



War in Israel: Update on Current Situation

April 4, 2024

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

The Hostage and Missing Families Forum are hosting a march in Washington, DC to demand the release of the remaining **134 hostages**, who have now been in captivity for almost six months. The Jewish community and their allies will march this **Sunday, April 7 at 2:30 pm** on the National Mall at the **Washington Monument**, concluding with a **rally at the Lincoln Memorial at 3:30 pm**. Click [here](#) for more information and to receive updates on how to join.

Jewish Federation of Greater Houston placed this [full-page ad](#) in the Houston Chronicle with **10 Facts** about the Israel-Hamas war. The ad was part of an effort to combat misinformation around Israel and educate the broader public about the dangers of Hamas, Israel's efforts to minimize civilian harm and provide aid to Gazans, and the root causes of the war.

Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Activities

- On Tuesday night, seven international workers - part of the World Central Kitchen team that delivers food to civilians in Gaza - were tragically killed due to an errant Israeli strike. [Click here](#) for Jewish Federations' statement on the incident.

- The seven aid workers [affiliated](#) with World Central Kitchen were identified as nationals from Australia, Poland, and Britain, a dual U.S.-Canadian citizen, and one Palestinian.
- According to [commentators](#), the IDF believes the tragic error was caused by either mistaken identity of the vehicle by the Israeli Air Force or miscommunication between Israeli intelligence and the Air Force.
- After speaking with Chef José Andrés, IDF spokesperson [Daniel Hagari expressed](#) his condolences over the tragic death of the workers “as they fulfilled their vital mission of bringing food to people in need.” Hagari said that Israel is “committed to examining our operations thoroughly and transparently.” Hagari also praised the World Central Kitchen’s work as “vital.”
- Prime Minister Netanyahu [called](#) the strike “tragic” and “unintentional,” and stated that Israel “will do everything to prevent this [incident] from happening again.”
- Israel’s Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant held an [operational assessment](#) together with IDF Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi and senior members of the defense team. He noted the complex environment that the IDF operates in. He highlighted the important role of aid organizations and Israel’s commitment to collaborating with them. His instructions to the defense team included establishing a professional team to immediately investigate the incident and setting up a mechanism that would directly coordinate aid efforts with the IDF going forward.
- For more background and information on the incident, see [here](#).
- Last night, Israel’s Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant briefed **US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin** on the tragic WCK incident. He emphasized that a thorough and transparent investigation is being conducted, that its conclusions will be shared with partners, and that lessons will be implemented by the defense establishment. Gallant emphasized his commitment to facilitating the distribution of humanitarian aid, and the measures currently being assessed to expand its influx and distribution to Gaza.

- Israel still insists that it will conduct an **operation in Rafah** in the south of the Gaza Strip to rid the area of the last major bastion of Hamas power. This is despite international pressure against such a move, due to the one million civilians who have sought refuge in the town. Many commentators think that it is likely that the IDF is waiting to enter Rafah until Ramadan ends next week, and until suitable arrangements have been made to allow civilians to escape the area, including safe corridors and a humanitarian zone with proper facilities. Even if/when an operation begins, most believe it will likely be limited in scope, due to US and other international pressure.
- An air strike attributed to Israel destroyed a building in Damascus earlier in the week, **killing Mohammad Reza Zahedi**, who was the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps commander for Syria and Lebanon. Zahedi was the highest-ranking Iranian to be killed since the assassination of Qasem Soleimani by the US in 2020. He is also the highest-ranking commander of any force allegedly killed by Israel since October 7. As a result of the attack, IDF forces have been put on high alert (including all leave canceled for combat soldiers) in expectation of a forceful Iranian retaliation against Israel from within Syrian territory (or elsewhere). Officials are also concerned that Iran may attempt to strike “soft targets” such as Israeli embassies, diplomats, and tourists around the world, or even local Jewish communities.

Hostages

- **A hostage deal** is still being negotiated, but Hamas continues to stick to what Israel calls “impossible demands.” Israel has accepted multiple compromise proposals suggested by the US, Qatar, and Egypt, but Hamas has yet to agree to those terms. Meanwhile, protesters in Israel are becoming increasingly vocal in calling on the government to soften its positions and ensure the release of the 134 remaining hostages as soon as possible. (At least 30 of these are known to be no longer alive.)
- [Qatar said](#) that the main point of dispute in negotiations on a ceasefire is over **the return of displaced Palestinians to the northern Gaza Strip**.

Rockets

- In the **north**, Hezbollah continues to fire at Israeli targets, triggering significant Israeli retaliations. Yesterday, Israel's Defense Minister Yoav Gallant [said](#) that a full-blown war in Lebanon would be disastrous not only for Hezbollah but for all of Lebanon.
- The number of **Hamas** rocket attacks on Israel remains negligible on most days, 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.

International Response

- Meanwhile War Cabinet Minister Benny Gantz yesterday [called](#) for Israel to hold **early elections by September**. In a televised press conference, Gantz insisted that going to the polls in some six months would be necessary to "maintain unity" and "renew trust" in the government he joined on an emergency basis following October 7.

Stories of Heartbreak, Heroism, and Hope

- Watch this Jewish Federations [video](#) of Yael, a therapist, who offers crucial psychological support to families grappling with trauma following the October 7th terrorist attacks. Her program, operating out of Beit Issie, is funded by Jewish Federations and provides therapy, respite, emotional support, and coping mechanisms for individuals with disabilities across Israel. These interventions serve as vital steps toward recovery for survivors.
- See this [story](#) of 53-year-old Mira Stahl, a special education teacher who touched countless lives both in and out of the classroom. The wife of Noam and mother of Rotem, Moran, and Ella, Mira's career was dedicated to advancing the lives of children with disabilities. She worked as a school counselor and most recently taught psychotherapists training to work with disabled children. She inspired her students to look beyond their limitations. She also had a passion for dance; she met her husband while teaching folk dancing on Kibbutz Kfar Aza. Mira was

murdered by Hamas terrorists on the morning of October 7. Her son vowed, "I swear not to become a bitter person, and I swear I will dance, like you, all the way to the grave."

- Read [this](#) opinion piece from the Jerusalem Post: Is Israeli society at the fifth stage of grief?



Further Reading

[Is War With Lebanon Imminent?](#)

[Netanyahu's half-steps may not be enough to fix ties](#)

[How Israel Wins the Postwar](#)

Jewish Federations Resources

Jewish Federations have collectively raised just shy of \$800 million and allocated more than \$400 million for humanitarian needs and economic support in Israel since October 7. For an updated list of allocations, click [here](#). Read this [JTA](#) Jewish Federations story: "The man allocating \$800M in post-Oct. 7 donations to Israel on where the money goes."

Jewish Federations' Backgrounders:

[At-Risk Youth](#)

[LGBTQ Community](#)

[Young Children](#)

[Volunteers](#)

[Women](#)

[Pastoral Guidance](#)

[Bedouin Communities](#)

[Food Security](#)

[People with Disabilities](#)

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 both affected populations and local mental health professionals in Israel. 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. [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](#).

Volunteering: Read [this](#) updated Jewish Federations' overview on the latest volunteering opportunities in Israel right now.

Read the latest communication from the **Community Mobilization Center** [here](#).

For more information, please contact: Jewish Federations of North America's Dani Wassner dani.wassner@jewishfederations.org. Subscribe to this twice-weekly update [here](#).



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