



February 12, 2024

Jewish Federations and Partners

- Jewish Federations' Israel Emergency Campaign has now raised a total of more than \$780 million and allocated close to \$350 million. For details, [click here](#).
- Join the **Jewish Agency for Israel's webinar today** - Navigating Crisis: Former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on the War with Hamas & the Road to a Brighter Future; Introduction by Jewish Agency Chairman of the Executive Major General (Res.) Doron Almog. Today, **Monday, February 12, 2024 at 12:30 pm ET**. Register [here](#).

Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Activities

- In what is being described as a “daring and complex operation,” **Israeli special forces rescued two hostages** from Hamas captivity in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip last night. The IDF has confirmed that Fernando Marman, 61, and Louis Har, 70, were both in reasonable condition after being rescued, following an operation that involved battles with Hamas terrorists and massive Israeli airstrikes in Rafah. The two hostages had been abducted from Kibbutz Nir Yitzhak on the morning of October 7 and spent 129 days in captivity. The joint operation by the police's elite Yamam counterterrorism unit, the Shin Bet security agency, and the IDF began at around 1:00 am, and forces breached the apartment at 1:49 a.m., killing the three terrorists guarding the hostages and then protecting the two hostages to allow an extraction. See the IDF's full briefing on the rescue mission [here](#).
- The **two rescued hostages**, both Argentinian-born Israelis, are reported to be weak but in good condition. See [here](#) for further details of the operation, and watch the hostages' reunion with their families [here](#).
- Overnight, **two soldiers fell in battle** in Gaza; both were sons of prominent Israeli doctors. Sgt. First Class Adi Eldor, 21, of the Commando Brigade's Maglan unit, from Haifa, is the son of Dr. Liron Eldor, a senior plastic and reconstructive surgeon at Rambam Hospital. He is also the grandson of gynecologist Prof. Yosef Itzkowitz-Eldor of Rambam and the Technion, who was a pioneer in the fields of fertility medicine and stem cell research in Israel. Sgt. First Class (res.) Alon Kleinman, 21, of the Commando Brigade's Maglan unit, from Tel Aviv is the son of Prof. Guy Kleinman, head of Wolfson's ophthalmology department. See details of

- all the fallen soldiers [here](#).
- With the north and center of Gaza largely under IDF control, and [considerable military gains](#) by Israel being recorded in the southern city of Khan Younis, the **last remaining Hamas stronghold is the city of Rafah**.
 - Located on the border between Gaza and Egypt, the city has seen a massive influx of Palestinians from the rest of the Strip, and now contains around six times the number of people it had on October 7. Its border location makes the city especially vulnerable, and Egypt, fearing a rush of hundreds of thousands to the border, has said that Israel should not attack Rafah. The international community is also largely opposed, with the US calling on Israel to refrain from attacking the city until a “credible plan” for its citizens is formulated.
 - Nonetheless, Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to continue, and said over the weekend that it is impossible to eliminate Hamas if four Hamas battalions are allowed to remain there.
 - It is understood that Hamas’ top leadership--as well as most of the Israeli hostages--remain underground in the city. Given that hundreds of thousands of Gazans have taken refuge in makeshift camps there, the IDF says it is drawing up plans to evacuate civilians ahead of a possible ground attack.
 - Read more about possible operations in Rafah [here](#).
 - The IDF uncovered **a large, strategic tunnel** that contained a sophisticated Hamas computer server farm. The discovery of the servers represents a significant intelligence find. The servers contain large amounts of valuable information that will assist the IDF in the ongoing war.
 - The tunnel itself is [located directly beneath](#) a UNRWA [office building](#), but the organization says that it was not aware of any Hamas activity below ground in the area. Israeli officials expressed skepticism over that claim, questioning how UNRWA personnel could have been unaware of hundreds of Hamas terrorists digging tunnels and entering and leaving the facilities directly underneath a major UNRWA complex.
 - Also found in the tunnel were notebooks and documents belonging to Hamas chief Yahya Sinwar.
 - Over the weekend, the IDF said that according to its estimates, **60% of the humanitarian aid entering Gaza ends up in the hands of Hamas**. It is estimated that the value of aid confiscated by Hamas since the beginning of the war is approximately \$130 million.

Hostages

- A new survey shows that Israelis are split on the question of whether the government should prioritize the freeing of hostages over defeating Hamas. Some 47% of Jewish Israelis insist that the return of the hostages should take precedence over the toppling of Hamas, while 42% express the opposite view. See details of this and other questions asked, [here](#).
- Meanwhile, senior Israeli officials remain engaged in negotiations to reach a new deal on the hostages, despite Hamas’ earlier demands that Israel said could not be met.

Rockets

- The number of **Hamas** rocket attacks on Israel remains low. In the last two weeks,

it has averaged just one or two per day.

- In the **north**, Hezbollah continues to fire at Israeli targets.
- In the **Red Sea**, the US, the UK, and Israel continue to defend against attacks by the Iran-back Houthi rebels in Yemen. Similarly, the US military continues to strike at pro-Iranian targets in Syria and Iraq.

International Response

- **Moody's rating agency lowered Israel's credit rating** from A1 to A2 and declared its outlook as "negative." This is the first time that Israel's rating has been downgraded in recent memory. The agency attributed its adjustment to the war and related costs but also pointed out its concerns over the financial management of the government and its budget priorities, coupled with the effects of political instability in Israel. The government, especially Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, downplayed the decision and attacked Moody's decision as being "politically motivated."
- There was a flurry of activity this week on **Capitol Hill** as both the House and Senate took up bills for military assistance to Israel. The House narrowly [voted down](#) the \$17.6 billion Republican-led bill as Democrats insisted on incorporating assistance to Ukraine and international humanitarian funding. However, the Senate bill, which includes \$14.1 billion for Israel, \$400 million in Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) funds, \$60.1 billion for Ukraine, and \$10 billion in humanitarian aid, has [advanced](#).

Stories Of Heartbreak, Heroism and Hope

- **Listen to the [music](#)** of 26-year-old Shaul Greenglick, a talented singer from Ra'anana who auditioned on "The Next Star" to represent Israel at the Eurovision competition just weeks before he was killed while fighting Hamas. Greenglick, who comes from a family of talented musicians, dropped out of the competition due to his military duties. This week, his siblings performed a song in his memory on the season finale of the show.
- More than 300,000 reserve soldiers were called up immediately after October 7. Many have now been released after months of fighting, and Israelis are constantly sharing video footage of soldiers returning home. Watch [this](#) short video from a staff person in our Israel office. It depicts the emotional return after months serving in Gaza of the security guard who works at her children's school.
- At least 134 hostages remain in Gaza, and according to most estimates, close to 100 are still alive. Read some of their stories here:
 - [Daniel Perez](#) was last seen and heard from on the morning of October 7. The 22-year-old resident of the community of Yad Binyamin in central Israel is the son of Rabbi Doron Perez, the head of the World Mizrahi movement. Daniel is an active runner, athlete, and ardent supporter of the Liverpool soccer team. His family has organized a weekly run where supporters show their solidarity with the family and implore that Daniel be released.
 - [Amiram Cooper](#), an 85-year-old grandfather of nine, is one of the founders of Kibbutz Nir Oz. His wife Nurit was one of the first hostages released in a deal. He is a poet and composer and is described as a lover of peace and a man of ideas. On the 25th anniversary of the kibbutz's founding in 1980, he composed a poem entitled [Love Song](#).
 - [Kaid Farhan Elkadi](#) lives in a Bedouin community in southern Israel. On the morning of October 7, he was abducted from Kibbutz Magen where he was

guarding a packaging facility. The 53-year-old is married and is the father of 11 children.

- [Edan Alexander](#) is a 19-year-old lone soldier who was born in Tel Aviv but grew up in Tenafly, New Jersey. After high school, he returned to Israel to join the Golani Brigade of the IDF. He is an avid swimmer and loves Thai and Japanese foods. His mother says that he is “a great all-American kid.” He had plans to attend college in the United States and study business.
- [Noa Argamani](#) is a dual Israeli and Chinese citizen who was kidnapped while attending the Supernova music festival with her boyfriend Avinatan Or, who was also taken captive. She is a student at Ben Gurion University. A video taken in the immediate aftermath of her kidnapping has been widely circulated and shows Noa yelling, “Don’t Kill Me!” Noa’s mother Liora is suffering from terminal brain cancer and has [pleading](#) for her daughter’s release. She wrote to President Biden in December, “All that’s running through my mind before I part ways with my family forever is the chance to hug my daughter, my only child, one last time.”
- [Alex Danzig \(Dancyg\)](#) is a 75-year-old father and grandfather. Born in Warsaw after the Holocaust, he is a dual citizen of Poland and Israel. He was kidnapped from Kibbutz Nir Oz on October 7. A Holocaust scholar and historian at Yad Vashem, he has won awards from the government of Poland for his educational work bringing together Israeli and Polish children to learn about the Holocaust. [A campaign](#) called “StandwithAlex” calling attention to his captivity has been spray-painted in public spaces in Warsaw. Danzig requires medication for a heart condition.
- [Doron Steinbrecher](#) is a 30-year-old veterinary nurse who was kidnapped from her apartment in Kibbutz Kfar Aza. At 10:30 in the morning of October 7, she sent a message to friends saying, “They’ve arrived. They have me.” Doron has a wide smile that radiates warmth and love. She requires daily medication.
- [Orión Hernández Radoux](#) is a 31-year-old Mexican and French citizen who was attending the music festival with his girlfriend, Shani Louk, who was later found dead. He was in Israel as a tourist at the time he was taken captive. He is described as “a man of music and festivals, love and family, adventure and peace.” His young daughter is eagerly awaiting her father’s return.

Further Reading

- [Israel must take Moody's credit drop seriously](#)
- [Israel's revised national security doctrine must include border defense](#)
- [Two hostages home. 134 to go](#)

Jewish Federations Resources

- See these **resources** by Jewish Federations that give insight into some areas of Federations’ emergency allocations:
 - [LGBTQ Community](#)
 - [Young Children](#)
 - [Volunteers](#)
 - [Women](#)
 - [Pastoral Guidance](#)
 - [Bedouin Communities](#)

- [Food Security](#)
 - [People with Disabilities](#)
- The Biden Administration has issued a new executive order to impose sanctions against four Israelis it said had committed violence in the West Bank. See this Jewish Federations' backgrounder for more information.
- Convening on the **Future of Israel Educational Travel**: The Israel Educational Travel Alliance (IETA), the consortium of over 100 Israel educational travel organizations housed at Jewish Federations of North America, will hold a convening in Washington, DC from Wednesday, **February 28 to Friday, March 1** to assess the future of the field of Israel educational immersive travel in the wake of 10/7. We welcome all Federation professionals who are involved with Israel-immersive experiences to participate. Register here. For more information, take a look at the FAQs or contact Melody.Desanto@jfna.org for more information.
- Jewish Federations recently released the [Israel Emergency Impact Report & resource package](#) to articulate the system-wide impact in Israel since 10/7. Watch a recent webinar ([recording here](#)) to learn more about this data, and the allocations processes.
- Registration for Birthright Israel's summer round is now open. See this [link](#) for important information to help potential participants and their parents navigate any concerns over the security situation. Interested parties can [reserve their spot here](#). [Registration is also open](#) for Onward's summer internships and fellowship programs – an opportunity for Birthright Israel alumni and those looking for a longer experience in Israel.
- As part of the [Second Line](#) initiative, Jewish Federations are partnering with the Israel Ministry of Health, the Israel Trauma Coalition, and Birthright Israel to recruit qualified volunteers to provide both in-person and remote support to affected populations and local mental health professionals in Israel. Native Hebrew speakers are particularly in demand, although speakers of French, Russian, Ukrainian, Arabic, Amharic, and Spanish will also be considered. Volunteers must be able to travel to Israel for six weeks. This is a golden opportunity for engagement, particularly for communities that can recruit a small group as a cohort. To apply, click [here](#). For more information, contact [Hannah Miller](#).
- Jewish Federations', 10/7 Project is a 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](#).
- **Resources:** 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.
- **Details:** 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 **Monday and 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](#).
- Read the latest communication from the **Community Mobilization Center** [here](#).
- **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.

For more information, please contact: Jewish Federations of North America's Dani Wassner dani.wassner@jewishfederations.org

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