



War in Israel: Update on Current Situation

March 21, 2024

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

Read this Jewish Federations story on the committee allocating our Israel emergency funds from [JTA](#).

Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Activities

- During extensive, ongoing IDF [operations](#) at **Shifa Hospital** in Gaza City, over 350 Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorists have so far been captured, including numerous high-ranking commanders.
 - At least 90 terrorists and one Israeli soldier have been killed in the fighting.
 - Dozens of terrorists were hiding in the hospital and firing from its windows.
 - IDF forces are reporting that terrorists were disguised as patients and doctors, thus endangering the lives of real patients and medical personnel.
 - [According to](#) IDF Spokesperson Daniel Hagari, IDF troops underwent special training in order to prepare them for the complex operation and adhered to strict measures to mitigate civilian harm. Prior to the battle, the IDF made a [warning call](#) to the head of the hospital. The forces were joined by Arabic speakers in order to communicate with patients, as well as by IDF

doctors to assist patients in need. The IDF also [delivered](#) humanitarian supplies to the compound.

- During searches inside the hospital, troops found large quantities of Hamas equipment, including a weapons cache next to the hospital director's office.
- Among those killed was senior Hamas official [Faig Mabhouh](#), who was hiding in the hospital, from where he was directing terror activity.
- The IDF [says](#) that no harm was caused to civilians, staff or medical equipment by Israeli forces. It also [uncovered](#) \$11 million in terrorist funds inside the hospital.
- Also, among those terrorists captured was Mahmoud Kawasmeh, who was responsible for planning and coordinating the abduction and murder of the three teenage boys in the West Bank who were kidnapped from a bus stop in 2014. The boys, Naftali Frenkel, Gil-Ad Sha'er and Eyal Yiftah, were missing for days before their bodies were found. This precipitated the 2014 Israel-Gaza war.
- The United States has corroborated Israel's position on the misuse of hospitals by Hamas, [stating](#) in a Pentagon release that, "We do have information that Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (use) some hospitals in the Gaza Strip, including the al-Shifa hospital, as a way to conceal and support their military operations and hold hostages."
- [International law](#) stipulates that medical facilities lose their protected status if they are used for military purposes, and that the defending military must provide warnings and consider other protections before attacking a hospital. See [these](#) comments on Hamas' use of hospitals by Rear Admiral Chris Parry, British naval officer, former Director of Operational Capability at the UK Ministry of Defence, and former commander of the UK's Amphibious Task Group.
- On Monday, IDF fighter jets eliminated **senior Hamas operatives** in Rafah who assisted its military wing in establishing continued control. The operatives were the representatives of Hamas's senior leadership in

Rafah. As part of their roles, they were responsible for coordination with Hamas operatives in the field.

- Israel looks likely to **approve an evacuation plan for Palestinians in Rafah**. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated, "I have already approved the IDF's operational plan, and soon we will also approve the plan to evacuate the civilian population from the battle zones."

Humanitarian Aid

- The issue of humanitarian aid for the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza continues to be a major issue. Last week, Israel [promised](#) to "flood Gaza with humanitarian supplies."
- The US, Israel, and other nations are working together to ensure humanitarian assistance reaches Gaza, whether by land, air, or [sea](#). Currently, **an average of 200 trucks per day** are arriving in Gaza with medical supplies, water, fuel, cooking gas, and food. Delivery of aid is slowed down by inspections to ensure safety, because of Hamas's repeated smuggling of deadly weapons in humanitarian aid convoys and ambulances. Click [here](#) for more information regarding Israel's commitment to humanitarian aid.
- US Centcom Deputy Commander Vice Adm. Brad Cooper visited Israel this week for talks on the **US construction of a port** in Gaza for humanitarian aid. The temporary pier will allow for the direct delivery of humanitarian assistance via the Mediterranean Sea; the US is coordinating with Israel to ensure all security concerns are met. Cooper also met with the UN and humanitarian organizations on the ground to ensure that aid would be properly distributed.
- According to the Wall Street Journal, Israel is working on a plan that would see **Palestinian leaders and businessmen with no ties to Hamas take a key role** in distributing aid in Gaza. This would eventually develop into a Palestinian-led governing authority.
- Israeli peace activists have [delivered Ramadan food aid](#) to the West Bank.
- See the latest facts and figures on Israel's humanitarian aid to Gaza [here](#).

Rockets

- In the **north**, Hezbollah continues to fire at Israeli targets, triggering significant Israeli retaliations.
- The number of **Hamas** rocket attacks on Israel remains negligible, 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. Earlier this week, a cruise missile was launched at Israel from Yemen. The missile overflew Eilat and crashed in the desert north of the Israeli southern port city.

Hostages

- US Secretary of State Antony Blinken commented on a possible hostage deal yesterday, saying that "**the gaps are narrowing**, and I think an agreement is very much possible." He was referring to a potential deal between Israel and Hamas that would see some 40 Israeli hostages released and a six-week ceasefire put in place. Blinken also noted, "We worked very hard with Qatar, Egypt, and Israel to put a strong proposal on the table... Hamas wouldn't accept it. They came back with other demands. The negotiators are working on that right now, but I believe it's very much doable, and it's very much necessary.... If Hamas cares at all about the people it purports to represent, then it would reach an agreement because that would have the immediate effect of a ceasefire, alleviating the tremendous suffering of people, bringing more humanitarian assistance in, and then giving us the possibility of having something more lasting."

International Response

- **Canada** has announced that it is [suspending arms supplies](#) to Israel. The Israeli government criticized the Canadian decision with Foreign Minister Yisrael Katz saying that "history will judge Canada." The Jerusalem Post: [Canada should be ashamed of its 'arms embargo' on Israel](#). You can find the response from CIJA, Jewish Federations' Canadian public affairs organization, [here](#).
- Following a relatively speedy process, leading to its passage in the House, the Jewish Federations-

backed **Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act** has now been referred to the Senate, where the Committee on Commerce, Energy and Transportation is considering it. Readers are invited to [sign this alert](#) today to urge senators to support the legislation to curb the proliferation of antisemitic content on social media.

- An **Israeli delegation** led by Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer and National Security Adviser Tzahi Hanegbi is expected to visit Washington next week to discuss Israeli military plans for Rafah, which is home to the last bastion of significant Hamas control. US President Joe Biden had asked Prime Minister Netanyahu to send such a delegation when the two spoke earlier this week. At the same time, US Secretary of State Lloyd Austin has separately asked Defense Minister Yoav Gallant to speak with him and other defense officials at the Pentagon. Gallant will travel to the US next week.
- Israel has submitted written assurances as required by the US State Department stating its use of **American-supplied weapons is not being used to violate humanitarian laws** in Gaza. The US has yet to publicly confirm that it has received this assurance from Israel despite reports that Defense Minister Yoav Gallant signed the relevant letter last week.
- Out of more than 150 foreign carriers that were flying to Israel before the outbreak of the war, [only about 50 have resumed](#) some of their operations in Israel this year.

Stories of Heartbreak, Heroism, and Hope

- President Isaac Herzog will [conduct a ceremony](#) to honor the bravery of three hostages who escaped from their Hamas captors only to be mistakenly killed by the IDF, he announced on Wednesday.
- Watch the Jewish Federations' [video](#) about Ethiopian olah, Addise, who evacuated to a hotel in Netanya after the Oct 7th attacks, where she discusses the importance of living in a safe place where all of her community's needs are being provided.
- Read the story of 22-year-old [Cpt. Daniel Peretz](#), a native of South Africa immigrated with his family to Israel at the age of 13. Daniel is described by loved

ones as a young man who was full of life and had a great sense of humor. He was serving as a tank commander when Hamas terrorists infiltrated his base on October 7. For over five months, his family did not know what had happened to him. On Sunday evening, the IDF announced that Daniel was killed on October 7 and that his body was taken into Gaza, where it is still being held. At his funeral, his commander described Daniel as a hero who looked after his comrades and acted like a brother to them. Daniel leaves behind his grieving parents and three siblings.