



December 18, 2023

Upcoming

- Join a webinar on **December 20, 2023, at 11 am ET** to hear some of the **stories of Israeli victims and survivors** who have recently received aid from the Jewish Agency's Fund for Victims of Terror, which has distributed over 6,300 grants since October 7. [Register here](#).
- Please join the Jewish Federation's **JEDI** team and Hadassah Foundation for a conversation on how Israeli women's organizations are partnering to meet the immediate needs of women and girls and to advocate for their rights. We will also hear from members of Israel's Civil Commission of Oct. 7. **The War's Impact on Women in Israel. Tomorrow, Tuesday, December 19, 1 pm ET.** [Register here](#).

The Latest

- As fighting continues, additional **IDF soldiers have been killed**, bringing the total number of IDF casualties since the ground offensive began to 127, (and to 459 since October 7). See details of all the fallen soldiers [here](#). More than 1,800 soldiers have been wounded, and 38 remain hospitalized in serious condition.
- Nearly 70% of Iran's gas stations went out of service following a likely **cyberattack**. An Israeli hacker group claimed responsibility. It was also announced today that an attempt by Iranian figures to hack into Ziv Hospital in northern Israel was recently thwarted.

Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Operations

- Earlier today, IDF troops seized some \$1.5 million in **cash in suitcases** found in the home of a senior Hamas member in northern Gaza ([see photos](#)).
- During activity in Jabalya, the IDF located an operational [tunnel shaft inside a children's room](#) in the basement of a building. This shaft included built-in stairs and was destroyed by the brigade's engineering forces.
- The [IDF also carried](#) out **strikes against more than 150 sites** in the Gaza Strip over the past day. In the Khan Younis area, an IAF drone spotted a Hamas cell entering a site belonging to the terror group. Troops of the Givati Brigade then directed a combat helicopter to strike the cell.
- The IDF also revealed the **largest-ever Hamas attack tunnel** (see [animated infographic](#)) discovered by the military, in northern Gaza, close to the Erez border

crossing with Israel ([see map](#)). The tunnel, of which around 2.5 miles were uncovered by the IDF, is located some 165 feet underground in some areas and appears to be wide enough for vehicles to pass through. Watch [this](#) Hamas video of the tunnel's construction.

- Over the weekend, IDF forces prevented an intricate assault prepared by Hamas. The ambush included **booby-trapped children's stuffed toys** and piles of children's clothing designed to lure soldiers into believing that Israeli children had been held hostage at that location. Hamas placed a blue-tooth speaker near the toys and played dialog in Hebrew through the speaker to convince the IDF that there were hostages nearby.
- See also [this](#) Jewish Federation backgrounder: Does the IDF target civilians?

Rockets

- **Hamas rocket attacks** on Israel remain far lower than earlier in the war but continue to strike Israeli cities on an almost daily basis. Most rockets are intercepted by Iron Dome, but even in these cases, fragments sometimes fall causing considerable damage. See [this](#) intercepted rocket that landed in an Ashdod supermarket yesterday.
- **In the north**, Hezbollah seems to have increased its level of rocket and other fire against Israeli targets. In response, Israel's Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said, "If Hezbollah wants to go up a level, we'll go up five....We don't want that, we don't want to get into a war situation. We want to restore peace and we will do it either through an agreement or with forceful action, with all its implications. We don't want war, but we won't hold it off for too long."
- In the **Red Sea**, Israel and the United States military continue to shoot down missiles fired at commercial shipping vessels, by Iran-back Houthi rebels in Yemen. Israel's President Isaac Herzog [said](#) that the Houthis have crossed a red line.

Hostages

- In a tragic development, **three hostages were mistakenly shot** and killed by IDF troops who believed they were Hamas terrorists. See more [here](#).
- There are ongoing reports of a **potential renewed hostage deal** with Hamas. Sources say that Hamas is insisting on being able to choose those Palestinian prisoners to be released, including those who have murdered Israelis. Hamas had also proposed to release the bodies of hostages it said were killed during captivity.
- Possibly as a first step towards a deal, and in preparation for increased aid to the Strip, **Israel has reopened the Kerem Shalom Crossing** to enable commercial quantities of goods to enter Gaza. However, videos circulating on social media showed Hamas gunmen stealing trucks delivering humanitarian aid to the Strip from Egypt.
- It is believed that **128 hostages remain in Gaza**, following the earlier truce deal that freed 105. Four hostages were released before that, and one was rescued by troops. The bodies of 8 hostages have also been recovered and 3 hostages were mistakenly killed by the IDF. The military has also confirmed the deaths of 21 of those still held by Hamas, citing new intelligence and findings obtained by troops operating in Gaza. This likely leaves some 104 living hostages.

International Response

- **US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin** together with Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. CQ Brown, arrived in Israel earlier today. Some media reports say that Austin will announce a new maritime protection force during his visit, after repeated attacks by the Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen on commercial ships traversing the Red Sea.
- As the Yemenite Houthis continue to raise the level of their threats towards all ships traveling to and from Israel, the **US Navy** today began to redeploy the USS Eisenhower Carrier group from the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Aden, near the Yemeni coast. It has been reported that this redeployment is a signal that the US may intervene and counterattack the Houthis shortly.

Stories Of Heartbreak, Heroism And Hope

- Watch JDC's videos:
 - "[Tzipy's Story](#)," is about living with a disability during war times.
 - "Our souls were shattered: [Sapir's story](#)."
- A new opinion poll about the ultra-Orthodox public in Israel shows the group seems to be moving closer to mainstream Israeli society since October 7. Among the findings:
 - 73% of the Haredi community feels a stronger sense of shared destiny with Israeli society due to the recent war.
 - 75% expressed a deep connection to the "Israeli narrative."
 - 32% supported increased involvement of their community in Israeli society.
 - 29% favor haredi enlistment (compared to 9% before October 7). And 70% said those not studying Torah should serve in the IDF or alternative national service.
 - Remarkably, when asked about their trust in institutions, Haredim said they trusted:
 - The IDF – 59%
 - Political parties (including haredi parties) – 58%
 - Local authorities – 48%
 - The Police – 42%
 - Government – 34%
 - Justice system – 8%

Further Reading

- [Initial Lessons](#) from the October 2023 War, [Major General \(res.\) Yaakov Amidror](#)
- An [Israeli Perspective](#) on the Gaza War and Its Broader Implications, [Professor Efraim Inbar](#)

Jewish Federations' Resources

- Read background on the Hamas terror group [here](#).
- Jewish Federations of North America's president and CEO Eric Fingerhut gave a stirring and timely speech last week to civic leaders at the Cleveland Club about the war in Israel and the need for all people of good faith to confront the dramatic spike in antisemitism that has arisen since October 7. To read the text of the speech, or to watch it on video, click on [this post](#).
- Jewish Federations', **10/7 Project** is a new collaboration with AJC, AIPAC, ADL, and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. The [10/7 Project](#) is an organized effort to counter the disinformation about the attacks

of October 7th and Israel's response, especially aimed at the key media and government influencers. [See here](#) for more information about the 10/7 project, as well as [this news bulletin](#).

- **Resource Hub:** Readers can see links to resources, background, research, and other information on the current war [here](#); can access a Jewish Federations toolkit [here](#), and can refer to the Community Mobilization Center [Resource Hub](#) for the latest talking points and tools.
- See these **newly produced resources** by Jewish Federations that give insight into some areas of Federations' emergency allocations:
 - [Women](#)
 - [Pastoral Guidance](#)
 - [Bedouin Communities](#)
 - [Food Security](#)
 - [People with Disabilities](#)
- **Details:** For information on the latest overall numbers from the conflict, see [here](#).
- Overall, **Jewish Federations have now raised** over \$762 million for emergency assistance and more than \$265 million has been allocated. For more details, [click 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 of the country's diverse society will speak every Sunday to Thursday from 11-11:30 am ET. No registration is required. Join [here](#).
- **Volunteering:** Read [this](#) updated Jewish Federation update on the latest volunteering opportunities in Israel right now.
- **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.
- **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.
- **Previous updates** can be found [here](#).

Jewish Federations

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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