



November 21, 2023

The Latest:

- **68 Israeli soldiers have been killed** since the ground offensive began, and 388 soldiers since October 7. See a list of all soldiers who have fallen (with details, in Hebrew) in this war, [here](#). Vered Benvenisti, who tragically lost her father and then her brother in previous Israeli wars, has now lost her son, who fell in battle in Gaza last night.
- Reports continue of an imminent deal on some **hostages**. Commenting on a possible agreement, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said, "We're closer now than we've been before." 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 3-5 day ceasefire.
- The IDF announced that the **residents of the Gaza Envelope** in communities that are located within four kilometers or more from the Gaza Strip can now return home, although, for many, their houses have been destroyed. Yesterday, media circulated a [photo](#) of the reopened dining hall at Kibbutz Be'eri.
- 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, **today, 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](#).
- **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.

- **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, the IDF has completed the encirclement of Jabaliya in northern Gaza. It says that heavy strikes were carried out by artillery and air force units in the area to "prepare the ground for battle." On the outskirts of Jabaliya, three tunnel entrances were struck with Hamas operatives inside.

The military also found and destroyed rocket launchers nearby. See footage [here](#) of the IDF operating around Jabaliya, and see photos [here](#).

The IDF also carried out airstrikes against an additional **250 Hamas targets** over the past day and hit terrorists, rocket launchers, and military infrastructure. Troops continue to discover large quantities of weapons hidden in civilian locations including in mosques, and even one anti-tank missile was even found under the mattress of a **baby's crib**). See the photos [here](#) and the video [here](#).

The level of rocket fire from Gaza remains low, presumably due to Hamas' diminished capabilities. However, following one barrage last night, a 54-year-old woman was pronounced dead after she collapsed while running to a shelter in the center of the country.

In the north, rocket and other fire by Hezbollah continues at a steady pace, as do Israel's retaliations against Hezbollah. Hezbollah has fired more than 1,000 rockets and other projectiles at Israel since fighting began on October 7.

Meanwhile, **29 premature Palestinian babies** arrived in Egypt yesterday after they were evacuated from Shifa Hospital. The babies were transported across the border, a day after they were evacuated from Gaza's largest hospital, which has become a focal point of fighting. The infants were evacuated with Israeli assistance after troops took control of the hospital over the weekend (see video [here](#)). Also yesterday, the first Jordanian field hospital was set up in southern Gaza. See [here](#) footage of a captured Palestinian giving information about Hamas' use of hospitals.

It has also been revealed that two weeks ago, two Hamas terrorists were arrested in the southern Bedouin city of Rahat, after having apparently **hidden out** in the town for a month following their part in the attacks of October 7.

The Hamas-run Gazan Health Ministry says that over 13,000 Palestinians have been killed since October 7, as a result of the war.

The Home Front

After meeting with the **families of the hostages**, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stressed his commitment to securing their release, calling it "a sacred and supreme mission." He said, "We will not let up until they are returned, and this is the

responsibility of me and the war cabinet. I listened to the pain of the families. We spoke heart to heart. I shared with them as much as I could about the diplomatic, intelligence, and operational efforts we are leading around the clock... We will not stop fighting until we bring our hostages home, destroy Hamas, and ensure there will no longer be a threat from Gaza.”

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:

- In London, the father of Hamas hostage Emily Hand (who turned 9 in captivity last week) pleads, ‘Help me bring her home.’ See [here](#).
- Watch [this](#) video footage from the dashboard of a truck belonging to Oz Davidian, a farmer from the area near the Gaza border who rescued some 120 young people trying to escape the rave on October 7. Davidian made 20 trips between Re'im and his moshav (a 9-mile journey), under fire, taking a different route each time to try to avoid the terrorists.
- Ori Danino, 25, is presumed captive from the rave. Danino and a friend each left the party in separate vehicles, filling their cars with as many people as possible to help them escape the terrorists. At one point, Danino asked his friend for the phone number of people they had just met at the party, telling him that he was going to go back and save them. That was the last time his friend heard from him. Read more [here](#).
- A new settlement to be built in the Negev was chosen to be named after Ofir Liebshtein, the former head of the Saar Negev Regional Council, who was murdered during the October 7 massacre while trying to save the lives of his neighbors. The decision was made by the prime minister and the housing minister with the intention of "honoring the memory of our friend. It is still hard to comprehend that he is not at our table."
- Read [here](#) about Matan Rosenberg, 17, who was murdered by Hamas on October 7 near Kibbutz Nirim.

Israel's coalition government has announced that it will advance legislation to enshrine the status of Israel's **Druze community**, amid the climbing death toll among Druze soldiers in the current war. Prime Minister Netanyahu and other senior figures suggested they would find a way to complement the 2018 Basic Law: Nation-State of the Jewish People, which the Druze community says marginalizes them. Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and coalition whip Ofir Katz, both of Likud, said the following over the weekend, “In the coming days, we will promote a draft Basic Law for the Druze community, which aims to anchor the important status of the Druze community in the State of Israel.”

International Response

Roughly 300 **UN diplomats** attended a screening at UN headquarters in New York of footage showing atrocities on October 7. The screening of the 40-minute video, compiled by the IDF and featuring uncensored, difficult-to-watch scenes, many taken from Hamas terrorists' bodycams, was organized by the Israeli Mission to the United Nations. While the footage will not be released publicly, Israeli diplomats have been holding special screenings for journalists, members of parliaments, diplomats, and other influential personalities.

Meanwhile, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for a UN protectorate involving US and Arab forces remaining in Gaza for a transitional period after the war.

International Committee of the **Red Cross** president Mirjana Spoljaric met yesterday with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Qatar. Following the meeting, the Red Cross issued a statement that read, “The ICRC has persistently called for the immediate release of hostages. The ICRC is insisting that our teams be allowed to visit the hostages to check on their welfare and deliver medications, and for the hostages to be able to communicate with their families. Agreements must be reached that allow the ICRC to safely carry out this work. The ICRC cannot force its way in to where hostages are held, nor do we know their location. The ICRC does not take part in negotiations leading to the release of hostages. As a neutral humanitarian intermediary, we remain ready to facilitate any future release that the parties to the conflict agree to, as ICRC staff have already done on two occasions.”

[Dramatic footage](#) has been released of **Houthi rebels** from Yemen seizing a ship in the Red Sea that they say is Israeli-owned. According to Israel, the ship is British-owned and Japanese-run, and no members of the crew are Israeli.

Inspiration

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

- Israeli government spokesperson Eylon Levy is developing a strong fan following due to his articulate answers in international media. See his latest interview [here](#).
- Two couples in Israel were celebrating weddings in adjacent halls when rocket sirens interrupted the festivities. Both families gathered in a bomb shelter - but didn't allow it to ruin the atmosphere. Instead, they continued the celebration together in the shelter, in a perfect showcase of Israeli resilience amidst hardship. Watch [here](#).
- A touching family reunion unfolded when a father, who had been on reserve duty for over five weeks, surprised his daughter Noga on her 13th birthday. He arrived with a cake in the middle of his daughter's classmates singing her “Happy Birthday.” While her dad has been away serving the country, Noga has been doing her part as well, preparing care packages for soldiers. Watch the special moment [here](#).
- Cindy Seni of Netflix's “Jewish Matchmaking” married her fiancé Eldad, surrounded by 50 close friends and family. (Read more about Cindy on the show [here](#)). When the war broke out, exactly one month before her planned wedding date, she struggled with whether to proceed, writing on Instagram: “When the war hit, nothing seemed less important than my wedding. Joy was a commodity we couldn't afford anymore.” Ultimately, she chose to celebrate her wedding as an act of defiance against Hamas, hoping it would be a “ray of hope and joy in the darkest hour.” Watch [here](#).

Additional Background Reading

- [Three weeks of the ground war in Gaza](#)
- [What happens to halacha during war times?](#)
- [Victory is an opportunity for Israel amid crisis](#) – By Israel's Minister of Intelligence

Additional Resources

- **Volunteering:** Read [this](#) updated Jewish Federations update on the latest volunteering opportunities in Israel right now.
- **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](#).
- **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.
- 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.

Jewish Federations

Our Israel Office, having activated emergency protocols, is working closely with our partners on the ground and is in close contact with both the Government of Israel and with the IDF. We will continue to update as the situation develops.



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