



War in Israel: Update on Current Situation

March 14, 2024

Past updates can be found [here](#).

- On Wednesday, March 13th, the Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act passed the House of Representatives with overwhelming bipartisan support, 352 to 65. The Jewish Federations of North America [strongly support](#) the [complete passage of this legislation](#) to stop the spread of overtly antisemitic content on social media platforms, particularly TikTok.
- Join the Jewish Agency for Israel for a webinar: **Israel and the War in International Media**, which will take place March 21, 2024 at 11am ET, featuring recently retired IDF Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Conricus, senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and owner of Conricus Communications, and Gadeer Kamal-Mreeh, The Jewish Agency's Senior Emissary to Washington DC and the first Druze woman elected to Israel's Knesset. Jonathan represented the IDF in hundreds of interviews during the first three months of the war and will speak about his experiences as well as the ongoing complexities of the conflict and Gadeer will talk about her work since October 7. Register [here](#).

Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Activities

- Israel says that it is now planning to “**flood Gaza with humanitarian supplies.**” Among the methods being planned is the floating pier off Gaza's coast that U.S. President Joe Biden announced on Thursday in his State of the Union address. A team of experts from the U.S. Central Command is scheduled to arrive in Israel over the next few days to discuss how to carry out this project with the IDF.
 - For the first time, the IDF prepared for the arrival this week of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip by sea. A ship carrying humanitarian aid from the WCK (World Central Kitchen) organization and funded by the United Arab Emirates set sail on Tuesday from the port of Larnaca in Cyprus toward Gaza. This was carried out in coordination with Israeli security and civilian authorities, and was facilitated after all the equipment on the ship underwent comprehensive security checks.
 - In addition, six [humanitarian aid trucks](#) containing aid from the World Food Organization entered the northern Gaza Strip [via the 96th Gate](#) along the security fence on Tuesday. This operation was also carried out in cooperation with the Israeli government and the IDF.
 - Also, over 1,000 aid packages have been [airdropped](#) into the Gaza Strip in over 12 missions by foreign countries during the last week, all in coordination with Israel.
 - Earlier this week, Israel opened up a third humanitarian aid corridor to Gaza on a new road that was especially paved into the northern zone of the Strip. The road was used by humanitarian aid trucks for the first time on Tuesday, despite complaints from members of Netanyahu's ruling coalition that the government and the IDF were indirectly helping Hamas. Food for 25,000 Gazans was transferred by the UN on the new road.
 - Meanwhile, Hamas has killed the leader of the powerful Doghmush clan in Gaza City, for “stealing humanitarian aid” and being in contact with Israel, according to unconfirmed Arab media reports. The reports said that the clan leader, who was not named, was “executed” in the family compound along with two others. Earlier this week, a Hamas-linked website warned Palestinian individuals or groups against cooperating with

Israel to provide security for aid convoys amid the spiraling humanitarian crisis as war rages in Gaza.

- As ceasefire talks appear to still be stuck, focus remains on a possible **IDF incursion into Rafah**, the last area of Gaza containing significant Hamas forces. Some media are citing US Administration sources as saying that the US Government has quietly informed Israel that the US might support a limited military operation in Rafah that would include pinpoint anti-terror operations in the city, without a large incursion. According to Israeli sources, the IDF is working on a plan to ensure the safety of the 1.3 million displaced Gazans in the city. Read [this](#) opinion piece: "Israel must go ahead with an operation in Rafah." The IDF also said that it plans to direct a significant portion of the 1.4 million displaced Gazans in Rafah toward "humanitarian islands" in the center of the territory, ahead of any ground operation in the city.

Rockets

- In the **north**, Hezbollah continues to fire at Israeli targets, triggering significant Israeli retaliations. Yesterday, the IDF eliminated a high-ranking Hamas (Lebanese branch) terrorist. The operative, who had planned and coordinated attacks against Israeli and Jewish targets around the world, was killed in the Lebanese city of Tyre, on the Mediterranean coast south of Beirut.
- The number of **Hamas** rocket attacks on Israel remains very low (less than one per day on average), due to Hamas' significantly diminished capabilities.
- 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. Read [this](#) article, "Missiles and UAVs in the Battle for Freedom of Navigation in the Red Sea."

Hostages

- There is **mounting pressure on Hamas** to present a counter-proposal to a hostage deal proposed by Egypt and Qatar that has been accepted by Israel. Pressure is being put on the organization by the mediators, with reports suggesting that Qatar has

even threatened to expel Hamas's political leadership and withhold funding from the organization.

- **Released American hostage** Judith Raanan, who was taken together with her teenaged Natalie Raanan by Hamas on October 7, says nurses at a hospital where they were brought after being abducted cheered at the sight of the Israeli "prey." Watch her US television interview [here](#).

International Response

- **South Africa's** Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor has vowed that citizens who fight in the IDF will be arrested upon returning to the country. "I have already issued a statement alerting those who are South African and who are fighting alongside or in the Israeli Defense Forces. We are ready. When you come home, we're going to arrest you," Pandor said on Sunday, at a conference on solidarity with Palestinians in Pretoria. Some 25,000 South African Jews live in Israel.
- **Delta Air Lines** says it will resume flights to Israel starting June 7, becoming the second major US carrier to do so since October 7. Delta says it will begin daily flights between New York-JFK and Tel Aviv following "an extensive security risk assessment by the airline." United Airlines resumed flights to Israel earlier this month from Newark but does not plan to restart flights from other US cities until at least this fall. El Al has continued to fly to and from Israel throughout the war.
- Member of Knesset **Gidon Sa'ar**, a former Likud minister, has pulled his New Hope faction out of War Cabinet Minister Benny Gantz's National Unity Party. The two factions united prior to the last elections but said they will go their own way in any upcoming national vote. Sa'ar sees hope for the future of a hawkish, but liberal, center-right party, that could eventually merge with a new political block that could include former prime minister Naftali Bennett and others. See more [here](#).

Stories of Heartbreak, Heroism, and Hope

- Read [the story](#) of 19-year-old **American-Israeli Itay Chen**, described as "a beloved individual" whose

warmth drew people close to him. He loved Israel and enjoyed hiking and guiding youth on trips. On October 7 Itay was taken captive by Hamas terrorists when they infiltrated his army base. His parents Ruby and Hagit spent the past five months traveling the world urging leaders to do everything in their power to bring back the hostages. On Tuesday, the IDF confirmed that Itay was killed on October 7, and that his body is still being held in Gaza.

- Amira Aharonoviz (Jewish Agency CEO), "[The women who give us hope.](#)"
- Taking into account the number of victims per capita, the October 7 terrorist attack ranks as the **deadliest worldwide in recent decades**. The massacres and ensuing violence caused tremendous upheaval within Israeli society, leaving hundreds of thousands of citizens displaced from their homes in both southern and northern Israel and resulting in widespread trauma experienced by children and adults all around the country:
 - [According to](#) the Israeli National Council for the Child, Israel has recognized 19,407 children as victims of terrorism since October 7, including 7,252 children aged five years and younger. Hamas terrorists murdered 38 children and left 20 children orphaned, and another 96 children with only one parent.
 - Terrorists abducted 240 people, including 42 children. Two children, [four-year-old Ariel and one-year-old Kfir Bibas](#), remain in captivity.
 - Psychology experts [estimate](#) that there may be up to 600,000 new cases of PTSD among Israelis resulting from the war. This situation could be significantly worse if war breaks out in the north.
 - The psychological impact of the attacks in Israel reverberates deeply throughout the country, affecting the direct victims, as well as their first and second-degree family members and friends. This trauma further extends its reach to encompass over 300,000 individuals serving in reserves and the regular army, along with their families. The repercussions of the attacks ripple through various circles, affecting released hostages, families of those still held captive, loved ones of the deceased and injured, as well as professionals such as first responders and

cyber experts exposed to graphic footage. Even those not directly impacted in southern and northern Israel find themselves psychologically affected, including relatives and friends of those directly involved, and trauma survivors who undergo re-traumatization.

- Israeli researcher of trauma Danny Horesh [explained](#) that what is happening in Israel is called “compounded trauma,” whereby trauma comes from multiple sources and carriers. “We are a small, densely populated country, so almost everyone knows at least one person who has been harmed by the war in some way. That combination makes it very difficult to cope with reality. There has been nothing like it in the world, not even in our history as a country with such population density.”
- As of today, 126,000 Israelis remain displaced from their homes along the southern and northern borders due to danger of incoming rocket fire from Hamas and Hezbollah. This [includes](#) around 48,000 school-aged children who must deal with the uncertainty and fear of being removed from their homes and schools. The psychological damage on evacuees from the south is compounded by their incredible loss - loved ones, their homes, their jobs, their possessions, their sense of security and in many cases, hope.
- Dr. Stav Shapira of Ben-Gurion University's School of Public Health [explained](#) the added strains of displacement. "If the house is standing, that provides some foundation, a sense of stability and the knowledge that in future there's a place to return to. But for someone who has lost his home and possessions, the danger of psychological damage is far greater. They're totally uprooted."
- In addition to homelessness, survivor's guilt among members of the southern kibbutzim is [widespread](#). In some cases, entire families were slain except for one lone survivor. Many still face anxiety and feelings of helplessness.
- The prevalent psychological trauma in response to the October 7 massacres and the ensuing war underscores the need for rapid and broad mental

health treatments and interventions to heal the country's wounds. Compounding the needs is the fact that the Israeli [mental health system](#) was understaffed and underfunded before this crisis.