



War in Israel: Update on Current Situation

February 6, 2025 - October 7 War, Day 489

War day: 489 - 79 hostages remain in captivity

TODAY: Jewish Federations Webinar: Understanding the Impact of the War on Israel's Economy. Join us **today at 12:30 pm ET** for an exclusive briefing with Amir Yaron, Governor of the Bank of Israel. Yaron previously served as a Professor of Banking and Finance at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania. Register for the webinar [here](#).

Diplomacy

- Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin **Netanyahu is in Washington** this week. He is the first international leader to meet with US President Donald Trump during his second term.
- Trump's proposal that the US should take over the Gaza Strip has drawn widespread reaction from

around the globe. The banner headline of today's Jerusalem Post reads, "Trump's Stunning Gaza plan Redraws Mideast." Since the press conference, Trump and his spokespeople have doubled-down on plans to relocate Gaza's population permanently, create a US presence on the Strip, and turn it into a "new Riviera." (See details below).

- Yesterday, Jewish Federations of North America **held a webinar** on the latest developments, which can be viewed [here](#).
- Israeli media have written this week about the "**very warm relationship**" between the two leaders and their broad agreement on policy. For example, Netanyahu [referred](#) to Trump as "the greatest friend that Israel has ever had in the White House." In Israel, the visit is considered a significant political success for Netanyahu.
- It is understood that the two leaders discussed a **broad range of issues** concerning the Middle East, and there has been much speculation as to what results will emerge. Many points and proposals were stated publicly during the press conference. Among the major issues were:
 - **The continuation of the ceasefire** in Gaza and progressing to Stage 2 of the deal. The White House would like to see the implementation of the second phase and a continuation of the ceasefire, accompanied by the release of the remaining of the hostages (which would be accompanied by a mass release of Palestinian terrorists from Israeli jails). Israel is concerned that such a deal could leave Hamas intact and in power, even though the US has repeatedly stated that it believes Hamas's rule should end. While [polls indicate](#) that the Israeli population is in favor of a deal that will result in the release of the rest

of the hostages, Netanyahu's ruling coalition could be in danger if such an agreement leaves Hamas in power. Israel's negotiating team will depart for Qatar for ongoing talks in the coming days.

- In parallel, President Trump has continued to suggest that he believes that the Palestinian population of Gaza could and should **be relocated out of the Strip**, and even said that such an arrangement could be permanent. While the Palestinians themselves (along with most of the Arab world and beyond) are vehemently opposed to such an idea, Trump says that the concept is feasible and went so far as to say that the US could potentially control Gaza (turning it into a "Riviera of the Middle East.") While the President has suggested that Jordan and Egypt could absorb the Gazans, those [two countries are adamant](#) that they would not accept the proposal.
- The two leaders also reportedly discussed **preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons**. While Trump has already indicated he will begin applying maximum pressure on Iran, including increasing sanctions, Israel is believed to be in favor of a military strike on the Islamic Republic's nuclear facilities as soon as possible. In recent Israeli retaliatory attacks, Iran's air defenses have been all but destroyed. Iran is now isolated internationally and weakened, having lost its strongest allies with the defeat of Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the fall of the Assad regime in Syria. Many in Israel therefore believe that this is the ideal time to destroy Iran's nuclear capabilities. On the other hand, it has been reported that the US Administration would prefer to reach a new

deal with Iran that would also ensure an end to its nuclear program.

- It is also understood that the two leaders discussed an expansion of the Abraham Accords that would see additional agreements reached between Israel and Arab and Muslim countries. The main focus of discussion has been **Saudi Arabia**, one of the [most important countries in the region](#). While Saudi leaders have publicly stated that they will not sign a deal with Israel without the establishment of a Palestinian state, experts think that significant progress towards such a state might count. The shared concern between the two nations about Iran's nuclear program may also bring them closer together.

Ceasefire and the Hostages

- Last Shabbat, **three more hostages were released** by Hamas, as part of the ceasefire deal. Ofer Calderon and Yarden Bibas from Nir Oz and American-Israeli Keith Siegal from Kfar Aza were all freed looking frail, but in a reasonable state of health.
- Siegal stated that he had **spent his entire captivity underground** and that the day of his release was the first time that he had seen the sun in 15 months. Watch him being reunited with his daughters [here](#).
- Following the very difficult scenes when hostages were handed over to the Red Cross last week amid violent Gazan crowds, Israel had threatened to disrupt the entire deal if such episodes were repeated. As a result, Saturday's releases were conducted in an **orderly manner**, with Hamas and Islamic Jihad keeping mobs away from handover locations.

- Watch Ofer Kalderon's **emotional reunion** with [his children](#) and [his brother](#).
- The fate of Yarden Bibas' **wife Shiri and their two toddler sons remains unknown**, and Israeli authorities hold grave fears for their well-being. Watch Yarden's reunion with his [mother, father and sister](#).
- Read more [here](#) about the **IDF's extensive preparations** to welcome home released hostages.
- A further **20 hostages (12 of whom are still alive) are set to be released** during the current first stage of the agreement, with the next batch set for this Saturday.
- In total, **79 hostages remain in Gaza**, at least 35 of whom are likely no longer alive.
- As part of the agreement, following the freeing of the three hostages on Saturday, **Israel released 183 Palestinian terrorists from prison**. Of these, 18 were serving life sentences. Over 100 were from the Gaza Strip; they were arrested after October 7, 2023. In total, 150 were sent to Gaza, 32 were released to the West Bank, and one was sent to Egypt.
- One of those released was **Mohammed el-Halabi**, who was sentenced to 12 years in prison for diverting tens of millions of dollars to Hamas. El-Halabi had worked as the manager of the Gaza branch of World Vision, a major Christian aid organization. Also among the released was Shadi Amouri, who was convicted of involvement in a June 2002 suicide bombing on a bus which killed 17 Israelis and injured over 40. Amouri had been sentenced to 17 life terms for his role in the attack.

IDF

- Two reserve **IDF soldiers were killed** in a terror attack in Northern Samaria (West Bank) earlier this

week. Eight other soldiers were wounded, and two remain in serious condition. In the incident, a single terrorist approached a fortified IDF position during the night and lay in wait until attacking the following morning. The two fallen soldiers were Sergeant Major Avraham Tzvi Friedman, 43, and Sergeant Major Ofer Yung, 39.

- Strong rain and winds last night caused a crane to collapse in Gaza, **killing two IDF Golani soldiers**, Nadav Cohen, 21, and Nachman Refael Ben Ami, 20.
- Israel's Ministry of Defense announced that it had successfully completed an extensive series of operational trials testing approximately 20 advanced **counter-drone technologies**. During the recent war with Hezbollah, defending against drone attacks was one of the more significant challenges that the IDF faced, resulting in a scramble to develop new technologies and methods to stop such weapons.

For Further Reading

- [So Far So Good? The Israel-Lebanon Ceasefire Is Largely Holding](#)
- [Could Kuwait be the next country to join the Abraham Accords?](#)
- [Normalizing Relations with Saudi Arabia Provides New Opportunities](#)
- [Regime Change and the Overall Campaign Against Iran](#)
- [Israel Is Eliminating the Perpetrators of the October 7 Massacre](#)

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