



November 20, 2023

The Latest:

- As the ground war continues, Israel has uncovered extensive tunnels under the Shifa Hospital, with concrete evidence that **hostages** were held there. Israel has also recovered several bodies of hostages at the hospital who were likely killed by Hamas. See the map [here](#).
- **67 Israeli soldiers have been killed** since the ground offensive began, and 387 soldiers since October 7. See a list of all soldiers that have fallen (with details, in Hebrew) in this war, [here](#).
- Iran-backed Yemeni Houthis have hijacked a ship in the Red Sea they claim is Israeli. According to Israel, the ship is British-owned and Japanese-run, and the international crew does not include any Israeli citizens. Read more [here](#).
- Watch [a special message](#) from Israel's President Isaac Herzog to global Jewish communities.
- See details on these developments, and more, below.

Key Resources From Jewish Federations

- **Jewish Federations** have now raised a total of more than \$659 million system-wide and allocated close to \$200 million to a wide range of humanitarian organizations in Israel. See our impact stats [here](#).
- **Webinar:** Key Concepts in Zionism and the History of Israel: Join Rabbi Mike Uram, Chief Jewish Learning Officer of JFNA, on **Tuesday, November 21 at 3 pm ET** to unpack Israel's history and gain a better understanding of the key features of Israel and Zionism. No prior knowledge is needed; questions of all kinds are encouraged. To learn more and register, [click here](#).
- **Arab and Jewish Israelis joint responses:** Join this webinar to hear from Shira Ohana and Hanan Alsanah about inspiring joint emergency responses from the earliest days of the war, and what they are doing today to preserve a shared future for all residents of the Negev. **November 28, 12 noon ET**. Register [here](#).
- **March:** Close to 300,000 people of all faiths and backgrounds [thronged the National Mall](#) in Washington, D.C. for the March for Israel, which featured political leaders from both parties, family members of hostages, students from campuses that are experiencing antisemitism, top Israeli and American entertainers, and many more. The event, which also attracted a quarter-million viewers on the livestream, was featured in [worldwide media](#). Watch the [interview](#) that Eric

Fingerhut did with CNN This Morning in advance of the rally. During the rally, Board Chair Julie Platt [declared](#) on Fox News that turnout “far exceeded our wildest dreams.” And read [here](#), a personal account of the march by the Jerusalem Post’s Editor in Chief, Avi Mayer.

- **Volunteering:** Read [this](#) updated Jewish Federations update on the latest volunteering opportunities in Israel right now.
- **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. The CMC is also holding a training on **Tuesday, November 28 from noon to 1 pm ET** on combating antisemitism in the K-12 education space. [Click here](#) to register.
- **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](#).
- **Webinar:** 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 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 (see footage [here](#)), Israeli forces continue to find weapons that Hamas has kept in civilian locations. Over the weekend, IDF forces engaged terrorists in a fierce battle that took place inside a high school, after which the military discovered large amounts of weapons of all types and ammunition on site. Also, for the first time since fighting began, a mixed-gender IDF unit has been operating in Gaza. Watch the unit’s commander [here](#), and see footage of the unit’s rescue operations [here](#).

The Director of Gaza’s **Shifa Hospital** has requested the IDF’s assistance in evacuating patients from the hospital. Gaza’s Hamas-run Health Ministry says 30 premature babies have been evacuated from Shifa and will be transferred to medical facilities in Egypt. The Israeli military has provided humanitarian aid to the hospital and will assist in evacuating patients. Some patients who cannot be moved will remain in the hospital with medical staff and will not be harmed. The IDF has announced that contrary to some reports, it did not order the hospital to evacuate. Rather, the decision was made by hospital management. See photos [here](#) of food and water being delivered to the hospital by Israeli troops.

Meanwhile, Israel disclosed a video showing Hamas bringing two foreign hostages, a Thai man and a Nepalese man, to **Shifa Hospital** on October 7. [One video](#) shows a group of Hamas terrorists dragging a man into one of the hospital entrances, clearly against his will (since he openly resists), although he is overpowered. [Another video](#) shows a man on a stretcher who appears to have been badly wounded. (Although faces are blurred here, the men’s identities can be made out in the original footage). The videos were obtained by internal hospital CCTV footage (see still photos [here](#)). In

addition, the terrorists are seen entering Shifa on a captured IDF military jeep (see photos [here](#)). Besides these videos, the IDF has also shown (see video [here](#) and map [here](#)) that it found bodies of Israelis killed on October 7, including pathology evidence that 19-year-old Israeli hostage, Noa Marciano, was killed at the hospital. Earlier, the IDF had revealed that Noa's injury was not life-threatening and that she was murdered by a Hamas terrorist at Shifa.

A [CNN team](#) was escorted into the area around the hospital leading the news channel to report, "It is arguably the most compelling evidence thus far that the IDF has offered that there may be a network of tunnels below the hospital."

Israeli troops have also raided the homes of senior Hamas officials in Gaza City's **upscale Rimal neighborhood** and battled operatives in the area. Soldiers from the Paratroopers Brigade, tanks, and combat engineers, with air support, are battling Hamas in Rimal, as well as in the Sheikh Ijlin neighborhood, and are working to locate Hamas infrastructure. Much of Rimal, once one of the Strip's most expensive neighborhoods and home to many senior Hamas leaders, has been destroyed by Israeli airstrikes. The military has located some 35 tunnel shafts, dozens of weapons, and seven rocket launchers in the two neighborhoods; they have also killed several Hamas operatives. See the footage [here](#).

The Hamas-run Gazan Health Ministry says that over 12,000 Palestinians have been killed since October 7, as a result of the war.

The Home Front

While reports persist of an imminent deal on some **hostages**, no formal announcement has yet been made. According to many media outlets, the deal will likely involve the freeing of around 50 hostages (comprised of women, children, and non-Israeli nationals) in exchange for an unknown number of Hamas prisoners, alongside a three to five day ceasefire.

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:

- Aryeh Zalmanovich, an 85-year-old founder of Kibbutz Nir Oz, was taken hostage on October 7. Hamas released a video showing Aryeh still alive but then announced that he had died. The circumstances of his death, like that of other hostages who are known to have died, remain unclear.
- Read the [story](#) of Yuval Baron and Moshe Shuva, an engaged couple who were planning to wed next February. Yuval had already purchased her wedding dress. The two were murdered by Hamas terrorists at the Nova Rave.
- 22-year-old Clemens Felix Matanga who lived in Kibbutz Nahal Oz was from Tanzania and participated in an agricultural training program as part of an agreement between Israel and his own country. He and a fellow countryman were abducted to Gaza on October 7. Over the weekend, Matanga was found dead at Shifa Hospital, where he had been held hostage. The circumstances of his death remain unclear. (See [here](#)).
- The remains of 12-year-old Liel Hetzroni, who was killed in the October 7 Hamas assault on her home in Kibbutz Be'eri, have been formally identified by forensic archaeologists. Liel was killed along with her twin, Yanai, their grandfather, Avia Hetzroni, and their aunt Ayala. Omri Shifroni, a relative of the family, said that no one came out alive from the Hetzroni home on October 7.

- The Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel said that “our hearts were broken” when the director of the sexual assault center at Canada’s University of Alberta signed an open letter denying Hamas-led terrorists raped women during the October 7 attacks. The Association tweeted that “It is incredible that an organization that is familiar with the mechanism of silencing [rape victims], chooses it and denies victims.” The director has since been removed from her position. Watch [this](#) dramatized video, staged by an Israeli advocacy group to highlight the issue.

The level of **rocket fire** from Gaza remains low, presumably due to Hamas’ diminished capabilities.

In the **north**, rocket and other fire by Hezbollah continues at a steady pace, as do Israel’s retaliations against Hezbollah. It seems that the Lebanese terror group is intent on continuing to hit Israel in a show of solidarity with Hamas, without trying to escalate further, for fear of massive Israeli retaliation. Most border towns in the north remain evacuated.

International Response

US President Joe Biden received a vote of confidence in his support of Israel’s fight against Hamas from inside his party last week, in a letter signed by over 100 former senior Democratic figures. The letter praised Biden’s “moral clarity, courageous leadership, and staunch support of Israel.” Signatories to the letter included Biden’s former chief of staff Ron Klain, former secretary of defense for policy Colin Kahl, and former ambassadors such as Joseph W. Westphal, who served as the US envoy to Saudi Arabia under former US president Barack Obama.

Israel’s Prime Minister **Benjamin Netanyahu** referred to mounting international pressures on Israel over the weekend when he said, “Even if the pressure increases, I will not stop from adhering to the three tasks that I have set and which all of must adhere to. The first task was to achieve absolute victory, to destroy Hamas. The people, the Government, and the fighting forces show that we have the will, the capability, and the unity to achieve this goal. The second task is to bring back the hostages. We will not relent in this sacred task. It guides us always. The third task is to ensure that after victory, Gaza will never again threaten the citizens of Israel. I will not agree that any element enters there that supports terrorism, pays terrorists and their families, and educates their children to murder Jews and eliminate the State of Israel. Without such a revolution in the future civil administration in Gaza, it would only be a question of time until the terrorism returns and I am not willing to agree to this.” Read the Prime Minister’s full remarks [here](#).

The **Palestinian Authority** has put out a statement, denying that Hamas was responsible for at least 350 young people killed during the Re'im music festival massacre. The statement falsely states that "preliminary Israeli police investigations" showed that Israeli claims in the media were false, followed up by saying that this was then used by "the occupation to justify its aggression against Gaza."

Inspiration

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

- An uplifting [video](#) of some of the love in Israel at this time.
- Watch [these reserve soldiers](#) trying to make the most of a difficult situation.

- Read [here](#) about how reserve soldiers from abroad drop everything to help out.
- Among the [more emotional videos being shared](#) is that of a reservist who missed his son's birth but made it to the hospital soon afterward.
- Watch [this](#) video message by Israeli teens for the world.

Additional Background Reading

- [On a tightrope: Israel's Arab citizens and the War Between Israel and Hamas](#)
- [Only a Preventative Attack on Hamas Could Have Averted the Current Crisis](#)
- [The mechanics of a hostage deal](#)

Jewish Federations' **Israel Educational Travel Alliance** has produced the *Voices We Must Hear* series, including reports by Masa participants, Taliya Shurki, Ryan Benjamin Knopp, and Isaiah Kriegman, who chose to stay in Israel after the war started. Shani Teshuva, an evacuee from Kibbutz Zikim, shared her harrowing experience with her husband and two teenage children on October 7 and the challenges of picking up the pieces of their lives since then. Dalia Cusnir, who is the Director of Immersive Experiences at The Jewish Agency, joined to sadly share the frightening stories of her brothers-in-law, who are being held hostage in Gaza, and the desperate efforts of her family to bring home the hostages. You can watch the recordings using these links:

- [Masa Participants](#)
- [Shani Teshuva](#)
- [Dali Cusnir](#)

For additional stories, see [here](#).

Other Resources

- **Supporting Pastoral Guidance and Rabbinic Services.** Read [here](#) about the work to date that Federations are supporting in this field through collective Israel emergency dollars.
- **Local Authorities:** Jewish Federations have produced a document answering questions about funding-impacted localities and municipalities in Israel. See [here](#).
- **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. Wearing a ribbon publicly 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

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.



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