



February 5, 2024

Jewish Federations and Partners

- 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 [backgrounder](#) for more information.
- Registration for Birthright Israel's summer round is now open. See this [link](#) for important information that will 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 others looking for a longer experience in Israel.

Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Activities

- An additional IDF soldier fell in battle in Gaza yesterday, bringing total IDF losses since the start of the ground operation to 225, and since the outbreak of war to 561. See details of all the fallen soldiers [here](#).
- Israeli troops killed dozens of Palestinian terrorists in [battles](#) throughout the Gaza Strip over the last 24 hours. In Khan Younis, which has been the site of the [heaviest fighting](#) in recent weeks, dozens of terrorists were killed in airstrikes and close-quarters combat. The IDF also uncovered [weapons stores](#), including [rockets](#), assault rifles, sniper rifles, grenades, and magazines.
- Over the weekend, IDF troops [raided the main headquarters](#) of Hamas' Khan Younis Brigade, used by the terror group for training ahead of October 7. The complex, known as the Al-Qadsia Outpost, also housed the office of Muhammad Sinwar, a senior Hamas military commander and the brother of the terror group's leader in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar. The outpost included a training ground of model targets (including mock entrances to Israeli communities), IDF bases, and military vehicles, all of which were used by Hamas to simulate and prepare for the October 7 attacks.

Hostages

- [Reports suggest](#) that Israel has accepted a hostage-release agreement, but that Hamas has not given its approval. According to some sources, under the **first stage** of the emerging agreement, Hamas would release some 40 hostages

comprised of children, women, the elderly, and those with major injuries. In return, Israel would agree to a six-week ceasefire and would release thousands of Hamas terrorists, including those serving time for murdering Israelis, from prison.

- It is believed that **136 hostages** remain in Gaza. The IDF has confirmed the deaths of at least 29 of them, citing intelligence and findings obtained by troops operating in Gaza and elsewhere. Since 2014, Hamas has also been holding the bodies of fallen IDF soldiers Oron Shaul and Hadar Goldin, as well as of two Israeli civilians, Avera Mengistu and Hisham al-Sayed.
- Meanwhile, superstar singer and social media influencer Montana Tucker, who traveled to Israel after October 7, walked the red carpet at the Grammy Awards on Sunday night in [a dress meant to call attention](#) to the Israelis who remain hostages in Gaza. In a nod to the 253 hostages taken captive by Hamas Tucker's dress featured a large yellow ribbon at its center.

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. Watch this troubling [video](#) of the immediate aftermath of a rocket strike in Ashkelon.
- In the **north**, Hezbollah continues to fire at Israeli targets. Hezbollah by the numbers:
 - 2,000 rockets and dozens of anti-tank guided missiles and drones fired at Israel since October 8.
 - 80,000 residents of communities along the northern border evacuated.
 - 430 homes on the border were damaged by Hezbollah attacks.
 - 3 IDF divisions deployed along the border have responded with defensive and offensive operations.
 - 3,400 Hezbollah targets have been struck, and 200 terrorists targeted, with hits on 150 terror cells and 120 Hezbollah observation posts.
 - 40 weapon stores have been struck along with 40 command and control centers.
- 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.
- **Background:** Hamas launched the first rocket attacks from Gaza in 2002. Since then, Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups have been launching rockets and other projectiles from the Gaza Strip as a means of imposing physical and emotional terror on the people of Israel. The only reason the devastation from the rockets is not far worse is thanks to the critical investment in the Iron Dome defense system. Some further background:
 - Since 2022, the intensity of fire from Gaza has increased, with the most affected target being the town of Sderot, whose border is located under one mile from the Gaza Strip. Over the years, the rockets became more sophisticated with capabilities of reaching much deeper into Israel. Before October 7, approximately 20,000 rockets were launched into Israel from Gaza.
 - Since October 7, over 12,000 rockets have been [fired into Israel](#) from Gaza. The attacks have [directly killed](#) 15 people and injured hundreds more. Attacks have been [launched](#) from civilian infrastructure, including safe zones the IDF set up for humanitarian purposes.

- The constant rocket fire has had devastating mental health effects on Israelis, especially residents of southern communities. The Sderot Foundation has [reported](#) that 90% of the city's residents, including 70 percent of the city's children. The scope of the October 7th attacks and the resulting war have been [linked to a nationwide massive increase](#) in PTSD and other emotional disorders, including depression and anxiety.
- The IDF has [identified](#) that between 10-20% of rockets launched from Gaza misfire, causing harm and sometimes death to Palestinians, such as the case of a [failed rocket](#) that hit a Palestinian hospital complex early in the war – an event that media initially blamed widely on Israel.
- The recording of our webinar with [international law experts](#) is available. In addition, Professor Arthur Van Coller, a South African law professor, issued a [report](#) on Hamas's use of Qassam rockets that found that "directing unguided rockets toward a densely populated urban area amounts to an unacceptable level of recklessness and risk to the civilian population...The use of [these] rockets implicates the customary international law prohibition against [indiscriminate attacks](#)."
- Since its development, Iron Dome, as well as other missile and rocket defense systems, have been critical to Israel's defense. The IDF has stated that the Iron Dome has a remarkable [over 90% success rate](#) and has shot down thousands of rockets that were fired indiscriminately at civilian populations. A complete battery [costs](#) approximately \$100 million to produce, and each interceptor costs approximately \$50,000.

International Response

- **US President Joe Biden** has urged senators to vote for a \$118 billion bipartisan national security deal. The package includes new border enforcement policy as well as wartime aid for Ukraine, Israel, and other US allies; and earmarks \$14 billion in military aid to the Jewish state. Biden said that the agreement "provides Israel what they need to protect their people and defend itself against Hamas terrorists," and "life-saving humanitarian assistance for the Palestinian people."
- The House has now introduced its own, \$17.6 billion [standalone bill for aid to Israel](#); this is likely to set up a clash between the two chambers.
- Jewish Federations support passing emergency funding for Israel as quickly as possible. Last week, 400 Federation leaders [met with dozens of Members of Congress](#) on Capitol Hill, urging them to hasten the passage of this lifesaving aid.
- US special envoy Amos Hochstein was in Israel over the weekend for talks with Israeli leaders on an **emerging framework to push Hezbollah back** from Israel's northern border. According to unconfirmed media reports, Hochstein has conveyed signs of a possible diplomatic solution that would lead to Hezbollah's moving back from the border. Meanwhile, Israel's Defense Minister Yoav Gallant continued to [warn Hezbollah](#) that Israel has considerable capabilities to strike the Lebanese terror group that have not yet been used.

Stories Of Heartbreak, Heroism and Hope

- War diary: [An IDF reservist reflects on his company's 100 days of war](#)
- In a [speech at the Grammy Awards](#) in Los Angeles last night, Recording Academy CEO Harvey Mason Jr. referred to the 360 Israelis gunned down at the Nova music festival on October 7. Mason said, "Music must always be our safe space. When that's violated, it strikes at the very core of who we are. We felt that at the

Bataclan Music Hall in Paris. We felt that at the Manchester Arena in England. We felt that at the Route 91 music festival in Las Vegas. And on October 7, we felt that again when we heard the tragic news from the Supernova Music Festival for Love, that over 360 music fans lost their lives, and another 40 were kidnapped... That day and all the tragic days that have followed have been awful for the world to bear as we mourn the loss of all innocent lives.”

- 'Emily has code words for Gaza captivity,' her father, Thomas Hand, told media. At one point, Thomas recounted, a terrorist told the then-eight-year-old Emily: “Uskut” [Arabic for be quiet] or I’ll kill you with this knife.” Read more [here](#).

Further Reading

- Yisrael Beteinu leader Avigdor Liberman on “[What should happen next](#).”
- Newsweek [op-ed](#) by urban warfare expert Major John Spencer, “Israel Implemented More Measures to Prevent Civilian Casualties Than Any Other Nation in History.”
- London-based Iranian opposition figure: ['Attack the head of the octopus' - It's time to confront Iran directly](#).
- El Hassan bin Talal, member of the Jordanian royal family: [A Middle East Paradox](#): The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has never been more dire—or riper for resolution.
- The Israel Democracy Institute writes about the unique role played by former Israeli Supreme Court President Justice Aharon Barak, who serves as an ad hoc judge on the ICJ panel. IDI’s Prof. Suzie Navot [explains](#) how Justice Barak’s powerful evocation of Israeli suffering against the backdrop of his history as a Holocaust survivor, along with his insistence on focusing on the horrors endured by Israelis that led to this war, affected the proceedings.
- Opinion: [Target the Iranian Regime](#)

Jewish Federations

- 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](#)
- Jewish Federations’ **Israel Emergency Campaign** has now surpassed \$775 million system-wide and has allocated more than \$300 million to a wide range of humanitarian organizations in Israel. See a detailed update on allocations [here](#).
- 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, consult 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.
- 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; also see [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 of 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
Subscribe to this twice-weekly update [here](#).*

