

War in Israel: Update on Current Situation

July 18, 2024 - Gaza War Day 286

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

Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Activities

- Last weekend, the IDF conducted an [airstrike](#) on a compound where Hamas's number 2 in Gaza, **Mohammed Deif**, who is also the organization's military chief, was hiding. He appears to have been killed in the attack.
- The IDF confirmed that Hamas senior commander **Rafa'a Salameh**, who oversaw the terrorist group's Khan Younis battalion, was killed. Hamas claims that 90 people were killed in the attack. According to the IDF, a majority of those killed, including guards of Deif and Salameh, are affiliated with Hamas.
 - [Deif](#) was a [founding member](#) of Hamas's Qassam Brigades; he was one of the **masterminds behind the October 7 massacres**. For over three decades, he promoted terrorism, planned bombings, and masterminded the murder of Israelis and the abduction of soldiers. In 1989, during the height of the first Palestinian Intifada, Deif arrested by Israel and released after 16 months in prison.
 - Deif was designated as a [terrorist](#) by the United States in 2015, along with Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar. Deif has been on **Israel's most-wanted list** since 1995. He has survived multiple assassination attempts in the past.

- [Photos](#) of the **location of the strike** show the scene both before and after. They support the IDF's claims that this strike was targeted solely at the Hamas compound.
- In keeping with a recent Israeli Supreme Court decision, Israel's Defense Ministry has instructed the IDF to send out **1,000 draft orders on Sunday to members of the ultra-Orthodox community**. The orders are the first stage in the screening process that the military carries out for recruits, ahead of enlistment in the military in the upcoming year. The IDF has said it can draft 3,000 Haredi men in the next twelve months. Prominent ultra-Orthodox rabbis have urged yeshiva students to ignore any communication from the IDF.
- On Sunday, in a **ramming attack** at a bus station near Ramle (south of Tel Aviv), a Palestinian drove his car into a bus stop, injuring four, including one critically.
- See here for a complete list of [IDF soldiers killed](#) since October 7.

Truce Talks and Hostages

- To pressure the government to reach a deal for the release of the hostages, the parents of five female soldiers who were abducted from the Nahal Oz base on October 7, held a press conference and **published photos** of their daughters in captivity. The photos are part of a short video that the families received months ago from the IDF. In the photos, the appear daughters appear injured, shocked, and frightened. Some are bandaged.
- Gaza ceasefire negotiations [resumed](#) in Doha on Wednesday then returned to Cairo today after talks on Tuesday between Egyptian President [Abdel Fattah al-Sisi](#) and US Central Intelligence Agency Director [William Burns](#), Egypt's state-affiliated Al-Qahera News TV said.
- Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant [told](#) his U.S. counterpart that military operations in the Gaza Strip have **created conditions that would enable a hostage deal** to be reached. Gallant made the comments during an overnight call with U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin.

- Earlier in the week, Gallant said in a closed meeting that a deal needs to be reached within the coming weeks, otherwise the hostages' **"fate will be sealed."**
- The ultra-Orthodox **Shas Party**, a member of Prime Minister Netanyahu's coalition, yesterday called on the Prime Minister to sign a deal.
- Reports suggest that **numerous members of the government**, including Minister Ron Dermer, who is considered to be the Prime Minister's closest ally and confidant, are urging Netanyahu to agree.
- Israeli media is saying that if a deal is brought to a **vote in the Cabinet, it would pass.**
- Nonetheless, some leaders of coalition parties who are further to the right have threatened to bolt the government if the current deal goes ahead. If that happens, the government would fall, **triggering new elections.**
- The **potential agreement** includes a prolonged ceasefire, the release of hostages in exchange for Palestinian security prisoners, and arrangements for governance in Gaza post-truce. A key negotiation point is Israel's control over the Egypt-Gaza border, with a proposed compromise involving electronic surveillance systems. For full details of the possible deal, see [here](#).
- Prime Minister **Netanyahu faced criticism from hostage families** after [reportedly](#) downplaying the danger to hostages during a security cabinet meeting. The Hostages Families Forum condemned his remarks.
- The CIA has [assessed](#) that the leader of Hamas in Gaza, **Yahya Sinwar, is coming under increased pressure from his military commanders** to accept a ceasefire deal and end the war with Israel.
- See [this full list](#) of those still being held hostage by Hamas.

International

- On July 24, Prime Minister **Netanyahu will [deliver](#) an address to a joint session of Congress.** Jewish Federations of North America are encouraging members of Congress to attend the speech to show their solidarity with Israel.

- The [US Government has released](#) **about half of the shipment of heavy bombs** it has withheld from Israel since May over concerns the IDF would use them in densely populated areas of Gaza. In May, the White House announced a decision to withhold a shipment of 1,800 2,000-pound bombs and 1,700 500-pound bombs.

Stories of Heartbreak, Heroism, and Hope

- **See this [story](#)** of 19-year-old Liri Albag from Moshav Yarhiv. The third daughter of four children to Shira and Eli, Liri dreams of being an interior designer. She is described as a cheerful person who loves to travel. On October 7, Hamas terrorists kidnapped her from Nahal Oz and publicized footage of the horrific abduction. Earlier this week, new photos were released from the beginning her captivity with four other young women. Her mother Shira looks forward to the moment when her daughter returns home.
- [Yael Rozman](#), 26, from Kfar Saba, was murdered while fleeing the Nova music festival on October 7. She attended the rave with her boyfriend of three years, Jonathan Kendror. When the rocket fire began, they left in their car with another friend to head home. At a junction along the road, terrorists opened fire at the car and the three jumped out and split up. The friend managed to survive, but the bodies of both Yael and Jonathan were found days later.