against war risks to Israeli airlines. See more [here](#).

See also [this](#) article about the role of the international press in the current war.

Efforts on thr Ground

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

In a massive operation, an astonishing 15,000 Israeli volunteers have been working to provide food, clothing and other needs to the evacuated residents of the south. Read more [here](#).

In the coming week, an unprecedented 2,000 ultra-Orthodox youth are set to be inducted into the IDF, amid a surge of support in the haredi community for IDF service (see [here](#)). At least 150 volunteers already joined today (see [here](#)). Also, see [this article](#) by JPPI’s Shuki Freidman on how the war may be a step towards healing the religious-secular divide in Israel. And see [this](#) video clip of a large group of chassidim who came to try to cheer up evacuated, secular residents of the south.

On Friday evening, family members of some of the hostages being held by Hamas staged a large Shabbat dinner gathering across the street from IDF headquarters in Tel Aviv. They set a long table on which they placed kiddush wine, challot, and 203 plates – one for each of the hostages. On each chair appeared the name of a hostage with their photograph. See more [here](#). Similar “Shabbat table for the hostages” events were held

in Jewish communities around the world.

One of the emerging needs for soldiers staged on the front, is a means for them to recharge their phones in order to be in contact with their families. Numerous citizens have voluntarily provided solutions, such as [this](#) generator-powered trailer that allows dozens of soldiers to fast-charge their phones simultaneously.

An electrically-powered sleeve that's designed to enhance performance and accelerate recovery among athletes is now being repurposed for Israeli soldiers readying to battle Hamas. See more [here](#).

And also see [this](#) article that discusses the role of the Police in the war, compared to the IDF.

The Israel Innovation Authority is launching a fast-track grant channel, with an initial allocation of \$25 million, targeting around 100 Israeli start-ups facing funding constraints due to the fighting. See more [here](#).

Watch [this](#) touching video of Israeli children appealing to the world to "stand by me," at this difficult time.

Despite the war, North American Jews continue to make Aliyah during these dark days. Watch a video [here](#) of new arrivals from Nefesh B'Nefesh.

The Israel Antiquities Authority will be hosting an online lecture series in English, focusing on the country's past crises, and its revival, as seen through the eyes of the archaeologists that have unearthed the country's history. The lectures will be presented by experts from the Israel Antiquities Authority, who will present archaeological data alongside textual evidence, providing insights on the revival in the history of the people of Israel, who knew moments of drama and hardship, yet found the way to overcome. The lectures are open and free of charge. Details [here](#).

Register [here](#) for a webinar: Israel at War: **The Jewish Agency's** Response - October 24, at 11am EST with:

- Yossi Klein Halevi, renowned American-Israeli author and journalist.
- Amira Ahronoviz, Director General and CEO of The Jewish Agency for Israel

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC)

Recent JDC activities include:

- More than 850 vouchers for food and essential needs have been distributed to vulnerable individuals and families since October 7. This is part of a wider initiative to distribute 3,000 food vouchers to participants of JDC programs which provide mentoring and guidance for young families and adults living in extreme poverty.
- At the request of the Ministry of Education, JDC is assisting in the establishment of temporary schools and kindergartens at Dead Sea hotels for the 2,000 children evacuated from the war region.
- In 75 locations across Israel, youth movement counselors trained by JDC in trauma counseling are now engaging and supporting children (aged 5-15) that were evacuated from the Gaza border area. The training includes mentorship and tools to process the trauma experienced. See [here](#) for a short video of the initiative.
- Some 16 JDC Up60+ Guidance Centers for Israeli elderly retirees have shifted from their physical centers to operating online. As a result more than 16,000 elderly retirees continue to receive skills and knowledge to minimize their health,

social and economic risks during these challenging times. Center professionals have conducted hundreds of routine phone calls and group meetings with participants to check in on their physical and emotional needs and offer support and guidance. Through the national Up60+ network, in the past two weeks, 1,600 retired seniors agreed to volunteer at least 20 hours a month, visiting homebound seniors or families of fallen soldiers, as well as assisting seniors or needy families who require help with their day-to-day tasks.

- JDC launched 'Nafshi', an online information system that provides information about available mental health services and recommendations for interventions based on individual needs.

JDC will host an Israel Emergency Briefing, featuring updates from the ground in Israel and JDC's efforts to support those affected by the crisis on Wednesday October 25, at 12:00 NOON (ET). Register [here](#).

Israel Trauma Coalition (ITC)

Federations partner ITC opened a National Resilience Center to provide clinical support to people in areas not covered by the 12 existing regional Resilience Centers. Six other areas in the North and South have already been identified as the next areas in need. Resilience center teams also provide intervention and trauma care in hotels housing those who have been evacuated.

ITC is also engaged in on-going work to significantly expand the scope and capabilities of trauma response teams to deal with the massive increase in the number of referrals they receive.

Meanwhile, ITC also conducted short training sessions on the challenges of working in “shared realities” (doctor-patient, Arab-Jew) and psychosocial information for 70 Bedouin doctors and nurses from the Soroka and Barzilai hospitals, both located in the south.

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 more than \$70 million to 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 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 in close contact with the Government of Israel and the IDF. We will continue to update as the situation develops.