



November 15, 2023

In the largest pro-Israel march in history, close to 300,000 people gathered yesterday in support of Israel on the National Mall in Washington DC. An additional 250,000 people watched the livestream of the event. [The march](#), which also called for the release of the hostages being held by Hamas and against rising antisemitism, was organized by the Jewish Federations of North America and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. If you were unable to attend in person, [watch it here](#). Read more [here](#).

### The Latest

- As the ground war continues, the Israeli military says that it has made considerable gains toward destroying Hamas' fighting capability and asserts that the terror group has now lost control over the northern part of the Gaza Strip.
- **48 Israeli soldiers have been killed** since the ground offensive began, and 367 soldiers have perished since October 7. Read more about some of the recent soldiers who fell, [here](#).
- See details on these developments, and more, below.

### Key Resources from Jewish Federations

- **Live Briefing:** Join the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) for a live emergency briefing about the situation on the ground and JDC's efforts to support vulnerable Israelis. **Thursday, November 16 at noon (ET)**. Register [here](#).
- **Unity Shabbat for Israel:** November 17-18. Join Jewish Federations, ADL, AJC, and Jews around the country to come together this week for a Shabbat of Unity. We ask that all Jews light a memorial candle in honor of those who were murdered in Israel and those who have sacrificed their lives fighting for the Jewish State. We also suggest that you light an extra pair of Shabbat candles, that you recite prayers for Israel and the hostages, and that you end Shabbat by reciting Psalm 121.
- **Resources:** Readers can access a Jewish Federations toolkit of resources [here](#), and can refer to the Community Mobilization Center [Resource Hub](#) for the latest talking points, tools, and other resources.
- **Map:** [This](#) site shows a map of the October 7 massacre with a red dot for every person killed and a black dot for every person abducted by Hamas. Clicking on any dot will show the name and picture (if available) of the victim with age and last

known location.

- **Details:** For full details about the home front and military operations, see [this](#) update. And for information on the latest overall numbers from the conflict, see [here](#).
- **Volunteering:** Read [this](#) Jewish Federations update on the latest volunteering opportunities in Israel right now.
- **Call:** The Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI): Daily webinars sponsored by Jewish Federations and the Jewish Agency are offered. A rotating team of analysts of Israeli military affairs, the US-Israel relationship, Israel's political system, and of the country's diverse society will speak every **Sunday to Thursday from 11-11:30 am ET**. No registration is required. Join [here](#).
- Additional resources can be found at the end of this update.

### Israel Defense Forces Operations

As the **ground operation** progresses, Israel's Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said that Hamas had lost control in the northern Gaza Strip. See the video of IDF troop activities in the area [here](#), and watch [here](#) a statement from the field by the Commander of the 603rd Battalion, LTC Gilad.

After surrounding Gaza's largest hospital, Shifa, with its vast underground system of tunnels built by Hamas and its housing of one of the terror group's main command and control centers, IDF forces entered the hospital last night for the first time and are currently operating inside its walls. The IDF has defined the mission as a "precise and targeted operation against Hamas in a specified area" within the large hospital compound which includes multiple buildings.

As the forces were entering the compound, they encountered several terrorists as well as explosive devices surrounding the buildings. The operation is aimed at locating terrorists and their infrastructure inside and underneath the hospital, as well as searching for hostages. Most of Shifa's patients had been evacuated, under the protection of the IDF. At the same time as troops were operating inside and underneath the hospital, the IDF also brought in medical supplies and baby equipment- including incubators - that were brought into Gaza in Israeli tanks and Armored Personnel Carriers and then delivered to the hospital (see footage [here](#) and photos [here](#) and [here](#)).

IDF forces in the operation include medical staff and Arabic-speaking soldiers who are facilitating support to the limited number of patients and civilians who remain in the hospital. Listen to [this](#) phone call between the IDF and the Shifa Hospital Director General, coordinating the rescue of children, provision of equipment, and more; and watch [this](#) IDF statement on the transfer of incubators.

Meanwhile, yesterday the IDF presented proof that the basement of the recently-captured Rantisi Hospital in Gaza was used by Hamas to hide arms and possibly also hold hostages kidnapped on October 7. The evidence shows Hamas weapons being stored underneath the children's hospital, as well as rooms seemingly used to hold hostages. One room staged to look like a living room featured window curtains covering a tiled wall and a calendar of guard shifts starting on October 7. In an adjoining room was a chair with a woman's robe and rope next to one of its legs, which seemed to be evidence of the constraints used. The chair sat under a piece of equipment donated by the World Health Organization, with a baby bottle on top and diapers on the floor. There was also a motorcycle thought to have been used by a Palestinian to transport hostages

into Gaza, as well as what appeared to be makeshift bathrooms, a kitchen, and ventilation pipes. See photos [here](#), and watch [this](#) video of tunnels connecting Rantisi Hospital with the home of a leading Hamas terrorist.

Israel has continued its policy of opening humanitarian corridors for a few hours each day. Recent fighting has led to an additional 200,000 people fleeing south in the past ten days. More than two-thirds of Gaza's population has fled their homes since the war began.

An [image](#) that is circulating on social media shows troops of the IDF's Golani Brigade inside Hamas's military police headquarters in the Gaza Strip, after capturing the site. The soldiers are seen holding an Israeli flag and a flag of Golani's 13th Battalion. On Monday, a [photo](#) showed Golani troops inside Gaza's parliament building, which has since been destroyed.

The Hamas-run Gazan Health Ministry says that over 11,200 Palestinians have been killed since October 7 as a result of the war.

### **The Home Front**

The country continues to **mourn** the victims of the massacre of October 7 and soldiers who have fallen in the fighting; and to **demand the return** of the hostages:

- There are unconfirmed reports that a pregnant Israeli woman among the hostages has given birth while being held in Gaza.
- Read [here](#) about the beloved principal of the Ort Pelech High School in Jerusalem, Yossi Hershkovitz, who fell in battle in Gaza.
- On Monday night, Hamas released a video of a 19-year-old female soldier Noa Marciano, who was abducted from the Nahal Oz base on October 7. In the video, she reads a text in which she introduces herself to the camera and gives details about her family. She says that she was abducted "4 days ago" and that there are other hostages with her and they could die from Israeli bombing. At the end of the 55-second video, there are still photographs of her dead body, and the IDF now confirms she has been killed. As is common practice, Israeli media is not showing the video to the public, in order not to "contribute to Hamas' psychological warfare."
- Watch [this](#) difficult video about those members of the IDF Rabbinate who serve at the base dealing with the more than 1200 bodies of those killed since October 7.
- At least ten survivors of the Nova rave massacre have been committed to psychiatric institutions since October 7. Israel's national commissioner for involuntary hospitalization, Daniel Raz, who works within the Justice Ministry, told a special Knesset Health Committee session yesterday that "quite a few people" from the festival had been involuntarily committed.
- Watch [this](#) difficult video about Yula, a young child who has been kidnapped by Hamas.
- Authorities identified the body of 12-year-old Liel Hezroni in Kibbutz Be'eri on Monday. She was killed along with her aunt on October 7.
- Forensic examiners have also identified the remains of peace activist Vivian Silver, confirming she was killed during the October 7 massacres in southern Israel by Hamas-led terrorists. The Canadian-born Silver, 74, had been listed as missing since her home in Kibbutz Be'eri was attacked last month. She was a founder of AJECC, a non-profit organization working to improve co-existence between the Beduin community and Jewish society. Vivian was also a founder of "Women

Wage Peace” and was active in other similar organizations empowering women and promoting co-existence. She frequently volunteered to drive Palestinian patients from the Gaza border to Israeli hospitals for treatment. Following her murder, her body had been so badly mutilated that it took over a month to positively identify her.

- Read [here](#) about difficult recordings of phone conversations with emergency services made on October 7, including one where a 15-year-old girl pleads with the terrorist, “Please leave me. I have school tomorrow.” The terrorist then killed her.

Reports continue to suggest that a deal between Israel and Hamas that would see the release of 50 - 100 women and children held by the terror group in Gaza could be announced within days. Under the emerging outline, the hostages would be released in groups, in exchange for Palestinian women and young people being held by Israel. According to the reports, Israel would also agree to a temporary ceasefire of up to five days, to allow safe passage for the hostages and an influx of aid for Gazan civilians.

Israeli universities have announced that due to the war, and in light of the large number of students conscripted to reserve duty, the opening of the new academic school year has been postponed again, until at least December 24.

The level of **rocket fire** from Gaza remains low, although there was one barrage towards Tel Aviv and the center and a number fired at Israel’s south. One boy was injured in Tel Aviv. Last night, Israeli air defense systems intercepted a Houthi missile launched toward Israel over the Red Sea area. Previously, sirens had sounded in Eilat, but the target was brought down by Israel's long-range Arrow missile defense system it crossed into Israeli territory. Meanwhile, the IDF’s Home Front Command issued this list of Israeli cities that have experienced the most number of rockets since October 7:

- Ashkelon - 253
- Ashdod - 187
- Sderot - 130
- Beer Sheva - 129
- Tel Aviv - 124
- Rishon Lezion - 114
- Netivot - 58
- Holon - 56
- Ramat Gan - 55
- Yavneh - 43
- Rehovot - 40
- Nes Ziona - 38
- Bat Yam - 38

In the **north**, rocket and other fires by Hezbollah are increasing. Yesterday, two IDF soldiers were wounded by an anti-tank guided missile attack near the Lebanon border. One is in serious condition; the other was only moderately hurt.

The Biden administration and some Israeli officials have recently spoken about their concern over an uptick in incidents where Jewish residents who live beyond the Green Line have been “taking the law into their own hands,” during the war.

According to the United Nations Office of the Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs, there have been more than 145 “attacks against Palestinians” since the start of the war.

- The UN says that Palestinians were injured in 22 of these incidents and Palestinian property was damaged in 100 cases.
- Unsubstantiated reports from Palestinian sources say that seven Palestinians have been killed in this violence since October 7.
- In one incident three weeks ago, a Jewish man allegedly shot dead a Palestinian man harvesting olives near the West Bank city of Nablus. According to Yossi Dagan, a representative of the Jewish communities that reside over the Green Line, the shooter fired in self-defense. The IDF said it received a report of a “violent confrontation” between Palestinians and Israeli civilians, and that a Palestinian was reported killed. Police have opened an investigation, it said.
- See [this](#) piece from the New York Times.
- Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently downplayed the issue, saying the isolated incidents were carried out by a tiny, fringe minority, and did not represent a trend. Similarly, Israel’s Yisrael Hayom Daily, in [this](#) piece, argues that the number of these incidents has decreased recently.
- Members of Jewish communities claim they have only acted in self-defense, have been living in a new and fearful environment since October 7; and must remain constantly vigilant, as they worry about a Hamas-style attack on their communities and populations, from neighboring, hostile, Palestinian towns. Even before October 7, more Israelis had been killed in the West Bank this year than during any year since the Second Intifada.

### **International Response**

Brett McGurk, the White House coordinator for the Middle East, has arrived in Israel. Israel’s Defense Minister Yoav Gallant told McGurk that Israel will not end its Gaza campaign until Hamas has been destroyed and the hostages held in the Strip are returned home. McGurk is participating in a tour of multiple countries in the region to try to quickly reach a US-brokered deal to secure the release of the hostages.

The BBC has apologized after a presenter falsely claimed that Israel was targeting medical staff and Arabic speakers during its operation at Gaza’s Al-Shifa Hospital. “This was incorrect and misquoted a Reuters report,” the UK broadcaster said. “What we should have said is that IDF forces included medical staff and Arabic speakers for this operation. We apologize for this error, which fell below our usual editorial standards.” (Israel’s satirical television show, Eretz Nehederet, continues to poke fun at the BBC, as can be seen in [this](#) “interview.”)

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has criticized Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for saying Israel must stop “this killing of women, of children, of babies” in Gaza. During a news conference yesterday, Trudeau called on Israel to “exercise maximum restraint” while fighting against Hamas terrorists in Gaza. He said, “The world is watching.”

### **Inspiration**

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

- Watch [here](#) as a man in the reserves bumps into his son, who serves in the standing army, in the middle of the fighting in Gaza.
- Watch [this](#) account by an Israeli, Muslim Arab who volunteers with Zaka rescue services.

- More and more soldiers are getting married whenever the opportunity allows. Read [this](#) moving account of one family's wedding.

### Additional Background Reading

- [America's Bear Hug](#)
- Read this analysis by Brett Stephens: [The Genius of Israel, Even Still](#).
- [Israel must be given time to complete its mission](#)
- When we say, 'Never Again' we mean 'Never Again'. Read [here](#).

### Other Resources

- **Local Authorities:** Jewish Federations have produced a document answering questions about funding-impacted localities and municipalities in Israel. See [here](#).
- **Volunteering:** Birthright Israel has opened [a volunteering program](#) in which people from outside of Israel can come to Tel Aviv and take part in food rescue operations to prevent shortages in the Israeli market. They include sorting, packing, and distributing goods to be sent to both civil and military personnel.
- **Critical Information:** 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.
- **Supplying Protective Equipment:** See also [this](#) Jewish Federation 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](#).
- **Funders:** 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.
- **Hostages:** Jewish Federations have launched [The Blue Ribbon Campaign](#), which symbolizes support and solidarity for the safe return of the hostages taken by Hamas. The campaign unites people of all religions, races, nationalities, ethnicities, ages, and generations and demonstrates to 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's **Israel Emergency Fund** has surpassed \$635 million. We have allocated a total of more than \$175 million to date from the Emergency Fund; for our blog post on the subject, [click here](#) and for the updated list of recipients and amounts, [click here](#).

The Community Mobilization Center is monitoring major developments in Israel and North America related to Israel's war to defend itself 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 you as the situation develops.**