



Israel Update

October 26, 2023

THE LATEST

- On day 20 of Israel's War with Hamas, Israeli forces, including tanks, again entered Gaza on land for a few hours, completed their mission, and then withdrew.
- The IDF has updated its numbers and now says that 309 soldiers have been killed, and that 228 people can be confirmed taken hostage, with 4 released, leaving 224 now in Hamas captivity.
- Prime Minister Netanyahu said yesterday in a [televised address](#) that Israel is preparing to invade Gaza, but offered no details on the timing or other information.
- Full details on these developments, and more, below.

KEY RESOURCES FROM JEWISH FEDERATIONS

- Join us today, **Thursday, October 26, at 1pm ET** as we highlight the impact of our Federation advocacy and allocations. Hear personal stories from our leaders on the ground, and a briefing on community advocacy and the impact of our collective allocations. To register for the webinar, please [click here](#).
- Join our partner, the Jewish Agency for Israel, for a webinar - "Israel at War: Media, the War, and Helping the Victims," on **Tuesday, October 31, 2023 at 11am ET**, featuring Avi Mayer, Editor-in-Chief of The Jerusalem Post, and Yehuda Setton, Chief Operating Officer of The Jewish Agency. [Register here](#).
- Join Jewish Federations on **Monday, October 30, at noon ET** for a basic introduction on how to prepare for and navigate interviews with the press, tackle tough questions, and make sure your message gets through. The webinar is open to all Federation professionals and board members, but is specifically recommended for CEO/Presidents, Board Chairs, and Marketing/Comms. This training is an offering of the newly launched Community Mobilization Center. To register for the webinar, please [click here](#).
- Jewish Federations have produced a document answering questions about funding impacted localities and municipalities in Israel. See [here](#).
- Readers can access a Jewish Federations [toolkit](#) of resources here. For full details about the home front and military operations, see [this update](#).
- Additional resources can be found at the end of this update.

THE HOME FRONT

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

- Four more bodies of murdered Israelis were discovered in the vicinity of nearly-destroyed Kibbutz Be'eri. These join the 130 previously recovered bodies of civilians murdered by Hamas in the kibbutz on October 7. See newly released video [here](#) of the destruction of Be'eri, including the destroyed kindergarten.
- Read [this story](#) of Yisrael, from Kibbutz Kissufim, who discovered that his wife had been killed by fire during the attacks.
- Two months ago, like in thousands of other kindergartens across the country, an end of year party took place at the Nir Oz Kindergarten. Every child in [this photo](#) from that event was either killed, orphaned, injured, or taken captive by Hamas.
- See [this piece](#) of the experiences of a tank commander who rushed to the south to fight the terrorists on October 7.
- The IDF has in its possession hours of horrific and graphic footage of the massacres that took place. Some was taken from security cameras, some from liberating troops, and others from GoPro cameras mounted on the terrorists during their rampage. Some of these images, including those depicting rapes, beheadings, the murder of babies, and even the forced removal of a fetus from its mother, have been presented to international media, as well as global leaders, who have described the materials as incomprehensible and devastating.

Some of the less extreme (but still horrifying) footage is being shared on social media, but while Jewish Federations understand that it may be important for certain international players to see this, we prefer to extend as much honor and respect as possible to the victims and will continue to avoid linking to these materials. Read more [here](#).

- The ANU Museum (formerly Diaspora Museum) in Tel Aviv is screening the names and faces of the hostages and artwork about them on the museum façade. Watch a short clip [here](#).

The level of rocket fire from Gaza remains low compared to the early days of the war, but another large barrage was fired at the center of the country last night. One apartment building in Rishon LeTzion suffered a direct hit, and six people were lightly injured (see video [here](#)).

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

The government will be extending the period of time that approximately 200,000 residents from the south and the far north will remain evacuated from their homes. There are over 200 hotels currently hosting evacuated communities, where the displaced people will now remain until December 31, 2023. Areas around the Gaza Strip, and also near the Lebanese border, remain closed military zones, to which entry by civilians is prohibited.

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, some 500 Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists took part in training in Iran, one month before the October 7 attacks. See details [here](#).

In the North, over the past 24 hours, the IDF struck five Hezbollah squads preparing to

launch rockets into Israel. Overnight, Hezbollah launched a surface-to-air missile at an Israeli unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV). The missile was intercepted over the Kinneret Sea, and the IDF bombed the location of the launcher.

Schools throughout much of Israel have been able to open as normal starting today, including those in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Haifa. However, in Ashkelon and the Western Negev, in-person learning has not yet been permitted. On the northern border, educational activities may resume in a restricted capacity, inside a sheltered safe room and subject to the guidelines of the IDF's Northern Command.

More than 2,000 foreign journalists have now arrived in Israel to report on the war. A partial list of countries and the number of journalists they have sent includes: U.S. – 358, Great Britain – 281, France – 221, Germany – 102, Türkiye – 71, the Scandinavian countries – 70, Italy – 63, Canada – 56, India – 55, Spain – 49, Australia – 36, Greece – 33, Russia – 24, China – 19, Belgium – 18, Romania – 16, Argentina – 16, Portugal – 14, Mexico – 10, Azerbaijan – 8, Slovakia – 7, Albania – 4, Uruguay – 4, Nepal – 4, New Zealand – 3, Georgia – 2, Ukraine – 2, Ghana – 1, Singapore – 1, Nigeria – 1, Armenia – 1 and Senegal – 1.

ISRAELI RESPONSE

Overnight, the IDF carried out a “targeted raid” in the northern part of the Gaza Strip with a large combined force of Givati Infantry Brigade forces and tanks. Troops struck numerous terrorists, infrastructure and anti-tank guided missile launch positions. The IDF says the raid is part of a process of preparing the border area for the “next stages of the war,” including carrying out some engineering works prior to a larger incursion.

A few hours after entering Gaza, troops left the area, with no reports of injuries. See video of the operation here, and of the IDF operational command post during the incursion, [here](#).

There has been considerable speculation as to why a ground invasion has not begun yet. Presumably, the delay is a result of some of the following factors:

- Each passing day, the Israel Air Force destroys additional Hamas infrastructure, personnel and weapons through its strikes. This reduces Hamas' capabilities to attack ground forces when they enter the Strip.
- Israeli troops continue to train and prepare, as well as gather intelligence, before a ground invasion begins.
- Hamas terrorists need to remain on alert for an invasion at any moment. Each additional day of waiting leads to fatigue and a letting down of their guards, giving Israel something of an element of surprise.
- While only four out of more than 200 hostages have been released, it is clear that some level of negotiation is continuing, and each day increases the chances that additional hostages may be released unharmed.
- It has been reported that Israel has agreed to a request from the United States to temporarily delay a ground incursion in order to give the U.S. military more time to deploy additional air defense systems to protect its troops in the region. See more [here](#).

Despite these factors, it is also clear that with each passing day, IDF troops can become frustrated and even experience decreased levels of motivation (although current reports

suggest that motivation remains very high), and as time passes from October 7, international support for Israel may begin to decrease. Read [this editorial](#) from the Times of Israel, “Why it’s time to go in.”

Nonetheless, last night, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Israel is “preparing for a ground incursion. I won’t specify when, how, how many... this is the way, so that we protect our soldiers’ lives.” Netanyahu said the members of the narrow war cabinet and the IDF chief of staff had agreed “unanimously” on the timing of the ground incursion, possibly in response to reports of disagreement among the among the senior leaders, as well as of US pressure, to delay the move.

As a whole, Israeli leadership, the media and others, have repeatedly stated that the country’s only priority is to win the war and destroy Hamas, but that after the fighting is over, there will be significant questions about who was responsible for the intelligence, military and other failures that allowed October 7 to occur. Numerous Israeli leaders have already accepted levels of responsibility. Last night, Prime Minister Netanyahu said that “everyone will have to give answers,” including himself, on the failures that led to the massacre, the closest he has come to taking responsibility for not anticipating or preparing for the surprise attack. Read the full remarks of the Prime Minister’s address to the nation last night, [here](#). And see [this](#) opinion piece by Gil Troy, on how Netanyahu should respond.

Also, see [this think-tank piece](#) on what may come of Gaza, once the fighting ends.

Over the past few days, the IDF has notified residents in the northern Gaza Strip of the need to evacuate to the south for their safety. However, Hamas continues to use Palestinian civilians of Gaza as human shields and is not allowing them to evacuate to the south. Hamas has been using a variety of methods including roadblocks, and even shooting at residents trying to flee. Listen to [this recording](#) of a conversation between an IDF officer and a resident of Gaza, and see [this translated transcript](#) of the conversation.

Over the past day, IDF fighter jets struck over 250 Hamas terror targets in the Gaza Strip, including terror infrastructure, operational command centers, tunnel shafts, and rocket launchers placed in the heart of civilian areas that fired toward Israeli territory throughout the war. One of those killed was the Commander of Hamas’ Northern Khan Yunis Rockets Array, Hassan Al-Abdulla. (See video [here](#)).

In addition, Israeli naval troops struck a Hamas surface-to-air missile launch post in the Khan Yunis area. The site is located adjacent to a mosque and kindergarten (see video [here](#)).

The Hamas-run health ministry claims that at least 6,546 Palestinians have been killed and 17,439 others wounded. These numbers have not been substantiated.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

U.S. President Joe Biden’s held another phone meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu. According to the White House, the two leaders discussed “ongoing efforts to locate and secure the release of hostages to include American citizens we believe are held by Hamas. They also reviewed ongoing discussions to ensure safe passage for foreign nationals wishing to depart Gaza as soon as possible,” according to a readout. “The President discussed ongoing US support for the continuous flow of humanitarian support to the civilian population in Gaza and welcomed efforts to increase this support over the coming period.”

The statement says Biden also stressed his support for Israel's "right and responsibility to defend its citizens from terrorism and to do so in a manner consistent with international humanitarian law," while calling on Israel to focus on ensuring "a pathway for a permanent peace" following the war.

The stream of western leaders arriving in Israel to express solidarity with the Jewish state continues. Yesterday Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer visited, as did Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala.

Saudi Arabia has agreed to continue talks on normalization with Israel, once the fighting ends. While the Kingdom has made many comments supporting the Palestinian population of Gaza, it has also called on Hamas to release the hostages it is holding. See more [here](#).

Meanwhile Russian President Vladimir Putin continued to take an anti-Western stand, warning that Israel's conflict with Hamas could spread well beyond the Middle East and said it was "wrong that innocent women, children and old people in Gaza were being punished for other people's crimes." See more [here](#). For an analysis of Russia's role in the war, see [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. In this video, see details about an amazing operation to coordinate thousands of volunteers to help soldiers, evacuate citizens, and others.

Watch [this teenager](#) giving out free haircuts to soldiers and this moving [video](#) of a soldier couple whose families joined them and joined the celebrations.

In [this](#) video, you can see a talented Israeli child sing a stirring rendition of the prayer for Israel' soldiers, and [here](#) see an El Al flight attendant raising spirits on his flight back to Israel.

A [light moment](#) as this Israeli man jokingly "speaks" via megaphone to the US naval ships in the region, trying to explain a little about Israeli coastal/ beach culture.

OTHER RESOURCES

- 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.
- 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 a compilation [here](#). For a guidebook on hosting a gathering in your community, click [here](#).
- Jewish Federations have launched The Blue <https://www.blueribbonsforisrael.org/e> 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.

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.

In addition to the extraordinary local allocations made in recent days, the Jewish Federations of North America allocations committee approved an additional \$21.6 million in our Israel Emergency Campaign, bring our system's total allocation to \$111 million. [Click here](#) for details.

The Jewish Federations' Israel Emergency Campaign allocations process combines a dynamic, holistic, and comprehensive needs assessment procedure with vetting and governance steps. [Click here](#) for an overview of the process.

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 close contact with the Government of Israel and the IDF. We will continue to update as the situation develops.

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