

ISRAEL - PALESTINIANS - TOGETHER THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

PART 3

ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR
OCTOBER 2023 - 2025?

PART 1

Jewishwikipedia.info

4,000 years of Jewish History

PART 2

[Jewish Return to Israel](#)

FROM the First Immigration

1881 to 1903 from Russia

Creation of Israel, 1948

TO October 2023

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When, finally, in the twelfth century BCE the Jews settled in a country they could call their own, they used the worst possible judgment. They selected a strip of land that was a corridor for the armies of warring empires. Over and over again the Jews were to pay for this error of judgment by being decimated in battle, sold into slavery, or deported to alien lands. Yet they showed up persistently at the same old place, building anew their little strip of real estate which has been alternately called Canaan. Palestine, Israel, Judah, Judea, and now again. Israel.

(Max Dimont, 'Jews, God and History' p48)

Founded in 1948, Israel is the world's only Jewish State and is the Middle East's only liberal democracy. Today more than eight million citizens - Jews, Muslims and Christians - call Israel home.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART O-O1 HELP	11
Searching for Text	12
The Story of Jewish History is Told in Our Two Websites	13
Jewish-Roman Wars between 66 and 135CE	14
PART O-O2 HELP	18
GAZA, Confrontation Between Israel and Hamas Between 2007 and 2023	19
No One Should Want Ceasefire in Gaza Until Clear Defeat of Hamas - Opinion	22
Strategic Assessment for Gaza After Hamas	27
Under Constant Fire: How Many Rockets Have Terror Groups Shot Into Israel?	32
On This Day: 75 Years Since UN Vote to Turn Palestine Into Jewish, Arab States	39
Lacking Haredi Manpower, IDF Turns to Womanpower: 1 in 5 fighters Are Now Female	43
Haredim Threaten to Bolt Coalition as IDF Launches Operation Against Draft Dodgers	47
Venturing into Haredi Enclaves, an Israeli Atheist Tries a New form of Jewish Outreach	53
Israel Using AI to Pinpoint Hamas Leaders, Find Hostages in Gaza Tunnels — Report	59
24-Country Survey: Support for Israel Strongest in Kenya and Nigeria, Lowest in Turkey	62
How Likely are the Haredim to Actually Topple the Government — and What Comes Next?	64
PART 1 ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR 2023 -	69
Hamas Terrorist Attack October 7 1943. The Deadliest Day in Israels History	70
Israel Hamas War 2023 -	80
Why Did Israel Bomb Hamas Targets (ChatGPT)	100
One Year After Hamas's October 7 Terrorist Attacks, Here's How the Region Changed	111
Israel-Hamas War Misconceptions	114
The IDF Has Taken Over the Rafah Crossing on the Gaza Side	117
On The Ground in Gaza: What I Saw of Israel's Military Operations	118
Understanding The Israel- Gaza Casualties In The Conflict That Began On October 7, 2023, To Early 2025	122
Gaza Death Toll: How Many Palestinians has Israel's Offensive Killed?	123
The Lives Lost in Gaza	126
Estimated Number of Hamas Deaths	133

How to Respond to Common Misconceptions About the Attack on Israel	134
Our Future Hope for Israel and Palestine.....	138
Gazans' Pre-War Views of Hamas	141
AJC Policy on UNRWA	143
Israel's Targeting AI: How Capable is It?	146
Malta, Greece, Turkey Said Threatening to seize Gaza Activists' Drone-Hit ship if it Docks	149
PART 2 ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR 2023 - 2025 (OPTIMISTICALLY).....	153
Israeli Public Is Increasingly Skeptical About Lasting Peace	154
Hamas Faces Growing Public Dissent as Gaza War Erodes Support	161
U.S. Aid to Israel in Four Charts.....	165
Israel and Hamas Reach Cease-Fire, but Will the War End?	174
IDF Complete Raid on North Gaza Hospital, Says Some 240 Terror Suspects Arrested	178
AJC Update May 15 2025	181
For Now, Victory is Still Within Reach: 10 Truths About the Gaza War, 20 Months In	186
Israeli Navy Gears Up to Block Greta Thunberg's High-Profile Protest Ship Headed for Gaza.....	201
PART 3 THE HAMAS ISRAEL HOSTAGES.....	205
THE GAZA HOSTAGES JANUARY 30,2025.....	206
Overview Of The Hostage Abductions By Hamas And Reaction.....	207
Israel-Hamas Hostage Deal – What You Need to Know	209
Hamas Hostage Ceremonies Angered US, Spurring Pressure for Plan to Push Group Out	215
Hamas Says it Rejects Israel's 'Formulation' of Extending First Gaza Ceasefire Phase	220
Some Released Hostages Were Held in Tunnels with no Human Contact for Months, IDF Says	223
Experts React: Everything You Need to Know About the Israel-Hamas Cease-fire and Hostage Deal ..	226
Israel Endorses New US Plan for Half of Hostages to be Released Now, Ceasefire Maintained	235
Israel Fears for Condition of Remaining Hostages, as Intel Suggests Male Captives Treated Worse Than Women	240
A Tale of Two Gatherings	242
Why Did Israel Resume the War in Gaza?	244
Hamas Studying US 'Bridge' Proposal on Ceasefire as Israel Escalates Return to War	248
PART 4 WHAT IS HAMAS ?	250
What is Hamas?.....	251
The 1988 Covenant of the HAMAS – Main Points.....	260
The Revised 2017 Covenant of the HAMAS – Main Points	262
The Road to October 7: Hamas' Long Game, Clarified.....	268
Hamas: Words and Deeds.....	269
There Are No Civilians In Gaza	270
Hamas Back On Gaza Streets After War with Israel	273

Why is Hamas Classified as a Terrorist Group?	277
Gaza, Dispute for Control Between Fatah and Hamas	280
Fatah-Hamas Conflict	282
Has Palestinians' Perception of Hamas Changed?	283
PART 5 - USING FACE MASKS TO HIDE THEIR IDENTITY	289
Facial Recognition Part of Israel's Arsenal in Gaza War	290
Private Groups Use Facial Recognition to Unmask Anti-Israel Campus Protesters for Deportation.....	294
The Trouble with Protest Mask Chic	301
Columbia University Calls in Police After Anti-Israel Activists Invade Library	303
Witnesses Say the Israeli Army is Using Facial Recognition Technology in its Assault on North Gaza ..	307
PART 6 HAMAS - DIPLOMACY AND CONFLICT	312
Hamas Diplomacy: From Haniyeh to Sinwar	313
Israeli-Palestinian Conflict	317
Palestinian Rocket Attacks on Israel From 2000	322
19,000 Rockets Launched at Israel Since Hamas's October 7 Atrocities	326
Israel Strikes Rocket Launching Post in Gaza Used by Hamas to Attack Tel Aviv	327
Israeli Military Launches New Ground Operation in Gaza	329
50,000 Killed in Gaza Since Start of Israel-Hamas War, Health Ministry Says.....	332
Gaza Photojournalist, Family Killed in Gaza strike; IDF Says it Targeted Hamas Operative	334
Hamas Claims Growing Gaza Protests Against its Rule Actually Aimed at Israel	338
PART 7 RAFAH	341
Israel, Hamas Complete Latest Ceasefire Swap as Rafah Crossing Opens for Gaza Wounded	342
Everything You Need to Know About Rafah, Its Importance to Hamas, and Protecting Its Civilian Population.....	349
WATCH: 'Post' Visits Key Gaza Corridor, IDF's Latest Move to Defeat Hamas in Southern Gaza	352
Israel's Latest War Plans: To Occupy Gaza and Rule Palestinians.....	355
Update: Everything You Need to Know About Rafah, Its Importance to Hamas, and Protecting Its Civilian Population	360
IDF advances in Gaza, expands buffer zone to pressure Hamas, but no fighting taking place	363
Israel Takes Control of Rafah, Creating New 'Security Corridor' in Gaza.....	368
Netanyahu: IDF Will Hold Captured Areas in Gaza Until Hamas Defeated, Hostages Freed.....	372
PART 8 HAMAS AND HUMAN SHIELDS	375
Hamas' Use of Human Shields in Gaza (1).....	376
Hamas' Use of Human Shields in Gaza (2)	380
Hamas Officials Admit its Strategy is to Use Palestinian Civilians as Human Shields	382
PART 9 HAMAS TUNNELS, LACK OF AIR RAID SHELTERS, GAZA STRIP IN MAPS	384

Palestinian Tunnel Warfare in the Gaza Strip	385
Hamas' Tunnels of Terror MAP DISPLAY	387
Media Watchdog Publishes First Interactive Map of Hamas Tunnels in Gaza	388
Israel's New Approach to Tunnels: A Paradigm Shift in Underground Warfare.....	390
Israel using AI to pinpoint Hamas leaders, find hostages in Gaza tunnels — report	397
Gaza Hostages Were Held in Tunnels for Months, Israeli Medical Officer Says	401
An 'Estimated 40% of Hamas Tunnels' Still Remaining, Israeli Expert Tells TML.....	403
Not One Air Raid Shelter in Gaza. Why?.....	407
'Somehow, We Adapt': Gazans Desperately Waiting for Shelters Describe Living Without Power, Water or Walls.....	409
Gaza Strip in maps: How 15 months of war have drastically changed life in the territory.....	412
A City of Booby Traps, Tunnels: Tol in Khan Younis Hours After Bodies of 2 Hostages Retrieved	420
Here, Beneath an EU-funded Gaza Hospital, Hamas Military Chief Mohammed Sinwar Met His End ..	424
PART 10 – MISTAKEN IDEAS ABOUT THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR	432
IDF's Oct. 7 Probes Show it Misread Hamas for Years, Left Southern Israel Utterly Vulnerable	433
Myths and Facts About the Israel and Palestine Conflict	438
How to Respond to Common Misconceptions about the Attack on Israel	450
PART 11 - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE ICC AND THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR	454
The International Criminal Court (ICC) Has Announced That It Has Issued Arrest Warrants	455
Hamas, Fatah Sign Declaration on Plans to Seek Joint Government; Israel Slams Fatah.....	467
US Vetoes UN Security Council Resolution Calling for Gaza Ceasefire	469
US Hits International Criminal Court Judges with Sanctions Over Investigation Into Israel.....	473
PART 12 ISRAEL-HAMAS PHASE 1 CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT	475
Understanding the Israel-Hamas Ceasefire Agreement.....	476
Details Of Prisoner Exchange Between Israel And Hamas	479
In Kiryat Shmona, a City with no Residents Holds Elections with No Voters.....	480
Israel-Hamas Ceasefire: Where It Stands and Where It's Headed	483
Hamas Calls for Talks on Next Phase of Ceasefire After Hostage-Prisoner Exchange	486
Friday Focus: Negotiating with Terrorists, Again.....	490
US Talks with Hamas Said to Hit Snag After Media Leak; PM Unhappy They're Taking Place	491
Israel Considers Massive New Ground Offensive in Gaza	495
US Vetoes UN Security Council Resolution Calling for Gaza Ceasefire	497
PART 13 GAZA AND FOOD.....	500
Availability of Food and Water in Gaza.....	501
GAZA MARCH - Ceasefire collapses as Israel intensifies pressure on Hamas (ACLED)	505
As Aid Embargo on Strip Enters Third Month, Hunger is Stalking Gazans Again.....	506

Head of Controversial Israel-backed Gaza Aid Group Says ‘Plan Isn’t Perfect, but Feeds People’	513
Israel Plans to Occupy and Flatten all of Gaza if No Deal by Trump's Trip	516
US reportedly developing plan to resettle 1 million Gazans in Libya	520
Rubio ‘Optimistic’ Gaza war Could End Soon, but Admits Having Felt Same Way Before	522
Israel Says Gaza Aid Starting Distribution Through Controversial New Mechanism	525
New Gaza Aid Body Starts Operating, Pans Hamas Threats Toward Those Cooperating With It	530
Crowds Overrun US-backed Group's New Aid Distribution Site in Gaza	533
Who's Shooting Whom Near Rafah's Aid Center, and Who's Exploiting the Bloodshed.....	537
PART 14 EDUCATION	542
As Gazans Return to School, Study Finds Their PA Textbooks Still Rife with Incitement	543
The Roots of Hamas' Terror Attack Can be Found in Gaza's Schools	549
Children in Gaza Defy Trauma to Return to School	552
Education for Terrorism in Palestinian Schools: 2023 Israel-Hamas War.....	555
PART 15 ANTISEMITISM	557
What is Antisemitism?	558
AJC (American Jewish Committee) AJC Convenes Allies in Paris to Tackle Antisemitism	566
Jews in Washington Voice Their Sorrow, Fear and Anger After Deadly Shooting	569
Why Were the Jews Persecuted	574
Why Do People Hate The Jews?.....	579
A Guide to Recognising when Anti-Israel Actions Become Antisemitic	582
Global Antisemitic Incidents In the Wake of Hamas' War on Israel	583
AJC's Role in the Creation of the U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism	584
What Does “Globalize the Intifada” Mean and How Can it Lead to Targeting Jews with Violence?	587
Palestinian Holocaust Denial.....	590
The New Antisemitism.....	593
Keeping Political Activism Free From Antisemitism: The Ethics of Protest to the Israel-Hamas Conflict.....	601
Resource Page: Understanding and Addressing the Israel-Hamas War	604
Global Academics Converge in London ‘Safe Space’ to Dissect Post-Oct. 7 Antisemitism	605
Good News in the Battle Against Campus Antisemitism	608
AJC is Leading the Charge in Confronting Jew-hatred at Home and Abroad.....	610
Government Report Accuses West of Bolstering Antisemitism by Criticizing Israel.....	614
PART 16 SEARCHING FOR HISTORY AND HOPE.....	618
5 Facts About The Jewish People's Ancestral Connection To The Land Of Israel	619
Conflicts double over the past five years Conflict Index: December 2024.....	622
THE ACLED MIDDLE EAST REVIEW, april 2025	633
“Israel” and “Palestine”: Where Should History Begin, and Should it Matter?	639
Myths and Facts About the Israel and Palestine Conflict	643

Israel's Enduring Quest for Peace	655
Israeli-Palestinian Conflict	659
Six Months After Ceasefire, Some in North are Slow to Recover as Fears of New Fight Lurk	672
PART 17 UNRWA.....	677
What to Know About UNRWA and Its Controversial Role in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.....	678
Israel Cuts Ties With UNRWA Over Links with Terror Groups, as Ban Comes Into Effect.....	683
The Connection Between UNRWA and Hamas in Gaza	686
Dismantling UNRWA Chief Lazzarini's Falsehoods	692
RESETTLEMENT-1 GAZA – TRUMP.....	693
The Historical Roots of President Trump's Gaza Relocation Plan	694
Trump aides defend Gaza takeover proposal but walk back some elements.....	700
Trump Wants Jordan and Egypt to Accept More Palestinian Refugees and Floats Plan to 'Clean Out' Gaza	705
'When he Wants Something, it Happens.' Israel's Far Right Applauds Trump's Gaza Plan	708
Trump: US will 'take over' Gaza, level it and create 'the Riviera of the Middle East'	711
The man with the plan: DC profs sent Trump study on Gaza relocation, development in July	716
Trump's start-from-scratch scheme to resurrect Gaza from the rubble inspired by futuristic 'Riviera' proposal	720
Egypt Said Privately Warning Trump's Gaza Plan Endangers Peace Treaty with Israel	723
PM calls Trump's Gaza plan 'remarkable'; Katz tells IDF to prep for voluntary emigration.....	725
Trump's 'Extreme Makeover: Gaza Edition' has many flaws. One of the worst is its absent morality... ..	728
Meeting Netanyahu, US Defense Secretary Says Trump Seeking 'New Ways to Solve Problems'	732
The Issue of Emigration From the Gaza Strip in Light of President Trump's Proposal	735
Countries Scramble to Offer Trump an Alternate Proposal for Post-War Gaza Arab	749
Netanyahu Committed' to Trump's Plan to Take Over Gaza	754
Trump Shares AI Music Video Reimagining Gaza Strip as Glitzy Beachfront Haven	757
'Trump Gaza is Finally Here!': US President Promotes Gaza Plan in AI video.....	759
US Reportedly Developing Plan to Resettle 1 million Gazans in Libya	763
Trump Plan or Not, Israel is Letting More Palestinians Leave Gaza	765
RESETTLEMENT - 2 - EGYPT.....	770
The Forgotten Palestinians: How Palestinian Refugees Survive in Egypt.....	771
Egypt Says Gaza Reconstruction Plan Ready, Will Intensify Efforts for Phase Two	774
RESETTLEMENT - 3 – ARAB.....	776
France, Germany, Italy and UK Give Support to Arab-backed Plan for Rebuilding Gaza.....	777
OTHER COUNTRIES - 1 - LEBANON.....	780
Lebanon-Israel: March 2025	780
Israeli Troops 'Staying Indefinitely' in Lebanon Border Buffer Zone, Defence Minister Says.....	781

What Is Hezbollah?	783
Hezbollah Ready to Lay Down Weapons if Israel Withdraws from Lebanon, Official Says	792
Lebanon Seizes \$2.5 Million Bound for Hezbollah, Local Officials Say	796
Lebanon: How Israel, Hezbollah, and Regional Powers Are Shaping Its Future	798
OTHER COUNTRIES – 2 - SYRIA	806
Israel Demands Complete Demilitarisation of Southern Syria	807
In southern Syria, a violent new Israeli occupation emerges	810
US Military Said Poised to Slash Troops in Syria; Israel Seeks to Limit Reduction	815
Syria Leader Jolani Privately Promised to Normalise Ties with Israel by 2026, ex-UK Diplomat Says ..	818
What is Behind Latest Clashes in Syria Between Druze and Pro-Government Gunmen	821
Israel, the Druze and Syria's Reign of Lies	826
OTHER COUNTRIES - 3 - YEMEN.....	828
What to Know About the Houthis, Their Attacks on Israel and the U.S., and Their Treatment of Yemen's Jews	829
Fresh US Airstrikes Against Houthi Rebels Kill at Least 1 in Yemen	833
Deadliest US Strike in Yemen Kills 74 at Oil Terminal, Houthis Say	836
20 Israeli Fighter Jets Strike in Yemen After Houthi Missile Hits Ben Gurion Airport	837
IDF 'Completely Disables' Houthi-Controlled Sanaa Airport in Strikes on Yemen Capital	840
US Downgrades Bombers Deployed in Middle East as Tensions with Houthis and Iran Recede	844
IDF Intercepts Houthi Missile Fired from Yemen, in Third Attack in Four Days	847
Israeli Navy Carries Out Yemen Strikes for 1st time, Targeting Houthi Port	849
IRAN AXIS OF RESISTANCE' - 4	853
Iran has been the aggressor since 1979. They Have Launched Attacks Around the World	854
The shape-shifting 'axis of resistance'	855
What is Iran's 'Axis of Resistance'?	860
Down but Not Out: Reassessing the Axis of Resistance	864
Israel Said Ready to Strike Iran, Possibly Within Days, Even As Nuke Talks Set to Resume	879
IRAN, Adversary Entente Task Force Update, June 11, 2025.....	883
Iran Update Special Edition: Israeli Strikes on Iran, June 13, 2025	893
Iran Update Special Report, June 17, 2025, Evening Edition	902
IDF Says it Partly Destroyed Natanz Nuclear Facility, Iran Says No Jump in Radiation.....	914
News Update The War Between Israel and Iran Continues	916
'Nowhere Feels Safe': Iranians on Life Under Israeli Attacks	917
Iran Launches Missiles at Israel, and Some Hit Tel Aviv, as Israel Attacks Iranian Nuclear Sites and Commanders	920
What are Iran's Nuclear and Missile Capabilities?	927
Iran's Nuclear Program has Been Hit Hard, but Won't Be Knocked Out if Fordo Remains	933
How Israel Used Spies, Smuggled Drones and AI to Stun and Hobble Iran	937

PM: Israel Will ‘Hit All Nuclear Facilities,’ Has Destroyed Half of Iran’s Launchers	945
As Israel Attacks, What is Life Like for Jews in Iran?	949
Its Country at War with Israel, Iran’s Jewish Community Walks a Delicate Tightrope	952
Arab Countries Who Do Not Allow Palestinians to Become Citizens	958
PART 11 VIDEOS	961

PART 0-01

HELP

SEARCHING FOR TEXT

1. Access the Search Function:

- **Keyboard Shortcut:**

Press **Ctrl + F** on Windows or **Command + F** on Mac. This opens the search bar.

- **Menu Option:**

In some PDF readers, you can also find the search option in the menu. Look for 'Edit' > 'Find'.

2. Enter the Search Term: Type the word or phrase you want to find in the search bar.

3. Use 'Next' or 'Previous' buttons to navigate through occurrences of the term in the document.

4. You will see three headings

Headings	Pages	Results
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Click all three headings individually and you will see what each heading has found.

5. Click on what you require

You will see what has been found in yellow

Click on what you want. The computer will take you to it.

THE STORY OF JEWISH HISTORY IS TOLD IN OUR TWO WEBSITES

The first, jewishwikipedia.info covers 4000 years

*The second jewishwikipedia.info/ottoman-palestine-israel.pdf
covers the past 100+ years.*

World War One saw the end of the Ottoman Empire.

*Britain accepted the League of Nations Mandate coastal area
to the south of Syria to be known as Palestine*

*Britain gave 80% of their territory to a new country
that became known as Transjordan (later called Jordan).*

*The British Mandate came to an end shortly after World War 2
and the new state of Israel was created in 1948*

The two biggest groups in Palestine were the Arabs and the Jews.








TO UNDERSTAND THE BELIEFS
OF PALESTINIAN CHILDREN AS THEY GREW OLDER





Go to

[VIDEOS – TEACHING PALESTINIAN CHILDREN](#)

JEWISH-ROMAN WARS BETWEEN 66 AND 135CE

[WIKIPEDIA](#)

Jewish–Roman Wars	
 <p>117 AD</p>	
Date	66–135 CE (70 years)
Location	Judeaea , Egypt , Cyprus , Cyrenaica , Mesopotamia
Result	Roman victory: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple Widespread destruction in Judea and diaspora of many survivors Consolidation of Jewish sects into Rabbinic Judaism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing separation of Christianity from Judaism Consolidation of Jewish center in Galilee
Territorial changes	Judeaea remains under Roman control; renamed Syria Palaestina
Belligerents	
 Roman Empire	 Judean provisional government Jewish Zealots
	Jewish rebels
	 Judea under Bar Kokhba
Commanders and leaders	
 Titus  Vespasian  Marcus Lupus	Hannan Eleazar ben Hanania Bar Giora Eleazar John

 Marcius Turbo  Lusius Quietus	Artemion Lukuas Julian and Pappus
 Hadrian  Sextus Julius Severus	Simon bar Kokhba † Eleazar of Modi'im
Strength	
Great revolt: 30,000 (Beth Horon) – 60,000 (siege of Jerusalem)	Great revolt: 25,000+ Jewish militias 20,000 Idumeans
Kitos War: forces of the eastern legions	Kitos War: loosely organized tens of thousands
Bar Kokhba revolt: 6–7 full legions with cohorts and auxiliaries of 5–6 additional legions – about 120,000 total.	Bar Kokhba revolt: 200,000–400,000 ^b militiamen
Casualties and losses	
Great revolt: Legio XII Fulminata lost its aquila and Syrian contingent destroyed – about 20,000 casualties; thousands of Roman civilians slain	Great revolt: 1,356,460 Jewish civilians and militia killed by Romans ^[3] – perhaps hundreds of thousands of non-Jewish civilians (mostly trapped visitors) killed; enslavement of 97,000–99,000 ^c
Kitos War: 240,000 killed in Cyprus ^a , ^[1] 200,000 killed in Cyrenaica ^a	Kitos War: 200,000 killed ^[4] Annihilation of Jewish communities in Cyprus, Cyrenaica and Alexandria
Bar Kokhba revolt: Legio XXII Deiotariana destroyed, Legio IX Hispana possibly disbanded, ^[2] Legio X Fretensis – sustained heavy casualties	Bar Kokhba revolt: 580,000 ^a killed, ^[5] 985 Jewish strongholds and villages destroyed ^a
350,000 ^[6] –1,400,000 ^[7] fatalities	
[a] per Cassius Dio ^[8] [b] according to Rabbinic sources [c] per Josephus ^[9]	

The Jewish–Roman wars were a series of large-scale [revolts](#) by the [Jews](#) of [Judea](#) against the [Roman Empire](#) between 66 and 135 CE.^[10] The conflict was driven by Jewish aspirations to restore the political independence lost when Rome conquered the [Hasmonean](#) kingdom, and unfolded over three major uprisings: the [First Jewish–Roman War](#) (66–73 CE), the [Kitos War](#) (116–118 CE) and the [Bar Kokhba revolt](#) (132–136 CE). Some historians also include the [Diaspora Revolt](#) (115–117 CE) which coincided with the Kitos War, when Jewish communities across the [Eastern Mediterranean](#) rose up against Roman rule.

The Jewish–Roman wars had a devastating impact on the [Jewish people](#), turning them from a major population in the Eastern Mediterranean into a dispersed and persecuted minority.^[11] The First Jewish–Roman War ended with the devastating [siege and destruction of Jerusalem](#) in 70 CE, including the burning of the [Second Temple](#)—the center of Jewish religious and national life. Roman forces destroyed other towns and villages throughout Judea, causing massive loss of life and displacement of the population.^[12] The surviving Jewish community lost all political autonomy under direct Roman rule.^[13] The later [Bar Kokhba revolt](#) proved even more devastating. The Romans' brutal suppression of this uprising led to the near-total depopulation of [Judea](#) through a combination of battlefield casualties, mass killings, and the widespread enslavement of survivors.^{[14][15]}

These catastrophic events expanded and strengthened the [Jewish diaspora](#), driving profound religious and cultural transformations that would shape [Judaism](#) for millennia. With the Temple's [sacrificial cult](#) no longer viable, other forms of worship developed, centered on [prayer](#), [Torah study](#), and communal [synagogue](#) gatherings, enabling Jewish communities to preserve their identity and practices despite dispersion. As Jewish life in Judea became untenable, two major shifts occurred: within the [Land of Israel](#), the cultural center shifted northward to [Galilee](#), while internationally, [Babylonia](#) and other diaspora communities across the [Mediterranean](#) and [Near East](#) gained unprecedented importance, eventually comprising the majority of the Jewish population. These developments laid the foundation for [Rabbinic Judaism](#), which emerged as the dominant form of Judaism in [late antiquity](#) and was responsible for the codification of the [Mishnah](#) and [Talmud](#).

THE JEWISH–ROMAN WARS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:^[16]

- [First Jewish–Roman War](#) (66–73)—also called the First Jewish Revolt or the Great Jewish Revolt, spanning from the 66 insurrection, through the 67 fall of the Galilee, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple and institution of the [Fiscus Judaicus](#) in 70, and finally the fall of [Masada](#) in 73.
- [Diaspora revolt](#) (115–117)—known as the "Rebellion of the Exile" and sometimes called the Second Jewish–Roman War; includes the [Kitos War](#) in Judea.
- [Bar Kokhba revolt](#) (132–136)—also called the Second Jewish–Roman War (if the Kitos War is not counted), or the Third (if it is).

Strength	
Great revolt: 30,000 (Beth Horon) – 60,000 (siege of Jerusalem)	Great revolt: 25,000+ Jewish militias 20,000 Idumeans
Kitos War: forces of the eastern legions	Kitos War: loosely organized tens of thousands
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350,000 ^[6] –1,400,000 ^[7] fatalities	

PART O-O2

HELP

GAZA, CONFRONTATION BETWEEN ISRAEL AND HAMAS BETWEEN 2007 AND 2023

AJC (American Jewish Committee)

2007: Hamas Takes Control of Gaza

In June, [Hamas, considered a terrorist organization by Israel, the U.S., U.K., EU, and others](#), took control of the Gaza Strip following violent clashes with its rival Palestinian faction, Fatah.

Why It Matters: This led to the division of the Palestinian territories, with Fatah controlling the West Bank and Hamas becoming the defacto ruler in Gaza. Hamas has used Iranian support to launch several significant attacks against Israel from its base in Gaza, including in 2008, 2009, 2014, 2021, and most recently on October 7, 2023, when Hamas terrorists murdered over 1,400 Israelis, wounded over 3,200, taken over 200 hostages, and launched thousands of rockets.

2008-2009: Operation Cast Lead (Gaza War)

From December 27, 2008 to January 18, 2009, Israel launched a military operation in response to rocket attacks from Gaza. Israeli forces conducted airstrikes, artillery shelling, and a ground invasion in response to the rocket attacks.

Why It Matters: This was the first major conflict between Israelis and Palestinians since the end of the Second Intifada in 2005. This also saw Israeli forces re-enter the Gaza Strip for the first time since its withdrawal in 2005 due to the terror threat posed by Hamas. The conflict resulted in significant casualties and destruction in Gaza, as well as international condemnation.

2012: Operation Pillar of Defense

From November 14 to November 21, 2012, Israel launched an operation to target terrorists and rocket launchers in Gaza, in response to increased rocket attacks from Gaza into nearby Israeli communities.

Why It Matters: The operation resulted in a ceasefire agreement brokered by Egypt and other international mediators, which ended the hostilities. While a ceasefire was brokered, this conflict reaffirmed the threat that Hamas posed to Israel, especially after the much larger 2009 conflict. In particular, Hamas' firing of rockets into Israeli civilian areas led to more investment in [Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system](#) as well as bomb shelters and a civilian alert system in Israel. It also renewed international criticism of Israeli policies, including questions over disproportionate force by human rights groups.

2014: Operation Protective Edge

In June 2014, three Israeli teenagers - Naftali Fraenkel, Gilad Shaer, and Eyal Yifrah - were abducted and killed by Hamas terrorists while hitchhiking in the West Bank. Their murder by Hamas led to a widespread Israeli crackdown on Hamas terrorists in the West Bank as well as increasing tensions and rocket fire on

Israel. This eventually escalated into Operation Protective Edge, which lasted from July 8 to August 26, 2014.

Why It Matters: The operation aimed to uncover and neutralize a network of tunnels that extended from Gaza into Israeli territory as well as end Hamas rocket fire. These tunnels were viewed as a significant security risk, potentially allowing terrorists to infiltrate and carry out attacks in Israel. Hamas also has held the bodies of two Israeli soldiers - Hadar Goldin and Oron Shaul - leading to significant tension between Israel and Hamas. It was also the last time Israeli ground forces entered the Gaza Strip until the October 7, 2023, Hamas terrorist attack.

2021: May Conflict in Gaza

[An 11-day war erupted between Israel and Hamas.](#) Hamas terrorists used tensions in Jerusalem, specifically over the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the eviction dispute in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, as a pretext to launch rockets at Israeli civilian areas and ignite hostilities. It resulted in intense rocket fire from Gaza and Israeli airstrikes. A ceasefire was brokered by Egypt and other mediators on May 21, 2021, ending the hostilities.

Why It Matters: Prior to October 7, 2023, this was the most recent direct conflict between Israel and Hamas until October 2023. The conflict also led to a major spike in antisemitism globally [targeting Jewish communities in the United States](#) and Europe.

2022: August Operation in Gaza

This three-day conflict resulted in over 1,000 rockets being fired at Israel by the [Iranian-backed Palestinian Islamic Jihad terror group and the targeted killing of PIJ commander Tayseer al-Jabari.](#)

Why It Matters: While the operation quickly ended in a ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, it was significant in that Hamas, the de facto ruler of Gaza, did not take part in the hostilities. The conflict was a setback for the Iranian-backed terror group, but tensions between Israel and Palestinian Islamic Jihad continued into 2023 in both Gaza and the West Bank.

2023: Operation Shield and Arrow

[Israel launched Operation Shield and Arrow](#) to end the threat against Israel posed by Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorists after they fired over 100 rockets into Israel.

Why It Matters: The violence stemming from Gaza was also linked to increasing terrorism in the West Bank, [specifically from Hamas](#) and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Backed by Iran, these Palestinian terror groups have sought to export their operations to the West Bank, specifically in Jenin, in order to carry out additional terror attacks against Israel. As such, Israeli security forces had been conducting near-daily counterterrorism operations in the West Bank to quell the violence.

2023: October 7 Hamas Massacre

[Hamas, the Iran-backed terror group controlling Gaza, launched an unprovoked and vicious surprise attack on over 20 Israeli communities.](#)

Using rockets, paragliders, boats, motorcycles, and other vehicles, and whatever other means they could, terrorists infiltrated Israel with one goal—to murder and kidnap Israelis. Over 1,200 Israelis have been killed, thousands of rockets have been fired on Israel, and over 134 hostages are being held by Hamas.

Why It Matters: This was the largest terrorist attack in Israeli history and the worst attack on the Jewish people since the Holocaust. In order to protect itself, Israel is working to eliminate the threat that Hamas poses through an air, sea, and ground campaign against the terror group's operations.

NO ONE SHOULD WANT CEASEFIRE IN GAZA UNTIL CLEAR DEFEAT OF HAMAS - OPINION

The goal for Hamas has never been a two-state solution or co-existence.

Its charter, still unchanged, calls for the annihilation of Israel.

[THE JERUSALEM POST](#) JOHN SPENCER, June 1, 2025



Smoke rises from Gaza after an explosion, near the Israel-Gaza border, as seen from Israel, May 29, 2025.(photo credit: AMIR COHEN/REUTERS)

Imagine what would have happened if Japan hadn't agreed to surrender in 1945. Or if Germany had remained undefeated after World War II. Even after their regimes had dragged their countries into catastrophic wars—wars they started—what if the world had simply stopped fighting and walked away?

That is exactly the scenario we are confronting with [Hamas](#) today.

After October 7, the single deadliest attack on the Jewish people since the Holocaust, Hamas is not suing for peace. It is not seeking a ceasefire in good faith. It is actively planning the next October 7. In fact, its leaders have said as much, publicly and proudly.

The goal for Hamas has never been a [two-state solution](#) or co-existence. Its charter, still unchanged, calls for the annihilation of Israel. This war, which began with Hamas's genocidal rampage into Israeli communities, was never about land or borders. It was about survival—Hamas's survival as a terrorist regime and political force. The moment Hamas executed on October 7, it accepted a war it could not militarily win. Yet now, it is fighting not to win militarily but to survive politically. For Hamas, mere survival is victory.

And if the guns fall silent now, if the war ends before Hamas is clearly and decisively defeated—or unless Hamas unilaterally surrenders, returns all the hostages, and agrees to fully disarm, then it will be a Hamas victory.



Displaced Palestinian children take shelter in tents, in Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip, May 29, 2025. (credit: REUTERS/Hatem Khaled)

Calls for a ceasefire may sound moral. They are not. A ceasefire without victory rewards war crimes such as mass hostage-taking, torture, mutilation, rape, the deliberate use of human shields, and the slaughter of civilians. These are not tactics of desperation; they are strategies of coercion. If such methods are seen to succeed, they will become a template for every terror group, militia, or hostile regime in the world.

CEASEFIRE COULD MARK DANGEROUS CHANGE IN EVOLUTION OF MODERN WARFARE

It would also validate and entrench a dangerous evolution in modern warfare: the systematic abuse of the laws of war as a weapon. Hamas has built its entire doctrine around this, deliberately violating every principle of international humanitarian law while relying on those same laws to constrain its adversary.

This is not just hypocrisy. It is a form of calculated warfare sometimes called lawfare: turning schools, hospitals, mosques, and civilian neighborhoods into military facilities, embedding command centers and weapons under protected sites, and then using civilian casualties as a political weapon. When those civilians inevitably suffer, Hamas leverages the images and statistics to win global sympathy and condemn the very nation trying to dismantle their terrorist infrastructure.

A Hamas victory would establish a new, horrific standard: that if you violate every rule of war with enough strategic cruelty—using your own population as shields, storing rockets in clinics, placing snipers in minarets, and ensuring the maximum number of civilians are exposed to danger—then international outrage will fall not on you, but on the state trying to stop you. It would teach regimes and terror groups everywhere that protected sites are no longer protected—they are exploitable. That civilian deaths are not just tragic but useful, even essential, to political victory. The consequences of rewarding that strategy would echo far beyond Gaza: it would put every civilian population under the control of evil dictators or armed non-state actors at even greater risk.

We've seen this before. In every prior round of fighting—Operation Cast Lead (Dec 27, 2008 – Jan 18, 2009), Operation Pillar of Defense (Nov 14–21, 2012), [Operation Protective Edge](#) (July 8 – Aug 26, 2014), and Operation Guardian of the Walls (May 10–21, 2021)— Hamas used international pressure for ceasefires not to lay down arms, but to regroup, rearm, and dig deeper into Gaza's civilian infrastructure. Each ceasefire became a strategic pause, not a step toward peace. October 7 was the result.

Now, with the war approaching a decisive phase and the IDF dismantling the core of Hamas's operational capacity, the terror group is betting once again that international pressure will save it. That hostages and humanitarian suffering—deliberately prolonged and manipulated by Hamas—will force Israel to back down. This is not a miscalculation on Hamas's part. It is their only hope.

Even if Hamas returned every [hostage](#) tomorrow but remained the de facto armed leadership in Gaza, it would not change the strategic calculus. In fact, it would mark a Hamas victory. The group would have proven that taking civilians—children, elderly, women, and foreign nationals—can yield tangible political results—that the international community will pressure a democratic state to halt a war of self-defense in exchange for hostages who should never have been taken. That leverage can be gained not through negotiation, but through atrocity. No nation can allow hostage-taking to become an accepted currency of warfare. To do so would invite it everywhere.

The idea that a genocidal terror group can survive a war it started by choice, from a position of unprovoked aggression, is a dangerous precedent. Hamas's survival will be celebrated by its backers—from Tehran to Beirut to Doha—as a modern miracle: a militant group that faced the full force of a nation-state and lived. This is the symbolic power Hamas craves. It would send a clear signal to Hezbollah, the Houthis, Iranian proxies across the region, and radical groups worldwide: terrorism works. Most dangerously, it would affirm to the Islamic regime in Iran that its decades-long strategy of proxy warfare against Israel—its so-called “ring of fire”—is working—that all it needs to do is keep going.

HAMAS WILL PREPARE FOR THE NEXT WAR

If Hamas survives, it will not rebuild Gaza. It will rebuild tunnels. It will not return hostages. It will capture more. And it will not seek peace. It will prepare for the next war. This is not speculation. This is what they say. This is what they've always done.

War is always tragic. But some wars are necessary. The just purpose of war is not vengeance—it is justice, deterrence, and the restoration of peace. But peace is not possible with an armed, fanatical regime in Gaza that seeks your destruction and views the murder of civilians as a divine duty. Wars of self-defense must end with unmistakable clarity.

Germany in 1918 was defeated militarily, but the war ended with ambiguity. The Allies allowed the German army to retreat intact. The result was the “stab-in-the-back” myth that fueled Nazism and led to an even more catastrophic war. In 1945, the Allies made no such mistake. Nazi Germany was not just defeated—it was destroyed as a governing entity. So was Imperial Japan. And just as importantly, the German and Japanese populations came to see and accept that their regimes had been defeated. Both societies

underwent years of disarmament, reconciliation, and comprehensive deradicalization. Only then could Europe and the Pacific begin to rebuild in peace.

Israel faces the same choice today. Ending this war without defeating Hamas means condemning Israelis—and Palestinians—to unending conflict. It means October 7 becomes not a cautionary tale, but a case study in successful terrorism, lawfare, hostage taking, and wars of aggression.

Israel is currently achieving real, measurable success in its military campaign. Operation Gideon's Chariot has transitioned from massed maneuvers to coordinated clear-and-hold operations across Gaza. The IDF has successfully seized and is now holding terrain in areas once dominated by Hamas battalions. Elite Israeli units continue to dismantle Hamas's underground networks, rocket infrastructure, weapons production sites, and command centers—undermining the group's ability to wage war.

In parallel, Israel has established a new humanitarian mechanism—the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation—to deliver food, water, and medicine directly to civilians without going through Hamas. This is critical. For years, Hamas maintained power not only through fear and force but also by monopolizing aid distribution and punishing dissent. That monopoly is now being broken. For the first time in nearly two decades, signs of civilian defiance are emerging: Gazans protesting Hamas's theft, rejecting their authority, and calling them out publicly.

But let no one be mistaken—this is still a war, not a counterinsurgency. Hamas remains the de facto ruling power of Gaza. It still commands fighters, holds hostages, and exerts control over large swaths of the population. No one who has studied war—real war—should have expected that a terror regime that spent decades militarizing every inch of Gaza and radicalizing generations of civilians could be dismantled easily or quickly. Those calling for an immediate ceasefire either do not understand war, or do not want Hamas to lose.

This war must end not with a ceasefire, but with a clear and irreversible outcome: the defeat of Hamas as a military and governing power.

If the international community truly wants peace, it should focus not on saving Hamas, but on how it is first removed from power, disarmed, and dismantled—so that the long process of deradicalization and reconciliation can begin. This was the path taken after World War II, when defeating the regimes that started the war was recognized as the necessary precondition for lasting peace.

Israel cannot be the only party planning for what comes after Hamas. The international community must stop pretending Hamas can be part of the solution. It must become part of the solution itself: by supporting measures that accelerate Hamas's defeat, such as the movement of civilians out of Hamas's grasp, not refusing to participate in a humanitarian plan that delivers aid directly to the people Hamas has long exploited.

The hypocrisy must stop. The reality must be accepted: peace will never come while Hamas remains intact. There is no future in which Gaza flourishes while Hamas remains in power. There is no future in which

Israelis or Palestinians are safe if October 7, hostage taking, lawfare, and human shielding are seen as a path to political leverage.

We would live in a very different world if the Allies had not pursued victory in 1945. We will live in a dark and dangerous world if Hamas is allowed to claim one now.

Let it be clear—to Hamas and to the world—that they lost this war. Anything less guarantees a future of endless violence.

The author is the Chair of Urban Warfare Studies at the Modern War Institute at West Point.

STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT FOR GAZA AFTER HAMAS

CHATGPT June 2025

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The potential removal or substantial weakening of Hamas in Gaza—whether through military defeat, internal disintegration, or diplomatic pressure—marks a critical juncture. While ending Hamas's control may mitigate immediate threats and create space for humanitarian engagement, it also risks plunging Gaza into chaos if no legitimate alternative governance emerges. Stabilizing Gaza in a post-Hamas reality demands an integrated approach that addresses governance, security, humanitarian relief, reconstruction, and long-term political solutions. International leadership, regional cooperation, and local buy-in will be essential to avoid a power vacuum, restore basic services, and lay the groundwork for sustainable peace.

2. POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Governance Vacuum

Hamas has governed Gaza with a mixture of authoritarian rule and grassroots service delivery, building a base of support through a resistance identity. Its abrupt removal could create a dangerous vacuum. The Palestinian Authority (PA), while internationally recognized, lacks credibility due to years of absence and internal corruption.

Governance Scenarios

- **PA-led Administration with International Oversight:** The PA could re-enter Gaza under a reform mandate, supported by donor guarantees and Arab oversight, but must first gain public trust through transparency and effective service delivery.
- **UN/Arab League Transitional Authority:** A transitional civil authority backed by the UN and Arab states could provide neutrality, enabling a smoother political reset.
- **Technocratic Local Governance:** Appointing independent technocrats with grassroots legitimacy may allow for administrative continuity without political entanglements during a transition phase.

Key Challenges

- Political fragmentation within the Palestinian camp.
 - Public skepticism of imposed or external governance models.
 - Potential power struggles between remnants of Hamas, Fatah factions, and unaffiliated actors.
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3. SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

Threat Landscape

- **Militant Survivors and Spoilers:** Groups like Palestinian Islamic Jihad and rogue Hamas elements may resort to asymmetric violence.
- **Weapons Proliferation:** Gaza is saturated with small arms, explosives, and smuggling networks.
- **Internal Disorder:** Criminal gangs and political militias may fill the void of policing.

Stabilization Measures

- **Multinational Security Deployment:** A peacekeeping force, ideally Arab-led with international support, could oversee border control, disarmament, and civilian protection.
- **Community Security Initiatives:** Train and deploy vetted local police units under international supervision to maintain order.
- **Intelligence Cooperation:** Strengthened regional and international intelligence coordination to preempt attacks or smuggling.

DDR and Security Sector Reform (SSR)

Robust disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) must be paired with the rebuilding of a neutral, professional security force. Programs should include:

- Economic reintegration packages.
- Education and vocational retraining.
- Psychological support and community reintegration campaigns.

4. HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

Status Overview

- **Destruction of Infrastructure:** Over two-thirds of housing, schools, and municipal buildings are damaged.
- **Water and Sanitation Crisis:** Extensive contamination and destruction of water networks.
- **Healthcare Collapse:** Hospitals operate under extreme shortages; infectious diseases risk surging.
- **Displacement Emergency:** Over 1.3 million people lack permanent shelter.

Urgent Interventions

- **Humanitarian Corridors:** Secure, internationally monitored routes for aid entry.

- **Field Hospitals and Mobile Clinics:** Rapid deployment to address trauma, maternal care, and disease prevention.
- **Emergency Water Access:** Trucked water and modular desalination systems.
- **Psychosocial Support:** Community outreach to address trauma, especially among youth.

Coordination Architecture

A central operations command involving UN OCHA, WHO, WFP, ICRC, and local NGOs should manage logistics, needs assessment, and transparency. Military actors must respect humanitarian neutrality.

5. ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND RECONSTRUCTION

Short-Term Measures

- **Emergency Employment:** Cash-for-work initiatives focused on debris removal and infrastructure repairs.
- **Agricultural Support:** Rehabilitate farmland, greenhouses, and fisheries.
- **Market Reactivation:** Support to informal traders, SMEs, and cooperatives.

Medium-Term Initiatives

- **Public Infrastructure Rehabilitation:** Repair energy grids, water lines, roads, public schools, and hospitals.
- **Transport and Logistics Hubs:** Create corridors for trade through Egypt and Israel with customs modernization.
- **Digital Connectivity:** Expand internet access and digital literacy programs to link Gaza with global markets.

Rebuilding Gaza

A long-term, multidimensional reconstruction plan is essential. It should emphasize resilience, inclusion, and transparency:

- **Housing:** Rapid construction of prefabricated homes followed by permanent housing developments incorporating community input and environmental resilience.
- **Public Institutions:** Rebuilding of courts, civil registries, and local councils to re-establish civic trust.
- **Education Infrastructure:** Reconstruct and expand schools, vocational centers, and universities with updated curricula.
- **Health Infrastructure:** Modernize hospitals, pharmacies, and health logistics chains.

- Urban Planning: Redesign neighborhoods with zoning laws, green spaces, and disaster preparedness standards.

Governance and Accountability

- Independent Reconstruction Oversight Board: Comprised of donors, civil society, and Palestinian technocrats to monitor funds.
- Transparency Portals: Public dashboards showing budgets, contractors, and milestones.
- Anti-Corruption Safeguards: Regular audits, whistleblower protections, and third-party monitoring.

Investment Climate Enablers

- Legal and Regulatory Reform: Property restitution, business licensing, and contract enforcement.
- Risk Guarantees: Donor-backed insurance and conflict-risk funds for private investors.
- Gaza Reconstruction Bank: Capitalized by Gulf states and international donors to pool and manage rebuilding funds.

6. REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL DYNAMICS

Regional Powers

- Egypt: Crucial facilitator of humanitarian access, potential peacekeeper, and political broker.
- Israel: Focused on demilitarization and long-term deterrence; key in border policy.
- Qatar/Turkey: Transitioning from Hamas supporters to reconstruction partners; could lead housing and public services projects.
- Saudi Arabia/UAE: Potential funders, but contingent on credible governance and moderation.

International Stakeholders

- United States: Strategic leader; can leverage normalization momentum and convene donors.
- European Union: Expected to lead in civil society, infrastructure, and judicial reform funding.
- United Nations: Central to humanitarian logistics and governance transition support.

Strategic Risks

- Proxy actors (e.g., Hezbollah, Iran) exploiting the vacuum.
 - Re-radicalization of youth in the absence of opportunity.
 - Politicization of aid or reconstruction by internal factions.
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7. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Short-Term (0–6 months):

- Launch a joint Gaza stabilization task force with regional and UN components.
- Secure humanitarian corridors and border crossings.
- Establish a credible interim governance structure with local and international legitimacy.

Medium-Term (6–24 months):

- Initiate large-scale reconstruction projects with anti-corruption oversight.
- Expand DDR and civic re-engagement programs.
- Rebuild educational and healthcare systems as anchors of civil recovery.

Long-Term (2–5 years):

- Hold municipal and national elections as a step toward Palestinian unity.
- Integrate Gaza's economy with the West Bank and regional markets.
- Institutionalize a resilient, inclusive political framework.
- Fully operationalize the Gaza Rebuilding and Resilience Plan with environmental, technological, and social sustainability pillars.

8. CONCLUSION

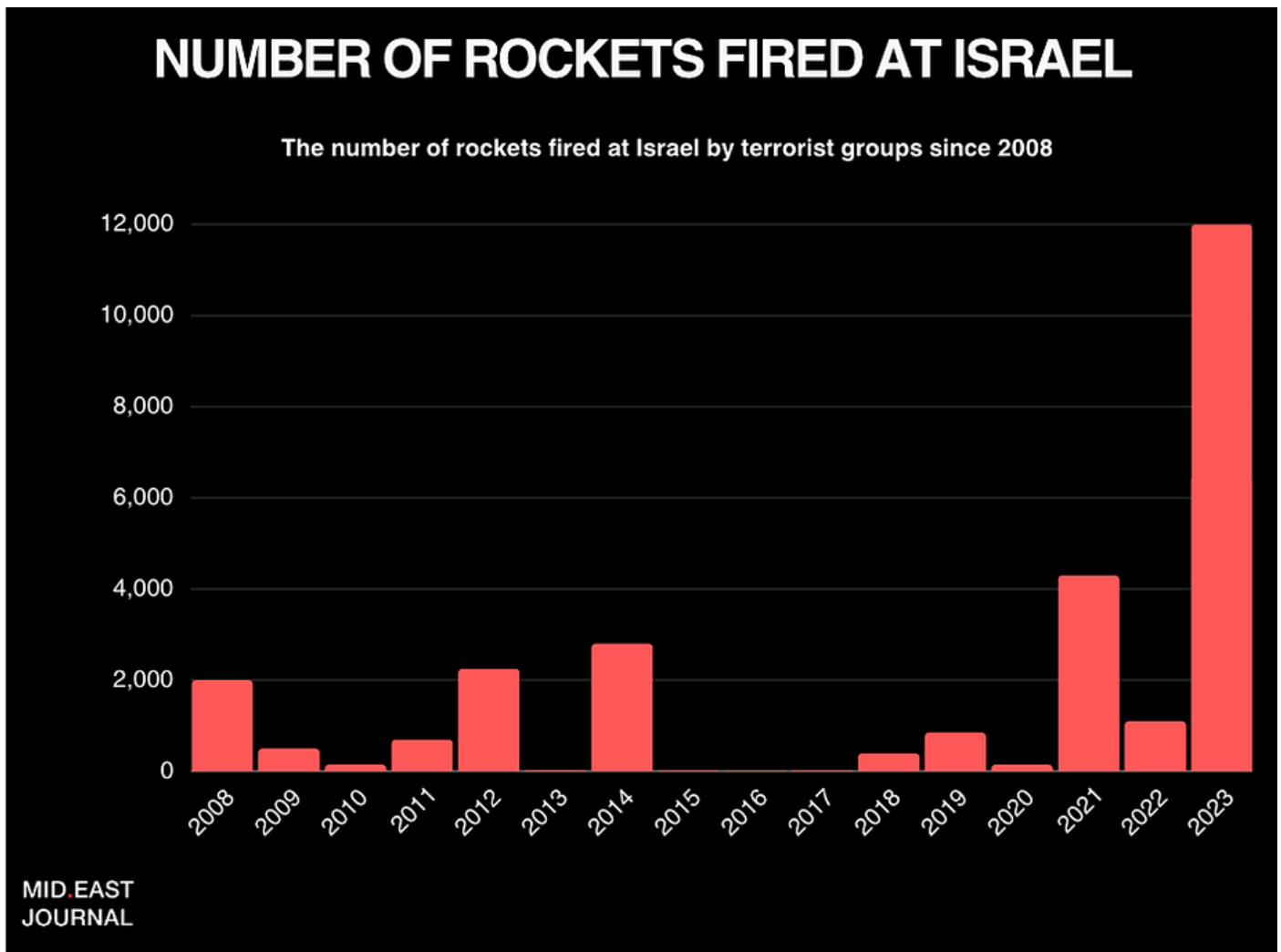
Post-Hamas Gaza presents a singular opportunity to reset the trajectory of one of the world's most protracted crises. It demands vision, pragmatism, and moral courage. The goal is not merely to remove an armed group, but to foster a society grounded in dignity, governance, and peace. Strategic patience, local empowerment, and a shared commitment to justice will determine whether Gaza spirals into renewed conflict or becomes a cornerstone for regional stability.

UNDER CONSTANT FIRE: HOW MANY ROCKETS HAVE TERROR GROUPS SHOT INTO ISRAEL?

[KYLIE LOBELL](#) Jan 16, 2024

Thousands of rockets have been lobbed at Israel by terror organizations.

Dive into the numbers to see how many.



- On October 7, 2023, Hamas sent a barrage of over 5,000 rockets from Gaza into Israel
- From that date, through December 28, Hamas and other militant groups have fired a total of 12,000 missiles at Israeli targets
- Since Israel activated its Iron Dome missile defense system in 2011, it has intercepted thousands of rockets, saving thousands of Israeli lives
- Hamas receives many of its rockets and other weapons from Iran

Since October 7—the [worst massacre of the Jewish people since the Holocaust](#)— Hamas and other militant groups have [fired 12,000 rockets at Israel](#) (as of December 28, 2023). In the two weeks following October 7, a total of 7,000 rockets had already been fired at Israel.

The number of Israeli casualties from the rocket fire has reached 15. That surprisingly low number is due to the country's [Iron Dome](#) air defense system. Without it, the number of fatalities would be significantly higher.

What Is The Iron Dome And How Successful Is It?

The [Iron Dome missile defense system](#) uses radar detection to stop short-range rockets from landing in populated areas of Israel where they could injure or kill anyone in the area. The system detects incoming missiles and intercepts them via a built-in launcher that fires a missile at the rocket, intercepting it so that it explodes in the sky. Though shrapnel may then drop, the damaging power of each rocket is effectively neutralized.

If the Iron Dome's radar system determines that the trajectory of a given missile will cause it to land in an uninhabited area, such as a field, then it does not intercept the rocket. At the same time, when a rocket is heading toward Israel, air raid sirens within the targeted areas are sounded, and depending on how close to Gaza they are located, Israelis have as little as 30 seconds to go into a bomb shelter for safety.

Each Iron Dome missile that's fired at incoming rockets costs \$40,000 to \$50,000. Due to the high cost of the Iron Dome system and the broader war in general, the US House of Representatives has pledged to [provide \\$14.3 billion to Israel](#) for its defense needs.

Israel developed the Iron Dome following the 2006 conflict with the Southern Lebanon-based militant group Hezbollah. During that [conflict](#), rockets from the terrorist organization killed dozens of Israelis causing a huge amount of damage. With some American financial aid, Israeli firms Rafael Advanced Defense Systems and Israel Aerospace Industries created the Iron Dome to protect Israel.

The Iron Dome's success rate has been as high as 90%. However, when dealing with a barrage of rockets, the system is less likely to be effective. During the current war, it failed on October 27 when a rocket hit an apartment building in Tel Aviv leaving four people injured. If Hezbollah decides to ramp up its activities on Israel's northern front, it could overwhelm the Iron Dome, given that the terrorist group has an estimated 150,000 missiles and rockets in its arsenal.

Notwithstanding, Israeli military spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Conricus stands by the system. "The number of Israelis killed and wounded would be far higher if it had not been for the Iron Dome system, which has been a lifesaver, as it always is," he says.

Which Terrorist Groups Fire Rockets at Israel?

Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist organizations including Palestine Islamic Jihad and Fatah, along with Hezbollah, have all sent rockets into Israel. Lately, Hamas and Hezbollah have been responsible for most of the rockets fired.

What Kind of Rockets Are Being Fired By Hamas And How Far Can They Reach Into Israel?

Since the early 2000s, terrorist organizations in Gaza have launched thousands of rocket and mortar attacks on Israel. In the past, these actions have been condemned as terrorism and called out as war crimes by organizations like the [United Nations](#) and the European Union.

Generically dubbed Qassams, the early iterations were crudely developed and relatively ineffective. These early versions would typically only reach communities in the immediate vicinity of the Gaza Strip. But beginning in 2006, terrorist groups started producing longer-range rockets that, when launched from Gaza, could reach the southern Israeli city of Ashkelon; by 2012 the locally made "M-75" as well as Iranian Fajr-5 rockets were able to reach as far as Tel Aviv which is in central Israel. Another notable "milestone" occurred in 2014 when these rockets were able to reach as far as the northern Israeli city of Haifa. Some of those rockets also contained white phosphorous which acts as an additional incendiary.

Reports have indicated that, at times, the rockets have been launched [from the UN's Relief and Works Agency \(UNRWA\) facilities](#) in Gaza as well as from areas in the Strip designated as humanitarian zones. Indeed, Hamas is known for using human shields and hiding out in hospitals, schools, mosques, and other civilian facilities.

Rocket Misfires Are Deadly to Palestinian Gazans

One of the consequences of Hamas' rocket barrages is that some tend to fall short of their targets. As of November 10, 2023, about 12% of rockets launched in the Strip towards Israel [ended up falling within Gaza](#).

On October 17, controversy erupted when many major media outlets reported that, according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which is run by Hamas, an [Israeli airstrike on a Gaza City hospital](#) left 471 dead. In reality, Israeli and US intelligence services determined that the deadly blast at the al-Ahli Arab hospital was caused, instead, by another Gaza-based terrorist group whose rocket misfired. As well, the actual death toll from the misfired rocket was estimated to be lower—between 100 and 300, according to US intelligence.

How Frequently Are Rockets Fired Into Israel?

Since 2005, when Israel withdrew from Gaza, Hamas and other Gaza-based terrorist organizations have [fired more than 18,000 rockets](#) and mortars at Israel. These rockets have a variety of ranges, but overall many can now hit a majority of Israel's central and southern population centers, including Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Beersheba, and Rehovot. Hamas' launches have been erratic, however. There have been as few as one rocket fired at a time, to up to thousands launched within hours or even days.

Since 2008, How Many Rockets Have Been Fired at Israel?

There have been a number of Israeli operations into Gaza over the years, after repeated and frequent rocket attacks as well as other incursions on Israel since 2008. These include:

- 2008: [Operation Hot Winter](#) began on February 29, 2008, after Hamas launched Qassam rockets at Israeli citizens from Gaza. For the first time, Hamas, the Popular Resistance Committees, and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad fired six Soviet-made Grad missiles toward Ashkelon, injuring some people while causing psychological terror among others. Israel responded with airstrikes on terrorist cells in Gaza.
- 2010: 150 rocket launches and 215 mortar launches at Israel took place over the course of the year. In 2009, there were 569 rocket launches and 289 mortar launches.
- 2011: On August 21, 2011, Hamas and Israel called for a ceasefire following another conflict where more than 100 rockets were fired at Israel; [one Israeli was killed](#), and more than a dozen were wounded. Almost immediately after the ceasefire took effect, rocket fire once again came from Gaza and Israel responded with an airstrike that killed two leaders of Islamic Jihad.
- 2012: After Israel took out Zohair al-Qaisi, the secretary general of the Popular Resistance Committee, [militants in Gaza](#) fired “over 300 Grad missiles, Qassam rockets and mortar shells launched, of which 177 hit Israeli territory, striking the major urban centers of Ashdod, Ashkelon and Beersheba,” according to Wikipedia.
- 2014: The 2014 Gaza war, called Operation Protective Edge, started after terrorists kidnapped and killed three Israeli teenagers. Israel arrested members of Hamas in the West Bank, and Hamas and [other terrorist groups](#) responded by shooting 4,564 rockets and mortars into Israel before a ceasefire was called.
- 2021: During the month of May, Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad [launched 4,360 rockets](#) toward Israel as an Israel-Palestine crisis escalated. The conflict started when six Palestinian families were up for eviction in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah.
- 2022: 1,100 rockets were [fired from Gaza](#) towards Israel during Gaza-Israel clashes It started after an Israeli airstrike killed Tayseer al-Jabari, a terrorist leader.

The Number of Rockets Fired Into Israel Over Time	
Year	Estimated Number of Rockets Fired
2008	2,000
2009	550
2010	150
2011	700
2012	2,250
2013	30

2014	2,800
2015	20
2016	15
2017	20
2018	400
2019	850
2020	150
2021	4,300
2022	1,100
2023	12,000

How Many Rockets Were Fired at Israel in 2023?

The rocket attacks on Israel in 2023 that came from Gaza started long before October 7, though they have been much more intense since then. From May 9-13, 1,469 rockets and mortar shells were fired into Israel; most [came from the Palestinian Islamic Jihad](#). Of those, 291 landed within the Gaza Strip; 131 landed in Israel; and 39 fell into the Mediterranean sea. Two people in Israel were left dead, many were wounded.

Between October 7 through the end of December 2023, Hamas and additional militant groups have fired upward of 12,000 rockets at Israel.

Where Does Hamas Get Their Rockets From?

Hamas obtains rockets and other weapons from a variety of sources. When Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005, Hamas began importing rockets and other military equipment from Iran. The weapons from Iran were shipped to Sudan, then trucked across Egypt and eventually smuggled through narrow tunnels built underneath the Sinai Peninsula.

While there has yet been no direct link made between the October 7 attacks and Iran, a source told Reuters that Iran prepared and trained Hamas for the massacre that day.

A Second Front on Israel's North: Rockets Fired From Lebanon

Hamas is not the only terror group lobbing rockets toward Israel. While much attention has been given to Hamas' rocket fire from Gaza additional barrages are coming from Hezbollah in Southern Lebanon.

Hezbollah, a [Lebanese terror group](#) with strong ties to Iran, has been consistently firing rockets into Israel's northern territory, raising the possibility of a legitimate second front to the war.

As of mid-November 2023, it was [estimated that Hezbollah has fired over 1,000 rockets, mortars, or other artillery](#) toward Israel's northern towns as part of the current conflict.

According to a report drafted on January 7, 2024, the [total number of weaponry fired into Israel by Hezbollah has topped 1,500](#) since October 7, 2023. This includes a [one-day barrage of 62 rockets](#) in response to the targeted killing of Hamas chief Saleh al-Aroui in Beirut on January 2.

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ON THIS DAY: 75 YEARS SINCE UN VOTE TO TURN PALESTINE INTO JEWISH, ARAB STATES

In later years, the date would also become known as the annual International Day of
Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

[THE JERUSALEM POST](#) [Aaron Reich](#) November 29, 2022



JEWS CELEBRATE in the streets of Tel Aviv moments after the United Nations
voted on November 29, 1947 to partition Palestine into two states. (photo credit: REUTERS)

November 29, 2022 marks 75 years since the historic move of the United Nations to [partition the British Mandate of Palestine into two countries](#), one Jewish and one Arab, essentially launching the birth of the State of Israel.

The decision to do so was made by the UN General Assembly as part of Resolution 181 (II) and sought to end the British Mandate and transform it into two new sovereign states.

However, while the decision was accepted by the Jews, represented by the Jewish Agency and Zionist factions, it was rejected by the Arabs, and a war ensued during which Israel achieved independence.

“On the 29th November, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz Israel; the General Assembly required the inhabitants of Eretz Israel to take such steps as were necessary on their part for the implementation of that resolution. This recognition by the United Nations of the right of the Jewish people to establish their state is irrevocable. This right is the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign state.”

Israeli Declaration of Independence

THE PARTITION OF PALESTINE AND THE BIRTH OF ISRAEL

The plan proposed partitioning Mandatory Palestine at the end of the British Mandate into two states, one Jewish and one Arab, with Jerusalem being controlled by an international regime.

THE PALESTINE POST 4.30 A
LATE Edition
SUNDAY, NOV. 29, 1947
JERUSALEM
PRICE: 20 VOL. XXII

PARTITION APPROVED BY MO

2/3: 33 VOTE YES, 13 NO, 10

FLUSHING MEADOW, Saturday. — The plan for the partition of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab States was at 5.30 (New York time) this afternoon adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations by 33 votes to 13, with 10 abstentions and one delegation absent. The voting came after a last ditch effort by the Arab States to prevent partition by proposing the establishment of a federated state based on the canton system, in which the Jews and Arabs would be separated as far as possible.

The Arab motion, which was attacked as a move to sabotage the U.N. Partition plan, was opposed by the rapporteur of the Ad Hoc Committee, Mr. Thors, and by the delegate of the United States, Mr. H. Johnson, who asked the Chairman, Dr. Aranha, to call for a vote on the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendation for Partition. Dr. Aranha ruled that the delegates would have to vote on the partition plan after hearing last minute appeals by Iran and Syria. Mr. Johnson, said: "There is nothing conciliatory in this," and he was supported by the Soviet Delegate.

After the result was announced, the Assembly appointed a five-nation Commission to carry out the plan and to supervise the transfer of the Government of Palestine to the provisional Jewish and Arab Councils: the nations appointed were: Bolivia, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Panama and the Philippines. The sum of two million dollars was then voted by the Assembly for the work of the Commission.

2,000,000 DOLLAR BUDGET FOR IMPLEMENTATION

SONG AND DANCE GREET NEWS

There was unrestrained joy obvious in the merry-making in Tel Aviv and Haifa and even the usually deserted thoroughfares of Jerusalem burst into life as the news flashed through the city. People in their homes joined in the dancing. About a third of Tel Aviv's population were out in the streets, about 25,000 of them in Magen David Square where the strains of Hatikvah roared forth as soon as the vote had been taken.

When a newspaper transmission of the Lake Success meeting had come to an end in Tel Aviv, a group of armed men forced their way into the "studio" and tried to get to the microphone. When the operators resisted the men



This Week in History: The UN Partition Plan announced (credit: ARCHIVE)

Internationally, the plan saw support from the US, France, Canada, Liberia, Sweden and Norway. However, it also faced opposition from several other countries like India.

The plan was accepted by many Jews, albeit some with reluctance due to territorial concessions. But ultimately, many Jews both in Mandatory Palestine and abroad were satisfied with it.

Arab leaders widely rejected the plan, however. They had announced they would refuse to be bound by this decision, which they claimed was made under duress, and vocally expressed their opposition to what they declared was a violation of self-determination.

Ultimately, the resolution was not carried out and Arab countries attacked Israel. This in turn led to the 1948 War of Independence, which saw Israel defeat its Arab neighbors and achieve independent statehood.

However, it is still enshrined as an important part of Israeli history, with a street being named "November 29 Street" in Jerusalem and the partition plan being mentioned in the Declaration of Independence:

"On [the 29th November, 1947](#), the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz Israel; the General Assembly required the inhabitants of Eretz

Israel to take such steps as were necessary on their part for the implementation of that resolution. This recognition by the United Nations of the right of the Jewish people to establish their state is irrevocable. This right is the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign state.”

In later years, the date would also become known as the annual [International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People](#), a United Nations-organized event observed since 1978.

Created as a result of UN General Assembly resolution 32/40 B in 1977, this specific date was chosen in memory of the partition plan.

This day of solidarity is still recognized and observed by events, typically held at the UN headquarters in New York and offices in Vienna, Nairobi and Geneva, as well as other places.

Many high-ranking UN officials, NGOs and other public figures tend to make statements regarding Palestine and the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict in special meetings at these events. Indeed, as noted by the UN's website, it is also the day when the UN General Assembly holds its annual debate about Palestine.

LACKING HAREDI MANPOWER, IDF TURNS TO WOMANPOWER: 1 IN 5 FIGHTERS ARE NOW FEMALE

**During recent Knesset committee discussions,
IDF representatives revealed that women now make up 20.9% of the combat force.
Among them are a growing number of religious women**

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL Tal Schneider 21 May 2025

One in five Israeli combat soldiers is female, a senior officer said in a recent Knesset hearing, underlining a major uptick in women serving in fighting roles.

“Today, women make up 20.9% of the IDF’s combat force – this is an unprecedented figure. We’re also seeing an increase in the technological units, but the main surge is in women serving as combat soldiers,” Brig. Gen. Shay Tayeb, head of the Personnel Directorate’s Planning and Personnel Management Division, said on May 7 while presenting official data to Knesset members in a discussion focused on female combat soldiers in the context of the need for an equitable conscription law for ultra-Orthodox men.

However, as women increasingly enlist in light infantry battalions, elite combat units, and other units that may put them on the frontlines, the army may struggle to address the dual challenge of integrating them alongside a hoped-for influx of ultra-Orthodox soldiers, policy planners warned.

Out of 18,915 Haredim who received initial draft orders since July 2024, around 319 have enlisted; 2,521 who ignored multiple draft orders were sent immediate call-up orders requiring them to show up at an induction center within 48 hours or be declared a draft evader.

In direct opposition to Haredi men evading the draft, Maj. Sapir Barabi, head of the Sources Department at the IDF Personnel Directorate, noted that between 2012 and 2024 – based on recruitment yearbook data – the number of female combat soldiers rose tenfold.

Regarding the types of combat roles open to women, the IDF said that women can today be assigned to 58% of combat positions. Units still closed to women include all of the IDF’s maneuvering infantry and armored forces, along with the vast majority of commando units, all of which are trained to operate within enemy territory.

CRACKS IN THE SPECIAL FORCES GLASS CEILING

The IDF has offered women combat service for about 20 years in the framework of mixed-gender light infantry battalions that are permanently stationed on Israel’s borders with Egypt, Jordan, and, more recently, the West Bank, as part of the Border Defense Corps.

Women comprise approximately 60% of all mixed-gender battalions, and the male and female combat soldiers train and serve together from the moment of enlistment through training and deployment to the borders.

During the October 7, 2023, Hamas onslaught, members of one of the light infantry battalions normally stationed on the Egypt border, Caracal, and its all-female tank company fought for hours, killing dozens of attackers along the border and in communities overrun by terrorists.

The Home Front Command's Search and Rescue Brigade, whose troops are mostly women and fully combat-trained, is often deployed to carry out routine arrest and defense operations in the West Bank. During the war, the search and rescue forces operated in Gaza to assist the maneuvering troops.

In the Air Force, women and men serve together in the aerial defense array — technically considered combat service. The Navy also sees women serving alongside men aboard missile boats.

Female soldiers also serve as canine handlers in the elite Oketz unit and as paramedics in other male-dominated infantry and armored brigades, including during the ground offensive in Gaza.

The IDF is expanding other opportunities after seeing a significant rise in the number of women serving in combat roles.

In 2024, the IDF launched pilot programs to integrate women into special forces units, including Unit 669, Sayeret Matkal, and Yahalom — the Combat Engineering Corps' elite unit. The pilot at Yahalom has ended and the IDF is awaiting a decision on whether it will officially open the unit to female service.

Some female soldiers who completed the Yahalom pilot have already gone on to the IDF officers' course, while others are now completing two years in the unit. It is unclear whether the IDF has integrated those women who completed the pilot into operational activity beyond the border.

The two female soldiers who were recruited to the prestigious 669 rescue unit dropped out, and no public information is available about the one recruited to the Sayeret Matkal special reconnaissance unit. At this point, there is no information on whether the pilot as a whole will continue or whether additional female recruits will be added to these units.

The IDF notes that all the women initially passed the screening and combat training requirements, using an adjusted physical fitness scale.

Another ongoing IDF pilot is testing the integration of women into combat mobility units in the Ground Forces. Each infantry battalion currently has mobility platoons, usually composed of regular infantry soldiers who receive additional training in operational driving on Hummers and/or ATVs.

The primary mission of the mobility unit is to deliver heavy supplies to forces operating in enemy territory — water, food, ammunition, mortars, missiles, and more. Other tasks include evacuating wounded soldiers under fire or transporting equipment between company commanders or from company commanders to battalion commanders, also under fire.

This pilot began recently and includes about 30 female combat soldiers recruited as a cohesive platoon. They are in advanced training at the Paratroopers Brigade training base, Camp Eitan, near Kibbutz Shomria.

According to Barabi, their training course is identical to that of male combat soldiers. The IDF decided to keep the women as a separate gender-segregated platoon within the brigade training base and not to integrate them into mixed-gender units with male combat soldiers.

A further pilot program expected to open to female combat soldiers in the 2025 recruitment cycle is in Unit 504 – the unit responsible for recruiting agents in enemy territory and interrogating prisoners, both in the field and in IDF facilities. Unit 504 belongs to the IDF's Intelligence Directorate, which has the highest number of women serving in general intelligence roles.

ENOUGH PILOT PROGRAMS; LET THE WOMEN FLY

MK Merav Michaeli of the Labor party accused the military of using the pilot program system as a tool to delay integrating women into combat roles.

"I don't see other parts of the population being placed under various pilot programs," she said. "Just let them be assessed according to the 'right person for the right role' policy and put an end to all these pilots."

One of the more contentious issues raised in the discussion, in the Knesset's Subcommittee on Human Resources of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, was the IDF's decision to allow religious female soldiers to serve in combat roles within "gendered platoons," similar to the arrangements offered to religious male soldiers who do not want to serve alongside female combatants.

For example, the IDF is expected to soon open up for women a gender-segregated combat platoon in the Combat Intelligence Collection Array — part of the Border Defense Corps — likely within the Eitam Battalion, which monitors the Egypt and Jordan border in southern Israel, and another such platoon within one of the Aerial Defense Array's Iron Dome battalions.

Michaeli sees the IDF's allowing of sex-segregated units for religious soldiers as a dangerous path that could undermine the army's operational goals.

"Dividing units by gender or sex does not stem from operational needs but from political considerations," she said. "You described a phenomenon of ultra-Orthodox soldiers who don't want to serve in artillery units because they'd have to serve alongside female combatants. This is a dangerous approach for the IDF. The great concern is that gender segregation will expand, and ultimately this will harm the IDF – and will harm women."

SIMILAR DROPOUT RATE

Asked about the dropout rate of female combat soldiers from their training tracks, Barabi noted that in the Border Defense Corps the dropout rate among women is 15%, compared to 14% among men. "There is no major difference between the genders," she said, "and the rates of leaving combat roles are similar across all units."

Also participating in the discussion was Ofra Ash, CEO of the Deborah Forum, which promotes women in national security and foreign policy, who pointed out that there is still a lack of women in senior command roles in the IDF.

“Until there are women at the General Staff Forum – women who rose through the combat and operational ranks – we cannot say that progress has been made,” she said.

Currently, there are only two female generals serving in the General Staff Forum, both legal officers.

TAKING PRESSURE OFF THE RESERVES

At a follow-up discussion in the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on May 8, the IDF’s Tayeb emphasized that “every new regular mixed-gender battalion – male and female – presents immense potential to reduce dependence on the reserves.”

Tayeb explained that a single regular battalion – for example, a mixed-gender battalion in the Border Defense Corps or the Search and Rescue Brigade – is equivalent in operational output to about seven reserve battalions.

However, if there is one statistic that indicates the growth in the number of women serving in significant roles in the IDF, it is the percentage of women currently serving in the reserves.

During the Second Lebanon War in 2006, women made up only 3% of reservists. By Operation Protective Edge in 2014, that figure had risen to 8%, and in the October 7 war, the proportion of women in the reserves surged to 20%.

On a general IDF level, he said, 90% of all IDF roles are currently open to women.

Tayeb revealed that of female candidates for military service, 37% identify as religious – either ultra-Orthodox or national-religious. Additionally, 25% of enlisted women are assigned to units in which the mandatory service period is 32 months, the same as for men. These units include the combat forces as well as some intelligence units.

During the discussion, MK Simcha Rothman from the Religious Zionism party asked how the sharp increase in the number of women – particularly religious ones – joining combat roles occurred organically, without any special measures taken by the IDF. This, Rothman noted, contrasted with the IDF’s considerable logistical and financial investment in recruiting ultra-Orthodox men, which has not yielded similar results.

Three female MKs — Michaeli, Sharon Nir, and Efrat Rayten — told Rothman that women’s motivation stemmed from watching their brothers and friends enlist, and from a desire to take an equal part. In fact, in many cases, they said, the women’s families did not support their decision to choose combat service.

The female MKs said that in the case of women’s enlistment, the IDF did not run any special recruitment campaigns – the demand for meaningful service arose from the ground up.

HAREDIM THREATEN TO BOLT COALITION AS IDF LAUNCHES OPERATION AGAINST DRAFT DODGERS

‘As soon as there is one arrest...we will shut down the government,’

United Torah Judaism official says

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL [Sam Sokol](#) and [Emanuel Fabian](#) 13 May 2025



Ultra-Orthodox Jews protest the IDF draft outside the Jerusalem enlistment center,
April 28, 2025. (Sam Sokol/Times of Israel)

The Israel Defense Forces on Tuesday confirmed that it had launched a “routine” Military Police campaign to detain people who ignored enlistment orders following the latest round of call-ups.

News of the arrest raids sparked a political firestorm, with ultra-Orthodox politicians threatening to bring down the government over the move. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s government is already [on rocky ground](#) due to its failure so far to pass legislation reestablishing yeshiva students’ exemptions from military service, which were struck down by the High Court last year.

In a statement, the IDF said, “Last night, there was an [arrest] operation close to the draft period as has been carried out previously, in an equal manner across all segments of society and against anyone who did not show up as required.”

The comment came after reports claimed that the army would launch large-scale arrest raids on Wednesday targeting Haredi draft dodgers.

The army said the campaign on Monday night was aimed at a total of 36 people evading conscription, and not just ultra-Orthodox men. The IDF would first make contact with those not showing up at induction centers and attempt to sort the matter out voluntarily, and would only afterward carry out arrests.

It is unclear how many arrests actually took place.



Ultra-orthodox men clash with police during a protest against the military draft, outside the IDF Recruitment Center at Tel Hashomer, August 5, 2024. (Tomer Neuberg/Flash90)

The detainees would either face disciplinary measures or a criminal trial, depending on how long they had ignored draft orders. In general, Military Police arrest campaigns are aimed at those who ignore recent draft orders, and therefore only face disciplinary — not criminal — measures.

It was the third arrest campaign against draft dodgers since the beginning of the war, with the previous ones taking place in November 2024 and March 2025, according to the army.

The military noted that last week, IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir instructed the Personnel Directorate to come up with a plan to send out more draft orders to members of the ultra-Orthodox community

“The plan is currently being prepared,” the IDF said.

Speaking with the Haredi news site Kikar Hashabbat last week, UTJ lawmaker Yaakov Asher warned that if the Knesset did not pass draft exemption legislation by the end of the summer session, on July 27, his party would no longer be able to remain in the government.

“If this law does not pass in this session... we will have a very big problem sitting in such a government, period,” he said, adding that UTJ “cannot be part of a government” that turns Haredim into “criminals.”



Ultra-Orthodox soldiers are drafted into the military at an induction center, April 28, 2025. (Israel Defense Forces)

Shas and United Torah Judaism are currently boycotting private member bills brought by members of the coalition in an effort to pressure Netanyahu to push the controversial enlistment legislation through.

With the news that the IDF plans on significantly increasing enforcement, many in the Haredi community are “very worried,” Yisroel Cohen, an ultra-Orthodox journalist with close ties to the Haredi parties, told The Times of Israel on Tuesday.

“It could bring this whole story to an explosive end. If they arrest even one or two yeshiva students in the street, it could bring about a big crisis, even potentially prompting the Haredim to dismantle the government,” he said.

“If they go to the yeshivas, it will breach every red line,” Cohen added.

Senior ultra-Orthodox political officials informed Netanyahu on Tuesday that the launch of a large-scale enforcement operation against Haredi draft dodgers could bring about their “immediate resignation from the government,” national broadcaster Kan reported.

Speaking with the Ynet news site, a senior Haredi party official declared that “if dozens and hundreds of yeshiva students are indeed arrested, as we are currently seeing, these will be the government’s final days.”

Similarly, an unnamed United Torah Judaism official told Army Radio that “as soon as there is one arrest tomorrow, we will shut down the government and begin the dissolution process.”

This rhetoric echoed Shas chairman Aryeh Deri’s statement last month that the government would not survive the arrest of yeshiva students.

“As long as... there is no proactive action by the state to arrest yeshiva students, we will continue to be part of the government, but as soon as there is such an arrest, even one... that is a red line for us,” Deri told his ultra-Orthodox party’s HaDerech newspaper. “We will not be able to continue to be a part of such a government.”

Unlike the Haredim, the leaders of the Knesset opposition welcomed the operation, with Opposition Leader Yair Lapid tweeting that “the Military Police are not ‘arresting Haredim,’ they are arresting young Israelis who received a draft order during the war and did not show up at the military induction base to enlist in the defense of the country.”

“The law is the law, recruitment is recruitment, and equality is equality. Don’t stop, recruit everyone,” tweeted The Democrats chairman Yair Golan.

Military officials have acknowledged that in practice, the IDF had not been enforcing the draft orders it was sending out to Haredim.

“We don’t enforce the draft orders for the ultra-Orthodox enough. There is almost no enforcement of them,” an official told reporters earlier this week.

“We don’t want Military Police battalions to storm Bnei Brak, Modi’in Illit, and Beitar Illit,” the official said, referring to three major ultra-Orthodox cities. “We want to increase enforcement, but it’s difficult for us.”

Normally, after ignoring two draft orders, a potential conscript receives an immediate call-up order and must show up at an induction center within 48 hours or be declared a draft evader.

The consequences of being declared a draft evader include receiving a “no exit order” — being barred from leaving the country. In addition, during any encounter with the police, the draft dodger can be arrested. The exact timeline between the draft orders varies.



Ultra-Orthodox Jews protest the IDF draft outside the Jerusalem enlistment center, April 28, 2025. (Sam Sokol/Times of Israel)

Currently, approximately 80,000 Haredi men between the ages of 18 and 24 are eligible for military service and have not enlisted.

The IDF in the coming weeks will complete sending out draft orders to 24,000 Haredi men, wrapping up an effort that began last summer but has seen only a handful enlist. As of late April, only 232 of those who have received orders have enlisted — 57 of them in combat roles.

In total, just over 1,800 Haredim have enlisted in the IDF since last summer, far fewer than the military’s goal of 4,800.

As of early February, arrest warrants had been issued for 1,212 Haredim who ignored multiple enlistment orders, a number that has likely increased in the interim.

During a discussion in the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee last week, Brig. Gen. Shay Tayeb, head of the IDF Personnel Directorate’s Planning and Personnel Management Division, told lawmakers the IDF has three main enforcement mechanisms: stopping people at Ben Gurion Airport, random police checks, and dedicated operations against evaders.

Such operations have been limited over the last year and a half as the bulk of the Military Police’s resources have been tied up in imprisoning captured terrorists, he said.

According to Tayeb, since the beginning of the year, 340 Israelis who received military draft orders and dodged service were detained while trying to leave the country — 52 of whom had recently received orders as part of an effort to recruit ultra-Orthodox men. Of those who were detained, 23 have since been drafted to the IDF, he said.

Speaking with the committee last month, Lt. Col. Avigdor Dickstein, head of the Haredi branch of the IDF's Personnel Directorate, seemed to indicate that the army sees large-scale arrest operations as ineffective.

"Currently, the most significant and effective sanction is Ben Gurion Airport; there is currently no other sanction," Dickstein asserted. "There is the ability to make arrests, but it is extremely ineffective. If I grab him and put him in a police car, will he end up enlisting?"

Speaking with The Times of Israel last week, former IDF chief military defense counsel Col. (res.) Ran Cohen Rochverger [alleged](#) that from November 2023 until this April, the military had significantly increased penalties for desertion against regular service and reserve troops, without a corresponding change in legal consequences for draft evaders.

The Ynet news site recently reported that the IDF had been in contact with the Justice Ministry to discuss the use of available sanctions, including ones that could have a significant economic impact on evaders.

Under existing laws, it is possible to block draft dodgers from obtaining drivers licenses, receiving passports or renewing their state identification cards, Deputy Knesset Speaker Evgeny Sova told The Times of Israel on Tuesday.

"You can do that today, but the state doesn't do it," he said. "But you can't carry on with your life, use state services in a normal and regular way without actually settling this matter."



Ultra-Orthodox soldiers draft to the IDF's new Haredi brigade, known as the Hasmonean Brigade, January 5, 2025. (Israel Defense Forces)

The government has also done little, if anything, to combat those actively encouraging yeshiva students to dodge the draft.

Since the High Court of Justice's ruling in June 2024 ending the exemption of Haredim from military service, multiple initiatives affiliated with various Haredi factions have sprung up to guide young men through their new post-exemption reality, and encourage them to disregard IDF enlistment orders.

The Israel Police and the attorney general appear to have [failed to crack down](#) on such groups, despite demands for investigation by advocacy groups and lawmakers. Under the law, someone inciting others to evade service during wartime is liable for a prison term of 15 years.

VENTURING INTO HAREDI ENCLAVES, AN ISRAELI ATHEIST TRIES A NEW FORM OF JEWISH OUTREACH

**Naor Narkis has launched a movement to help members
of the insular ultra-Orthodox community explore other options**

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Alexandra Vardi](#) 24 May 2025



Hozrim Betvuna founder Naor Narkis, right, speaks with a passerby in the largely ultra-Orthodox central Israeli city of Bnei Brak, May 2025. (Alexandra Vardi)

At the edge of the largely ultra-Orthodox central Israeli city of Bnei Brak, 36-year-old atheist Naor Narkis has set up an information booth. It's Friday, and the street buzzes with the usual pre-Shabbat bustle as people rush to complete their last-minute errands a few hours before sunset, when public transportation will halt and shops will close for the day of rest.

Narkis founded a movement in 2024 called Hozrim Betvuna ("Returning to Reason") whose self-stated goal is to provide information to "help those who wish to leave the ultra-Orthodox world."

Despite their hurry, many slow down to glance curiously toward the booth, where a handful of secular activists hand out brochures to teenage boys in black hats.

A slim blue leaflet lists "Ten Reasons to Leave the Ultra-Orthodox Community," which include escaping the rigidity of an oppressive environment, pursuing professional fulfillment, earning a living, and enjoying sexual freedom.

"I want to encourage you to make your own choices, to live your own life, instead of following the rabbis' orders," Narkis tells one intrigued Haredi passerby. Their exchange ends with a warm handshake.

Others react with hostility. "Coming into a religious city to hand out flyers to secularize the ultra-Orthodox — just like it says on your sign — is pure provocation," a woman fumes, pointing at the movement's blue-and-white banner.



A police officer asks Hozrim Betvuna founder Naor Narkis, left, to vacate his stall and cease reaching out to passersby in the largely ultra-Orthodox central Israeli city of Bnei Brak, May 2025. (Alexandra Vardi)

The conversations between activists and passersby continue peaceably until the police arrive and order the group to pack up, citing a “public disturbance.”

The scene is a star“<https://www.timesofisrael.com/venturing-into-haredi-enclaves-an-israeli-atheist-tries-a-new-form-of-jewish-outreach>. We’ve had several calls,” an officer explains.

A reminder that, beyond the war sparked by Hamas’s October 7, 2023, terror onslaught, additional divides continue to shape Israeli society, including the tension between religious and secular communities.

POPPING THE EDUCATION BUBBLE

Haredim (a Hebrew term for ultra-Orthodox that literally means “those who tremble before God”) make up roughly 14 percent of Israel’s 10 million citizens. Adherents to the Haredi brand of Orthodoxy are governed by strict religious laws and often reside in insular, self-contained communities to distance themselves from the influences of the outside world.



Ultra-Orthodox students seen at the Ponevezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak, February 27, 2024.

(Chaim Goldberg/ Flash90)

With a [record fertility rate](#) of 6.4 children per woman, Haredim could account for 32% of Israel's population by 2065, [according to projections](#) by the Central Bureau of Statistics — a demographic trend that Narkis sees as a threat to the country's stability.

“Economically, it's unsustainable,” he says bluntly. Many Haredi men do not work, instead dedicating their lives to Torah study in yeshivas (religious schools), supported by costly government subsidies. This keeps much of the community in poverty, Narkis argues — a situation perpetuated by ultra-Orthodox parties such as Shas and United Torah Judaism, which have become key players in coalition governments. In exchange for their political support, they secure crucial influence over issues including public transport and education.



Haredi men protest against the sale of smartphones at a shop in Jerusalem, on December 22, 2022.
(Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)

The latter has become a hot-button issue as Haredi elementary and high schools often choose to focus on religious studies while neglecting to seriously teach secular topics, with little meaningful oversight or enforcement of educational standards to which other communities are held.

“The state is funding schools that don't teach math, English, or science, leaving students ill-equipped for the workforce,” Narkis adds.

The gap between the ultra-Orthodox and the rest of Israeli society is also widening over the contentious issue of mandatory military service. Since Israel's founding, the Haredi community has been exempted from the military draft. Despite the Supreme Court [overturning that exemption last June](#), very few Haredim have joined the ranks of the IDF, while hundreds of secular and religious Zionist soldiers have been killed since a multi-front conflict erupted with the Hamas invasion of October 7, 2023.

For Narkis, the stakes couldn't be higher: “We live in a hostile environment, and we need to stay strong — economically and militarily. We won't survive otherwise.”



A stall set up by activists for Hozrim Betvuna in the largely ultra-Orthodox central Israeli city of Bnei Brak, May 2025. (Alexandra Vardi)

But he warns that Israel's demographic and political trajectory also threatens the foundations of its liberal democracy. The Haredi worldview, rooted in halacha, or Jewish law, sometimes clashes with Israel's pluralistic, egalitarian values, Narkis says, foreshadowing a future where individual rights may be eroded.

For the activist, reversing the tide is urgent, and education is the key.

Narkis grew up in a secular family in a Tel Aviv suburb that still observed a few Jewish traditions such as Friday night kiddush. At 18, he watched his sister marry an ultra-Orthodox man and move to Bnei Brak. She went on to have eight children and cut off nearly all contact with the family. Only their mother is still allowed to visit — provided she wears a long dress and black gloves.

This family rupture pushed Narkis to investigate his nieces' and nephews' lives by gathering testimonies from former Haredim. What he uncovered shocked him: children raised in a rigid system and taught to fear breaking religious rules.



A Haredi soldier at the Mahane Yehuda Market in Jerusalem, May 14, 2025. (Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)

"The ultra-Orthodox school system deliberately keeps students ignorant by withholding core subjects," Narkis charges. "By the time they're adults, many don't know how to write a resume, open a bank account, or even spell their name in English."

A study [published earlier this month](#) by Tel Aviv University researcher Nechumi Yaffe, herself from the ultra-Orthodox community, found that about 50% of Haredim want to integrate into Israeli society by joining the workforce and/or going to university, and many would even be willing to serve in the army. But lack of basic knowledge and social pressure stand in their way.

“We want to extend a hand to help them integrate,” Narkis says, calling the figure encouraging.

REVOLUTION BY SOCIAL MEDIA

Thanks to a crowdfunding campaign, Hozrim Betvuna has distributed around 2,500 mobile phones to young Haredim — simple but powerful tools in communities with restricted internet access.



An activist with Hozrim Betvuna, right, hands out fliers in the largely ultra-Orthodox central Israeli city of Bnei Brak, May 2025. (Alexandra Vardi)

On his YouTube channel, Narkis shares content inspired by the Haskalah, or Jewish Enlightenment, movement of the 18th and 19th centuries: educational videos on Darwin’s theory of evolution as well as practical guides on how to ace a job interview or avoid an arranged marriage.

A savvy marketer, Narkis leverages [the main social platforms](#) popular among young people — TikTok, Instagram, X, and Facebook — and boosts his reach through TV appearances.

His efforts are paying off, he says, backed by analytics. Some videos have racked up nearly 1 million views.

“I get dozens of messages every day from young Haredim across the country asking for advice,” he adds.

Eager to expand the conversation about religion’s role in society, Narkis is now considering a run for office in the 2026 national elections under the banner of the Democrats Party founded last year by [Yair Golan](#) and Tomer Reznik in a merger between the left-wing Labor and Meretz parties.

To critics who accuse him of wanting to destroy ultra-Orthodox society — or even of antisemitism — Narkis responds that he respects everyone's beliefs but wants to offer "an alternative" to those seeking a different path.

"We're not trying to change their faith; we want to encourage them to make their own choices," he says.

For more on Haredim in Israel, please see:



ISRAEL USING AI TO PINPOINT HAMAS LEADERS, FIND HOSTAGES IN GAZA TUNNELS — REPORT

AI programs, including chatbot and audio-based location tool, reportedly developed by Unit 8200 soldiers and reservists from big tech firms, said to have raised ethical concerns

(see also VIDEOS [‘Why Israel still Can’t Defeat Hamas by AiTelly](#))

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL ToI Staff 26 April 2025

Israel has made unprecedented use of artificial intelligence to wage war in Gaza, with many programs developed through cooperation between enlisted intelligence soldiers and reservists who work at large tech firms, [The New York Times](#) reported Friday, citing European, American and Israeli defense officials.

While Israel’s use of AI in warfare has previously been revealed, the latest report details several different ways the IDF has incorporated AI, including a chatbot trained in multiple Arabic dialects that has served the IDF to gauge public sentiment, an AI-infused audio program that pinpoints targets based on sounds “such as sonic bombs and airstrikes,” and a facial recognition program that matches hidden or injured faces to real identities.

Israeli officers cited by the Times said the AI helped find hostages and sped up certain tasks, but acknowledged the applications could sometimes be faulty. According to the Times, “some officials have struggled with the ethical implications of the AI tools” because they can lead to increased surveillance, civilian deaths and [wrongful arrests](#).

Responding to the Times, the IDF said specific technologies were confidential and could not be commented on. The newspaper quoted the military as saying Israel “is committed to the lawful and responsible use of data technology tools.”

Four Israeli officials cited by the Times said the IDF quickly cleared AI tools for deployment after the Gaza war was sparked on October 7, 2023, when thousands of Hamas-led terrorists stormed southern Israel to kill some 1,200 people and take 251 hostages.

Some uses of AI in Gaza have been previously reported, including a [virtual reality system](#) that helps soldiers scan urban war zones. Israeli-Palestinian activist outlet +972, which first [reported](#) on the Arabic-language chatbot, has also reported on a program called Lavender, said to have helped the IDF amass a list of 37,000 human targets based on their ties to Hamas. The military has [denied](#) using AI to generate such a kill list.

Many of the AI tools were developed in an innovation hub set up by the Military Intelligence Directorate’s Unit 8200, according to the Times. Known as “The Studio,” the hub helped connect enlisted soldiers with reservists who work at companies such as Meta, Google and Microsoft, the Times said, citing the four Israeli officials.

Avi Hasson, who heads the nonprofit Startup Nation Central that connects investors with companies in Israel, told the Times that the reservists “brought know-how and access to key technologies that weren’t Meta and Microsoft declined to comment, while Google responded that it had reservist employees in numerous countries and that their work was unrelated to the company, the Times said.

Citing three Israeli and American officials briefed on the matter, the newspaper said the IDF in October 2023 infused AI into decade-old technology in a bid to pinpoint Ibrahim Biari, the commander of Hamas’s Central Jabalia Battalion.

The new tool reportedly enabled the IDF to track Biari’s phone calls to a Hamas tunnel complex under northern Gaza’s densely populated Jabalia refugee camp. A strike on the area was greenlit despite warnings within the military that several apartment buildings would need to be targeted to ensure Biari was killed. The strike, said to have killed dozens of people, is being probed by the military, which told the Times it was “unable to provide any further information until the investigation is complete.”

The audio tool used to locate Biari has been sharpened over time to more accurately locate people, and has served the IDF in finding hostages in Gaza, the Times said, citing Israeli officers.

Following the Hamas onslaught, Israel also erected temporary checkpoints between the Strip’s north and south, with security cameras capable of sending high-resolution images to an AI facial recognition program, the Times said.



Displaced Palestinians walk through a muddy road amid the destruction in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip on February 6, 2025. (Bashar Taleb / AFP)

Two Israeli intelligence officers cited by the newspaper said the system sometimes had trouble identifying obscured faces, leading to the arrest and interrogation of Palestinians flagged by mistake.

Three Israeli officers cited by the Times said “The Studio” at Unit 8200 also developed an AI large language model capable of handling texts in various dialects of spoken Arabic.

According to the Times, such tools are difficult to develop because most relevant training data appears in standard written Arabic. The IDF, on the other hand, “has decades of intercepted text messages, transcribed phone calls and posts scraped from social media in spoken Arabic dialects,” the Times said, citing the three officers.

The program was said to have been developed in the early months of the war and incorporated into multimedia databases, enabling military analysts to run complicated searches of images and videos, the Times said.

The chatbot reportedly had difficulty identifying modern slang and words transliterated from English, requiring intelligence officers with knowledge of the dialects to check its output. The program was also said to have provided some wrong answers, such as “returning photos of pipes instead of guns.”

Nonetheless, according to two Israeli intelligence officers cited by the Times, the chatbot has significantly sped up the military’s research and analysis.

The Times cited three officers as saying the technology allowed the military to gauge whether there was public pressure in the Arab world for a counterstrike on Israel after it assassinated Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah in September.

24-COUNTRY SURVEY: SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL STRONGEST IN KENYA AND NIGERIA, LOWEST IN TURKEY

**In US, 53% of respondents are opposed to Israel and 45% in favor,
Pew poll finds; Netanyahu's favorability is low across the board**

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Luke Tress](#) 5 June 2025, 10:50



Protesters hold an Israeli flag stained with red paint at an anti-Israel demonstration in Madrid, Spain,
on May 11, 2024. (Pierre-Philippe Marcou/AFP)

International views of Israel and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are largely negative, especially on the political left and with the young, according to a survey released on Tuesday.

[The Pew Research Center surveyed adults in 24 countries](#) about their views of Israel and Netanyahu, and reported on how those views have changed over time.

In 20 of the countries, at least half of the respondents had a negative view of Israel, led by Turkey, with 93%, followed by Indonesia, 80%, Japan, 79%, the Netherlands, 78%, and Spain and Sweden, both at 75%.

The outliers were Kenya and Nigeria. In Kenya, 50% had a favorable view of Israel and 42% unfavorable, and in Nigeria, 59% were favorable and 32% unfavorable. Those countries, like Israel, have grappled with Islamic terrorism in recent years. The only other African country surveyed was South Africa, where 54% had a negative view.

In India, views were mixed, with 34% of respondents reporting a favorable view of Israel and 29% unfavorable.

In the US, 53% of respondents were opposed to Israel and 45% in favor.

The median for all countries surveyed was 62% unfavorable and 29% favorable. Some respondents did not know or refused to answer.

Younger people were more against Israel, especially in high-income countries such as the US, Australia, Canada, France and South Korea.

Some countries have seen a significant swing against Israel in recent years. In the US, Israel's unfavourability jumped 11 percentage points since the spring of 2022. In the UK, it went up 17 points since 2013. France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Indonesia and Turkey also saw an increase in hostility against Israel.

Turkey was the only Middle Eastern country surveyed, besides Israel. In Israel, 81% of respondents had a favorable view of the country.

Respondents on the political left were more hostile to Israel, particularly in Europe and Australia. In Spain, 91% of those on the left had a negative view of Israel, in Australia and the Netherlands it was 90%, and in Greece, 89%.

In the US, 74% of those on the left had an unfavorable view of Israel, compared to 30% on the right.

The results are in line [with other surveys](#) that have found that young and left-leaning Americans are increasingly hostile to Israel.

Netanyahu's approval ratings were low across the board, except for in Kenya and Nigeria. The countries most against the prime minister were Turkey, Spain, Italy, Sweden, the Netherlands and France.

The survey also asked Israelis about how they think Israel is viewed around the world. The majority — 58% — said Israel is not respected globally. Israelis on the right were more likely to say Israel was respected abroad. Israeli Arabs and Jews had roughly the same opinion.

The margin of error ranged from 2.5% to 4.7%, depending on the country. The survey was carried out between January and April, and polled at least 1,000 residents in each foreign country.

HOW LIKELY ARE THE HAREDIM TO ACTUALLY TOPPLE THE GOVERNMENT — AND WHAT COMES NEXT?

With Shas and UTJ using the threat of elections to pressure Netanyahu for concessions on enlistment issue, coalition insider puts chances of Knesset dissolving during summer session at 20%

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL [Sam Sokol](#) 9 June 2025



Shas party chairman and Interior Affairs Minister, Aryeh Deri, casts his ballot at a voting station in Jerusalem, during the Knesset Elections, on March 02, 2020 (Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)

Last Wednesday, the spiritual leaders of Degel Hatorah, one of the two factions that make up the ultra-Orthodox United Torah Judaism party, [instructed their MKs](#) to introduce a bill to dissolve the Knesset due to the coalition's failure to pass a law exempting yeshiva students from conscription.

The next day, the spiritual leadership of UTJ's Hasidic Agudat Yisrael followed suit, with its ruling Council of Torah Sages [backing new elections](#).

Buoyed by the cracks in the coalition, opposition parties Yesh Atid, Yisrael Beytenu, National Unity and The Democrats announced that they would submit a bill for the Knesset's dissolution this Wednesday.

However, with only seven Knesset seats, UTJ on its own does not have the ability to bring down the government, as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition currently holds 68 out of the 120 parliamentary seats.

Thus, any effort to do so on UTJ's part would require the cooperation of the Sephardic Shas party, which on Monday morning announced that it, too, [will vote in favor](#) of dissolving the Knesset.

But how likely is it that the Haredim will end up actually toppling the government? And, if they do, how does the process of dissolving the Knesset work?

NEGOTIATIONS ON THE ENLISTMENT BILL

The heart of the current crisis lies with the ultra-Orthodox leadership's frustration with Likud MK Yuli Edelstein. As head of the Knesset's powerful Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, Edelstein has long blocked the passage of a government-backed bill enshrining the broad exclusion from IDF service for Haredim, as demanded by the Shas and UTJ, and has instead been pledging that any law coming out of his committee would levy strong financial sanctions on draft dodgers.

According to reports, a revised draft of the bill by Edelstein's committee includes a raft of harsh penalties, including the loss of property tax and public transportation discounts, the removal of tax benefits for working women married to dodgers, exclusion from the housing lottery, and the cancellation of daycare and academic subsidies.

The bill would also prevent draft dodgers up to the age of 29 from receiving driver's licenses or traveling abroad and would open them up to the threat of arrest.

Edelstein's unwillingness to back down from this position in last-ditch talks with the Haredim brokered by Netanyahu was what led Degel HaTorah's leaders to support dissolving the Knesset. While he has shown somewhat more flexibility in subsequent talks over recent days, it was not enough to prevent Shas from following UTJ's lead.

According to Channel 12, Edelstein expressed willingness to back off the cancellation of property tax discounts and allow the Haredim to receive tax breaks on the purchase of their first apartments.

Nevertheless, significant gaps remain, with the veteran lawmaker continuing to insist that the sanctions be applied immediately, while the Haredim are pushing for any penalties to be delayed by up to a year, in an apparent effort to weaken the pressure on evaders.

AN INTEREST IN PRESERVING THE KNESSET

However, despite its harsh rhetoric against Edelstein (the party's spiritual leader said "[his soul is an abomination](#)"), many pundits have pointed out that Shas has an interest in keeping the Knesset together, at least for now.

The party is in the middle of a concerted push to appoint affiliated rabbis to municipal posts throughout the country, strengthening its political machine for the long haul.

"They have already appointed a handful of municipal rabbis with approximately 50 more [positions] still open," explained Rabbi Seth Farber, the director of the ITIM nonprofit, which helps Israelis navigate the country's religious bureaucracy.



Maj. Gen. David Zini, the head of the IDF's Training Command (left), greets an ultra-Orthodox soldier drafting to the IDF's new Haredi brigade, known as the Hasmonean Brigade, January 5, 2025.
(Israel Defense Forces)

According to Farber, while there is no law against continuing to appoint city rabbis following the dissolution of the Knesset, practically speaking, "if there's snap elections, then clearly the moment there's a date of the election, all the things will have to stop."

Moreover, the opposition has promised to advance ultra-Orthodox conscription the moment it comes into power, limiting the Haredi parties' options and leading many to speculate that the current crisis represents an effort to pressure Netanyahu into concessions — rather than a genuine campaign to take down the government.

"The Haredim know they have no other coalition, and after they see the movement they are looking for, they will come around," a coalition source, speaking on condition of anonymity, told The Times of Israel.

Putting the chances of the government actually falling at around 20 percent, the source said that even if the preliminary reading of the bill to dissolve the Knesset passes on Wednesday, the coalition will attempt to drag out the legislative process for as long as possible.

"July 23 is the last day of the plenum session before recess. Either the government uses that day to come to an agreed-upon election day, or we go into the recess. I don't expect anything to fall before that," the insider argued, while acknowledging, "Of course, it can get very dysfunctional until then."



Ultra-Orthodox demonstrators clash with police during a protest against the drafting of Haredi youth near Bnei Brak, June 5, 2025.(Erik Marmor/Flash90)

“Netanyahu can intervene and push Yuli Edelstein to agree to lift a large part of the sanctions, and then at least maybe Shas will support” a compromise over the wording of the bill and back down from its threats, agreed Yisroel Cohen, an ultra-Orthodox journalist with close ties to the Haredi parties. “Maybe Degel HaTorah, too.”

“Let’s put it this way,” Cohen added: “If you’re asking about three readings [of the dissolution bill], I don’t think it will pass. There will be a solution even earlier.”

REVERSING COURSE?

According to the ultra-Orthodox Behadrei Haredim news site, Jerusalem Affairs Minister Meir Porush has been working behind the scenes in recent days to reverse his Agudat Yisrael faction’s decision to support the dissolution of the Knesset.

Porush was said to be working on behalf of several senior rabbis opposed to the move, including Yissachar Dov Rokeach, the leader of the Belz Hasidic sect, who believes that the government should not be brought down in the middle of a war.

“There is a majority among the Haredi public and leadership that understands that dissolving the Knesset at this time is irresponsible,” the site quoted sources involved in the issue as saying.



Jerusalem Affairs Minister Meir Porush in the Knesset plenum, April 15, 2024. (Chaim Goldberg/Flash90)

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

A bill to dissolve the Knesset is similar to any other legislation and must pass three readings (after a preliminary vote) in the Knesset plenum before it becomes law, although, unlike other laws, it does require a minimum majority of 61 yes votes on its final reading.



Dr. Assaf Shapira, head of the Israel Democracy Institute's Political Reform Program. (Oded Antman)

Like any other bill, if it fails in the plenum, lawmakers will not be able to submit it again for a considerable period.

"So this is their main dilemma, because if they bring it to a vote, and if they fail, theoretically they won't be able to raise it again for six months. And I think that they won't bring it to the discussion and vote unless they will be sure that they have the majority or that they win at least the preliminary reading," Assaf Shapira, the director of the Israel Democracy Institute's Political Reform Program, told The Times of Israel.

And while such legislation can pass through all its reading "in theoretically one or two days," he said, it is also possible to play "political games" by trying to hold it up in committee. Still, in the end, he noted, "if the ultra-Orthodox parties decide to support this law, [it] will probably pass."

The law also stipulates that elections be held within five months of the Knesset's dissolution, with the bill to dissolve the Knesset containing the specific date on which balloting is to take place.

Shapira predicted that if the law is passed soon, elections would be scheduled after the High Holidays "in late October or early November."

Should that happen, it would likely lead to a halt on the advancement of any enlistment legislation, "so the Haredim would get a time out," he said.

But they might not get a more convenient government.

PART 1 ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR 2023 -

HAMAS TERRORIST ATTACK OCTOBER 7 1943.

THE DEADLIEST DAY IN ISRAELS HISTORY

On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched the largest-ever terrorist attack on Israeli soil. The Palestinian organisation, considered a terrorist group by the EU and the US, stormed through the security fence separating Gaza and Israel in the early morning, killing 1,189 people, including 815 civilians, wounding 7,500 and taking 251 hostage. One year on, FRANCE 24 looks back at an event that shook the region and the world.

FRANCE 24 Jean-Luc MOUNIER 7 October 2024

6:29AM: ROCKETS RAIN DOWN ON SOUTHERN ISRAEL

Just after dawn on Saturday, October 7, 2023, [Hamas](#) unleashed a barrage of rockets and mortar shells on Israeli towns and military bases. It was the start of what the armed wing of Hamas called “operation Al-Aqsa deluge”, a reference to the [Al-Aqsa mosque](#) compound in [Jerusalem](#), [Islam](#)'s third holiest site. This was the opening salvo in the deadliest terrorist attack against [Israel](#) since its birth in 1948.

The bloody incursion caught Israel off guard, timed to coincide with the Jewish Sabbath and the last day of the religious holiday of Sukkot.

This intelligence failure had a precedent: 50 years and one day earlier, on October 6, 1973, [Egypt](#) and [Syria](#) had launched a surprise offensive, igniting the Yom Kippur War.

Israel's famed “Iron Dome” air defence system, deployed in 2011, was rapidly overwhelmed by the thousands of rockets being fired from Gaza.

Hamas claimed it fired 5,000 rockets in a 20-minute initial barrage, sending projectiles up to 80 kilometres into Israeli territory. Israel's military said 2,500 rockets were fired.



Burnt out vehicles in Ashkelon are pictured following a rocket attack from the Gaza Strip into Israel on October 7, 2023. © Ahmad Gharabli, AFP

Air alert sirens sounded across Israeli towns and cities as far away as Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Beersheba. Civilians hurried to shelters. Many rockets were intercepted, others fell to the ground.

At least five deaths were reported, and there was damage to property in several towns, particularly on the outskirts of the [Gaza Strip](#).

HAMAS FIGHTERS CROSS THE BORDER

The rockets served to cover the coordinated incursion by Hamas commandos.

Hundreds of fighters from Hamas's armed wing, the al-Qassam Brigades, headed for dozens of points along the 59-kilometre barrier separating the Gaza Strip and Israel.

“The Hamas fighters were battle-hardened and knew the topography of the area,” said FRANCE 24's specialist in jihadist movements, Wassim Nasr, in the aftermath of the events.

Drones armed with explosives were used to neutralise the Israeli watchtowers topped with machine guns near the Gaza border.

Israeli military equipment positioned close to the border, including armoured vehicles, was also targeted.

So were telecommunications infrastructure, including a pylon destroyed near the Be’eri kibbutz.

The aim was to quickly disable Israeli military communications and cameras near Gaza.



Explosives were used to create dozens of breaches in the security fences. Where they couldn't break through to Israel, Hamas fighters fired rockets from positions a few hundred metres from the border.

The surprise attack was well-coordinated and rapidly executed.

Commandos on motorbikes and pick-up trucks quickly infiltrated Israeli territory, before bulldozers widened the gaps in the fence to allow larger vehicles to pass through.

Hamas also used motorboats to reach Israel by sea and motorized paragliders to infiltrate by air.

Clashes erupted at several points along the Gaza security barrier, notably at the Erez border crossing in the north of the Gaza Strip.

Israeli soldiers were overwhelmed and some were captured as hundreds of vehicles from Gaza crossed the border to continue the assault.

Some 1,200 Hamas fighters – 2,900, according to Israel – were involved in the operation that day. The commandos had precise, designated objectives – a “battle plan”, as Israeli intelligence later called it.

The targets were both military and civilian. Most of the targets were hit in under 30 minutes.

MILITARY BASES STORMED

The simultaneous attacks caught the Israeli security apparatus off guard. For several hours, civilians and soldiers were left to fend for themselves.

Between 6.30am and 8.30am, Hamas targeted several Israeli military bases.

The attacks spread from north to south, along the border between the Gaza Strip and Israel. Hamas hit Erez, Zikim, Nahal Oz, Sufa, Re'im and two bases near Be'eri and Kerem Shalom. At 10am, the Israeli army acknowledged that armed Palestinians had entered at least three military sites.

Fierce fighting ensued. The bases are attacked with grenades, rocket launchers and automatic weapons, as numerous Hamas [propaganda](#) images later showed. In some instances, Israeli soldiers were roused from their sleep by the fighting.

At least fifty soldiers were killed in Nahal Oz, including many unarmed women. The Re'im military base, headquarters of the Gaza Division, was also captured. Israeli forces did not regain control of it until the end of the day.

THE SUPERNOVA MUSIC FESTIVAL, KIBBUTZIM ATTACKS

At around 7am, the first images showed Hamas vehicles and fighters in the streets of Sderot, a town of 30,000 inhabitants, just one kilometre from Gaza.

Two vans of Hamas fighters indiscriminately killed people in the streets. At least 20 civilians were shot dead along the road to the police station – the commandos' main target. The police station was stormed and around ten policemen were killed. After almost a day of fighting, the Israeli army finally destroyed the building with the attackers still inside.



A children's swing hangs outside a house in the Be'eri kibbutz, Israel, which was overrun by Hamas militants during the attack of October 7, 2023. © Ariel Schalit, AP

At the same time, several kibbutzim bordering the Gaza Strip were attacked: Yahini, Be'eri, Nirim, Nir Oz, Nir Yitzhak, Netiv HaAsara and Kfar Aza.

Originally farming collectives, thousands of people, mostly affiliated with the Israeli left, lived in these residential communities.

In the Be'eri kibbutz, the [massacre](#) lasted almost seven hours. Its thousand or so inhabitants suffered the deadliest attack on a single community on October 7.

Residents of Be'eri were methodically slaughtered, the attackers going from house-to-house for their victims. In all, 101 civilians were killed, along with 31 security personnel, and 32 people were taken hostage.

Read more

[En images : scènes de guerre et de chaos après l'attaque d'envergure du Hamas contre Israël](#)

Another massacre occurred near Kfar Aza. Some 64 inhabitants or guests of the kibbutz were killed and 18 people taken hostage.

Those here and in other kibbutzim who had managed to take refuge in safe rooms would wait hours before the Israeli security forces arrived. Several months later, the Israeli security forces acknowledged that they had been disorganised and slow to send reinforcements.

The largest massacre of civilians took place at the Supernova music festival, near the Re'im kibbutz, where 3,000 people had gathered.

As the Hamas attackers approached, festival-goers were told by the organisers to gather in the car park and drive home. The only road leading out of the area was quickly congested.

Read more

[In Israel, Tribe of Nova festival survivors seek solace in trance music culture](#)

It was at this point that several armed Hamas commandos arrived by air and road. People were told to flee the scene on foot, some tried to escape across the fields. The attackers targeted them indiscriminately.

Some 364 people were massacred.

They account for more than half of the civilian casualties on October 7 and more than a quarter of the total number of fatalities that day. In addition to those killed, 44 people attending the festival were taken hostage.

Overall, 251 people were taken hostage during the October 7 attacks, including 74 from the Nir Oz kibbutz.

FROM 7:30AM: ATTACKS POSTED ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Images and videos of the coordinated Hamas incursion were rapidly made public. Videos of Palestinian commandos in the streets of Sderot, probably filmed by Israeli civilians, were posted on [social media](#). The first posts from Palestinian civilians surfaced on [Telegram](#) beginning at around 8am, showing multiple breaches in the security fence that separated the Gaza Strip and Israel.

Between 2,000 and 3,000 Palestinians, including Hamas commandos, members of other Palestinian factions and civilians, crossed the border.



Palestinians break through the Israel-Gaza border fence on October 7, 2023, as gunmen infiltrated areas of southern Israel. © Mohammed Fayq Abu Mostafa, Reuters

Some Gazans advanced beyond the border area into Israeli territory. One video shows Palestinian civilians at the Magen kibbutz, a few kilometres from the border with Gaza. Some were filmed looting after the deadly Hamas attack.

Several photojournalists were on the ground, reporting.

Reuters photographer Mohammed Fayq Abu Mostafa documented an incursion of Palestinian civilians at the border, as did Yousef Masoud of the Associated Press. AP also used photos by Hassan Eslaih, Ali Mahmud and Hatem Ali that day.

Several of the photojournalists were later wrongly accused in the Israeli media of having known about the Hamas attacks beforehand and being de facto accomplices.



Palestinians wave their national flag and celebrate on a destroyed Israeli tank east of Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip on Saturday, Oct. 7, 2023. © Yousef Masoud, AP

AROUND 9AM: ISRAELI POLITICIANS 'AT WAR', STRIKES ON GAZA

After the first few hours had passed, Israeli politicians, still in shock, began to speak out about the attacks, which were still in progress. Shortly after 9am, Defence Minister Yoav Galant declared: " Hamas made a grave mistake this morning: it started a war against the State of Israel."

To display this content from X (Twitter), you must enable advertisement tracking and audience measurement.

Israel's riposte was swift. Shortly before 10am, the first retaliatory air strikes began on the Gaza Strip. Israeli warplanes flattened the 11-storey Palestine Tower. This was the beginning of a long campaign to destroy the infrastructure of the Gaza Strip.

At 11:34am, Israel's Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu addressed the nation by video: "Citizens of Israel, we are at war, not in an operation or in rounds, but at war. This morning, Hamas launched a murderous surprise attack against the State of Israel and its citizens. We have been in this since the early morning hours." The prime minister said that Hamas would pay "an unprecedented price". He added, "We are at war and we will win."

Netanyahu also announced that he was "launching an extensive mobilisation of reserves".

On the afternoon of October 7, the Israeli army called up 360,000 reservists to reinforce its army of 170,000 soldiers.

To display this content from X (Twitter), you must enable advertisement tracking and audience

Israeli authorities implemented an evacuation plan for civilians near the Gaza Strip. In all, 125,000 Israelis were forced to move. Some have still not returned to their homes.

LATE MORNING: HAMAS PROPAGANDA, GRUESOME VIDEOS

In the hours following the attacks, Hamas broadcast several propaganda videos glorifying its fighters. In particular, the Palestinian group broadcast footage from before October 7 revealing preparations for the attacks and selected extracts from the day's offensive. One video, for example, showed an armed commando on a motorbike preparing for action in the courtyard of a house before he headed towards the Gaza-Israel border fence.



A screen grab from footage recovered from a Hamas fighter's body camera show the commandos' infiltration into southern Israel from Gaza on Oct 7, 2023. © EyePress via Reuters Connect

But Hamas's communications management quickly crumbled after the release of other videos showing incidents of particular savagery. These disturbing videos were filmed by Palestinian civilians, found on cameras taken from the bodies of killed Hamas fighters, or from surveillance cameras by kibbutzim and military bases. Summary executions of civilians, hostage-taking, grenades thrown into houses, corpses brought back to the Gaza Strip ... Many shocking scenes were documented that day, as our Focus documentary reporting shows.

Read more [Focus: The October 7, 2023 attack that shook Israel](#)

The day was also marked by sexual assaults. A few months after the deadly Hamas attack, the [UN](#) confirmed that it had "found clear and convincing information that sexual violence, including [rape](#), sexualised [torture](#), cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment" had been committed against Israeli [hostages](#).

IN THE AFTERNOON: THE ISRAELI ARMY BEGINS TO REGAIN CONTROL

From midday onwards, the Israeli security forces were deployed to recapture 22 localities in the south of Israel that were attacked by Hamas commandos. In particular, the army aimed to regain control of the Re'im military base and the Sderot police station.

In the late afternoon and evening, Hamas fired new rocket salvos at several cities, including Tel Aviv, Ashkelon and Sderot. Meanwhile, fighting continued in the Be'eri kibbutz, which was finally liberated 17 hours after being seized by Hamas commandos.

As night fell, the search continued for the attackers remaining on Israeli soil.

On October 10, the Israeli army declared that it had regained control of all the areas infiltrated by Hamas.

This article was adapted from the [original in French](#).

ISRAEL HAMAS WAR 2023 -

BRITANNICA

Israel-Hamas War, war between [Israel](#) and Palestinian militants, especially [Hamas](#) and the [Palestinian](#)

[Islamic Jihad](#) (PIJ), that began on October 7, 2023, when Hamas launched a land, sea, and air assault on Israel from the [Gaza Strip](#). The October 7 attack resulted in more than 1,200 deaths, primarily Israeli citizens, making it the deadliest day for Israel since its independence. More than 240 people were taken [hostage](#) during the attack.



The next day, Israel declared itself in a state of war for the first time since the [Yom Kippur War](#) in 1973. The war began with the [Israel Defense Forces](#) (IDF) conducting air strikes on the Gaza Strip, followed weeks later by the incursion of ground troops and armored vehicles. By January 2025 when a ceasefire agreement was reached, more than 46,000 Gazans, about 2 percent of the territory's population, had been killed according to official numbers and two-thirds of the buildings in the Gaza Strip had been damaged or destroyed. About 1,600 Israelis had been killed, including those killed in the October 7 attack.

WHAT LED UP TO OCTOBER 7

In 1948 the State of Israel was created on land inhabited by both Jews and Arab Palestinians. Hostilities between the two [communities](#) that year led to a mass displacement of Palestinians. Many of them became refugees in the [Gaza Strip](#), a narrow swath of land roughly the size of [Philadelphia](#) that had come under the control of Egyptian forces in the [1948–49 Arab-Israeli war](#). The status of the Palestinians remained unresolved as the protracted Arab-Israeli conflict brought recurrent violence to the region, and the fate of the Gaza Strip fell into the hands of Israel when it occupied the territory in the [Six-Day War](#) of 1967.

In 1993 there was a glimmer of hope for a peaceful resolution when the Israeli government and the [Palestine Liberation Organization](#) (PLO) reached an agreement on the creation of a Palestinian state alongside an Israeli state (see [two-state solution](#); [Oslo Accords](#)). Hamas, a militant Palestinian group founded in 1987 and opposed to the more [conciliatory](#) stance taken by the PLO, rejected the plan, which included Palestinian recognition of the State of Israel, and carried out a terror campaign in an attempt to disrupt it. The plan was ultimately derailed amid [suicide bombings](#) by Hamas and the 1995 [assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin](#) by a Jewish extremist. In 2005, in the wake of the collapse of the peace process, Israel unilaterally [withdrew](#) from the [settlements](#) it had constructed in the Gaza Strip after 1967, and in 2007, after factional conflict within the [Palestinian Authority](#) (PA), Hamas emerged as the [de](#)

[facto](#) ruler in the Gaza Strip. The takeover by Hamas prompted a blockade of the Gaza Strip by Israel and [Egypt](#) and set the stage for the next decade and a half of continued unrest.



[Gaza's underground tunnels](#)

Members of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) keeping guard inside an underground tunnel in the Gaza Strip, on March 30, 2023.(more)

The first major conflict between Israel and Hamas, which included Israeli air strikes and a ground invasion, took place at the end of 2008. Hostilities continued to break out, most notably in 2012, 2014, and 2021. Among the factors complicating those hostilities were the high [population density](#) of the Gaza Strip and the proliferation of subterranean tunnels there. Those tunnels were used by Hamas and other Gazans to sidestep the blockade, to conduct operations, and to hide from Israeli forces, and they were difficult to detect or destroy, especially when constructed under urban dwellings.

These conflicts were devastating for the Gaza Strip and came at a high human cost for Gaza's civilians. But they usually lasted only weeks, resulted in few Israeli civilian casualties, and weakened Hamas's military capacity. Hostilities often resulted in ceasefire agreements that temporarily eased Israel's blockade and [facilitated](#) the transfer of [foreign aid](#) into the Gaza Strip, an approach that critics in Israel referred to as "money for quiet." Many officials in Israel's defense establishment maintained that Hamas had been effectively deterred by years of conflict and that an occasional flare-up of violence would be manageable. On October 7 the error of that assumption became tragically clear. Ongoing violence in the West Bank, political turmoil at home, and simmering tensions with [Hezbollah](#) in Lebanon were among the distractions that left Israel unprepared for the onslaught from the Gaza Strip.

In early 2022 militants from the PIJ and new, localized groups in the [West Bank](#), a territory northeast of the Gaza Strip that is also predominantly inhabited by Palestinians, conducted a string of attacks in Israel. The IDF responded with a series of raids in the West Bank, resulting in the deadliest year for the West Bank since the end of the second Palestinian [intifada](#) (uprising; 2000–05). The IDF targeted PIJ militants in the Gaza Strip—but left Hamas alone. In turn, Hamas refrained from escalating the conflict, [bolstering](#) the assumption by Israeli officials that they could prioritize other threats over Hamas.

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At the close of 2022, [Benjamin Netanyahu](#) returned to office as Israel's [prime minister](#) after cobbling together the most far-right cabinet since Israel's independence, which proved to be domestically destabilizing. The cabinet pushed for reforms to Israel's [basic laws](#) that would bring the judiciary under

legislative oversight; the polarizing move led to unprecedented strikes and protests by many Israelis, including thousands of army reservists, concerned over the [separation of powers](#). In August 2023 senior military officials warned lawmakers that the readiness of the IDF for war had begun to weaken. All the while, provocations by [Hezbollah](#) were raising the risk of conflict along Israel's northern border.

In November 2024 the independent Civilian Commission of Inquiry into October 7, which was organized in July 2024 by survivors of the October 7 attack and the families of victims who were either killed or kidnapped, released a report placing broad blame on the Israeli government for effectively bolstering Hamas throughout Netanyahu's [tenure](#) and leaving the IDF ill prepared for the assault. Although the report named Netanyahu, [Yoav Gallant](#), [Benny Gantz](#), the IDF, and intelligence agencies among those responsible for the security failure, it especially condemned Netanyahu for undermining coordination between the political and military echelons.

But while tensions were brewing at home, [Saudi Arabia](#)—which had long conditioned diplomatic relations with Israel on the conclusion of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process—had begun negotiating with Israel and the [United States](#) on an [Israeli-Saudi peace deal](#). Although Saudi Arabia sought [concessions](#) on issues related to the Palestinians, the Palestinians were not directly involved in the discussions and the deal was not expected to satisfy the grievances of the Palestinians in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Many observers believed that disrupting those negotiations was one of the goals of Hamas's October 7 attack.

That deal was part of a broader regional transformation. The United States, which had long been the driving force behind the peace process, sought a “pivot to Asia” in its [foreign policy](#) and hoped an Israeli-Saudi deal would reduce the resources it needed to devote to the [Middle East](#). [Iran](#), meanwhile, was consolidating an “[axis of resistance](#)” in the region that included [Hezbollah](#) in [Lebanon](#), Pres. [Bashar al-Assad](#) in [Syria](#), and [Houthi](#) rebels in [Yemen](#). Hamas, whose relationship with Iran had been [tumultuous](#) in the 2010s, had grown closer to Iran after 2017 and received significant Iranian support to build up its military capacity and capability.

THE OCTOBER 7, 2023, ATTACK



[Aftermath of the October 7, 2023, attack](#)

Survivors of a Hamas rocket strike on Tel Aviv talking with rescuers on October 7, 2023.(more)
On October 7, 2023, [Hamas](#) led a stunning coordinated [attack](#), which took place on [Shemini Atzeret](#), a [Jewish holiday](#) that closes the autumn thanksgiving festival of [Sukkot](#). Many IDF soldiers were on leave, and the IDF's attention had been focused on Israel's northern border rather than on the [Gaza Strip](#) in the south.

The assault began about 6:30 am with a [barrage](#) of at least 2,200 rockets launched into Israel in just 20 minutes. During that opening salvo, Hamas used more than half the total number of rockets launched from Gaza during all of 2021's 11-day conflict. The barrage reportedly overwhelmed the [Iron Dome](#) system, the highly successful antimissile defense system [deployed](#) throughout Israel, although the IDF did not specify how many missiles penetrated the system. As the rockets rained down on Israel, at least 1,500 militants from Hamas and the PIJ infiltrated Israel at dozens of points by using explosives and bulldozers to [breach](#) the border, which was heavily fortified with smart technology, fencing, and concrete. They disabled communication networks for several of the Israeli military posts nearby, allowing them to attack those installations and enter civilian neighborhoods undetected. Militants simultaneously [breached](#) the maritime border by [motorboat](#) near the coastal town of Zikim. Others crossed into Israel on motorized [paragliders](#).

About 1,200 people were killed in the assault, which included families attacked in their homes in [kibbutzim](#) and attendees of an outdoor [music festival](#). That number largely [comprised](#) Israeli civilians but also included foreign nationals. A [March 2024 United Nations report](#) found evidence that some were victims of sexual violence before they were killed. Adding to the trauma was the fact that it was the deadliest day for Jews since the [Holocaust](#).



[Hostages taken on October 7, 2023](#)

Portraits of some of the hostages taken during the October 7, 2023, attacks, displayed on a wall during a rally in Tel Aviv calling for their release.(more)

More than 240 others were taken into the Gaza Strip as hostages. Many of them were taken from their homes and some from the music festival. Including Israelis with dual citizenship, more than half of those taken hostage collectively held passports from about two dozen countries, effectively pulling several countries into the efforts to release their citizens.

AT WAR IN THE GAZA STRIP

OCTOBER 2023: AIR CAMPAIGN

At 8:23 am on October 7 the [IDF](#) announced a state of alert for war and began mobilizing its army reserves (eventually calling up more than 350,000 reservists over the next several days). Two hours later, IDF fighter jets began conducting air strikes in the [Gaza Strip](#). On October 8 [Israel](#) declared itself in a state of war, and [Netanyahu](#) told residents of the blockaded [enclave](#) to “get out now. We will be everywhere and with all our might.” On October 9 Israel ordered a “complete siege” of the Gaza Strip, cutting off water, electricity, food, and fuel from entering the territory.



[Israel's Iron Dome defense system](#)

The Iron Dome antimissile defense system intercepting rockets launched from the Gaza Strip on October 11, 2023.(more)

As Israel conducted air strikes, international efforts were made to secure the release of the hostages. [Qatar](#), which in years past had coordinated with Israel on the delivery of international aid packages to the Gaza Strip, became the key mediator, but in the first weeks of the war it managed to negotiate the release of only four of the people held by Hamas. Gaza's subterranean tunnels—forming an [intricate](#) web of passageways extending hundreds of miles—added to the difficulty of locating the hostages as well as targeting militants and their weapons caches: destroying the tunnels without high civilian cost proved difficult, and conducting military activity inside the tunnels presented a high risk for all those inside, especially for the IDF troops and the hostages who might be held there. Just three weeks after Hamas's assault on October 7, more than 1.4 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip had become internally displaced, and, with numbers of Palestinians killed still climbing by the thousands, it had already become the deadliest conflict for the Palestinians since the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.

OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 2023:

GROUND INVASION AND BEGINNING OF THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS



[Israel-Hamas War](#)

Destruction in the Jabalia refugee camp from an Israeli air strike in the Gaza Strip on November 1, 2023.(more)

At the end of October Israeli ground forces advanced into the Gaza Strip. Communications in the territory were initially cut, restricting the ability of militants to coordinate but also limiting the ability of paramedics and humanitarian organizations to [attend](#) to emergencies. Unlike in previous conflicts, the ground invasion

was slow and the number of [armored vehicles](#) and personnel was increased gradually. On November 1 the Rafah border crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt was opened, under conditions agreed to by Egypt, Hamas, and Israel, to allow a limited number of foreign nationals to evacuate the territory for the first time since October 7.

On November 22 Israel's war cabinet agreed to a prisoner exchange with Hamas, which was mediated by Qatar and Egypt, that would coincide with a temporary pause in fighting. During the pause, which lasted seven days, 110 of the hostages were freed in exchange for 240 Palestinian prisoners. In the days after fighting resumed, Israeli forces moved into Khan Younis, the largest urban center in the south of the Gaza Strip and the location of the homes of senior Hamas leaders, including [Yahya Sinwar](#) and Mohammed Deif. A large number of civilians fled to [Rafah](#), one of the last areas in the enclave for civilians to shelter from the ground invasion, and within weeks more than half of the Gaza Strip's total population had crammed into the city along Egypt's border.

DECEMBER 2023–JANUARY 2024:

PRESSURE MOUNTS FOR A CEASEFIRE

By year's end international pressure weighed heavily on Israel amid the high number of civilian casualties and wide destruction in the Gaza Strip. In mid-December U.S. Pres. [Joe Biden](#), during a fundraising event for his reelection campaign, said that Israel was beginning to lose international support. In early January 2024, after nearly 23,000 Palestinians had been reported dead (a number that included mostly civilians but also Hamas fighters), Israel announced a change in strategy that would result in a more targeted approach. By the end of January the average number of daily deaths was one-third of what it had been in October but was still more than three times that of the 2014 conflict, the deadliest in the Gaza Strip until 2023. (By late July, the number of Palestinians reported dead approached 40,000.)

In late January a framework emerged through the mediation of Qatar, Egypt, and the United States for a potential three-phase pause in fighting during which a [comprehensive](#) agreement to end the war would be negotiated. The pause would include the release, in stages, of hostages held in the Gaza Strip and Palestinian prisoners taken by Israel since the start of the conflict. But the framework remained [elusive](#) as Hamas insisted on guarantees that the hostage exchange would lead to a permanent ceasefire.

FEBRUARY–APRIL 2024:

INVASION OF RAFAH LOOMS



From November 2023 to May 2024 Rafah provided refuge for the majority of the population of the entire Gaza Strip, who crowded into makeshift shelters in the last urban area to be affected by the Israeli invasion. Image from January 16, 2024.(more)

[Rafah as refuge in the Israel-Hamas War](#)

Israeli officials in February announced their intent to extend the war into [Rafah](#), leading to concerns internationally over the high humanitarian cost of such an operation. Netanyahu [insisted](#), however, that an invasion of Rafah would proceed to root out “the last bastion” of Hamas battalions. A rift between Netanyahu and Biden came out into the open as Biden mulled withholding military support if an invasion of Rafah were to go forward without a comprehensive plan in place to protect civilians. In mid-March the IDF said that it would evacuate a portion of the civilians in Rafah to “humanitarian islands” that it would set up in the center of the Gaza Strip. On March 25, for the first time since the outbreak of the war, the United States [refrained](#) from vetoing a resolution by the [United Nations \(UN\) Security Council](#) that called for an immediate ceasefire.

On April 1 several vehicles carrying aide workers for chef [José Andrés](#)’s World Central Kitchen were hit in an Israeli air strike. The seven workers were killed, and the deaths brought increasing scrutiny on the actions of the IDF in the wake of the growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The IDF took responsibility for the deaths with a government spokesman describing the incident as “a terrible chain of errors.”

Early that same month, Hamas rejected a ceasefire proposal that would require it to release 40 living hostages who were female, children, older people, or sick in the initial stages, saying it did not have 40 such hostages. At the end of April, as the IDF readied the Gaza Strip for an evacuation of Rafah, Hamas released videos showing proof of life of three hostages.

MAY–JUNE 2024: RAFAH INVASION, OPERATION ARNON, AND PRESSURE FOR A CEASEFIRE

Although negotiations seemed to be progressing at the beginning of May, talks broke down on May 5. Hours later, Hamas fired rockets at Israeli soldiers who were stationed near the Kerem Shalom border crossing, the main avenue for humanitarian aid. The attack killed four soldiers and prompted Israel to close the crossing to aid convoys. The next day, Israel ordered the evacuation of 100,000 Palestinians from [Rafah](#). That evening, Hamas accepted a ceasefire proposal tendered by mediators that included efforts toward a “permanent cessation” of hostilities, but Israel [reiterated](#) its stance that it would reject any proposal that insists on an end to the war.

Meanwhile, Israel’s war cabinet unanimously authorized the military to proceed with its plans for Rafah. Israeli forces began moving to take control of the Rafah border crossing and the [Philadelphi Corridor](#) and on May 14 they entered the city. Within days the number of people who had fled Rafah since May 6 exceeded 800,000, and the areas they escaped to were deemed inadequate by international observers. On May 17 a floating pier constructed by the United States for international humanitarian aid received its first shipment, but the distribution of aid was repeatedly disrupted by safety concerns and weather damage. It was operational for a total of only 20 days before use of the pier was abandoned in mid-July. In that time, the total amount of aid delivered through the pier fell slightly short of what is needed to [sustain](#) the Gaza Strip’s population for just one day.

On June 8 Israeli special forces rescued four of the hostages who had been kidnapped at the music festival in an operation that was conducted in central Gaza. The raid took place in two buildings in the Nuseirat refugee camp in the middle of the day. When the four Israelis were recovered alive and unharmed, the Israeli officers gave word to their commanders by radio: “Ha-yahalomim be-yedeinu” (“The diamonds are on

hand”). Heavy fighting took place as the special forces escaped with the rescued hostages, and more than 270 Palestinians in the [vicinity](#) were killed as air strikes aimed to shield the Israelis. The officer who led the mission, Arnon Zamora, was critically wounded and died shortly afterward; the operation was renamed Operation Arnon in his honor ex post facto.

When the rescued hostages revealed that they knew in captivity that protesters were fighting for their release, demonstrators took to the streets in major cities across Israel that night to celebrate the rescue, call on the government to do more to bring the remaining 120 hostages home, and call for Netanyahu to be replaced as prime minister. The following day [Benny Gantz](#), an opponent of Netanyahu who was also a key figure in his war cabinet, carried out a threat made weeks earlier to resign if Netanyahu had still not [articulated](#) a plan for the hostages to be released and end the war.

On June 10 the [UN Security Council](#) adopted [Resolution 2735](#). It called for an immediate ceasefire, a release of hostages, and the safe distribution of humanitarian aid, followed by a permanent end to hostilities in exchange for the release of remaining hostages and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip. The resolution, which was drafted by the United States and followed a ceasefire plan outlined by Biden weeks earlier, was passed with 14 votes in favor; [Russia](#) abstained, saying it had questions about the details of the U.S.-drafted resolution.

JULY–SEPTEMBER 2024:

HAMAS DROPS KEY DEMAND, ISRAEL DEMANDS PHILADELPHI CORRIDOR, POLIOVIRUS DETECTED IN THE GAZA STRIP, AND HAMAS EXECUTES SIX HOSTAGES

In early July Hamas and Egyptian officials who were involved in the ceasefire negotiations reported that Hamas had dropped its demand for Israel to commit to a permanent end to hostilities. Meanwhile, Netanyahu began insisting that Israel retain control of the Gaza Strip’s [Philadelphi Corridor](#), a demand that Israel had not previously raised in its [May 27 proposal](#). As talks continued, Israel intensified its operations in Gaza. On July 13 an Israeli strike in Khan Younis targeted Mohammed Deif, Hamas’s top military commander. The strike killed Deif, according to an intelligence [assessment](#) by the IDF, and about 90 other Palestinians. [Ismail Haniyeh](#), Hamas’s political chief abroad who was leading Hamas’s delegation in ceasefire negotiations, was killed in [Tehrān](#) on July 31, leaving the negotiations in the hands of the more hard-line and inaccessible [Sinwar](#).

On July 23, as Netanyahu arrived in the [United States](#) to address the [U.S. Congress](#), Hamas, [Fatah](#) (the Palestinian faction that leads the Palestinian Authority), and 12 other Palestinian factions agreed to a reconciliation deal, which was brokered by the [Chinese](#) foreign ministry. The agreement would attempt to bring unified governance to the [West Bank](#) and the [Gaza Strip](#), which have been split between Fatah and Hamas rule, respectively, since 2007. It was not immediately clear, however, how the “Beijing Declaration” would differ from [past failed attempts at reconciliation](#), such as those in 2011, 2014, and 2017.

Meanwhile, the war’s toll on [public health](#) was highlighted in July, after [The Lancet](#) published [a study](#) that indicated a [conservative](#) estimate of about four indirect deaths per one direct death during the war due to destroyed health care [infrastructure](#) and shortages of food, water, and safe shelter, bringing the total of direct and indirect deaths due to the war to 186,000. Later that month the IDF announced that it had found [poliovirus](#) in sewage and would offer vaccines to its soldiers. It also coordinated with international

groups to assess the risk of polio among Gazans and administer vaccines. When the first confirmed case of polio was identified in a 10-month-old infant in mid-August, UN agencies requested a pause in fighting to allow health workers to [vaccinate](#) children in the Gaza Strip. On August 28 Netanyahu agreed under U.S. pressure to allow a vaccination campaign to take place in select areas.

On August 27 Israeli forces rescued Farhan al-Qadi, a [Bedouin](#) Arab from Israel who was working as a security guard when he was taken hostage on October 7. He was the first hostage to be rescued from inside a subterranean tunnel and was alone when he was found. Qadi reported that his captors had fled when they learned the IDF was close by.

On August 31 Israeli forces found the bodies of six hostages. Autopsies indicated that they were executed 1–2 days before they were found and nearly two months after Hamas had agreed to release three of them in a July ceasefire proposal. Protests erupted in fury across Israel as hundreds of thousands of Israelis took to the streets to demand Netanyahu reach a deal for the hostages to be released. [Histadrut](#), Israel's largest [trade union](#), joined the protests on September 2 with a [general strike](#) (although a court found the strike illegal and ordered it to end that same afternoon). At a press [conference](#) that same day, Netanyahu doubled down on his demand to control the Philadelphi Corridor, which he characterized as “the oxygen of Hamas.” In mid-September Israeli forces focused on weakening [Hezbollah](#) in Lebanon—including killing its longtime leader, [Hassan Nasrallah](#)—while the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip continued to deteriorate from the unbroken bombardment of the territory and from restrictions on the entrance of humanitarian aid.

OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 2024:

YAHYA SINWAR IS KILLED, UNRWA IS BANNED IN ISRAEL, AND ICC ISSUES ARREST WARRANTS

The killing of Nasrallah induced [Iran](#) to send a barrage of missiles into Israel on October 1, an attack that nonetheless caused minimal damage and one casualty. The anniversary of the October 7 attack passed with bombardment from Hamas, Hezbollah, and Houthi forces, which likewise rendered little damage. On October 17 Israel announced that the IDF had killed [Sinwar](#) in an operation it had conducted the previous day in the Rafah area. The international [community](#) seized the chance to reopen ceasefire discussions about a week later, and Egyptian Pres. [Abdel Fattah al-Sisi](#) proposed a short pause in fighting followed by the release of a small number of Israeli hostages who also hold citizenship in the United States or Russia. Egyptian mediators also proposed subsequent phases that would build toward a more lasting end to the fighting. Despite the reluctance of Hamas to engage after previous ceasefire negotiations fell apart in July, the group indicated an openness to the proposal while insisting on guarantees that a short pause would lead eventually to a long-term ceasefire. The Israeli [delegation](#), which had flown to Qatar to take part in the discussion in person, awaited the results of the [U.S. election](#) on November 5 to determine how to proceed. [Donald Trump](#) won the election, and members of Israel's right-wing government believed that his administration would align even more sympathetically with their cause than the Biden administration had. On October 28 the Israeli [Knesset](#) overwhelmingly voted to ban and designate as a terrorist organization [UNRWA](#), the [United Nations](#) agency that distributes the largest amount of international aid to the Gaza Strip. The [designation](#) came months after Israel [alleged](#) that some employees of UNRWA were

members of Hamas and that about a dozen had taken part in the October 7, 2023, attack; an [independent review](#) in April 2024 indicated that the agency could do more to “assume more accountability for staff neutrality” but also concluded that it already had a “more developed approach than other similar UN or [NGO](#) entities” and that Israel had not expressed specific concerns about staff prior to the Israel-Hamas War.

On November 21 the [International Criminal Court](#) (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Netanyahu and [Yoav Gallant](#), who until November 5 had served as Israel’s defense minister. In a [press release](#), the court noted reasonable grounds that Netanyahu and [Gallant](#) “intentionally and knowingly deprived the civilian population in Gaza of objects indispensable to their survival” and that “no clear military need or other justification under international humanitarian law could be identified” for those restrictions. The ICC also issued an arrest warrant that same day for Deif, whose reported death in July the court could not verify, for his role in commanding the October 7 attacks against civilian targets and his responsibility for his subordinates’ cruel treatment of and sexual violence against hostages. The court also intended to issue arrest warrants for Haniyeh and Sinwar before their deaths.

AGREEMENT FOR CEASEFIRE AND HOSTAGE EXCHANGE

An agreement for a ceasefire and exchange of hostages was announced on January 15, 2025. It followed extensive negotiations throughout the war mediated primarily by [Qatar](#) and [Egypt](#), which first resulted in a seven-day pause in fighting in November 2023 and the exchange of 110 hostages for 240 Palestinian prisoners. Negotiations continued throughout the war, including a concerted effort by U.S. Pres. [Joe Biden](#) in May 2024, a near deal in July, and a hopeful attempt in October. When the negotiations that began in October fell apart, Qatar announced a pause in its efforts to mediate until “the parties show their willingness and seriousness to end the brutal war.”

The following month Qatar resumed mediation after Steve Witkoff, the [Middle East](#) envoy of the incoming Trump administration, traveled to the Middle East in an attempt to fulfill a campaign promise by [Donald Trump](#) to reach a [hostage](#) release deal before his inauguration. The renewed effort, in which Secretary of State [Antony Blinken](#) of the outgoing Biden administration worked closely alongside members of Trump’s transition team, was [bolstered](#) by a desire by the warring parties and the mediators to enter a second Trump term on good footing with the incoming president. Trump’s [ambiguous](#) threat on [Truth Social](#) that “[there will be ALL HELL TO PAY in the Middle East](#)” without a deal by the time of his inauguration also loomed over the negotiations.

The details of the ceasefire deal followed a three-phase approach.

The first phase of the deal, lasting six weeks, included

- Cessation of hostilities
- Phased release of 33 Israeli female soldiers and civilian hostages, including two dual citizens of the [United States](#)
- Phased release of about 1,900 Palestinian prisoners
- Withdrawal of Israeli forces from populated areas of the [Gaza Strip](#) to [delineated](#) buffer zones within the territory
- Return of displaced Gazans to their homes beginning on the seventh day

- Increase in humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip to 600 trucks per day

A second phase,

whose details required additional negotiation during the first phase, would see the release of the remainder of living hostages held by [Hamas](#), the release of additional Palestinian prisoners, a wider withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip, and the declaration of a permanent end to the war.

The third phase

would include the exchange of bodies of [deceased](#) hostages and fighters, the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip, and the opening of the Gaza Strip's border crossings.

Phase one

On January 19, after days of anticipation and uncertainty over the deal's implementation, the first hostage release of the agreement took place as three Israeli women, two who had been kidnapped from their homes and the other from the [music festival](#), were handed over to the [International Committee of the Red Cross](#). They were subsequently escorted by the [IDF](#) back into [Israel](#), where after an initial medical inspection they were greeted by their mothers in an emotional reunion. Hours later 90 Palestinian prisoners, which included 69 women and 21 teenage boys who had been convicted of minor offenses or held without charge, were released in [Ramallah](#) in the West Bank, completing the first exchange of the agreement.

The weekly exchanges continued to take place in the subsequent weeks, including a midweek exchange arranged in the second week that remedied a dispute between Israel and Hamas during the second set of releases. But tension brewed from the start as Hamas made a spectacle of the releases, parading the hostages who were set to be freed (some of whom smiled and waved to the crowds gathered to witness) and presenting them with signed documents authenticating their release. The events were choreographed in a way that exaggerated Hamas's control over the Gaza Strip and distorted its treatment of the hostages as humane and dignified, and in [propaganda](#) it compared its treatment against that of Palestinian prisoners, some of whom were frail and emaciated upon release. That façade quickly crumbled in early February when three male hostages, who appeared pale and gaunt, were released.

Despite the pause in fighting in the Gaza Strip, violence was ramped up in the [West Bank](#), in part as a conciliatory measure made by Netanyahu for his far-right coalition partner [Bezalel Smotrich](#) to tolerate the ceasefire agreement. Smotrich also insisted Netanyahu promise that fighting in the Gaza Strip would eventually resume. Concerns about the fate of Palestinian civilians were heightened further when Trump in late January indicated he wanted to "just clean out" the Gaza Strip and relocate its residents abroad. Days later he said that the United States would own and build on the Gaza Strip and that Gazans would not return to the territory, because "they'll be resettled in areas where they can live a beautiful life." But where Gazans would be welcome and secure remained entirely unclear: [Egypt](#) and [Jordan](#) had already rejected requests from Trump to take in displaced Palestinians, and [Saudi Arabia condemned](#) a suggestion by Netanyahu that Gazans be relocated to Saudi Arabia. Following Trump's comments, UN Secretary-General [António Guterres reaffirmed](#) the UN's commitment to a [two-state solution](#) and warned against "any

form of [ethnic cleansing](#)” and the “chilling, systematic dehumanization and demonization of an entire people.”

Meanwhile, a tremendous increase in humanitarian aid flowed into the Gaza Strip, according to the [United Nations](#), although not as quickly as promised in the ceasefire agreement. On February 10 Hamas, blaming Israeli restrictions for the delay in aid flow, announced that it intended to postpone further release of hostages. By that point, 16 Israeli hostages and more than 550 Palestinian prisoners had been released, as well as 5 Thai hostages who were not a part of the formal agreement with Israel. In response Netanyahu, with Trump’s encouragement, threatened to end the ceasefire if any of the remaining hostages were not released by February 15. Hamas later announced it would continue the hostage exchange as planned after mediators pledged to remove obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian aid.

CONFLICT OUTSIDE THE GAZA STRIP: WEST BANK, HEZBOLLAH, HOUTHİ FORCES, AND IRAN



Israel and the Axis of Resistance

The fighting was by and large centered on the Gaza Strip for the first nine months of the war, but it was never confined to that territory. In October 2023 the IDF intensified its raids in the [West Bank](#), blockading several urban areas, and conducted a strike by warplane in the territory for the first time since the second [intifada](#) (2000–05). Raids were carried out nearly daily and concentrated primarily around refugee camps in the northern West Bank. Attacks on Palestinians by vigilante [Israeli settlers](#) increased as the number of gun permits and weaponry in the settlements proliferated, especially at the [initiative](#) of Israel's far-right national security minister [Itamar Ben-Gvir](#). Skirmishes with [Hezbollah](#) near the Lebanese border threatened to open a second major front, although both the IDF and Hezbollah appeared hesitant to escalate the fighting for much of the first year of the war. Attempts by [Houthi](#) forces to strike southern Israel—an unusual target for the [Yemen](#)-based movement—using both missiles and drones also gave early indication that there was some level of coordination among the [Iran](#)-led [Axis of Resistance](#) during the war. In April 2024 Israel and Iran exchanged direct strikes, and in July the conflict took an increasingly regional turn. In September Israel shifted its attention from the Gaza Strip to [Lebanon](#).

ISRAEL AND IRAN EXCHANGE DIRECT STRIKES IN APRIL 2024



Iran and Israel exchange fire

Iranians marching in Tehrān in protest of Israel's strike on military facilities in Iran on April 19, 2024, just days after Iran fired hundreds of drones and missiles into Israel.(more)

Israel and Iran entered into direct [confrontation](#) in April 2024. Israeli warplanes struck Iran's embassy complex in [Damascus](#), killing, among others, senior officers of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' [Quds Force](#), which provides aid, support, and training for the Iran-led axis. Two weeks later, in a retaliation that *Politico Magazine* and other observers considered to be "[designed to fail](#)" in order to avoid escalation, Iran fired into Israel hundreds of [drones](#) and missiles, most of which were intercepted by Israel's [Iron Dome](#) and Arrow 3 antimissile systems (along with help from American, British, and Jordanian forces). Israel retaliated days later with an attack near a military complex in the Iranian city of Isfahan ([Esfahān](#)), which includes facilities involved in its nuclear program; Iran downplayed the incident and claimed it had intercepted the strikes. See the section below for the confrontations between Israel and Iran that took place in July and October.

ESCALATION WITH IRAN'S [AXIS OF RESISTANCE](#) IN JULY 2024 AND AFTERWARD

Despite reports in July that Israel and Hamas had been close to a ceasefire, the conflict was beginning to take on more regional dimensions. Israel made several decapitating strikes, damaging a critical Houthi-controlled port, killing a top Hezbollah commander, and—most boldly—assassinating Hamas's diplomatic chief in Iran just hours after he had attended a presidential inauguration there. In September Israeli forces began to focus on confronting Hezbollah in Lebanon and killed its leader, compelling Iran to launch a [barrage](#) of missiles into Israel. On November 26 a ceasefire agreement was announced to end the fighting between Hezbollah and Israel, making Lebanon the first front of the war to reach such a deal.

ISRAEL AND THE [HOUSHI MOVEMENT](#) IN YEMEN

On July 19 a Houthi drone struck [Tel Aviv](#), killing one person and wounding several others after it traveled undetected for 16 hours from Yemen. The following day the IDF retaliated with an air strike on [Hodeidah](#), a Houthi-controlled port that is critical to the import of both weaponry and humanitarian aid to the [war-torn country](#). In September Houthi forces fired a number of missiles toward Israel in separate instances. They were intercepted, and on September 29 the IDF again retaliated, with air strikes on Hodeidah and Ras Issa, a Houthi-controlled port north of Hodeidah.

ISRAEL AND [HEZBOLLAH](#) IN LEBANON

On July 27 a rocket that was launched from Lebanon killed 12 children of the [Druze community](#) in the northern [Golan Heights](#) region, where much of the tension between Israel and Hezbollah had been centered since 2022. Hezbollah denied responsibility, but on July 30 the IDF responded with an air strike in Beirut that killed Fuad Shukr, a top Hezbollah commander who had been involved in the [1983 Beirut barracks bombings](#). As Israel caught wind in late August of a missile buildup in preparation for a retaliatory salvo, the IDF preemptively struck dozens of sites in Lebanon on August 25. Hezbollah then sent hundreds of rockets and [drones](#) into Israel. Despite the major escalation, fighting between Israel and Hezbollah returned to more regular levels the next day.

In September Israel began placing greater focus on the conflict with Hezbollah. Late that month thousands of pagers and walkie-talkies, many belonging to members of Hezbollah, exploded, dealing a significant blow to its communications network. The attacks were followed days later by a campaign of intense air strikes throughout Beirut and southern Lebanon, killing hundreds of people, including civilians. On September 25 Hezbollah fired a missile toward central Israel for the first time, aiming for Tel Aviv, although it

was intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome system. On September 27 the Israeli [air force](#) dropped more than 80 bombs on a neighborhood just south of Beirut in a strike targeting and killing Hezbollah's leader, [Hassan Nasrallah](#). Israeli ground forces invaded southern Lebanon days later, on October 1. The fighting in Lebanon was far more devastating than that of the [2006 Lebanon War](#): by late November about 3,800 Lebanese civilians and Hezbollah combatants had been killed, one-fifth of the population of Lebanon had been displaced, and one-fourth of the buildings in southern Lebanon had been destroyed or damaged. More than half a million people fled to Syria; most were Syrians who had fled [Syria](#) for Lebanon because of the [Syrian Civil War](#) that began in 2011. On November 26 a ceasefire deal, brokered by the United States and France, was announced. It largely revolved around [enforcing UN Resolution 1701](#) (2006), which had brought an end to the war in 2006 but whose provisions were never fully enforced.

Israel and [Iran](#)

On July 31 [Ismail Haniyeh](#), Hamas's political chief abroad who was leading Hamas's delegation in the ceasefire negotiations, was killed by a covert Israeli operation. The assassination took place in Iran's capital, [Tehrān](#), where Haniyeh had attended the inauguration of Iranian Pres. [Masoud Pezeshkian](#) the day before. [According to The New York Times](#), [Ali Khamenei](#), Iran's supreme leader, ordered a direct attack on Israel in retaliation. Iranian officials initially indicated a delay to avoid disrupting a potential breakthrough in ceasefire talks, but, after the shock of Haniyeh's assassination had worn off, the risk of regional escalation appeared to deter Iran from responding within a timely manner.

After the September 27 assassination of [Hassan Nasrallah](#), the Hezbollah leader who played a vital role in coordinating activity within Iran's [Axis of Resistance](#), Iran launched about 180 [ballistic](#) missiles toward central and southern Israel that it said targeted air bases and intelligence headquarters. With assistance from U.S. forces, Israel and its Arrow 3 antimissile system prevented casualties within Israel proper, although a shooting spree in [Tel Aviv](#)'s Jaffa district by Palestinian militants just before the missile barrage killed eight people. Israel launched a response nearly a month later, targeting several military sites, including facilities used in missile production, although Iranian authorities played down the attack.

ISRAEL'S LARGE-SCALE OFFENSIVE IN THE WEST BANK LAUNCHED IN AUGUST 2024

On August 28, 2024, days after Hamas and the PIJ claimed responsibility for an attempted [suicide bombing](#) in [Tel Aviv](#), Israel launched a large-scale offensive in the [West Bank](#) that it said would prevent further terrorist attacks that might originate from the territory. At the start of the offensive the IDF blockaded roads around [Jenin](#), [Tulkarm](#), and Al-Faraa refugee camp as ground forces and aerial vehicles entered them, destroying roads that Israeli forces suspected of containing explosive devices and controlling access to hospitals where they said militants might hide. The offensive included air strikes in the northern West Bank and raids across the territory, which were [exacerbated](#) by ongoing violence from Israeli settlers. The killing of [Ayşenur Eyqi](#), a Turkish-American activist who was protesting settler violence near the city of [Nablus](#), on September 6 drew international attention to concerns over IDF conduct in the offensive.

GLOBAL REACTION TO THE WAR

The October 7 Hamas attack drew widespread condemnation from around the world and was denounced for its terrorism against civilians by many, including the governments of many Western countries as well

as [India](#), [Japan](#), and [South Korea](#). Some foreign ministries, especially those of several Arab countries as well as [Turkey](#), [Russia](#), and [China](#), refrained from condemning Hamas specifically and instead urged restraint. In the war's initial stages, U.S. Pres. [Joe Biden](#) pledged [unequivocal](#) support for Israel, and on October 18 he became the first U.S. president to visit Israel while it was at war.

Concerns were also raised over the potential of the war taking on a global consequence, particularly as attacks by [Houthi](#) fighters on ships passing through the [Red Sea](#) disrupted global shipping and U.S. troops in the region faced attacks that, at times, proved deadly.

But as the war led to a deepening humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, Israel faced significant international pressure to allow limited aid into the territory. Pressure for a ceasefire also intensified as the war dragged on. Some opponents of the war lodged accusations of [genocide](#) against Israel as the war moved to the southern half of the Gaza Strip, and in December 2023 [South Africa](#) sought an [injunction](#) from the [International Court of Justice](#) (ICJ) to prevent violations of international genocide conventions. The following month the court ordered Israel to take all measures within its power to prevent genocide, including enabling humanitarian assistance in the Gaza Strip. In May 2024 South Africa filed an urgent request to the ICJ over the Israeli offensive in [Rafah](#); two weeks later, the court ordered that Israel "immediately halt its military offensive" in Rafah.

The intense emotions surrounding the war led to a wave of [anti-Semitism](#), [Islamophobia](#), and anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian racism. In the first several weeks of the conflict, the [Anti-Defamation League](#) (ADL) recorded 312 anti-Semitic incidents in the United States, up from 64 incidents reported in the same period in 2022. The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) recorded 774 complaints of Islamophobia in the United States during a similar period, up from 63 total reported incidents in August.



[Protest at the University of California, Berkeley](#)

Pro-Palestinian activists calling for university divestment during a demonstration in front of Sproul Hall at the University of California, Berkeley, April 22, 2024.

The protesters set up a tent encampment in solidarity with protesters at Columbia University who were demanding a permanent ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas War.

The atmosphere at American universities during the war was under particular scrutiny as protests prompted concerns about students' safety and [freedom of speech](#). In April 2024, as [Columbia University](#)'s president testified before the [U.S. Congress](#) about the university's handling of anti-Semitism, pro-Palestinian activists


at the university erected an encampment on campus calling for the university to [divest](#) from Israel (see [Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions \[BDS\]](#)). Students at dozens of other universities followed suit in the weeks ahead, causing significant disruption as graduation season approached. Incidents of anti-Semitism at some of the encampments and confrontations with counterprotesters amplified concerns over safety and security, leading to the dismantlement of many of the encampments and disciplinary measures, including arrest and suspension, for some of the protesting students.


Oct. 7 2023

HAMAS MASSACRE:


Documentation of Crimes Against Humanity

On the morning of October 7, 2023, Hamas invaded Israel from Gaza in a massive surprise terrorist attack against civilians by air, land and sea.


 Gallery



More than 1000 innocent civilians massacred



Raped and slaughtered in their own homes



Over 200 people kidnapped into Gaza

Hamas' terrorists recorded their barbaric atrocities on body cameras and cell phones to proudly display their crimes and gloat about them. Many of these cameras were recovered from neutralized terrorists. Now the whole world can see Hamas' unfathomable savagery.

saturday-october-seven.com



Fact Check: AI Fakes in Israel's War Against Hamas

[DW News](#)

DW is a German Public Service



Israel-Gaza War: Fake News, Misinformation, Disinformation & How to Spot It | Explained

[ABC News in Depth](#)

ABC is an Australian Public Broadcast Service

WHY DID ISRAEL BOMB HAMAS TARGETS

WHY DID ISRAEL BOMB HAMAS TARGETS (ChatGPT)

ChatGPT

WHY DID ISRAEL BOMB HAMAS TARGETS

ChatGPT said: 23 April 2025

Israel bombed Hamas targets in response to attacks or threats posed by Hamas, which is an Islamist militant group that governs the Gaza Strip. Hamas is designated as a terrorist organization by countries including the United States, Israel, the European Union, Canada, and others.

These airstrikes are typically aimed at military infrastructure, weapons depots, tunnels, or command centers used by Hamas, and are often launched after Hamas fires rockets into Israeli territory or carries out other forms of attacks. Israel states that these strikes are acts of self-defense to protect its civilians and deter future attacks.

WHERE DID HAMAS LIVE IN GAZA

Hamas is based in the Gaza Strip, where it has been the de facto governing authority since 2007 after seizing control from the Palestinian Authority. While individual members of Hamas may live throughout Gaza, the group's leadership, infrastructure, and military assets have been concentrated in several areas, including:

- **Gaza City** – Often considered the administrative and political hub.
- **Khan Younis and Rafah** – Located in the southern part of Gaza, these areas have seen significant militant activity and underground tunnel networks.
- **Northern Gaza Strip** – Frequently associated with rocket launching sites and other military operations.

Hamas is known to operate both above ground and through an extensive network of underground tunnels used for movement, weapons storage, and surprise attacks.

USE OF TUNNELS BY HAMAS

Hamas, the Islamist militant group that governs the Gaza Strip, operates extensively throughout the territory but especially in densely populated urban centers like **Gaza City, Khan Younis, Rafah, and northern Gaza**. Members of Hamas live and work within civilian areas, and its political leadership is often based in cities like Gaza City. However, much of its **military infrastructure is deliberately embedded in civilian zones**, including homes, schools, mosques, and hospitals—partly to make it harder for Israel to target them without risking civilian casualties.

A key feature of Hamas's military strategy is its **extensive network of underground tunnels**, often referred to as the "**Gaza Metro**." These tunnels serve multiple critical purposes:

1. **Military Tunnels:** Used to move fighters and weapons underground to avoid detection by surveillance drones and airstrikes.
2. **Smuggling Tunnels:** Especially active near the border with Egypt (in Rafah), these were used to bring in weapons, goods, and supplies, especially during periods of blockade.
3. **Attack Tunnels:** Built to cross under the border into Israel, allowing militants to launch surprise attacks or kidnappings inside Israeli territory. Israel has discovered and destroyed many of these over the years.
4. **Command and Control Centers:** Some tunnel complexes include underground bunkers where Hamas leaders can hide, communicate, and direct operations even during intense Israeli bombardments.

The **use of these tunnels** gives Hamas a significant tactical advantage, allowing them to operate despite being under constant surveillance and military pressure. However, it also complicates Israel's military responses, as striking above-ground targets may not effectively degrade Hamas's actual capabilities, which are hidden underground.

Because of this, when Israel launches airstrikes on Hamas targets, they often include efforts to **destroy tunnel networks**, in addition to targeting weapons storage sites, rocket launchers, and command centers. This leads to high-intensity air campaigns, especially during periods of escalated conflict.

HAMAS PRESENCE IN GAZA

Hamas, which stands for *Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah* (Islamic Resistance Movement), has governed the **Gaza Strip** since 2007 after violently ousting the rival Fatah faction and taking control of the territory. Since then, it has functioned as both the **political authority and the military power** in Gaza. While Gaza is only about 365 square kilometers (roughly the size of Detroit), it is densely populated with over 2 million residents.

AREAS OF OPERATION

Hamas operates throughout Gaza but is especially concentrated in several key areas:

- **Gaza City:** This is the largest urban center and functions as the political, media, and administrative hub for Hamas. Government ministries, media stations, and leadership compounds are often located here. Many Hamas leaders reside or work in Gaza City.
- **Northern Gaza Strip:** This area has historically been a hotbed of militant activity and rocket fire into southern Israel. It includes places like Beit Hanoun and Jabalia, where Hamas is known to have training camps and launch sites.
- **Khan Yunis:** A stronghold in southern Gaza, Khan Yunis is known for being a major center of both political support and military operations. Some of Hamas's key battalions operate from this region.

- **Rafah:** Located at the southernmost point of Gaza on the border with Egypt, Rafah was once home to a vast network of smuggling tunnels. These tunnels were used for bringing in weapons, fuel, and goods during times of Israeli and Egyptian blockades.

USE OF TUNNELS BY HAMAS

One of the most defining features of Hamas's military strategy is its **extensive network of underground tunnels**. These tunnels serve a variety of purposes and are considered one of Hamas's greatest asymmetric warfare assets.

1. Military Tunnels (The "Gaza Metro")

These are internal tunnels that crisscross underneath Gaza. They allow Hamas fighters to:

- **Move undetected** between different parts of Gaza during airstrikes or ground operations.
- **Store and transport weapons**, including rockets, explosives, and drones.
- **Provide shelter and communication hubs** for commanders during conflicts.

Israel refers to this system as the "Gaza Metro" due to its complexity. These tunnels are often reinforced with concrete and designed to be deep enough to withstand most conventional airstrikes.

2. Smuggling Tunnels

Before the Egyptian government cracked down on them in the mid-2010s, **smuggling tunnels under the Egypt-Gaza border in Rafah** were critical to Hamas's economy and military logistics. These tunnels allowed the movement of:

- Weapons and ammunition
- Fuel and spare parts
- Civilian goods (such as food, clothes, medicine) during times of heavy blockade

Hamas taxed the goods brought in through these tunnels, providing a source of revenue to fund both its civilian governance and its military wing.

3. Cross-Border Attack Tunnels

These were some of the most alarming to Israel. Built to **extend under the Gaza-Israel border**, they were designed to:

- Allow Hamas fighters to infiltrate Israeli territory.
- Conduct surprise attacks on soldiers or civilians.
- Facilitate kidnappings (as in the 2006 capture of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit).

Israel has invested heavily in **detecting and destroying** these tunnels with specialized radar, underground sensors, and a fortified underground barrier along the Gaza border.

4. Command and Control Centers

Many Hamas leaders and commanders **use the tunnel network as a protective shield**, knowing that Israel is reluctant to bomb civilian areas above them. Some tunnels are located beneath densely populated areas, hospitals, mosques, and schools, making Israeli strikes more politically and diplomatically sensitive.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

The tunnel network makes Hamas's military infrastructure **deeply embedded and hard to target** without risking significant civilian casualties. This is one of the central reasons why Israeli military operations in Gaza are complex and often result in tragic consequences for civilians—Hamas's military assets are intertwined with civilian life.

In recent conflicts (like those in 2014, 2021, and 2023), Israel has carried out **targeted airstrikes on tunnel shafts**, entrances, and known underground facilities using precision-guided munitions. These operations are often accompanied by surveillance drones, ground intelligence, and advanced technology to minimize collateral damage, but the risk remains high.

Would you like to go deeper into a specific conflict or the international legal and political debates surrounding this?

ACTION BY HAMAS AGAINST ISRAEL

Hamas has carried out numerous actions against Israel, both militarily and ideologically, as part of its long-standing objective to resist Israeli control and advocate for what it sees as Palestinian liberation. Here are the main types of actions Hamas has taken against Israel:

1. Rocket and Mortar Attacks

Hamas has launched **tens of thousands of rockets and mortars** from the Gaza Strip into Israeli territory since the early 2000s. These attacks have:

- Targeted civilian population centers such as **Ashkelon, Sderot, Be'er Sheva**, and even **Tel Aviv and Jerusalem**.
- Often been indiscriminate, lacking guidance systems, which increases the risk to civilian lives.
- Prompted the development of Israel's **Iron Dome defense system**, which intercepts many incoming projectiles.

2. Suicide Bombings

During the **Second Intifada (2000–2005)**, Hamas was responsible for numerous suicide bombings inside Israel. These attacks targeted:

- Buses, restaurants, markets, and nightclubs
- Civilians in cities such as Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Haifa

Hundreds of Israeli civilians were killed in these attacks. This era was one of the deadliest in Israeli-Palestinian violence.

3. Cross-Border Infiltrations

Hamas has attempted **cross-border raids** from Gaza into Israel, sometimes via underground tunnels or through breaches in the border fence. These attacks are intended to:

- Kill or kidnap Israeli soldiers or civilians
- Sow panic and demonstrate military capability

Notably, in **2006**, Hamas fighters infiltrated Israel, killed two soldiers, and kidnapped **Gilad Shalit**, who was held captive for over five years before a prisoner exchange.

4. Use of Underground Tunnels

As discussed earlier, Hamas has constructed **attack tunnels** beneath the Gaza-Israel border to conduct surprise attacks on Israeli military positions or civilian communities. These tunnels are considered a major threat by the Israeli military.

5. Incendiary Balloons and Drones

Since around 2018, Hamas and affiliated groups have launched:

- **Incendiary balloons** and kites into Israel, which have ignited fires in agricultural fields and forests.
- **Armed drones** to conduct reconnaissance and, in some cases, carry explosives.

6. Clashes at the Border and Mass Protests

Hamas has organized or supported **mass border protests**, especially during the 2018 "Great March of Return." While framed as civilian protests, some participants:

- Attempted to breach the border fence
- Threw explosives or Molotov cocktails
- Were allegedly used as cover for Hamas operatives

7. Psychological and Propaganda Warfare

Hamas also engages in **psychological warfare** aimed at weakening Israeli morale. This includes:

- Publishing videos of attacks
- Broadcasting threats to Israeli civilians and soldiers
- Using social media to spread disinformation or propaganda

Designation and Legality

Hamas is designated as a **terrorist organization** by multiple countries and bodies, including:

- **United States**
- **European Union**
- **Canada**
- **Israel**
- **United Kingdom**
- **Australia**

These designations are based on Hamas's use of violence against civilians, its charter which historically called for the destruction of Israel, and its rejection of peaceful negotiation paths.

Let me know if you'd like a breakdown of specific conflicts (like 2014, 2021, or 2023), or how Israel has responded to these actions.

HOW ISRAEL HAS RESPONDED TO THESE ACTIONS

Israel has responded to Hamas's actions with a **wide range of military, political, technological, and diplomatic measures**, aimed at defending its civilians, deterring future attacks, and degrading Hamas's military capabilities. These responses have varied in scale depending on the nature and intensity of Hamas's attacks, but they typically fall into several key categories:

1. Airstrikes and Military Operations

Israel's primary and most immediate response to attacks from Hamas has been the use of **airstrikes and ground operations**.

Targeted Airstrikes

- The Israeli Air Force (IAF) frequently conducts **precision strikes** on:
 - Rocket launch sites
 - Weapons storage facilities
 - Command centers
 - Tunnel networks
 - Homes of Hamas leaders (if used for military purposes)
- These strikes are often carried out within minutes or hours of rocket attacks from Gaza.

Major Military Operations

Israel has launched several large-scale military operations in response to escalations, including:

- **Operation Cast Lead (2008–2009):** In response to ongoing rocket fire; involved airstrikes and a ground invasion.
- **Operation Pillar of Defense (2012):** Focused on targeting Hamas's long-range rocket capabilities.
- **Operation Protective Edge (2014):** A 50-day war in which Israel sought to stop rocket fire and destroy cross-border attack tunnels.
- **Operation Guardian of the Walls (2021):** Triggered by Hamas rocket fire toward Jerusalem; involved intense airstrikes over 11 days.
- **Operation Iron Swords (2023):** Launched after a surprise attack by Hamas killed over 1,200 Israelis; involved a massive military campaign with ground incursions into Gaza.

2. The Iron Dome Missile Defense System

In response to the threat of rockets, Israel developed the **Iron Dome**, a mobile missile defense system designed to intercept and destroy short-range rockets and artillery shells.

- It has a high success rate, often intercepting **over 90%** of projectiles aimed at populated areas.
- The system has saved countless lives and has changed the strategic calculus of conflicts, allowing Israel more time to decide on proportional responses.

3. Border Security and Barrier Construction

Israel has significantly fortified its border with Gaza:

- **Smart Fences** equipped with sensors and surveillance systems.
- **Underground concrete barriers** to detect and block tunnels.
- **Naval blockades** to prevent Hamas from smuggling weapons by sea.

These systems aim to reduce the chances of infiltration and tunnel-based attacks.

4. Targeted Killings of Hamas Leaders

Israel has employed **targeted assassinations** against senior Hamas military leaders responsible for orchestrating attacks. Examples include:

- **Ahmed Jabari (2012):** Military chief of Hamas, killed by a drone strike.
- Other commanders have been targeted during major operations when intelligence confirms their location.

These strikes are intended to disrupt Hamas's leadership and planning capabilities.

5. Cyber and Intelligence Operations

The Israeli military, particularly **Unit 8200**, conducts **cyber operations and electronic surveillance** to:

- Track rocket launches in real-time.
- Map Hamas's tunnel networks.
- Disrupt communications among militant cells.
- Gather intelligence for future strikes.

6. Economic Sanctions and Blockades

In coordination with Egypt, Israel has imposed a **blockade on Gaza since 2007**, aimed at restricting the import of weapons and dual-use materials that could be used for military purposes.

- Goods and people are strictly monitored through controlled border crossings.
- Humanitarian aid is allowed through, but the blockade has been criticized for contributing to economic hardship in Gaza.

7. International Diplomacy and Pressure

Israel works with allies such as the **United States, Egypt, and the United Nations** to:

- **De-escalate conflicts** through ceasefires brokered by third parties.
- **Highlight Hamas's use of human shields** and violation of international laws.
- Maintain diplomatic support for its right to self-defense.

8. Public Warning Systems and Civil Defense

To protect civilians, Israel has developed an extensive **civil defense system**, including:

- **Red Alert sirens** that warn residents of incoming rockets.
- **Bomb shelters** built in homes, schools, and public areas.
- **Evacuation plans** and safety drills.

Strategic Objective

Israel's overarching strategy is based on a mix of **deterrence, damage limitation, and international legitimacy**. While it aims to degrade Hamas's military infrastructure, it often balances this with pressure to minimize civilian casualties and avoid long-term reoccupation of Gaza.

IMPACT ON CIVILIANS

1. Civilians in Gaza

Civilians in Gaza bear a **heavy humanitarian burden**, especially during escalations.

Impact of Israeli Military Actions

- **Casualties:** Airstrikes aimed at Hamas often hit targets in **densely populated areas**, which can result in civilian deaths and injuries—even if the targets are military in nature.
- **Displacement:** Many families are forced to flee their homes due to the fighting. Schools and UN facilities often turn into emergency shelters.
- **Infrastructure Destruction:** Bombings can damage or destroy homes, hospitals, power plants, water systems, and roads, crippling daily life.
- **Psychological trauma:** Especially for children, repeated exposure to war leads to high levels of PTSD, anxiety, and depression.

Use of Human Shields (Alleged by Israel and others)

- Hamas is **accused of embedding military infrastructure among civilian areas**—in homes, schools, and hospitals. This makes it harder for Israel to strike without risking civilian lives.
- Critics argue this tactic **violates international law**, while Hamas claims it has no alternative due to the size and density of Gaza.

2. Civilians in Israel

While Israel has more advanced defenses, its civilians also suffer during Hamas attacks.

Impact of Hamas Rocket Fire

- **Casualties:** Though Iron Dome intercepts many rockets, some still get through, killing or injuring civilians.
- **Disruption of life:** People in southern Israel often live with **daily air-raid sirens** and are forced to seek shelter within seconds.
- **Psychological effects:** Particularly on children in areas like Sderot, where rockets are a near-daily threat. Many live with anxiety, PTSD, and trauma.

Tunnels and Infiltration

- Hamas's **cross-border tunnels** and infiltration attempts create fear in Israeli border communities.
- Residents worry not just about rockets, but also potential ground attacks from fighters emerging near or inside their homes.

INTERNATIONAL LAW PERSPECTIVES

International law tries to balance a **state's right to self-defense** with the **protection of civilians in conflict**. Both sides face **accusations of violations**, though the contexts differ.

Hamas

Violations Alleged:

- **Indiscriminate Attacks:** Firing rockets without guidance into civilian areas **violates international humanitarian law (IHL)**, which prohibits attacks not aimed at specific military targets.
- **Use of Human Shields:** Placing military assets near civilians or using them as shields is a **war crime under the Geneva Conventions**.
- **Targeting Civilians:** Direct attacks on civilians are strictly prohibited.

Designation as a Terrorist Group:

- Many Western countries have designated Hamas a **terrorist organization**, meaning their armed actions are not seen as legitimate resistance under international law.

Israel

Rights Under Law:

- Israel has the **right to self-defense** under **Article 51 of the UN Charter** if attacked.

Criticisms and Allegations:

- **Disproportionality:** Critics argue that Israel's responses often cause **disproportionate civilian harm** relative to the threat posed by Hamas, which may violate **principles of proportionality** in warfare.
- **Civilian Casualties:** Even if Hamas uses human shields, Israel is still obligated to **take all feasible precautions** to avoid civilian harm.
- **Blockade of Gaza:** Some legal scholars argue that the **Israeli-Egyptian blockade** constitutes **collective punishment**, which is prohibited under IHL.

Defense Arguments:

- Israel says it goes to great lengths to **minimize civilian harm**, including:
 - **"Roof knocking"** (warning strikes before real airstrikes)
 - Distributing leaflets or phone calls before targeting buildings
 - Using precision-guided weapons
- It argues that when Hamas hides behind civilians, **responsibility for casualties lies with Hamas**.

GLOBAL RESPONSE AND LEGAL AMBIGUITY

The international community often responds with **calls for restraint**, **UN investigations**, and **debates at the International Criminal Court (ICC)**. However:

- **Accountability is rare**, due to political gridlock, especially at the UN Security Council.
- Both sides accuse the other of war crimes.
- **Human rights groups**, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have investigated and criticized both Hamas and Israel for actions that allegedly violate international law.

Would you like a more specific breakdown of how recent events (like in 2023 or 2024) were judged legally or reported internationally? Or a deeper look into the **rules of war** under the Geneva Conventions?

ONE YEAR AFTER HAMAS'S OCTOBER 7 TERRORIST ATTACKS, HERE'S HOW THE REGION CHANGED

[ATLANTIC COUNCIL](#) by Atlantic Council experts October 4 2024

A year into the Gaza war, the conflict has left deep political, security, and societal scars across the Middle East and North Africa. The war was ignited by an unprecedented terrorist attack by Hamas on Israel on October 7, 2023 in which militants killed some 1,200 people and took 251 hostages—97 of whom are still being held hostage one year later, with approximately one-third of that group already believed to be dead. The attack prompted Israel's strongest response in decades, with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) launching airstrikes and a ground invasion aimed at dismantling Hamas and its capabilities that continue to this day.

The Gaza Strip, which has been ruled by Hamas since 2007 and under an Israeli blockade for nearly two decades, has suffered widespread destruction and heavy damage to its infrastructure. Since the war began, some 41,000 people have been killed, according to the Hamas-run health ministry. The humanitarian situation in Gaza has reached catastrophic levels, with Gazans facing massive food shortages, the spread of disease, and the displacement of 1.9 million people from their homes.

International efforts at the United Nations to calm tensions have been ineffectual, and the decision by the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to seek arrest warrants against Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, and Hamas chief Yahya Sinwar has been met with fury in Israel and derision by Hamas. The United States, Qatar, and Egypt had early success in November 2023 in securing a ceasefire and freeing some hostages, but since then the conflict has continued unabated, leaving the region in a fragile state and possibly veering toward wider regional conflict.

The potential for a direct conflict between Israel and Iran has never been higher following Iran's firing of almost two hundred ballistic missiles at the beginning of October, an event preceded by the Islamic Republic's April barrage of over three hundred missiles and drones. Houthi rebels in Yemen have spent months intermittently launching missiles into Israel while consistently attacking Western shipping lines in the Red Sea and Bab el-Mandeb Strait. And daily skirmishes along the Israel-Lebanon border have led to dozens of deaths in both countries over the last year. It may be a prelude to a broader war—the likelihood of which greatly increased following Israel's September killing of Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah and its ground invasion of southern Lebanon.

One year on, the Gaza War remains unresolved and the potential for war across the region is becoming more likely. So what is the humanitarian situation on the ground? Will Saudi-Israeli diplomatic normalization materialize? What does the future of the Abraham Accords look like? Is there a regional war around the corner? Fourteen experts from across the Atlantic Council take on these questions in a series of short essays below.

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ISRAEL'S RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES

Israel has settled into a routine known colloquially as the “new normal,” where the fabric of daily life is interwoven with threads of ever-present crisis. One year since the brutal October 7, 2023, massacre wrought by Hamas, and amid the repercussions of that day’s devastating aftermath—including multiple “hot” battlefronts, constant dread over the fate of the captives in Gaza, and extended tours of reserve duty—Israelis are abiding a split-screen existence. They go about their regular business while simultaneously perceiving that the nation’s calendar will be stuck hopelessly on October 8, 2023.

A similar, schizophrenic rhythm pervades Israel’s relationship with its main benefactor, the United States, as matters of critical substance are intermingled tightly with considerations of domestic politics. On the one hand, the two countries remain aligned closely in their commitment to ensuring Israel’s security: The Joe Biden administration has come singularly to Israel’s aid with invaluable military, intelligence, and diplomatic assistance, thereby enabling the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to persist in the effort to dismantle Hamas’s infrastructure and to defend against other threats, from Lebanon and Syria to Yemen and Iran. On the other hand, and at the same time, that cooperation has come under heavy assault from various constituencies in the United States and Israel, who charge that Washington has been either excessively or insufficiently supportive of its embattled ally.

These conflicting realities complicate an already problematic environment where tensions have surfaced regularly over the precise manner in which the Benjamin Netanyahu government has pursued its objectives. US initiatives to promote a hostage release and ceasefire deal in Gaza, bring a halt to fighting across the Israel-Lebanon border, institutionalize an emerging US Central Command-led regional defense architecture, and possibly deepen Israel’s integration into the wider region have stalled as Israel gives precedence to continuing IDF manoeuvre in neighboring theaters of operation and resists attempts to cede control to other foreign auspices. The volatility of the current political moment—with impending elections in the US and coalition instability in Israel—amplifies these fraught dynamics.

The predicament facing Israel is almost certain to grow more acute when the next US administration assumes power in January 2025. With more questions than answers about the path forward, both presidential candidates have resorted to issuing impatient calls for Israel to draw its Gaza campaign to a close. Under these circumstances, the prime minister would be wise to hasten and proceed toward an endgame that allows Israel to ground its relations with the United States’ next president—a vital component in Israel’s national security—on a more positive footing.

—[*Shalom Lipner*](#) is a nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council’s Scowcroft Middle East Security Initiative who previously worked in foreign policy and public diplomacy during his time at the Prime Minister’s Office in Jerusalem, where he served in the administration of seven consecutive Israeli premiers.

ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR MISCONCEPTIONS

JEWISH PRESS Yoram Ettinger September 1 2024



Anti-Israel demonstration immediately following the Hamas October 7 massacre, November 4, 2023.

Western conventional wisdom is systematically baffled by the volcanic, violent, intolerant, unpredictable, despotic and frustrating Middle East reality, as evidenced by Western misperceptions of the Israel-Hamas war, which undermines the national and homeland security of the US.

For example:

*The State Department's pressure on Israel to switch from the military option toward Hamas to the **diplomatic/negotiation option**, ignores the failure of the US diplomatic option toward Iran's Ayatollahs, and the on-again, off-again Israeli diplomatic option toward Hamas since 2007 (the latest was in May 2023), which dramatically upgraded Hamas' terror capabilities, paving the road to the horrific October 7, 2023 Hamas terrorism. Moreover, Hamas is a branch of the Moslem Brotherhood and a proxy of Iran's Ayatollahs, which are dedicated to the toppling of the regimes of all pro-US Arab countries and bring the Western "infidel," and particularly "The Great American Satan" to submission.

*Thus, snatching Hamas from the jaws of obliteration would reflect a State Department and Israeli determination to repeat – rather than avoid – past critical mistakes. In the Middle East, it would be perceived as a major Islamic terrorism victory, undermining the US' and Israel's **posture of deterrence**, promoting more anti-US terrorism in the Middle East and on US soil. This would intensify terrorism against

the pro-US Arab regimes (which feel the Moslem Brotherhood machete at their throats) and against Israel, and cause a major setback to the Arab-Israeli peace process (which has been induced, mostly, by Israeli's posture of deterrence, which was devastated on October 7).

*Israel is not fighting a Hamas **terror organization**, but the most fortified aboveground and underground Hamas **terrorist state** with an elaborate network of 60-80-feet-deep tunnels, equipped with the most advanced electronics, accommodating heavy vehicles and is longer than the NYC Subway system!

*The toll of Hamas atrocities on October 7, 2023 – 1,200 mutilated Israelis – does not fully convey the magnitude of Hamas terrorism. In proportion to the size of the US population (340 million), it was identical to 41,000 American fatalities, or **13 “nine-elevens”** committed by terrorists, dispatched by a neighboring country. How would the US react to such a neighbor?!

*The **number of Arab casualties** in Gaza are issued by Hamas and Gaza-based branches of international organizations, who are controlled by Hamas, which is known for its horrific violation of human rights, hate education, despotism, ruthlessness and corruption. However, in the pursuit of the immoral “moral equivalence,” Western policy makers and public opinion molders reverberate Hamas' numbers....

*Are most Gazans **innocent civilians**? Hitler's [Mein Kampf has been a best seller](#) in the Palestinian Authority since its establishment in 1993, including in Gaza. The Gaza population has considered “September 11” as a role model of Islamic heroism. Since 1994, Gaza parents have sent their children to hate-education-school – which have been the most effective production line of terrorists – while worshipping in hate-sermon-mosques, cheering and heralding daily acts of terrorism, and enticing their children to join the ranks of Hamas and other Palestinian terror organizations.

*As expected, Western and Israeli **humanitarian aid** to Gaza is controlled by Hamas terrorists, bolstering their terror capabilities; thus, **dehumanizing the aid**. Genuine humanitarian aid would be extended by the obliteration of Hamas' terror capabilities, which could set Gaza on a humanitarian path.

*While Hamas considers its October 7 terror offensive as a divine mission to annihilate the “infidel” Jewish State, the State Department takes lightly the **centrality of fanatic Islamic visions** in the conduct of Middle East rogue entities. Foggy Bottom believes that terrorism is despair-driven and assumes that financial (“money talks”) and diplomatic bonanzas could induce moderation. However, Iran's Ayatollahs, Hezbollah and Hamas interpret Western and Israeli gestures as weakness, which whets their terroristic appetite. They have demonstrated that fanatic Islamic ideology transcends financial considerations, and eclipses accords concluded with the “infidel.” They have diverted mega billions of dollars in Western gestures toward anti-Western terrorism, not moderated policy.

*Western policy makers have showered rogue Middle East entities with diplomatic and financial gestures, ignoring the precedents, which demonstrate that terrorists bite the hand that feeds them, as experienced by the US, which facilitated the rise to power of the Ayatollahs in Iran 1978/79 and the Mujahideen in Afghanistan (1980s). These terror entities emerged as chief anti-US terrorists, partaking in “September 11” and the bombings of the US Embassies in Lebanon (1983), Kenya and Tanzania (1998), as well as the

Marines barracks in Lebanon (1983). Similarly, in 1993 and 2005, Israel overwhelmed the Middle East with dramatic gestures (never contemplated by Arabs) extended to the PLO, which yielded unprecedented waves of terrorism, as was demonstrated by the 2007-2023 series of Israeli financial and humanitarian gestures to Hamas, which resulted in thousands of missiles hitting Israeli civilian targets, and leading to the October 7, 2023 massacre.

*Israel's wars on Hamas and Hezbollah terrorists are not only Israel's wars. These wars are largely designed, directed, supervised and financed by Iran's Ayatollahs. The [Ayatollahs' strategic footprint](#) stretches from the Persian Gulf through the Middle East at-large and Africa to Latin America – viewed as the US' soft underbelly – and on **US soil**, as [recently testified](#) by FBI Director, Chris Wray. The Ayatollahs view Israel as the most effective US outpost/beachhead in the Middle East, and the first line of defense of the Western democracies against Shiite (Iran's Ayatollahs) and Sunni (the Moslem Brotherhood and ISIS) Islamic terrorism.

*A **nuclear Iran** is not the only real and clear threat to global stability. In fact, the most pressing threat to global stability and vital US interests is **Iran's conventional military potency**, which has its machete at the throats of every pro-US Arab regime, while constituting the global epicenter of anti-US terrorism, drug trafficking, money laundering and proliferation of weapon systems. They are training terrorists in the tri-border areas of Argentina-Paraguay-Brazil and Chile-Bolivia-Peru, and supplying underground tunnel construction equipment and predator unmanned aerial vehicles to Venezuela and to Mexican drug cartels.

*The 45-year-old US diplomatic option – and its bonus of hundreds of billions of dollars – failed to entice the Ayatollahs toward peaceful co-existence, good faith negotiation and abandoning a fanatical ideology. In fact, the diplomatic option transformed the Ayatollahs from a secondary power in 1979 to a leading regional and global power in 2024, and to extend a most critical support to Hezbollah, Houthi, Hamas, and Latin American terrorists – a chief threat to global sanity and US national and homeland security. Contrary to the prevailing misperception, for the sake of global sanity, Iran's Ayatollahs are not a partner for negotiations, but a target for regime change.

THE IDF HAS TAKEN OVER THE RAFAH CROSSING ON THE GAZA SIDE

ISRAEL AM May 7 2024

The IDF has taken over the Rafah crossing on the Gaza side and is mounting targeted operations against terrorists in eastern Rafah.

The international media reported that Hamas accepted a ceasefire proposal and that Israel subsequently rejected it. In truth, Hamas accepted their own version of a proposal that was totally unacceptable to Israel and the U.S. They did not accept the deal proposed by Israel and supported by the U.S., that would release 33 Israeli hostages in exchange for a 6 week ceasefire and the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners. The result of the Hamas "acceptance" and the media coverage was that Israel comes out looking like the bad guy -- just like Hamas planned.

[Hamas clearly fired those rockets at the Kerem Shalom crossing on Sunday to draw Israel into mounting a full scale invasion of Rafah. By doing so they made it clear that they are not interested in a ceasefire or in releasing hostages. All they are interested in is to harm Israel by isolating it in the international community and making it into a pariah state -- and the easiest and quickest way for them to accomplish that is through an Israeli invasion of Rafah that leads to the deaths of thousands of civilians.

Israel has not launched a full scale invasion of Rafah. The IDF is currently just operating in a very limited and targeted manner, in order to be able to stop in the event that Hamas accepts a reasonable ceasefire proposal. Israel also wants to respect the demands of the Biden administration not to invade Rafah. But if Hamas continues to reject proposals and attack Israeli forces, Israel might have to move forward with a full push into Rafah to finish the job it started on October 8 -- the destruction of Hamas as a viable fighting force.]

The Biden administration is reportedly delaying a shipment of thousands of weapons to Israel. For more, [click here](#).

Drone attacks and rocket barrages against Israel continue in the north. The air force is responding.

The IDF announced the names of 2 soldiers killed in a drone attack on Metula on Sunday:

- Major (res.) Dan Kamkagi, 31 years old, from Kfar Oranim, a fighter in patrol battalion 6551, half-fire formation (551).
- Major (res.) Nahman Natan Hertz, 31 years old, from Elazar, a fighter in patrol battalion 6551, half-fire formation (551).

ON THE GROUND IN GAZA: WHAT I SAW OF ISRAEL'S MILITARY OPERATIONS

[Forbes](#) [David A. Deptula](#) (general, US army), Updated Aug 5, 2024,

Dave Deptula is a retired Air Force 3-star general. He is Dean of the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies and a Senior Scholar at the U.S. Air Force Academy.

The smell of dust clung to the air when I departed from the border crossing at Kerem Shalom, at the intersection of Israel, Egypt, and Gaza, this past week on July 25, 2024. I traveled through an ancient city's suburbs to the shores of the Mediterranean, and back again, becoming the first U.S. general officer (active or retired) to travel across Gaza during this war.

Gaza presents an extraordinarily difficult adversary environment. Yet the Israel Defense Forces face the acute challenge of defending their nation while striving to protect Palestinian civilians. Unfortunately, negative perceptions on social media and elsewhere, based on a combination of [disinformation](#), [ignorance](#), and [anti-Semitism](#), indicates there is a wide gap between the reality I witnessed and the perceptions abroad. Sadly, war always involves civilian casualties. But there are many complex factors unfolding on the ground in this war between Israel and Hamas.

Entering Gaza, just past the Kerem Shalom crossing, there was a new road lined on both sides with dozens of trucks, most of them carrying food. The road was constructed by the IDF to make it easier to get food, water, fuel, and other essential supplies to the civilian population. An Israeli Druze colonel in the IDF, responsible for coordinating humanitarian access, explained to me that the numbers vary on average between 200 to 240 trucks entering Gaza every day to deliver food and other [humanitarian aid](#). Some days that number goes even higher.

While there is certainly a difficult situation in Gaza for civilians, [assertions](#) by the International Criminal Court that Israel is intentionally starving Gazan civilians did not match what I witnessed on both sides of the crossing. The average man needs 2500 [calories a day](#) to maintain a stable diet; the average woman needs 2000. At current levels, there is enough aid entering Gaza daily to support over a 3,000 calorie a day diet. But food insecurity remains a challenge in Gaza, IDF officials say, because of Hamas fighters inside Gaza who steal and hoard relief supplies.

Driving into the city of Rafah, I witnessed a substantial level of destruction. IDF officials say that Hamas fighters deliberately mingle with civilians in order to use noncombatants as human shields. The fact is the [killing of Palestinian civilians](#) is a cruel and [illegal](#) element of Hamas' strategy. While there is no denying that civilians are dying because of the IDF's actions, the routine Hamas tactic of walking the streets in civilian clothes with no weapons, then duck into a building knowing where weapons are stored for use against the IDF, makes urban structures legitimate military targets according to the [laws of armed conflict](#). In targeting these, the [principles](#) of distinction and proportionality still apply. The military activities I saw, as

well as the processes and procedures followed by the Israeli military, are indicative of the IDF complying with the laws of armed conflict.

In those cases where there are questions of misconduct or errors in the application of military force, these issues are investigated by a judicial arm of the IDF. In fact, such [investigations are currently underway](#) in Israel by a judicial arm that is separate from the military chain of command, causing widespread debates across the Jewish nation. Legal action is imminent. IDF personnel are [legally held accountable](#) for their actions. Israel employs measures not just to comply with international law, but because, whenever hostilities end, Israelis will still be living with the Palestinians as neighbors.

According to the Chair of Urban Warfare Studies at West Point's Modern War Institute, John Spencer, "Israel has done [more to prevent civilian casualties](#) in war than any military in history," he posted on LinkedIn. His studies reveal that the [ratio of enemy belligerent deaths to civilian deaths](#) in Gaza is on the order of 1 to 1.0-1.5. Others estimate that ratio to be on the order of [1 to 2](#). World famous historian Lord Andrew Roberts gave a [compelling expose](#) in the House of Lords to the same effect. In similar urban terrain in Mosul, Iraq, from 2016 to 2017, the ratio was [1 to 2.5](#). The United Nations estimates that the nominal ratio of belligerent casualties to civilian casualties in wars of all types is on the order of [1 to 9](#). While the effects of combat are not conclusive, regarding the implementation of law of armed conflict obligations, they are certainly relevant. It is hard to square the accusations of indifference to Palestinian civilians and indiscriminate warfare with these statistics.

The current war also complicates Israel's obvious interest in avoiding confrontation with Egypt. I drove past Hamas rocket launch positions that were located feet from Gaza's border with Egypt. Hamas operatives know the Israeli Air Force would not strike positions so close to Egypt. This is the same logic Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad use for occupying hospitals, mosques, schools, United Nations facilities, etc. It is important to realize that the law of armed conflict does not categorically prohibit attack on such locations, and that when an enemy transforms such locales into military objectives, [such strikes are legally defensible](#).

In our move to the coast, we also drove over an underground [city of tunnels](#), not unlike those used by subways and trains in New York City. For years, [Hamas has diverted resources](#) intended for the betterment of the Palestinian civilian society to instead build this underground city for wartime purposes. There are underground bunkers full of rockets and booby traps, and command centers for the Hamas military leadership. These are the same tunnels Hamas uses to imprison hostages, smuggle aid, and store ammunition. While much of that has now been emptied, there are even server farms still housed in the Hamas tunnel system. And where does all the electric power needed to keep this underground city operating come from? It is diverted from civilian hospitals, apartments, offices, and often from UN facilities.

That is why a critical IDF operational objective is to locate, destroy, or otherwise seal off these tunnels. Hamas' use of their tunnel city enabled them to set the conditions for the October 7th attack in a concealed fashion. By sealing off the terrorist tunnels, the IDF can force Hamas to move to the surface where they can more easily be corralled. It is slow and difficult work, as this is where Hamas is holding many of the

remaining hostages. But the IDF is making progress. During my trip into Gaza, I visited an engineering unit tasked with finding and then physically confirming the exact location of the tunnels. Since going into Rafah, this unit locates, on average, two tunnels a day. Once located, they turn over the mission of destroying the tunnels to another unit with experts equipped to accomplish that task.

Once we arrived at the shore of the Mediterranean, next to a suburb of Rafah known as the Swedish village, due to the source of its aid funding, I had the opportunity to discuss IDF operations with a commander in the area. He has been fighting since ground operations began in late October 2023 in northern Gaza. He described the difficulty of the operational environment.

The commander was confident when asked about how long it would take to break Hamas, answering that, “it will take time, but it can be done.” He emphasized that this was a war—not a counterinsurgency operation. There is a lot to unpack in that statement. It became very evident during my visit that the IDF is competently integrating all available means to accomplish their objectives from all domains—air, sea, ground, space, and the electromagnetic spectrum.

As we talked, the commander pointed out an Israeli Navy ship about a mile and a half off the coast, mentioning how it was providing valuable support in the immediate fight. With machine gun fire echoing to the northeast of our position, we could still hear Israeli Air Force drones flying overhead, and occasionally fighter jets tied closely to the actions of the Israeli Army on the ground.

There are both lethal and non-lethal operations integrated across the traditional armed services. How IDF actions are conducted are informed by an assessment that involves complex telecommunication operations, including the integration and distribution of the various means of data collected by intelligence organizations. The data is then translated into situational awareness, actualized by means across the electromagnetic spectrum. From my experience, it was evident that the IDF has achieved a level of integration and an authentic understanding of how to genuinely apply jointness—using the right force, at the right place, at the right time—regardless of the service components sourcing those forces.

While there are multiple alternatives proposals for how to end this war, one thing is certain: the IDF takes many precautions in an effort to reduce civilian casualties. Thousands of phone calls, texts, leaflets, as well as roof-knocking (dropping small munitions on top of buildings) are some of the warnings the IDF uses to notify civilians to evacuate Hamas-occupied structures. I visited an IDF [control center](#), used to integrate information from a variety of sources, that closely monitors civilian locations and movements throughout Gaza. The data is continually updated to inform IDF operations to minimize unintended collateral damage, as well as to evacuate and separate the civilian population from combat operations to the greatest degree possible.

There is no “moral equivalency” [as implied by the White House’s public statements](#), when comparing Israel’s “right to defend itself” with ending the war in Gaza to stop “the death of far too many innocent civilians,” at least, not before the IDF reduces Hamas’ military capabilities so they can never repeat the atrocities of 7 Oct. There is no such thing as “immaculate war” where there are no civilian casualties.

Unfortunately, Hamas is only one element of an alliance of terrorist activities—Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthi's, radical Islamic militias—all under the influence of Iran. Collectively these organizations and the current Iranian government are a threat to both liberal democracy and free trade. What I witnessed in Gaza impressed upon me that the sooner the people subjugated by these militant forces—including Palestinians in Gaza—can be free of extremism, the sooner the world can become a better place.

Disclosure: *Travel for my trip was supported by the Friends of Israel Initiative, a U.S.-based non-profit 501c3.*

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David A. Deptula

Follow

Dave Deptula is a retired Air Force 3-star general. He is Dean of the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace

UNDERSTANDING THE ISRAEL- GAZA CASUALTIES IN THE CONFLICT THAT BEGAN ON OCTOBER 7, 2023, TO EARLY 2025

WRITTEN BY GEMINI AI 21 April 2025

Understanding the casualties in the conflict that began on October 7, 2023, involves examining significant losses on both sides as reported by various authorities up to early 2025.

Israeli authorities have named approximately 845 soldiers and 69 police officers killed by early February 2025, with total IDF personnel losses reported as high as 891 by January 2025. These figures include substantial losses during the initial Hamas attack on October 7 (when around 1,200 people in Israel were killed in total and 251 taken hostage), subsequent ground operations in Gaza (claiming over 400 IDF lives), fighting in Lebanon, incidents in the West Bank, and non-combat causes like accidents and suicides.

On the Palestinian side, the Gaza Health Ministry reported by late March 2025 that Israeli military operations had killed over 50,000 people. This figure, while disputed by Israeli officials, is considered broadly reliable by international bodies like the UN and WHO, as well as reportedly by the Israeli military itself regarding the overall scale. Israel estimates around 20,000 militants are among the Palestinian dead and states that it tries to avoid civilian casualties, attributing the high toll, in part, to Hamas allegedly using civilians as human shields by operating within densely populated areas, humanitarian zones, schools, and hospitals—claims which Hamas denies. The Palestinian data, which does not differentiate combatants, indicates nearly a third of the identified dead were children under 18, and reports suggest over 1,200 entire families have been killed, with potentially thousands more victims remaining uncounted beneath rubble.

GAZA DEATH TOLL: HOW MANY PALESTINIANS HAS ISRAEL'S OFFENSIVE KILLED?

REUTERS [Nidal Al-Mughrabi](#) and [Emma Farge](#) March 24, 2025

March 24(Reuters) - Palestinian health authorities say Israel's ground and air campaign in Gaza which resumed last week has killed more than 50,000 people, with nearly a third of the dead under 18.

After a ceasefire characterised by two months of relative calm in the 18-month war, Israel resumed an all-out air and ground [campaign against Hamas](#) last Tuesday. Palestinian health officials say nearly 700 have been killed since.

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The war began on Oct. 7, 2023 when Hamas militants stormed across the border into Israeli communities. Israel says the militants killed more than 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took some 250 people into captivity in Gaza.

A new list released by the Palestinian Ministry of Health that includes the names, age and gender of those killed up until March 22 includes 50,021 people, ranging from a newborn baby to a 110-year-old. Of those, 15,613 or 31% were under 18.

The official Palestinian Health Ministry death toll dwarfs those killed in previous [bouts of fighting](#) between Israelis and Palestinians in Gaza since 2005, according [to data from](#) Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem.

This explainer examines how the Palestinian toll is calculated, how reliable it is, the breakdown of civilians and fighters killed and what each side says. For more information, Reuters Graphics has produced [a multi-media exploration](#) of the deaths.

HOW DO GAZA HEALTH AUTHORITIES CALCULATE THE DEATH TOLL?

In the first months of the war, death tolls were calculated entirely from counting bodies that arrived in hospitals and data included names and identity numbers for most of those killed.

As the conflict ground on and fewer hospitals and morgues continued to operate, the authorities adopted other methods too.

From early May 2024, the ministry updated its breakdown of fatalities to include [unidentified bodies](#) which accounted for nearly a third of the overall toll. Since then, health authorities have been working to identify them and none are now listed in the death toll.

Zaher Al-Waheidi, Director of the Information Unit at the Gaza Health Ministry, attributed progress in identifying bodies to the restoration of a central database from [Shifa Hospital](#) and a system allowing families to provide input on victims, which is then verified by medics and police.

In the two months of relative calm during the ceasefire that began in January, 2025, work accelerated, he said.

A Reuters examination of an earlier Gaza Health Ministry list of those killed showed that more than 1,200 families were completely wiped out, including one entire family of 14 people.

IS THE GAZA DEATH TOLL COMPREHENSIVE?

The numbers do not necessarily reflect all victims, as many are still under rubble, the Palestinian Health Ministry says. It estimates some 10,000 bodies were uncounted in this way, with only a few dozen of them recovered since the ceasefire.

Official Palestinian tallies of direct deaths in the Gaza war likely undercounted the number of casualties [by around 40%](#) in the first nine months of the war as Gaza's healthcare infrastructure unravelled, according to a peer-reviewed study published in The Lancet journal in January.

The U.N. human rights office also says the Palestinian authorities' figure is probably an undercount. In past Gaza wars, the U.N. tally sometimes exceeded the Palestinian count.



Item 1 of 2 FLE PHOTO: Mourners embrace during the funeral of Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes, amid Israel-Hamas conflict, at Nasser hospital, in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip July 24, 2024.

REUTERS/Mohammed Salem/File Photo

The deaths it has verified so far show that nearly 70% were [women and children](#).

HOW CREDIBLE IS THE GAZA DEATH TOLL?

Pre-war Gaza had robust population statistics and better health information systems than in most Middle East countries, public health experts told Reuters.

A [study, opens new tab](#) of open sources by the UK-based Airwars non-profit found a correlation of at least 75% between its lists and those of Gazan authorities for thousands killed early in the war.

The U.N. often cites the ministry's death figures and the [World Health Organization](#) has voiced full confidence in them.

DOES HAMAS CONTROL THE FIGURES?

While Hamas has run Gaza since 2007, the enclave's Health Ministry also answers to the overall Palestinian Authority ministry in Ramallah in the West Bank.

Gaza's Hamas-run government has paid the salaries of all those hired in public departments since 2007, including in the Health Ministry. The Palestinian Authority still pays the salaries of those hired before then.

WHAT DOES ISRAEL SAY?

Israeli officials have said the figures are suspect because of Hamas' control over government in Gaza. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Oren Mamorstein said the numbers were manipulated and "do not reflect the reality on the ground".

However, Israel's military has also accepted in briefings that the overall Gaza casualty numbers are broadly reliable.

The Israeli military says 407 of its soldiers were [killed in combat](#) since its Gaza ground operation began on Oct. 27, 2023.

The Israeli military says it goes to great lengths to avoid civilian casualties. It says Hamas uses Gaza's civilians as human shields by operating within densely populated areas, humanitarian zones, schools and hospitals, which Hamas denies.

HOW MANY OF THE DEAD ARE FIGHTERS?

The Palestinian Health Ministry figures do not differentiate between civilians and Hamas combatants, who do not wear formal uniform or carry separate identification.

Israel periodically estimates the number of Hamas fighters killed. Recent assessments put the number of Palestinian militant dead at 20,000. It says about one civilian was killed for every fighter, a ratio it blames on Hamas for using civilian facilities.

Israeli officials say such estimates are reached through a combination of counting bodies on the battlefield, intercepts of Hamas communications and intelligence assessments of personnel in targets that were destroyed.

Hamas has said Israeli estimates of its losses are exaggerated, without saying how many of its fighters have been killed.

Compiled by Emma Farge, Nidal al-Mughrabi, Ali Sawafta, James MacKenzie and Angus McDowall, Editing by William Maclean and Peter Graff

THE LIVES LOST IN GAZA

A closer look at those killed in the conflict so far.

[The Reuters site should be viewed to appreciate the graphics](#)

REUTERS By [Sudev Kiyada](#), [Simon Scarr](#) and [Nidal al-Mughrabi](#) April 3 2025

This is Mohammed Al-Agha. He's 13 years old.

An image of Mohammed, in black and white, taken from a video.

His immediate family were all killed during the war in Gaza.

Figures of his family appear behind him as transparent bodies. The names of each family member are shown including his mother, father, one brothers and two sisters.

They are among more than 50,523 people that Palestinian authorities say have been killed in Israel's military campaign since October 7, 2023.

Mohammed now disappears, his family's transparent figures become solid gray.

Israel says those figures, which do not distinguish between combatants and civilians, are untrustworthy but has not published its own estimate of the total death toll in Gaza. Senior Israeli figures have said they believe 20,000 Hamas fighters have been killed.

Behind the family, the page is filled with more and more people to represent just some of the more than 51,000 who have died over the past year.

THE LIVES LOST IN GAZA

A closer look at those killed in the conflict so far.

Last updated April 3, 2025 11:30 BST

Mohammed now lives with his uncle in Gaza after his home was hit by an Israeli strike on November 18, 2023. The names of his mother, father, brother and two sisters are now on Gaza Health Ministry's list of the dead.

A ceasefire paused the fighting on January 19, but the death toll kept rising because more bodies were unearthed from the rubble and added to the list as people returned to devastated neighbourhoods.

After a first phase of the ceasefire expired without agreement on steps towards a lasting end to the conflict, Israel resumed intensive air strikes on March 18 and ground operations on March 19.

The death toll from the war already dwarfs the numbers killed in previous bouts of fighting between Israelis and Palestinians in Gaza.

Palestinians accuse Israel of indiscriminate bombardment of the Strip, which is home to more than two million people. Israel's military says it tries to avoid harming civilians but that fighters loyal to Palestinian Islamist group Hamas hid among the general population.

Israel has also suffered badly. It says Hamas and allied Palestinian militant groups killed around 1,200 people in the Oct. 7 attack and abducted another 251, dragging them back to Gaza. It has also lost more than 400 troops in the fighting.

Reuters examined the data from the Gaza Health Ministry to look more closely at those who have died.

It found that more than one-fifth of those killed in the territory were children under the age of 12. More than 1,200 families were completely wiped out, the data showed, including one entire family of 14 people. Roughly half of those killed - 25,211 - were Palestinian males aged 15-65 killed, according to the health ministry figures – slightly greater than the Israeli estimates of the number of Hamas fighters eliminated.

A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is driven by competing claims for land. Israel - which has fought several wars with neighboring countries since its creation in 1948 - defends its right to secure its own borders. Palestinians want to create their own state in Gaza and the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Israel captured both territories in 1967 in the Six Day War. Gaza was a focal point for Palestinian uprisings against Israeli rule in 1988 and again in 2000.

Israeli forces unilaterally pulled out in 2005 and Hamas - an Islamist group that seeks the destruction of Israel - seized control of it in 2007, expelling its rival Fatah.

But the violence did not stop. In the following years, Hamas attacked Israel with rockets and attempted infiltrations. Israel launched several major military operations against the group.

Reuters visualised the death toll for both Palestinians and Israelis in Gaza since the Israeli pull-out in September 2005. The data comes from the Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem.

B'Tselem has built a database that it says has tracked every recorded death directly from the conflict over decades. The organisation, whose donors include U.N. bodies and Western governments, cross-checks press reports with eyewitness accounts and official sources. It has not yet published any figures on the current conflict. Israel's military and Hamas did not respond when asked to comment on B'Tselem's data.

Casualties began mounting soon after Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip. Deaths were in the double digits within the first few months.

Fatalities were due to sporadic incidents between Israel and Hamas, as well as major Israeli military operations against the group in Gaza.

The biggest operations were Summer Rains in 2006, Cast Lead in 2012...

... and Protective Edge in 2014.

This conflict has been far deadlier.

The number of Palestinians killed far outweighs Israelis.

* Data for deaths from 2005-2023 is from Israeli rights group B'Tselem. Data for Palestinians killed since Oct. 7, 2023 is from the Gaza Health Ministry. Data for Israelis killed on or since Oct. 7 2023 is from the Israeli government and includes an unknown number of foreign nationals killed in the Hamas attack.

In analysing Palestinian deaths from the latest conflict, Reuters has used only detailed data from the Gaza health ministry's last release of full information, covering deaths up to March 22, 2025.

This data – which includes names, ages, ID numbers and gender – covers 50,021 of those killed. Detailed information for the remainder of those killed is not available.

DISPUTES OVER NUMBERS

Counting the dead in war zones is difficult and the numbers are often disputed.

The Israeli military says the health ministry in Gaza is controlled by Hamas and subject to its agenda: "In consequence, as has been proved and demonstrated repeatedly, the data of the ministry is replete with inconsistencies and false determinations. For instance, the Ministry makes no attempt to differentiate between civilian casualties and terrorists, and has been known to record deaths unrelated to the conflict, such as natural deaths," the Israeli military said.

However, the ministry's figures are seen as reliable by U.N. agencies, such as the World Health Organization, many academics and international NGOs. Christian Lindmeier, a WHO spokesperson, said "we do have confidence" in the numbers.

Israel's military has accepted in briefings that the overall casualty numbers are broadly reliable, but it says many of those killed were fighters.

The Gaza Health Ministry has rejected Israeli criticism of its numbers, saying it has worked hard to ensure they are accurate and that it has been transparent about its methodology and data. It says it has only included direct deaths from the conflict, not those who died from causes such as disease or lack of shelter.

THE GENDERS AND AGES OF THE IDENTIFIED PALESTINIAN CASUALTIES FROM OCTOBER 7, 2023 TO MARCH 22, 2025.

Based on the detailed Health Ministry data covering 50,021 of the dead ...

Just over two-thirds are adults aged 18 or older, while nearly a third are children under 18. That reflects the young average age of the population: the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reported in 2022 that 40% of people in Gaza were under the age of 15.

Among children, slightly fewer females have been reported killed than males. Among adults, the group most fighters are drawn from, significantly more men have been reported killed than women.

Breaking this further into age groups, children up to the age of 12 account for over 10,731 dead, or just over 21%. More than 2,562 were 2 or younger.

The deaths among children were reflected in Mohammed's family. All his siblings fall within this age group. They were 11, 10 and 8 years old.

Another family to suffer in this way was that of Palestinian father Abdelsalam al-Banna. He lost his two children aged 8 and 5 when their apartment building collapsed during an Israeli airstrike on Dec. 15, 2023. He also lost his wife, sister-in-law and father-in-law.

Salsabiel Mohammad Abdel-Latif Al-Aklouk Wife, 32 years old

Joury Kamal Mohammad Al-Banna Daughter, 9 years old

Kamal Mohammad Kamal Al-Banna Son, 6 years old

Add a description of the graphic for screen readers. This is invisible on the page.

Banna has little recollection of the week he spent buried in the collapsed ruins of the building. He said he was unconscious for much of the time and drank urine to survive.

"The place was as dark as a grave. I didn't realise what happened. It felt like a dream," he said. After seven days his mother-in-law and another sister-in-law, who had all been in a corridor near concrete pillars that created a pocket of space, finally found a way out of the rubble after feeling air.

More than a year later, the bodies of his wife and children remain buried beneath the rubble. Banna registered their deaths at a local hospital, providing witness statements from him and his in-laws that the family had been present in the building when it collapsed but had not emerged.

"Nothing is more painful than this. I can't put them to rest," he said.

Banna and Mohammed's uncle Muataz al-Agha said that neither building was known to shelter active Hamas members or fighters. Reuters could not independently confirm this.

Israel said it needed precise coordinates of the air strikes that killed the Agha and Banna families to comment on them. Reuters was unable to provide those details and buildings in that area were not numbered as street addresses.

Abdelsalam Al-Banna escaped from this crevice



Ruins from a collapsed apartment building

An image of the collapsed building and a circle indicating where he managed to get out.

Source: Photo provided by Abdelsalam Al-Banna.

“BIGGEST MASSACRE OF JEWS”

When Hamas militants stormed into Israel from Gaza on October 7, 2023, they killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and seized 251 hostages, according to Israeli tallies.

Those killed in the Hamas attack included 329 soldiers and 58 police, Israel says.

At least 84 hostages are either confirmed or presumed to have died according to statements by Israel authorities.

It says 409 of its military have also been killed in the war.

Israel has called October 7 the biggest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust.

Among the people killed by Hamas on October 7 were three entire Israeli nuclear families according to Israel’s Civil Commission on October 7 Crimes by Hamas. One of these was the Siman Tov family: parents Yonatan and Tamar, their six-year-old twins Shahar and Arbel, and four-year-old son Omer.

PALESTINIAN FAMILIES ERASED

By Oct. 7 2024, one year into the war, 1,238 Palestinian families that have been wiped out, with no survivors, according to ministry figures. The data defines families as married couples and their children. 70% of these families were made up of between 2 to 4 people.

The ministry did not provide a more recent tally of the number of families killed.

407 families of **two**

26 families of **three**

192 families of **four**

Add a description of the graphic for screen readers. This is invisible on the page.

Families of 5 to 9 people made up 30% of those erased.

171 families of **five**

121 families of **six**

50 families of **seven**

17 families of **eight**

10 families of **nine**

Add a description of the graphic for screen readers. This is invisible on the page.

Among the larger families, there were three families of 11 people who were killed. The biggest family to be eliminated was the Haj family, whose 14 members were killed in the current conflict, according to the data provided by the Palestinian ministry of health.

3 families of **eleven**

and

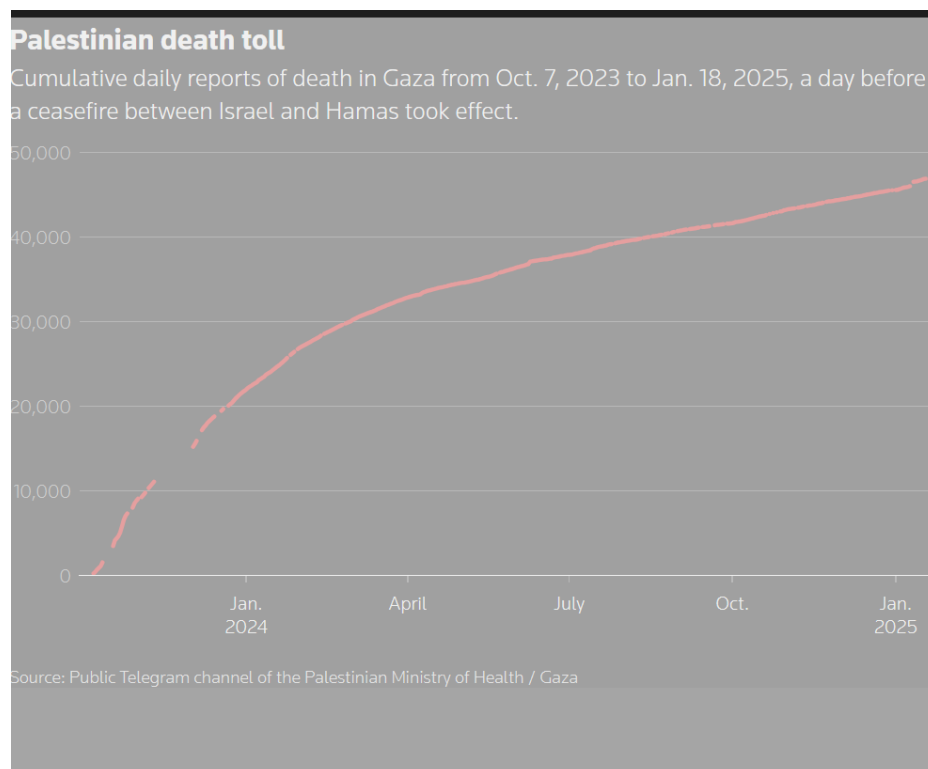
1 family of **fourteen**

Add a description of the graphic for screen readers. This is invisible on the page.

After Israel bombed Suhail al-Majdalawi's apartment building two months into the war, rescue workers helped unearth the bodies of 11 of his relatives. But they could not find six more, including three small children. He is waiting for authorities to bring heavy equipment to dig out their bodies.

"I've lost all my family and I am very tired and don't know what to do," he said.

Palestinian health authorities say there could be 10,000 dead still lying, uncounted, under the rubble. That figure is not included in this graphic.



Sources

Historic data - The data visualized in the opening timeline animation from Sept. 2005 to Oct. 7, 2023 is sourced from B'Tselem's fatalities database. The database provides statistics on all those killed in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Fatalities from the West Bank were not visualised, leaving only Palestinian and Israeli citizens killed during the conflict in both Gaza and Israel since Sept. 2005. This includes military and civilians. Palestinian citizens of Israel are categorized as Israeli.

Note

* Children are classified as anyone under the age of 18. Data on Israeli deaths during the initial attacks on Oct. 7 may include an unknown number of foreign nationals.

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ESTIMATED NUMBER OF HAMAS DEATHS

FROM MARK WHITE (Google AI) 21 APRIL 2025

Total Deaths: Estimates for the total number of Palestinian deaths vary significantly depending on the source and time period. The Gaza Ministry of Health (MoH) has reported figures exceeding 30,000 , reaching over 50,000 in some reports. A capture-recapture analysis published in The Lancet estimated approximately 64,260 deaths from traumatic injuries by June 30, 2024 (with a range of 55,298 to 78,525), suggesting the MoH figure of 37,877 for that period was an undercount.

Combatant Deaths: The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) have claimed to have killed between 12,000 and over 17,000 militants. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu cited a figure of around 14,000 militants killed out of approximately 30,000 total deaths as of May 2024. Hamas acknowledged losing 6,000 fighters as of February 15, 2024. The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) linked approximately 8,500 militant fatalities to specific IDF operational reports by October 2024. Action on Armed Violence (AOAV) estimated a maximum of 10,595 combatants based on their analysis of the MoH list of 40,717 identified deaths.

It's important to remember that these figures come from various sources with different methodologies and potential biases, and independent verification remains extremely challenging.

HOW TO RESPOND TO COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE ATTACK ON ISRAEL

[AJC](#)

Claim: Gaza is an Open Air Prison

Response:

- Israel has a security fence/blockade on its border to prevent terrorists from entering from Gaza - not to keep Palestinian civilians locked in. Egypt has the same type of closed border with Gaza for the same reason.
- In 2005, Israel disengaged and withdrew from Gaza, dismantling all Jewish settlements and withdrawing all military forces. Since 2007, Gaza has been controlled by Hamas, an Iran-backed terror group, which came to power through elections.
- Since 2007, Hamas has posed a true security threat to Israel. It has launched thousands upon thousands of rockets into Israel, targeting civilian neighborhoods. There have been wars between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, including in 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2021. Hamas has built underground tunnels from Gaza into Israel through which they smuggle weapons and engage in terrorist incursions into Israeli territory.
- Hamas, with the funding it receives from international aid, could have built infrastructure, health care, and education systems for its population. Instead, it has created rockets and tunnels to attack Israel, turning Gaza into a wasteland and keeping the Palestinian population in poverty.
- Israel has issued over 15,000 work visas for civilians in Gaza to work in Israel, which provides an economic lifeline for tens of thousands of Gazans, and provides free electricity and consistent humanitarian aid to Gazans.
- It is important to also keep in mind that, as noted above, Gaza has a border with Egypt. Egypt and other Arab nations could take in Palestinian refugees who don't support Hamas and are essentially being held prisoners by a terrorist group. It has thus far refused to do so.

Claim: Israel is equally at fault for killing as many or more Palestinian civilians

Response:

- The Gazan people are tragic pawns of Hamas, which has prioritized terror against Israel over the wellbeing of its own people. Using civilians as human shields, Hamas stores missiles and military equipment in schools and hospitals, putting the lives of Palestinian civilians in danger when Israel must bomb military installations. Israel has a policy of warning civilians before attacking, making phone calls to residents and dropping lead on buildings to warn of impending missile strikes. In this conflict, Israel has warned Gazans to evacuate ahead of air strikes. The Israeli army has shared footage of Hamas

- Israel was attacked by Hamas, and 1,300 Israeli citizens were murdered. Israel has a moral obligation to protect its citizens and to recover the approximately 150 Israelis, among them babies, children, women, and the elderly (some of whom are American citizens), who are being held hostage by Hamas terrorists in Gaza.
- While Israel does its best to avoid civilian casualties through warnings before bombing military installations, Hamas uses its own citizens as human shields, which increases the death toll in Gaza exponentially. Unfortunately, Hamas' lack of humanity results in the tragic death of innocent civilians.

Claim: Israelis are colonizers

Response:

- There is no justification for terrorism. Period.
- The accusation that Israel is a colonial state is an attempt to delegitimize the existence of the State of Israel and deny its right to exist.
- As is documented through historical sources and archeological finds, Israel has been the homeland of the Jewish people for more than 3,000 years. The Roman Empire destroyed the Jewish state of Judea in 70 CE and expelled the Jews living there, but even in exile, the Jewish people always longed to return to their homeland. The Zionist movement of the late 19th century gave Jews the hope and ability to begin to return to live there.
- The term "colonizers" suggests a colonial empire which benefits from colonization. Far from colonizers, Jews who returned to Israel were fleeing persecution in their nations of previous residence to return to their ancestral homeland.
- Lastly, and importantly, Israel does not occupy the Gaza Strip and has had no presence in the coastal enclave for nearly two decades.

Claim: Antizionism is not Antisemitism

Response:

- Zionism is the movement for self-determination for Jews in the land of modern-day Israel. Antizionism is the opposition to Jews having a Jewish state in their ancestral homeland and the denying of the Jewish people's right to self-determination, calling for Israel's dissolution.
- While criticism of Israeli policies, like critiquing any other country, is valid and not antisemitic, the particular belief that Jews do not have the right to self-determination is discrimination against Jews and is antisemitism. [Natan Sharansky's 3D test and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism \(IHRA\)](#) are helpful frameworks to determine when criticism of Israel veers into antisemitism.

- While criticism of Israeli policy is valid and not antisemitic, attacks on “Zionists” are often thinly veiled attacks against Jews, especially since most Jews support Zionism and have a connection to Israel.

Claim: Israel is an apartheid state

Response:

- This is one of the most commonly used canards against Israel, which seeks to cast Israel as uniquely evil and worthy of being dismantled. Apartheid is defined as *“the implementation and maintenance of a system of legalized racial segregation in which one racial group is deprived of political and civil rights.”* 21% of the Israeli population are Muslim Israeli Arabs who enjoy the same rights as all other citizens of Israel. There are two Arab parties in the Israeli Knesset, the legislature of Israel. There are also two Arab Supreme Court judges.
- People who claim Israel is an apartheid state point to the barrier wall between the West Bank and Israel proper as evidence for their claim, but the wall is a critical security measure put into place as a result of the Second Intifada during which terrorists crossing into Israel from the West Bank killed approximately 1000 Israelis. The wall has saved countless Israeli lives, including Arab Israeli lives. It is important to note that terrorists do not only harm Jews. Arabs are also protected from terrorist attacks by Israeli security measures.

Claim: Gaza lives in abject poverty because of Israeli oppression

Response:

- Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005. Hamas gained control of the territory in 2007. Instead of investing in schools, civil infrastructure, and hospitals, Hamas invested in rockets to target Israeli civilians and they consistently place Palestinians who live in Gaza as human shields, hiding their terrorist cells in heavily populated neighborhoods where it becomes challenging to dislodge them without harming innocent civilians.
- Israel provides electricity, fuel, and humanitarian aid to Gaza. International organizations also provide millions of dollars in aid to Gaza. Hamas takes this aid and weaponizes it to build terror tunnels, fund missiles and weaponry, and pay off the families of suicide attackers instead of providing for the Palestinian people.

Claim: Israel has created the context and circumstances that led to this recent conflict.

Response:

- Let's be very clear here: Nothing justifies the unprovoked murder and kidnapping of innocent civilians. Babies, children, young people, elderly, disabled individuals have been killed, injured, or kidnapped by brutal terrorists. What happened in Israel was a pogrom. The slaughter of innocent Israelis and the documentation by Hamas of these crimes against humanity must be denounced unequivocally.
- Any attempt to rationalize or justify Hamas' terrorist actions is utterly abhorrent. There can be no moral equivalency drawn between the horror of Hamas' attack on Israel beginning October 7th, 2023 and Israel's legitimate defense of its citizens from Hamas aggression.
- For decades, Israel has endorsed a two-state solution that would lead to a Palestinian state. The Palestinian leadership has repeatedly rejected proposals for two-state solutions. Since 2005, Israel has had no military or civilian presence in Gaza.

Claim: Rallies and organizations celebrating the “successes” of Hamas have a right to organize and express themselves.

Response:

- When freedom of speech turns into hate speech, it is our collective responsibility as a society to condemn it and denounce it unequivocally.
- The horrors that we see perpetrated by Hamas are acts of terrorism, and supporting Hamas' actions in any kind of way equals defending terrorists.
- Organizations like Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), and other pro-Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement groups who back Hamas and their terrorist acts are supporting and praising the killing of Jews. They foment hatred against Jews and create an unsafe environment for Jewish students on campus.

OUR FUTURE HOPE FOR ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

ChatGPT (AI) (Jan 2024)

The future hope for Israel and Palestine lies in fostering a vision where peace, coexistence, and mutual respect transcend historical grievances and political divides.

Achieving this hope requires a combination of education, dialogue, and practical steps toward reconciliation.

Here's a framework for envisioning a better future:

1. A Shared Vision for Peace

- Two States or Shared Sovereignty:
 - A viable solution may lie in the establishment of two states living side by side in peace, with clearly defined borders and mutual recognition. Alternatively, some advocate for a single, democratic state that guarantees equal rights for all citizens.
 - Commitment to Coexistence:
 - Both Israelis and Palestinians must cultivate a shared commitment to coexist as neighbors, partners, or members of the same political entity, respecting each other's rights and aspirations.
-

2. Building Trust Through Dialogue

- Grassroots Efforts:
 - Civil society organizations, schools, and community leaders can promote dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians to break down stereotypes and build trust.
 - Cross-Border Initiatives:
 - Programs that bring together youth, academics, and professionals from both sides can foster collaboration and shared understanding.
-

3. Prioritizing Education for Peace

- Peace-Oriented Curricula:
 - Revamping educational systems to teach mutual respect, shared history, and conflict resolution is critical.
 - Language and Culture:
 - Learning each other's languages and celebrating cultural contributions can bridge divides and foster empathy.
-

4. Addressing Economic Disparities

- Economic Cooperation:
 - Joint economic projects, such as industrial parks or trade partnerships, can create shared prosperity and interdependence.
 - Humanitarian Focus:
 - Addressing poverty and providing access to healthcare, education, and basic services can reduce tensions and improve quality of life.
-

5. Strengthening Political Leadership

- Bold and Visionary Leaders:
 - Both sides need leaders willing to take risks for peace, prioritize dialogue, and reject extremism.
 - International Mediation:
 - The international community, including the United Nations, the United States, and regional partners, can play a critical role in mediating and supporting negotiations.
-

6. Ensuring Human Rights and Justice

- Equal Rights:
 - Guaranteeing rights and protections for all individuals, regardless of nationality or religion, is essential for long-term peace.
 - Transitional Justice:
 - Mechanisms to address past grievances, such as truth commissions or compensation for displaced families, can help heal historical wounds.
-

7. Environmental and Resource Cooperation

- Shared Resource Management:
 - Joint management of shared resources like water, energy, and arable land can build interdependence and reduce conflicts.
 - Sustainability Projects:
 - Collaborative efforts to combat climate change and protect the environment can unite both sides around a common goal.
-

8. Empowering the Next Generation

- Youth Leadership:
 - Investing in young leaders who believe in peace and coexistence can create a new generation unburdened by the weight of past conflicts.
- Digital Platforms for Collaboration:
 - Technology can connect young people from both sides, fostering shared projects and breaking down barriers.

9. Emphasizing Shared Humanity

- Cultural Exchange:
 - Art, music, literature, and sports can serve as powerful tools for highlighting shared humanity and building relationships.
 - Shared Mourning and Healing:
 - Acknowledging the pain and losses of both sides can foster compassion and empathy.
-

10. Long-Term Security and Stability

- Demilitarization and Cooperation:
 - Agreements that focus on security cooperation and demilitarization can build trust and reduce violence.
 - Peacekeeping Support:
 - International peacekeepers may help maintain stability during transitional periods.
-

Conclusion: A Hopeful Future

The hope for Israel and Palestine lies in their ability to see each other not as perpetual adversaries, but as partners in building a peaceful, prosperous region. This requires courage, empathy, and unwavering commitment to a shared future where both peoples can thrive. By addressing the root causes of conflict, fostering trust, and investing in the next generation, Israel and Palestine can move toward a reality where peace is not just a dream, but a lived experience.

GAZANS' PRE-WAR VIEWS OF HAMAS

[WILSON CENTER](#) [Ambassador Mark A. Green](#) Nov 28 2023



 Image Credit

A pre-October 7 survey of West Bank and Gaza residents suggests most Palestinians didn't trust Hamas or the Palestinian Authority.

Israel and Egypt have [limited the flow of goods and people](#) into Gaza since 2005. Those restrictions were significantly strengthened after Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip in 2007. Yet, according to polling from the respected Arab Barometer conducted before the October 7 Hamas terrorist attack, only [16%](#) of residents there blamed the lack of food in Gaza to externally imposed economic sanctions. 31% of respondents blamed government mismanagement, and 26% blamed inflation.

[Arab Barometer](#) is a nonpartisan research group established in 2006 to help the world better understand the views and issues shaping the Middle East and North Africa. Its most recent survey of the West Bank and Gaza utilized one-on-one conversations with 790 individuals in the West Bank, and 399 in Gaza, between September 28 and October 8, 2023—with the work in Gaza obviously interrupted by Hamas's terrorist attack.

Even though Hamas won a plurality of votes in 2006 legislative elections in both Gaza and the West Bank, the Arab Barometer's findings make it clear that the terrorist group had fallen well out of favor before the October 7 attacks.

When asked how much they trusted Hamas authorities, 44% of Gazans said they had no trust at all, and 23% had "not a lot of trust." Only 29% expressed either a great deal or quite a lot of trust in their government. When it came to government corruption, 72% said they believed there was a large or medium amount of corruption in government institutions, and only a minority thought the government was taking meaningful steps to address the problem.

Those same attitudes were reflected in the Gazans' views of key political candidates. In a hypothetical ballot featuring Ismail Haniyeh, the leader of Hamas, Mahmoud Abbas, the current president of the

Palestinian Authority, and Marwan Barghout, an imprisoned member of the central committee of Fatah, none got more than 32% of the imagined vote, and 30% said they would sit the election out.

According to a recent [Wall Street Journal](#) story, as leaders in the Middle East and the West begin to contemplate post-war Gaza, most believe some form of Palestinian government should lead it, however, there is little consensus on what that government should look like. The Journal reports, “One emerging point of consensus is that the [Palestinian Authority](#)—as it now operates and oversees the West Bank—isn’t up to the job.”

The horrific attack on October 7 has obviously upended the lives of everyone in Gaza—and had dramatic costs and impacts for millions of people in the region. For many, it may seem hard to recall a time before October 7, and just as hard to focus on what needs to happen once the fighting is over. But that day will come. And when it does, we will all have a stake in, first, helping the Palestinian people find leadership they can believe in and, second, bringing together the support of Egypt, Jordan, members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Israel, and the US to help that leadership find its footing on a path toward peace and security.

This blog was researched and drafted with the assistance of Caroline Moody.

AJC POLICY ON UNRWA

AJC 2/5/2024

CURRENT SITUATION

American Jewish Committee (AJC) is outraged by the revelations that twelve employees of **UNRWA – the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Middle East – were involved in the horrific October 7 terror attacks** perpetrated by Hamas against Israel. According to an Israeli government dossier shared with the media and selected foreign governments, an additional 1,200 of Gaza's 12,000 UNRWA employees are said to have links to Hamas or Islamic Jihad.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has pledged to investigate the allegations of UNRWA staff complicity in October 7 atrocities, saying any UN employee involved in acts of terror will be held accountable, including through criminal prosecution. UNRWA had also previously announced a full, independent review of its operations. We note with interest the Secretary-General's decision to establish an independent Review Group, which will function separately and in parallel from the efforts already underway by the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). We expect such serious allegations to be investigated by an impartial outside body, independently and with full transparency.

We are keenly aware that some two million Palestinian civilians in Gaza depend on aid from UNRWA. Their condition might deteriorate further due to the allegations against UNRWA employees, which led the U.S. and several other major donor countries to suspend their financial aid to the agency. Despite the serious issues with UNRWA that must be investigated, continued delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza is essential, and next steps on UNRWA must be conducted in a manner that does not harm Palestinian civilians in need of humanitarian assistance.

PERPETUAL ISSUES

The allegations against UNRWA that continue to emerge are just the latest revelation regarding an institution that has, since its formation, been deeply flawed. Once the immediate crisis in Gaza is remedied and as Israel, the United States and key stakeholders in the region chart the course ahead, it is clear that the international community must engage in serious conversation around the future of UNRWA.

UNRWA was established in December 1949 to provide education, health care, social services, and emergency aid to Palestinian refugees. It is the only UN refugee institution that deals with a singular population, whereas the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which was created in 1950, is the United Nations' main agency that handles all other refugees and displaced persons.

Unfortunately, for many years, the agency has also served as a vehicle for the advancement of Palestinian goals against Israel. It has detracted from the cause of a negotiated, peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and instead of helping solve the refugee problem, it has endeavored to perpetuate it. UNRWA also continues to register people as refugees even if they have gained citizenship or citizen rights in other countries or were born in Palestinian territories. These practices have been one of the main

reasons that the original count of an estimated 750,000 Palestinian refugees in 1948 has expanded to 5.9 million today. To the detriment of peace, UNRWA has magnified the Palestinian refugee problem.

What's more, UNRWA has been teaching successive generations of Palestinians born in Gaza and the West Bank with deeply problematic curricula that promote and glorify violent antisemitism and deny Israel's right to exist.

THE PATH FORWARD

We recognize that the ultimate settlement of the refugee problem lies in the permanent resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – a resolution continually pushed out of reach by the principles and incendiary practices of UNRWA.

To address the issues perpetuated by UNRWA, AJC urges governments to press for fundamental reforms that will:

- Create new procedures for the screening of UN staff engaged in assisting the Palestinian population, particularly in the educational sector, to prohibit connection with terror organizations listed as such by donor countries.
- Ensure that curricula taught in Palestinian schools are in line with UNESCO standards, do not promote hatred or incitement, and rather promote peaceful coexistence.
- End UNRWA's policy of perpetuating the Palestinian refugee problem and replace it with a new policy designed to help resettle refugees.

There are currently 35.3 million registered refugees worldwide, of whom 29.4 million are under the UNHCR mandate. The remaining 5.9 million people are under UNRWA's mandate. The existence of a separate agency to deal with Palestinian refugees, while all other refugees are under UNHCR's mandate, is politically based, costly, and nonsensical. The needs of those currently under the umbrella of UNRWA could be met as well or better under UNHCR and other international agencies.

PART 0-1A ACTION BY ISRAELI FORCES AGAINST HAMAS

ISRAEL'S TARGETING AI: HOW CAPABLE IS IT?

[RUSI](#) Noah Sylvia 8 February 2024



Laid waste: the aftermath of an an Israeli strike on north Gaza in November 2023.

Image: Eddie Gerald / Alamy

The ‘Habsora’ AI system used by the Israeli military is said to use intelligence data to generate targets for attack, including reports on the likely number of civilian casualties. But the odds of even the Israel Defense Forces using an AI with such a degree of sophistication and autonomy are low.

In 2021, Israel claimed to have used AI in its brief conflict against militant groups in the Gaza Strip, sparking headlines about the first ‘AI War’. Recent reports claim much more intensive usage of AI-powered systems in Israel’s current war on Gaza, although details about these systems remain scarce due to the highly classified nature of Israeli intelligence and the layers of mis- and disinformation surrounding the ongoing war. Despite the dearth of information, there is reason to inject a note of caution into discussions of both the alleged capabilities and the role of Israel’s military AI.

HABSORA: AI TARGETING?

In 2019, the Israeli government announced the creation of a ‘targeting directorate’ to produce targets for the Israeli Defense Force (IDF), especially the Israeli Air Force (IAF). In previous conflicts, the IAF would run out of targets after just a few weeks of fighting, having hit all the targets of which they knew. The targeting directorate was created to mitigate this shortage by preemptively creating a ‘bank’ of militant targets prior to any conflict, thereby ensuring enough targets when hostilities began. The directorate, consisting of hundreds of soldiers and analysts, creates targets by aggregating data from a variety of sources – drone footage, intercepted communications, surveillance data, open source information, and data from monitoring the movements and behaviour of both individuals and large groups.

Both media and IDF sources claim that AI is used by the targeting directorate to process the aggregated data and then generate targets at a much higher speed than human analysts can. The AI system used (dubbed 'Habsora' (בשורה), or 'Gospel') is said to use the intelligence collected to output actionable targets of militants' locations for brigade- or division-level targeting. The reporting claims that the target outputs include reports on the likely number of civilian casualties. Media sources claim that the human analyst's role is confined to confirming the target before it is given to the commander for rejection or approval. The IDF states that the goal is a 'complete match' between Habsora's and a human analyst's targeting recommendation prior to a strike.

ALTERNATIVE VIEW

The IDF is one of the most technologically advanced and integrated militaries in the world, yet the odds of even the IDF using an AI with such a degree of sophistication and autonomy are low.

Despite the dearth of information, there is reason to inject a note of caution into discussions of both the alleged capabilities and the role of Israel's military AI

Although 'creating targets' might sound like a simple concept, targeting is an immensely complex task, meaning that Habsora would be miles beyond any other tactical/operational system deployed by militaries around the world. The AI would need to be capable of accepting a variety of data formats from numerous sources, weighing the relevance and reliability of each data point, combining this data with existing records, and creating an actionable target profile, while allegedly also estimating civilian collateral damage.

While such capability is may be technically feasible, there is an even lower likelihood of such a system being allowed such a broad remit in a combat environment, because trust in AI, especially military AI, remains lacking. A system like Habsora, with its reported lack of output detailing reasons for target selection, is unlikely to reduce this apprehensiveness.

Even in the less autonomous, but still vague, role for Habsora described by the IDF, no description is given of how the system creates targets, or what happens when the two do not align. Commanders would likely desire significant cross-checking by several human sources before confirming a strike, which would occupy many of the directorate's human analysts, thus negating at least some of the efficiency gained by deploying AI.

Every decision to strike is made with near-comprehensive knowledge of conditions in the target location and anticipated effects of the strike, including anticipated casualties

A much more likely scenario is that the targeting directorate uses machine-automated systems in cohering intelligence to identify patterns in the massive quantities of data collected, with humans creating the actual target. Even in a secondary role such as this, AI-enhanced processing would undoubtedly increase the speed at which the directorate produces targets, relative to analysts doing this by hand. Using a system to amass and automatically process collected intelligence is not new; such computing has been used in targeting for decades, albeit with varying technical capability. Upon receiving intelligence (which could be

anything from geospatial to signals intelligence), a machine-automated system could indicate areas of interest where further attention or action might be merited, but not output actionable targets.

IMPLICATIONS

However, the absence of explicit AI targeting does not mean that Israel's aerial war on Gaza is imprecise, or that it is unable to avoid civilian casualties in its strikes. Despite its extensive use of 'dumb' munitions, Israel has access to massive quantities of precision munitions. These precision munitions are available with a variety of warheads and capabilities, allowing the IDF to limit or expand the level of destruction at will, and indicating that the majority of civilian collateral damage from air strikes is intentional and accounted for.

The IDF has maintained an extraordinarily dense surveillance network over Gaza for many years, and retains absolute supremacy in electronic, communications, geospatial, and measurement and signature intelligence. Every decision to strike is made with near-comprehensive knowledge of conditions in the target location and anticipated effects of the strike, including anticipated casualties. Israel also has a rigorous legal core within its military, whose lawyers must sign off on every target – human- or AI-generated – even if there are hundreds in a single day. When Israeli air strikes kill or injure tens of thousands of civilians, it seems beyond any reasonable doubt that every single target is generated, approved, ordered and struck with the full knowledge and consent of human IDF operators.

The views expressed in this Commentary are the author's, and do not represent those of RUSI or any other institution.

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MALTA, GREECE, TURKEY SAID THREATENING TO SEIZE GAZA ACTIVISTS' DRONE-HIT SHIP IF IT DOCKS

Activists with pro-Gaza Freedom Flotilla Coalition say Palau revoked its flag from Conscience shortly before alleged Israeli attack on reportedly Hamas-affiliated vessel

[TIMES OF ISRAEL Agencies](#) and [Tol Staff](#) 3 May 2025



Damage to the vessel Conscience is seen after what the ship's operators, Flotilla Freedom Coalition, said was an Israeli drone strike in international waters near Malta, May 2, 2025.

(Screen capture: Instagram/Flotilla Freedom Coalition)

At least three countries are said to have denied entry and threatened to confiscate a reportedly Hamas-affiliated Gaza-bound humanitarian aid ship whose operators accused Israel on Friday of attacking it with drones in international waters near Malta.

Tighe Barry, an activist with anti-war group Codepink, told the Associated Press that the Pacific island nation of Palau, which has warm ties with Israel, revoked its flag from the Conscience prior to the alleged attack.

As a result, authorities in Malta, Greece and Turkey have warned that they would seize the ship if it comes to port, he said, adding that it was unclear where the vessel could stop for repairs. There was no formal comment from those countries.

"To get a new flag will take months, so they're just stuck out there," said Barry, who was among a group of activists who took speedboats to the Conscience after the attack.

The boats were turned away by Maltese authorities, he said, but one person made it aboard and spoke to the captain.

The Conscience was operated by the Freedom Flotilla Coalition, an international non-governmental organization, which is campaigning to end Israel's blockade of Gaza. Another Coalition ship to Gaza in 2010 was stopped and boarded by Israeli troops, leading to the death of nine of the activists, who resisted the troops and injured 10 of them. Other ships have similarly been stopped and boarded, without loss of life.



A Maltese tugboat helps put out a fire onboard the vessel Conscience, sparked by what the ship's operators, the Freedom Flotilla Coalition, said was an Israeli drone strike, in international waters near Malta in the Mediterranean Sea, early May 2, 2025. (Government of Malta)

The Saudi Al Arabiya news channel reported, citing a Western security source, that Hamas was behind the Conscience vessel and that those onboard planned to engage with troops from the Israel Defense Forces as they approached the Gaza shore.

According to the ship-monitoring website Marine Traffic, the Conscience had left the Tunisian port of Bizerte on Tuesday and arrived Thursday morning in the area where it reported being attacked.

The Freedom Flotilla said Friday that the Conscience had been struck twice overnight by armed drones 17 nautical miles (31.5 kilometers) east of Malta, "causing a fire and a substantial breach in the hull." The statement added that "Israeli ambassadors must be summoned and answer to violations of international law.

The Israeli foreign ministry did not respond to a request for comment on the allegation by the Freedom Flotilla Coalition.

The group released footage showing two large holes in the ship's deck, with thick smoke surrounding the vessel. The person recording the footage said the ship had been hit twice. Further footage recorded in daylight showed debris surrounding the holes.

The ship's generator was badly damaged and would need to be repaired before it could continue, said Charlie Andreasson, who has been involved with the Freedom Flotilla Coalition for more than a decade.



Damage to the vessel Conscience is seen after what the ship's operators, Flotilla Freedom Coalition, said was an Israeli drone strike in international waters near Malta, May 2, 2025. (Screen capture: Instagram/Flotilla Freedom Coalition)

The coalition said it organized a non-violent action under a media blackout to avoid any potential sabotage. Asked whether the group believes Israel was behind the attack, a spokesperson told AFP they "suspected" that was the case.

"While we cannot confirm 100%, we suspect it's Israel," Hay Sha Wiya said, calling the country "the primary entity interested in keeping us and any aid out of Gaza."

Another spokeswoman, Caoimhe Butterly, said the attack took place as the ship was preparing for activists to board from another vessel. A transfer at sea had been planned rather than the ship going to harbor, for bureaucratic reasons, she said. Swedish activist Greta Thunberg told Reuters she was in Malta and had been supposed to board the ship.

The Maltese government said the vessel and its crew were secured in the early hours of the morning after a nearby tug assisted with firefighting operations following an SOS call from the Conscience. The government said there were 16 people on board the ship, while Thunberg and the Freedom Flotilla gave the number to be 30.

In a statement Friday evening, Malta also said "no aircraft or vessel currently mentioned in local and foreign media in relation to the case of the vessel Conscience" had entered the country's airspace or territorial waters, which stretch to 12 nautical miles (19.3 kilometers) from the island.

Turkey's foreign ministry said Turkish nationals were on board at the time of the incident, and it was working with Maltese authorities to transfer them to a safe location.

"We condemn in the strongest terms this attack on a civilian ship," it said, noting that there were "allegations that the ship was targeted by Israeli drones."

"All necessary efforts will be made to reveal the details of the attack as soon as possible and to bring the perpetrators to justice," it said.

The alleged Israeli attack on the Conscience came some two months after Israel halted the entry of aid into the Gaza Strip.

The flow of aid stopped on March 2, after the expiration of the Gaza ceasefire and the hostage deal's 42-day first phase, amid Israel's refusal to negotiate the second and Hamas's refusal to extend the first. Israel resumed hostilities in Gaza on March 18.

Aid agencies say there is a growing humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian enclave.



Palestinians wait for donated food at a distribution center in Beit Lahiya, northern Gaza, March 16, 2025.

(AP Photo/Abdel Kareem Hana, File)

The stop on aid entering Gaza was part of an Israeli effort to pressure Hamas back into a hostage deal. At the same time, the IDF resumed its offensive in Gaza, seizing large sections of the Strip's territory and killing an estimated 400 members of terror groups, including dozens of top officials in Hamas's politburo and military wing.

According to the terror group's health ministry, more than 52,000 people in the Strip have been killed or are presumed dead in the fighting so far. The toll cannot be verified and does not distinguish between civilians and fighters.

Israel says it has killed some 20,000 combatants in battle as of January and another 1,600 terrorists inside Israel during the Hamas onslaught of October 7, 2023, in which terrorists killed some 1,200 people and took 251 hostage, sparking the war in Gaza.

PART 2 ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR 2023 - 2025

(OPTIMISTICALLY)

ISRAELI PUBLIC IS INCREASINGLY SKEPTICAL ABOUT LASTING PEACE

*Most see lack of trust between Israelis and Palestinians,
along with the status of Jerusalem, as major obstacles*

[PEW RESEARCH CENTER](#) [Maria Smerkovich](#), [Kelsey Jo Starr](#) and [Andrew Prozorovsky](#)

June 3 2025

HOW WE DID THIS

More than a year into the Israel-Hamas war, Israelis express growing doubts about peace with Palestinians, according to a Pew Research Center survey.

Research in the West Bank and Gaza

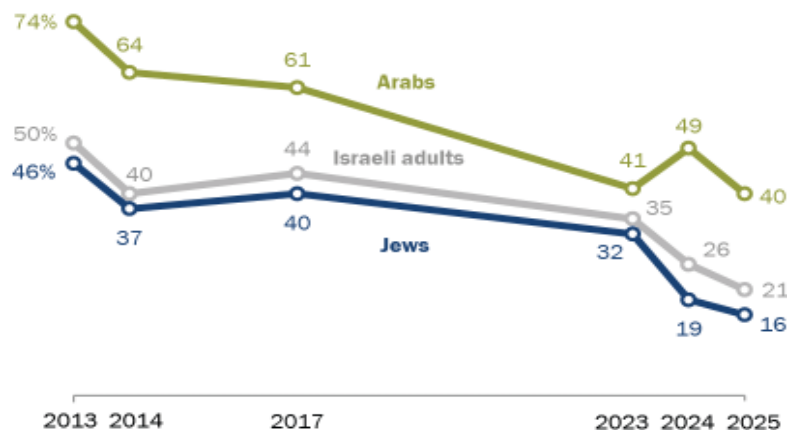
Pew Research Center has polled the Palestinian territories in previous years, but we were unable to conduct fieldwork in Gaza or the West Bank for our February-March 2025 survey due to security concerns. We are actively investigating possibilities for both qualitative and quantitative research on public opinion in the region.

The survey was conducted Feb. 5-March 11, 2025, among a nationally representative sample of 998 Israeli adults. It is the Center's second annual survey in Israel since the start of the war on Oct. 7, 2023. The field period coincided with [the most recent ceasefire](#) between Israel and Hamas, and the survey was completed before [hostilities resumed on March 18](#).

Likelihood of peace

Share of Israelis who say peaceful coexistence with a Palestinian state is possible continues to shrink

% who think a way **can** be found for Israel and an independent Palestinian state to coexist peacefully with each other, by ethnicity



Source: Survey of Israeli adults conducted Feb. 5-March 11, 2025.
"Israeli Public Is Increasingly Skeptical About Lasting Peace"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

We find that 21% of Israeli adults think Israel and a Palestinian state can coexist peacefully – **the lowest percentage since we began asking this question in 2013**. This share is down 14 percentage points since spring 2023, several months before the Israel-Hamas war started.

The share of Jewish Israelis who think peaceful coexistence is possible is also low (16%). Arab Israelis are more optimistic (40%) about the possibility of an independent Palestinian state coexisting with Israel, a prospect often called a “two-state solution.”

Commitment to peace

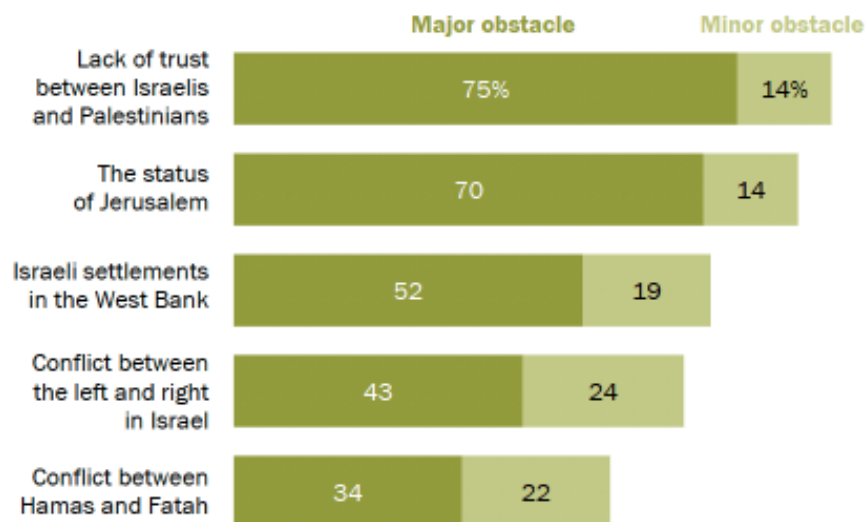
A slim majority of adults in Israel (56%) say the Israeli people are committed to working toward lasting peace. But fewer think this is true of the Palestinian people (41%) or of the leadership on either side.

About half of Israelis (47%) say their own government is very or somewhat committed to working toward lasting peace. A similar share (45%) say the Palestinian Authority is at least somewhat committed to seeking peace. Just 20% of Israelis say this about Hamas, the main organization at war with Israel in the Gaza Strip.

Obstacles to peace

Majorities of Israelis see several issues as obstacles to lasting peace with Palestinians

% of Israeli adults who say each of the following is a ___ to working toward lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians



Source: Survey of Israeli adults conducted Feb. 5–March 11, 2025.

“Israeli Public Is Increasingly Skeptical About Lasting Peace”

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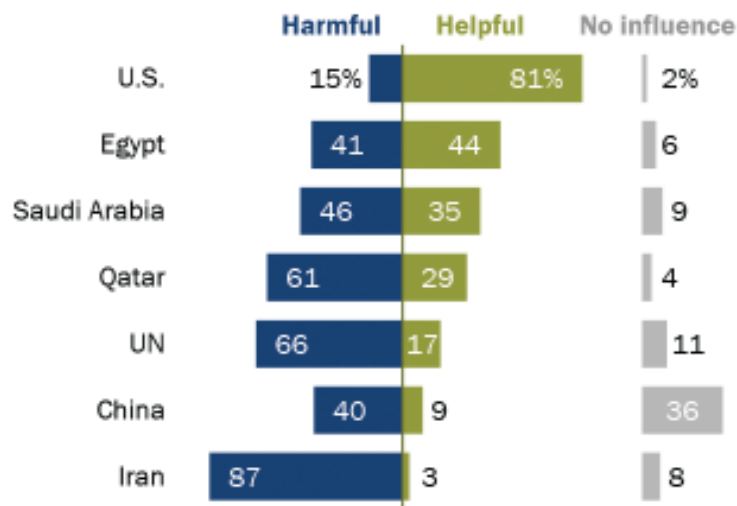
Israelis see several things as at least minor obstacles to peace: the status of Jerusalem, Israeli settlements in the West Bank, conflict between the left and right in Israeli politics, and conflict between Hamas and Fatah on the Palestinian side.

But the most frequently cited obstacle is a lack of trust between Israelis and Palestinians. Three-quarters of Israelis call this a *major* obstacle to lasting peace.

International actors

Israelis see U.S. as helpful, Iran as harmful to peace efforts

% of Israeli adults who say each of the following is ___ in working toward lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians



Note: Those who did not answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of Israeli adults conducted Feb. 5-March 11, 2025.

"Israeli Public Is Increasingly Skeptical About Lasting Peace"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Israelis are skeptical about foreign involvement in efforts to facilitate lasting peace. They see the influence of several countries – as well as the United Nations – as harmful rather than helpful.

The United States is an exception: **81% of Israelis say the U.S. is helpful in the work toward lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.**

Still, half of Israelis say U.S. President Donald Trump is favoring Israelis too much in his foreign relations, while 2% say he favors Palestinians too much and 42% say he favors each group the right amount.

In the following report, we look more closely at how Israelis view:

- [Likelihood of peace and each side's commitment to it](#)
- [Obstacles to peace](#)
- [International actors and their contributions to peace](#)
- [Israeli and Palestinian leaders](#)

Related: [How Americans view Israel and the Israel-Hamas war at the start of Trump's second term](#)

Views of contested territories

Israelis identify several contested territories as obstacles on the path to peace with the Palestinians.

Seven-in-ten (70%) say the status of Jerusalem, a city that both Israelis and Palestinians claim as their capital, is a major obstacle. Roughly half (52%) say the same of surrounding Israeli settlements in the West Bank. The settlements are [considered illegal under international law](#), though Israel disputes this claim – and among the Israeli public, more say the continued building of West Bank settlements helps the security of their country (44%) rather than hurts it (35%).

As for Gaza, a third of Israelis believe Israel should govern the territory after the war, down from 40% in spring 2024. In particular, Israeli Jews and Israelis on the ideological right are less likely to say Israel should govern Gaza compared with last year.

A smaller share of the Israeli public would rather let the people who live in Gaza decide who governs them (16%). And relatively few prefer a unity government led by the Palestinian Authority – either with (6%) or without (10%) the leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas, also known as Abu Mazen – or control by the United Nations (2%). Just 1% of Israelis say Hamas should govern Gaza after the war ends. A combined 11% say they would like to see some other person or group in charge.

As to whether the international community will recognize an independent Palestinian state in the next five years, more Israelis say this is unlikely (51%) than say it is likely (40%).

Related: [Fewer Israelis support Israel taking over Gaza now than in 2024](#)

Read more about Israeli views of obstacles to peace with Palestinians in [Chapter 2](#).

Views of Israeli and Palestinian politics

Israelis generally voice unfavorable views of their own political leaders, both those in power and in the opposition.

Support for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was at a low ebb [in the Center's 2024 survey](#) (58% unfavorable vs. 41% favorable). Today, a similar share of Israeli adults see the leader of their country in a negative light (53% unfavorable vs. 45% favorable). The two opposition party leaders we asked about – Benny Gantz and Yair Lapid – receive poor marks, too, with unfavorable views of Gantz up 10 points since 2024 (from 44% to 54% unfavorable).

Israelis are even more critical of Palestinian leaders. Abbas and Marwan Barghouti, the latter a prominent Fatah member [detained by Israel since 2002](#), are viewed unfavorably by 85% and 80% of the Israeli public, respectively.

As the war continues, **Israelis are divided about their own leaders' level of commitment to working toward lasting peace with Palestinians**: 47% say the Israeli government is very or somewhat committed to peace, while 49% say it is not too or not at all committed.

A similar share of Israelis (45%) see at least some commitment to peace in the Fatah-controlled Palestinian Authority, which governs parts of the West Bank.

One-in-five Israelis say Hamas is at least somewhat committed to lasting peace, while 72% disagree. This includes a 67% majority who say Hamas is not committed to peace *at all*.

Read more about Israeli views of Israeli and Palestinian leaders in [Chapter 4](#), and about commitment to peace in [Chapter 1](#).

Related: [Most people across 24 surveyed countries have negative views of Israel and Netanyahu](#)

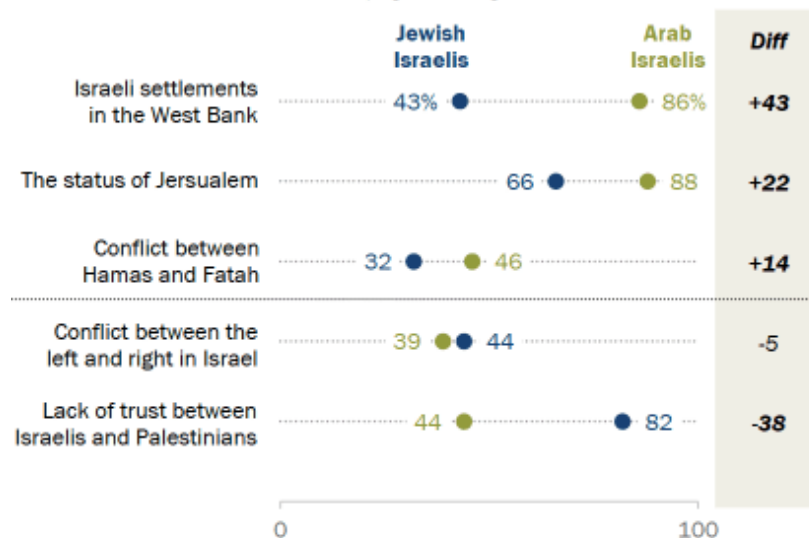
How Israelis differ from one another

On many of these questions, we find large gaps between demographic groups in Israeli society – particularly between Israeli Jews and Arabs, but also between Israelis with different ideological leanings.

Views by ethnicity

Jewish and Arab Israelis differ on what they consider major obstacles to lasting peace

% who say ___ is a **major obstacle** to working toward a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians, by ethnicity



Note: Statistically significant differences are in bold.

Source: Survey of Israeli adults conducted Feb. 5-March 11, 2025.

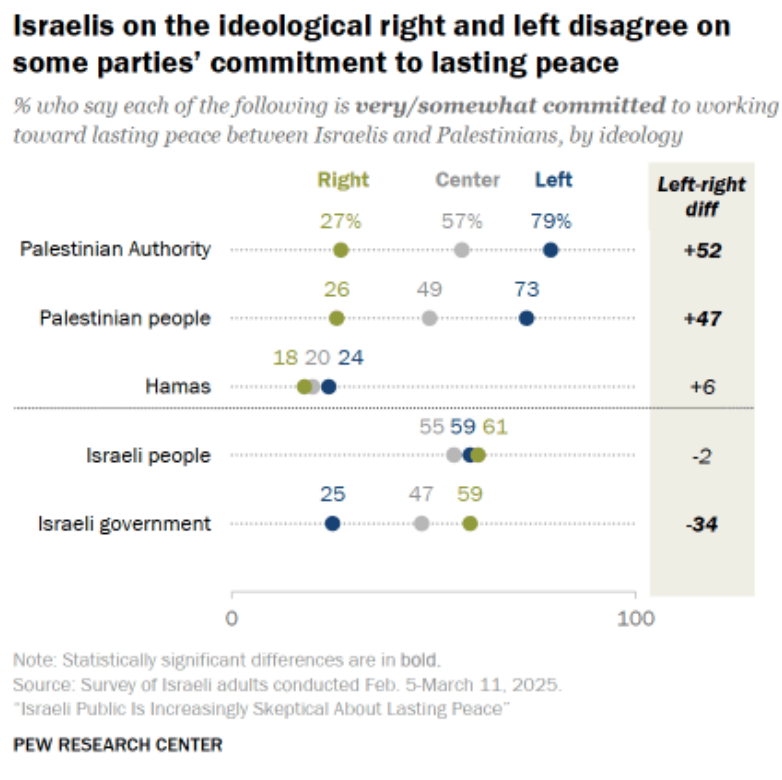
"Israeli Public Is Increasingly Skeptical About Lasting Peace"

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- Israeli Arabs are more optimistic about peace than Israeli Jews are, with larger shares saying that coexistence with a Palestinian state is possible (40% vs. 16%) and that international recognition of a Palestinian state is likely in the next five years (62% vs. 34%).
- Israeli Arabs are more likely than Israeli Jews to say West Bank settlements, the status of Jerusalem, and conflict between Hamas and Fatah are major obstacles to peace. Jews are more likely than Arabs to see distrust between Israelis and Palestinians as a major obstacle.

- 42% of Israeli Jews think Israel should control the Gaza Strip after the war ends, the most common answer within this group. Among Arabs, the largest share (45%) say the people who live in Gaza should decide who governs them.

Views by ideology



- Majorities of Israelis who place themselves on the ideological right, in the center and on the left say that the Israeli people are committed to peace – and that Hamas is not.
- Israelis on the right are more likely than other ideological groups to say the Israeli government is committed to peace, while left-leaning Israelis are more likely than others to say this of the Palestinian people and Palestinian Authority.
- While left-leaning Israelis are more likely than those on the right to predict international recognition for a Palestinian state and to think coexistence is possible, they are *also* more likely to see several issues as major obstacles to peace.
- Left-leaning Israelis are more likely than those on the right to say international actors other than the U.S. are helpful to long-term peace efforts.

Views by Jewish religiousness

We also find differences between Jewish religious groups. Hilonim (“secular”) and Masortim (“traditional”) are more likely than Haredim and Datiim (“ultra-Orthodox” and “religious”) to say the Palestinian people and Palestinian Authority are committed to peace, and also more likely to see various international actors as helpful to peace efforts. Haredim and Datiim are more likely than Hilonim and Masortim to call for Israel to govern Gaza after the war.

Jewish religious groups in Israel: Haredim, Datiim, Masortim and Hilonim

Nearly all Israeli Jews identify as Haredi (commonly translated as “ultra-Orthodox”), Dati (“religious”), Masorti (“traditional”) or Hiloni (“secular”). The spectrum of religious observance in Israel – on which Haredim are generally the most religious and Hilonim the least – does not always line up perfectly with Israel’s political spectrum. On some issues, including those pertaining to religion in public life, there is a clear overlap: Haredim are furthest to the right, and Hilonim are furthest to the left, with Datiim and Masortim in between. But on other political issues, including those related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and views of the United States, differences between religious groups do not always mirror those between people at different points on the ideological spectrum. Because of sample size considerations, we combine Haredim and Datiim for analysis in this report.

For more information on the different views of these religious groups, read the Center’s 2016 deep dive on the topic, [“Israel’s Religiously Divided Society.”](#)

Next: Views of the potential for lasting peace

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7

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HAMAS FACES GROWING PUBLIC DISSENT AS GAZA WAR ERODES SUPPORT

BBC Lucy Williamson & Rushdi Aboualouf BBC Middle East correspondent & Gaza correspondent

Reporting from Jerusalem and Istanbul 4 July 2024



Image source, Reuters A man sits inside a building damaged by Israeli strikes conducted during an operation to rescue four hostages held in Nuseirat refugee camp last month

The man in the video is beside himself, a mask of anguish radiating through his bloodied face.

"I am an academic doctor," he says, "I had a good life, but we have a filthy [Hamas] leadership. They got used to our bloodshed, may God curse them! They are scum!"

The video - unthinkable before the Gaza war - was filmed outside a hospital, inundated with hundreds of Palestinian casualties after an Israeli operation to free hostages from central Gaza last month.

Warning: Graphic image

Seconds before the video ends, he turns to the crowd.

"I'm one of you," he says, "but you are a cowardly people. We could have avoided this attack!"

The video went viral. And it's not the only one.



An injured man in Gaza denounced the Hamas leadership's actions in a video shared on social media last month Image source, UGC

Open criticism of Hamas has been growing in Gaza, both on the streets and online.

Some have publicly criticised Hamas for hiding the hostages in apartments near a busy marketplace, or for firing rockets from civilian areas.

Residents have told the BBC that swearing and cursing against the Hamas leadership is now common in the markets, and that some drivers of donkey carts have even nicknamed their animals after the Hamas leader in Gaza - Yahya Sinwar - urging the donkeys forward with shouts of "Yallah, Sinwar!"

"People say things like, 'Hamas has destroyed us' or even call on God to take their lives," one man said.

"They ask what the 7 October attacks were for - some say they were a gift to Israel."

Some are even urging their leaders to agree a ceasefire with Israel.

There are still those in Gaza fiercely loyal to Hamas and after years of repressive control, it's difficult to know how far the group is losing support, or how far existing opponents feel more able to speak their mind.

But a senior Hamas official privately acknowledged to the BBC, months ago, that they were losing support as a result of the war.

And even some on the group's own payroll are wavering.

One senior Hamas government employee told the BBC that the Hamas attacks were "a crazy, uncalculated leap".

He asked that we concealed his identity.

"I know from my work with the Hamas government that it prepared well for the attack militarily, but it neglected the home front," he said.

"They did not build any safe shelters for people, they did not reserve enough food, fuel and medical supplies. If my family and I survive this war, I will leave Gaza, the first chance I get."



Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, pictured here in April 2023, has been in hiding since the start of the war

Image source, Reuters

There was opposition to Hamas long before the war, though much of it remained hidden for fear of reprisals.

The last time Palestinian elections were held, in 2006, in the party list vote Gazans voted for Hamas in 15 out of 24 seats in the territory - in the other nine districts, voters chose a different party.

A year later, Hamas violently ejected Palestinian Authority forces from Gaza causing a bitter rift with the rival Fatah movement, and took over the running of the whole Gaza Strip.

Ameen Abed, a political activist, said he had been arrested many times for speaking out against Hamas before the war, but said - nine months on - dissent was becoming more common there.

"In Gaza, most people criticise what Hamas has done," he said.

"They see children living in tents, and insulting their leaders has become routine. But it has a lot of support among those outside Gaza's border, who are sitting under air conditioners in their comfortable homes, who have not lost a child, a home, a future, a leg."

Desperation and war are eroding social structures in Gaza, and Hamas control is not what it was.

Four-fifths of Gaza's population is displaced, often moving between temporary shelters.

And law and order has broken down in places, partly as a result of Israel's policy of targeting Gaza's security forces - not just the official Hamas internal security service, but also the community police responsible for street crime.

As control has waned, criminal gangs have thrived, looting neighbourhoods and aid convoys; and private security companies - some run by powerful local families - have emerged.

One staff member from an aid organisation operating in Gaza described "absolute chaos at street level" and "a state of anarchy", saying that civilian order had completely broken down as a result of the Israeli policy.

Israel's prime minister has repeatedly vowed to continue the war until Hamas's military and governing capabilities are destroyed.

But some aid agencies - in both northern and south areas of Gaza - have also reported regular checks on their activities by local Hamas officials, and videos are frequently circulated of unofficial Hamas security forces shooting and beating those caught looting.

One well-placed source told the BBC that dozens of people had been killed by Hamas in bloody score-settling with other local groups, after Israeli troops withdrew from one area.

Fear of criticising Gaza's leaders might have lessened, but it hasn't gone, so it is still hard to accurately gauge, beyond individual testimony, how far support for the group is shifting.

Some, like 26-year-old Jihad Talab, still strongly support Hamas.

Displaced from the Zeitoun area of Gaza City with his wife, daughter and mother, and now sheltering in Deir al Balah, he said the group was not responsible for their suffering.

“We must support [Hamas] because it’s the one working on the ground, the one who understands the battle - not you or I,” he said. “Empty accusations only serve the Occupation [Israel]. We’ll support it until our last breath.”

A regular poll carried out by a West Bank-based think tank, the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research, claims that most people in Gaza still blame Israel and its allies for the war, rather than Hamas.

The latest survey in June said that almost two-thirds of Gazan respondents were satisfied with Hamas - a rise of 12 points from December - and suggested that just around half would still prefer Hamas to run Gaza after the war ends, over any other option.

Glimpses through chinks in the media blockade around Gaza can never give a full assessment of the situation. International journalists are barred by Israel and Egypt from reporting on the situation there first-hand.

What is clear is that Hamas remains very sensitive to public opinion.

Strikingly similar messages regularly appear on certain social media platforms to justify its actions, often apparently in response to criticism at home.

A source familiar with Hamas told the BBC there was an organised international network to co-ordinate social media messaging for the group.

After Israeli families released a video showing the moment female soldiers were kidnapped by Hamas units on 7 October, some in Gaza questioned whether targeting women during war was in line with Islamic teaching.

In response, several pro-Hamas social media accounts put out similar messages insisting that soldiers - male or female - were justified military targets, and saying the unit had been involved in shooting Gazan protestors during demonstrations six years ago.

Criticism of Hamas is growing sharper, and long-buried divisions over Hamas rule in Gaza are becoming clear.

Out of the destruction left by Israel’s battle with Hamas, a new war is emerging: a battle for control of public opinion within Gaza itself.

U.S. AID TO ISRAEL IN FOUR CHARTS

COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS <https://www.cfr.org/article/us-aid-israel-four-charts>

Jonathan Masters and Will Merrow Nov 13 2024

The United States was the first country to recognize the provisional government of the state of Israel upon its founding in 1948, and it has for many decades been a strong and steady supporter of the Jewish state. Israel has received hundreds of billions of dollars in U.S. foreign aid in the post–World War II era, a level of support that reflects many factors, including a U.S. commitment to Israel’s security and the countries’ shared [foreign policy interests](#) in a volatile and strategically important part of the world. Israel is also a leading buyer of U.S. weapons systems via traditional arms sales.

The two countries do not have a mutual defense pact, as the United States has with allies such as Japan and fellow members of the [North Atlantic Treaty Organization](#) (NATO). However, Israel is among a short list of “major non-NATO allies” and has privileged access to the most advanced U.S. military platforms and technologies.

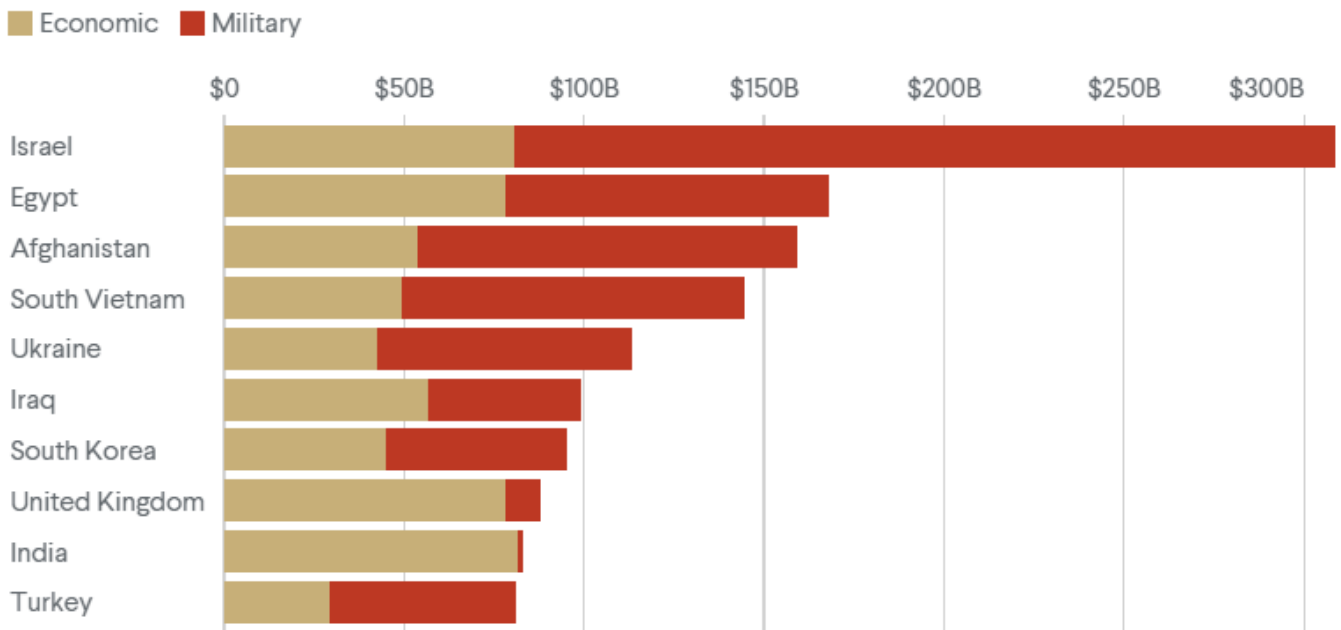
U.S. military aid to Israel has soared to its highest in decades amid Israel’s yearlong war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip. More than forty thousand Palestinians, including a large share of civilians, have died in the conflict, [according to the United Nations](#) and the Gaza health ministry. Israel is responding to Hamas’s October 2023 attack that killed approximately 1,200 Israelis, the deadliest in the country’s history. U.S. military support is also proving essential for Israel during its more recent hostilities with Hezbollah in Lebanon, and with Iran.

HOW MUCH U.S. AID DOES ISRAEL RECEIVE?

Israel has been the largest cumulative recipient of U.S. foreign aid since its founding, receiving about \$310 billion (adjusted for inflation) in total economic and military assistance. The United States has also provided large foreign aid packages to other Middle Eastern countries, particularly Egypt and Iraq, but Israel stands apart.

Israel Is the Largest Cumulative Recipient of U.S. Aid

Total aid from fiscal years 1946 to 2024* (constant 2022 dollars)



*Data for fiscal years 2023 and 2024 is incomplete.

Notes: Data for Israel for FY 2024 is from the March 23 appropriations bill and April 26 aid bill and is preliminary. The April bill included an additional \$5.4B for procuring and replacing weapons in U.S. stocks which is not included in this chart. Military aid for Israel includes missile defense starting in 2006. For Ukraine, data for FY 2022 to 2024 is from the Kiel Institute for the World Economy. South Vietnam existed as a country until the end of the Vietnam War in 1975.

Sources: United States Agency for International Development (USAID); Congressional Research Service; Antezza et al., Ukraine Support Tracker, Kiel Institute for the World Economy.

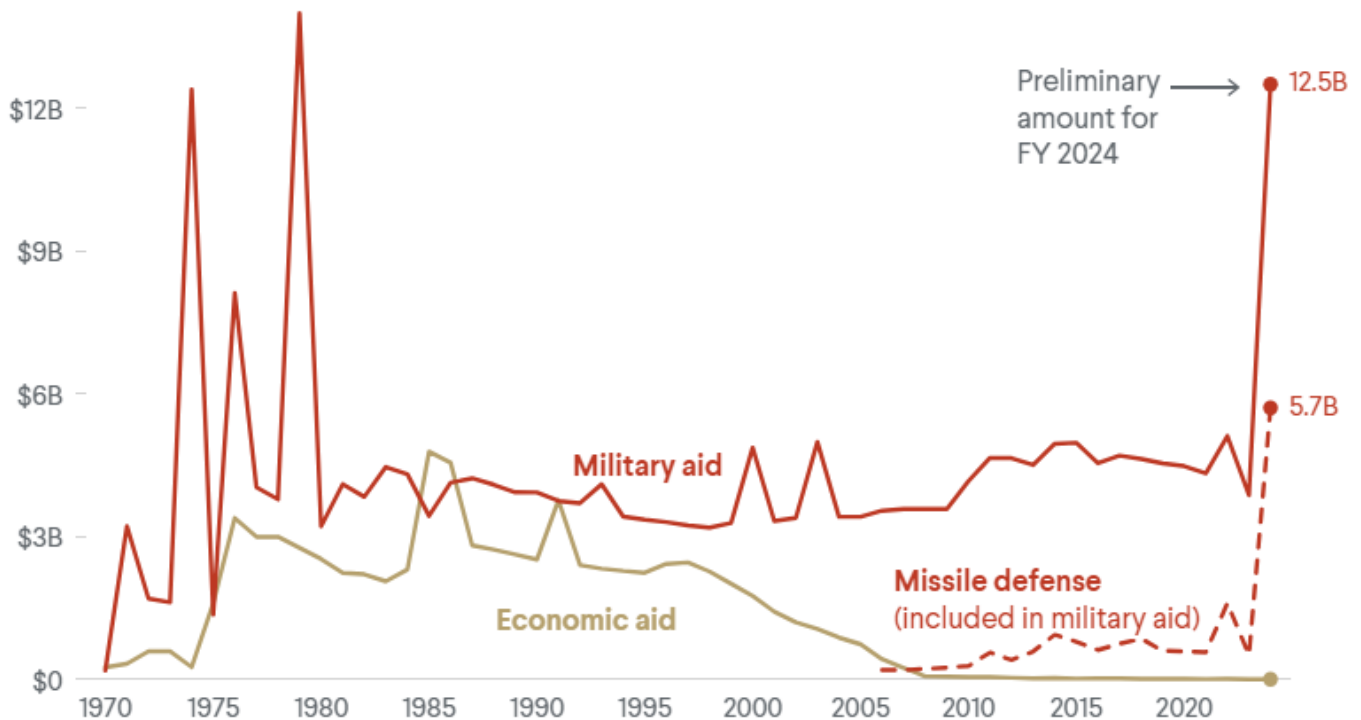
COUNCIL on
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The United States provided Israel considerable economic assistance from 1971 to 2007, but nearly all U.S. aid today goes to support Israel's military, the most advanced in the region. The United States has provisionally agreed via a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to provide Israel with \$3.8 billion per year through 2028.

Since the start of [Israel's war with Hamas](#) on October 7, 2023, the United States has enacted legislation providing at least \$12.5 billion in direct military aid to Israel, which includes \$3.8 billion from a bill in March 2024 (in line with the current MOU) and \$8.7 billion from a supplemental appropriations act in April 2024. Other analysts—Linda J. Bilmes, William D. Hartung, and Stephen Semler, from Brown University—[have reported](#) [PDF] that Israel received \$17.9 billion in U.S. military aid during this period, a figure that additionally accounts for the cost to the U.S. Defense Department of replenishing the stock of weapons provided to Israel.

The U.S. Has Provided Significant Military Aid to Israel Since the 1970s

Aid by fiscal year (adjusted for inflation*)



*Data is adjusted to constant 2024 dollars using the price index for the first half of fiscal year 2024.

Note: Amounts for FY 2024 are from the March 23 appropriations bill and April 26 aid bill and are preliminary. The April bill included an additional \$5.4B for procuring and replacing weapons in U.S. stocks which is not included in this chart. Data for prior fiscal years is from foreignassistance.gov, with missile defense included starting in 2006 using data from the Congressional Research Service.

Sources: USAID; Congressional Research Service; Bureau for Economic Analysis via Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis.

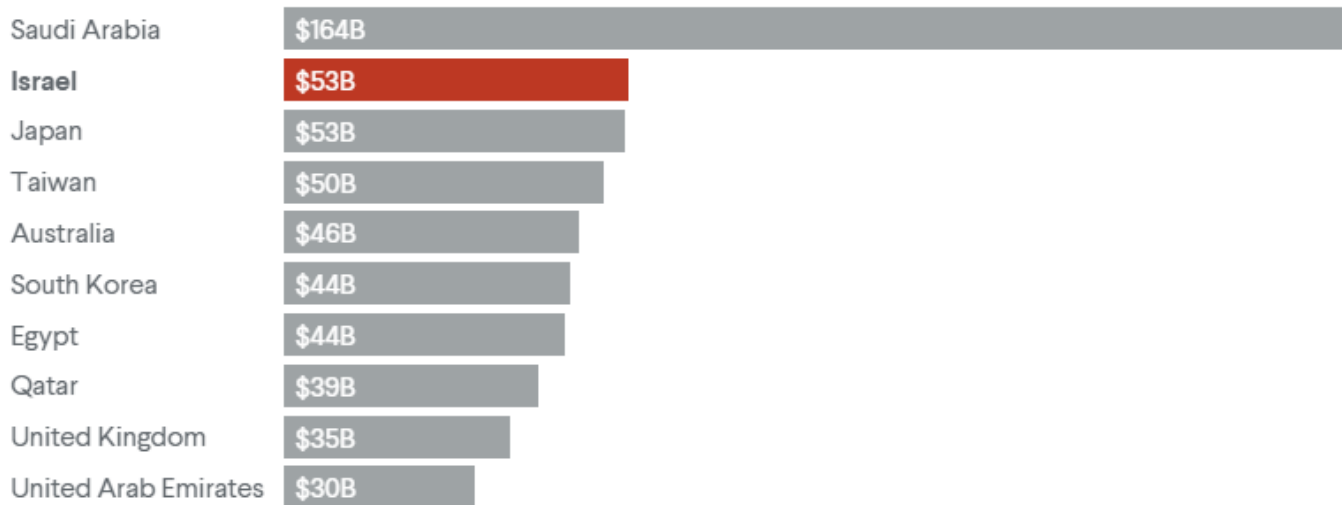
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FOREIGN
RELATIONS

HOW DOES ISRAEL USE THE AID?

Most of the aid—approximately \$3.3 billion a year—is provided as grants under the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) program, funds that Israel must use to purchase U.S. military equipment and services. In October 2023, the Joe Biden administration said Israel had nearly six hundred [active FMF cases](#), totalling around \$24 billion. Israel has also historically been permitted to use a portion of its FMF aid to buy equipment from Israeli defense firms—a benefit not granted to other recipients of U.S. military aid—but this domestic procurement is to be phased out in the next few years. U.S. aid reportedly accounts for some 15 percent of Israel's defense budget. Israel, like many other countries, also buys U.S. military products outside of the FMF program.

Israel Has Been a Top Recipient of U.S. Arms Sales

U.S. arms sales, fiscal years 1950 to 2022 (not adjusted for inflation)



Source: U.S. Department of Defense.

COUNCIL on
FOREIGN
RELATIONS

Additionally, \$500 million a year is slated for Israeli and joint U.S.-Israeli missile defense programs, in which the two countries collaborate on the research, development, and production of these systems used by Israel, including the Iron Dome, David's Sling, and Arrow II. Iron Dome was solely developed by Israel, but the United States has been a production partner since 2014. For instance, the U.S. military contractor [Raytheon manufactures](#) Tamir interceptor missiles for Israel's Iron Dome at its facilities in Arizona.

[Get the Facts](#)

[U.S. Military Support for Taiwan: Five Charts](#)

ARE THERE ANY CONDITIONS OR RESTRICTIONS ATTACHED TO THE AID?

Transfers of U.S. military equipment to Israel, as to other foreign governments, are subject to relevant U.S. and international law. The president [must notify Congress](#) [PDF] before selling foreign powers major weapon systems or services valued above a certain dollar threshold, and lawmakers are allowed a period to review the sale. For transactions with Israel (and other close U.S. allies), the threshold that triggers a fifteen-day congressional review ranges from \$25 million to \$300 million, depending on the defense articles or services.

Congress can block a sale through a joint resolution, although this has never happened. In special cases, the president can bypass the congressional review if they deem that a national security emergency exists. President Biden has used this expedited waiver process for both Israel and Ukraine. For smaller transactions that don't meet the dollar threshold, no congressional review is required.

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HOW MUCH AID HAS THE U.S. SENT UKRAINE?

The United States cannot provide security assistance to foreign governments or groups that commit gross human rights violations, a red line enshrined in the so-called [Leahy Law](#). Moreover, the [Biden administration announced](#) in February 2023 that it would not provide arms to recipients deemed likely to commit serious human rights violations. Some [legal scholars](#) and other critics have alleged that the United States has not applied the Leahy Law with regard to Israel as it has with other Middle Eastern countries.

Any military aid that the United States provides to recipients must only be used according to agreed-upon terms and conditions, and it is incumbent on the U.S. government to monitor the end use of the equipment it provides. For instance, the Ronald Reagan administration [banned transfers](#) of cluster munitions to Israel for several years in the 1980s after it determined that Israel had used them on civilian targets during its invasion of Lebanon.

Israel has agreed to use U.S. weapons only in self-defense. Outside of this, Biden administration officials [said in mid-October 2023](#) that they had not placed further limitations or constraints on how Israel uses U.S. weapons, although they said that Israel should observe [international law](#). In February 2024, four months into the Israel-Hamas war, Biden issued a [national security memo](#) requiring recipients of U.S. military aid to give written assurances that they would observe international law in their use of the aid, and that they would facilitate the delivery of U.S. humanitarian assistance in the area of armed conflict where the U.S. military aid is being used.

In May, the administration issued a [follow-up report](#) [PDF] that found it “reasonable to assess” that Israel has used U.S. weapons since October 7 “in instances inconsistent with its IHL [International Humanitarian Law] obligations.” Days later, the White House said it was [pausing a shipment of large bombs](#) to Israel ahead of a pending assault on the southern Gaza city of Rafah, although it noted it would continue other military assistance. “Civilians have been killed in Gaza as a consequence of those bombs and other ways in which [Israel goes] after population centers,” President Biden said in an interview with CNN.

What military aid has the United States provided Israel since the October 7 attacks?

Israel has been using American-made weapons against its foes, including Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran, for decades. Since October 7, the Biden administration has reportedly made more than one hundred [military aid transfers to Israel](#), although only six have met the aforementioned congressional review threshold and been made public. The Israeli military has reportedly received expedited deliveries of weapons from a [strategic stockpile](#) that the United States has maintained in Israel since the 1980s. Shortly after Hamas’s attack, the United States also agreed to lease Israel two [Iron Dome missile defense batteries](#) that Washington had previously purchased from the country.

The extraordinary flow of aid has included tank and artillery ammunition, bombs, rockets, and small arms. In April 2024, [news reports](#) said the Biden administration was considering new military sales to Israel that

are valued at more than \$18 billion and would include fifty F-15 fighter aircraft, although the shipments wouldn't arrive for years. The Israeli military is also reportedly purchasing some high-tech products, such as [surveillance drones](#), directly from smaller U.S. manufacturers.

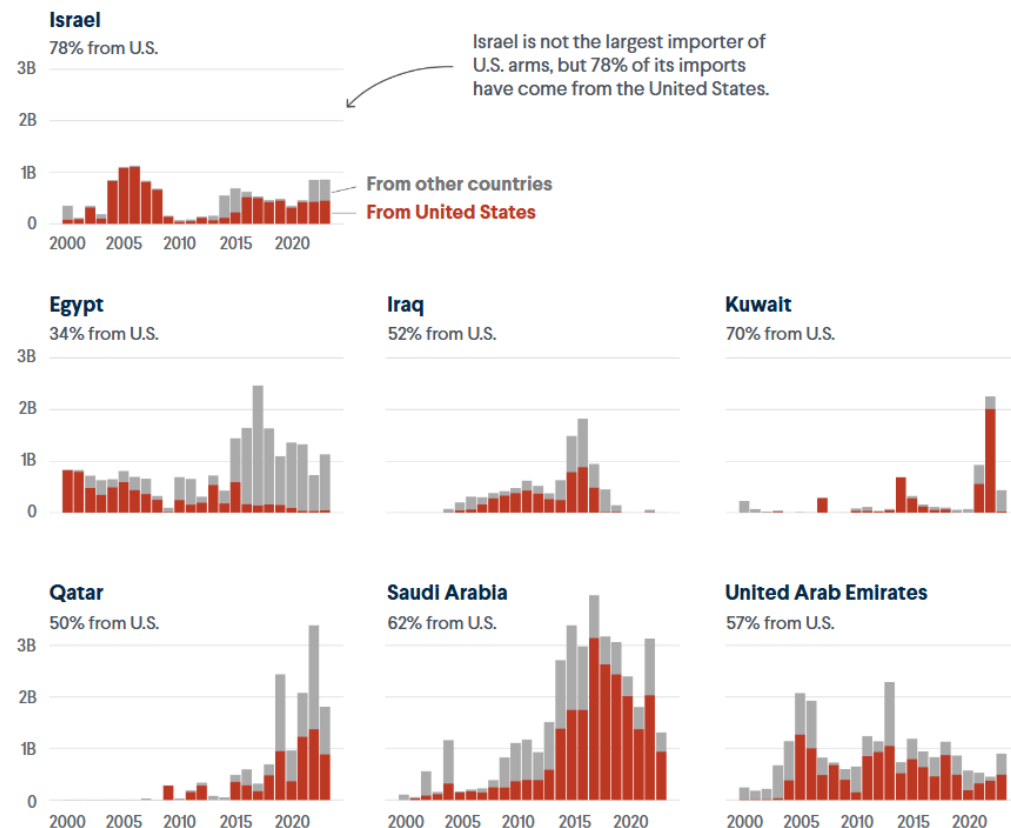
WHAT IS ISRAEL'S QUALITATIVE MILITARY EDGE (QME)?

QME has been a conceptual backbone of U.S. military aid to Israel for decades, and it was formally enshrined in [U.S. law in 2008](#) [PDF]. It requires the U.S. government to maintain Israel's ability "to defeat any credible conventional military threat from any individual state or possible coalition of states or from non-state actors, while sustaining minimal damage and casualties." QME is based on NATO military planning vis-a-vis a potential conflict with the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact countries during the Cold War.

Under the 2008 law, the United States must ensure that any weapons it provides to other countries in the Middle East do not compromise Israel's QME. In [several cases](#), this has required the United States to provide Israel with offsetting weaponry as part of larger regional arms sales. QME has also ensured that Israel is the first in the region to receive access to the most sophisticated U.S. military weapons and platforms, such as the [F-35 stealth fighter](#), of which Israel has fifty.

How Israel's Imports of U.S. Arms Stack Up

Estimated military value of arms imports*



*Military value is expressed as "trend-indicator-value," a unit developed by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) that represents the military capability of arms sales.

Note: Countries included are the largest recipients of U.S. arms sales in the Middle East.

Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

WHY IS THERE GROWING PUBLIC SCRUTINY OF U.S. AID TO ISRAEL?

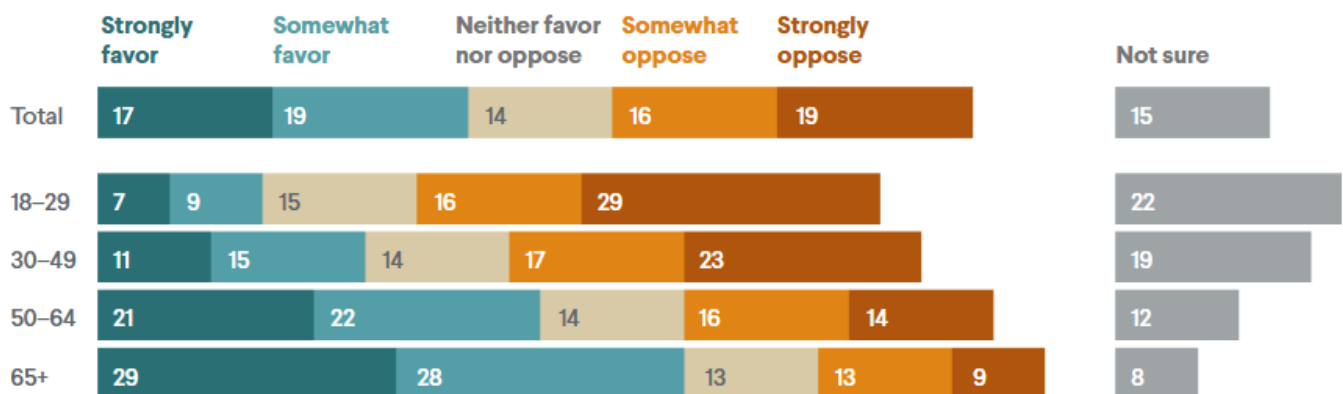
Israel received widespread support from the West immediately following Hamas's attack on October 7, but pro-Israel sentiment among some groups in the United States and many other countries has weakened as Israel's campaign against Hamas has also killed thousands of Palestinian civilians in Gaza and has exacerbated a humanitarian crisis that is spiraling [toward famine](#). According to a [March 2024 poll](#) by the Pew Research Center, most Americans (64 percent) held favorable views of the Israeli people, while a slight majority (51 percent) viewed the Israeli government unfavorably.

Some [U.S. and foreign leaders](#), the United Nations, human rights and activist groups, and other parties have voiced growing concern over the past year about Israel's heavy air and ground assaults on Gaza, as well as its alleged obstruction of humanitarian aid to the densely populated enclave. Israel has said the high civilian death toll is a result of Hamas using civilians as "[human shields](#)." In December 2023, South Africa filed a case at the International Court of Justice accusing Israel of perpetrating genocide, a claim which Israel and the United States [both denounced](#) as unfounded. In May, the prosecutor for the International Criminal Court (ICC) [charged both Hamas and Israeli leaders](#) with multiple war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Recent [polls suggest](#) that American adults are divided in their views of U.S. military aid to Israel, with a significant divergence among age groups. Support for military aid to Israel appears strongest among older respondents (ages sixty-five and older) and weakest among younger adults (ages eighteen to twenty-nine).

Younger Americans Are More Critical of U.S. Aid to Israel

Attitudes toward U.S. military aid to Israel in its war against Hamas, by age group



Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Pew Research Center.

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FOREIGN
RELATIONS

While Biden has been an ardent supporter of Israel's right to self-defense and continues to supply Israel with essential military support via aid and weapons sales, he and some members of U.S. Congress have been critical of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's prosecution of the war and his government's planning for postwar Gaza. In December 2023, [Biden warned](#) that Israel's "indiscriminate bombing" of Gaza risked costing Israel its international support. Meanwhile, some lawmakers have sought to [condition U.S. military aid](#) to Israel or to block sales altogether.

In early 2024, the Biden administration paused a shipment of bombs to Israel, effectively acknowledging that Israel was using American-made weapons in a manner that resulted in civilian deaths in Gaza and that risked violating the laws of war. The White House has also [spoken out against](#) what they view as Netanyahu's lack of planning for postwar Gaza. "Israel's on the trajectory potentially to inherit an insurgency with many armed Hamas left or, if it leaves, a vacuum filled by chaos, filled by anarchy," said U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken in May 2024. Netanyahu has also faced criticism from his own [defense minister](#), Yoav Gallant, for failing to form a vision for "a governing alternative in Gaza."

The Biden administration, however, [rallied behind the Israeli government](#) in late May after [ICC investigators](#) applied for arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant over allegations of war crimes committed in the Palestinian territories during the latest war against Hamas and possibly before. The White House called the ICC's decision "outrageous" and "profoundly wrong-headed." The ICC simultaneously announced warrant applications for several Hamas leaders as well.

The Biden administration has meanwhile expanded the already large [U.S. military presence](#) in the Middle East to protect U.S. installations and ships, as well as to help defend Israel. U.S. forces helped Israel neutralize two separate Iranian missile and drone attacks, in April and October 2024, and has been protecting merchant shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden against regular Houthi attacks.

Prior to the war, the U.S.-Israel relationship had suffered some strains over the [rhetoric and policies](#) of Netanyahu's government, including its plans to curb the Israeli Supreme Court's powers and its approval of more Jewish settlements [in the West Bank](#)—critics say the settlements violate international law and undermine prospects for a future state for Palestinians. The so-called two-state solution has been a long-running U.S. foreign policy goal, including for the Biden administration. Some [U.S. lawmakers](#) have raised these criticisms in the debate over U.S. aid to Israel during the war in Gaza.

In recent years, some U.S. and Israeli analysts have said that U.S. aid to Israel should be reevaluated because Israel is [now a wealthy country](#)—the fourteenth richest per capita—with one of the most advanced militaries in the world. Unlike Cold War-era Israel in the 1970s, when large amounts of U.S. aid started to flow, modern Israel is more than capable of providing for its own security, and the U.S. aid unnecessarily distorts the bilateral relationship and the countries' respective foreign policies, these observers say. CFR Senior Fellow Steven A. Cook [wrote in May 2024](#) that U.S. military aid should be phased out over ten years and replaced with a series of bilateral agreements on security cooperation, a move he says would benefit both countries and help normalize their relations.

The late Martin S. Indyk, former U.S. ambassador to Israel and CFR Distinguished Fellow, also called for reductions in U.S. aid. “The U.S.-Israel relationship would be a lot healthier without this dependence. Time for Israel at seventy-five to stand on its own two feet,” he [wrote on X](#) in June 2023.

Some experts argue that U.S. aid actually [weakens Israel’s defense industrial base](#) while serving primarily as a guaranteed revenue stream for U.S. defense contractors.

On the other hand, supporters of continued aid say that it fosters ongoing, important collaboration between U.S. and Israeli defense industries and experts, and in the end helps the countries counter shared threats in the Middle East, particularly Iran. U.S. aid remains a “[vital and cost-effective expenditure](#)” that enhances U.S. national security, and it should not be reduced or conditioned, wrote more than three hundred Republican lawmakers in 2021. Ending U.S. military aid today “would send a message to all of Israel’s enemies that Israel’s greatest friend was stepping away, so they should double down on their plans for more, and more deadly, assaults on the Jewish state,” wrote [CFR Senior Fellow Elliott Abrams](#) in September 2023.

ISRAEL AND HAMAS REACH CEASE-FIRE, BUT WILL THE WAR END?

COUNCIL FOR FOREIGN RELATIONS Expert Brief by Steven A. Cook January 15

Steven A. Cook is Eni Enrico Mattei Senior Fellow for Middle East and Africa studies and Director of the International Affairs Fellowship for Tenured International Relations Scholars at the Council on Foreign Relations.



Supporters of Israeli hostages, who were kidnapped during the deadly October 2023 attack by Hamas, react to news on the Gaza cease-fire negotiations, January 15, 2025. [Ronen Zvulun/Reuters](#)

The agreement to exchange Israeli hostages for Hamas prisoners calls for an end to the fighting in Gaza. But deep hostilities on both sides remain, and an unsettled region makes a lasting cease-fire uncertain.

WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS FOR THIS HOSTAGE DEAL EFFECTIVELY ENDING THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR?

A cease-fire and hostage deal does not necessarily end the war. It is important to keep in mind that when Hamas launched its attacks on southern Israel on October 7, 2023, it was also launching a total war that included a broad international effort to de-legitimize the state of Israel. Even if a cease-fire were to end the hostilities in Gaza, as the draft agreement reportedly envisions, Hamas, affiliated groups, and other international actors like the Iranian regime would continue the war by other means.

In addition, [the three-phased cease-fire agreement](#) will likely be vulnerable to vigorous opposition on both sides. The first phase alone is six weeks, and only on the sixteenth day of that stage will negotiations begin over the terms of the second phase. This extended time frame provides opportunities for the agreement's Israeli and Palestinian opponents to undermine it at critical moments.

This was the pattern during the 1990s, which featured the [Oslo Accords](#) peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians. Of course, the Oslo process was drawn out over the better part of a decade, but it is not hard to imagine similar dynamics emerging over this cease-fire. During the Oslo process,

whenever there was perceived progress toward peace, opponents of compromise sowed discord through politics and violence, damaging the legitimacy of the talks to the point that they collapsed. In the current moment, the main spoilers could be Israeli settlers who want nothing less than the destruction of Hamas and the resettlement of Gaza, and Palestinian extremists who believe they are winning.

Finally, it is still possible that either side could renege on the deal. Indeed, this is one of the reasons Hamas has held onto the remaining 98 hostages. They are human bargaining chips. Once they are all returned to their families, Hamas has little reason to believe that Israel will not return to the battlefield to destroy them. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said as much for months. At the same time, Hamas has an incentive to keep fighting given how much damage the war in Gaza has done to Israel's international image.

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WILL ISRAEL KEEP A SECURITY PRESENCE IN GAZA?

The Israeli government has been clear since late 2023 that it will retain overall security over the Gaza Strip in the future. Israel wants the freedom of action they enjoy in the West Bank to maintain pressure on Hamas in Gaza and prevent the group from having any chance of mounting an attack like the one on October 7, the most deadly in Israeli history.

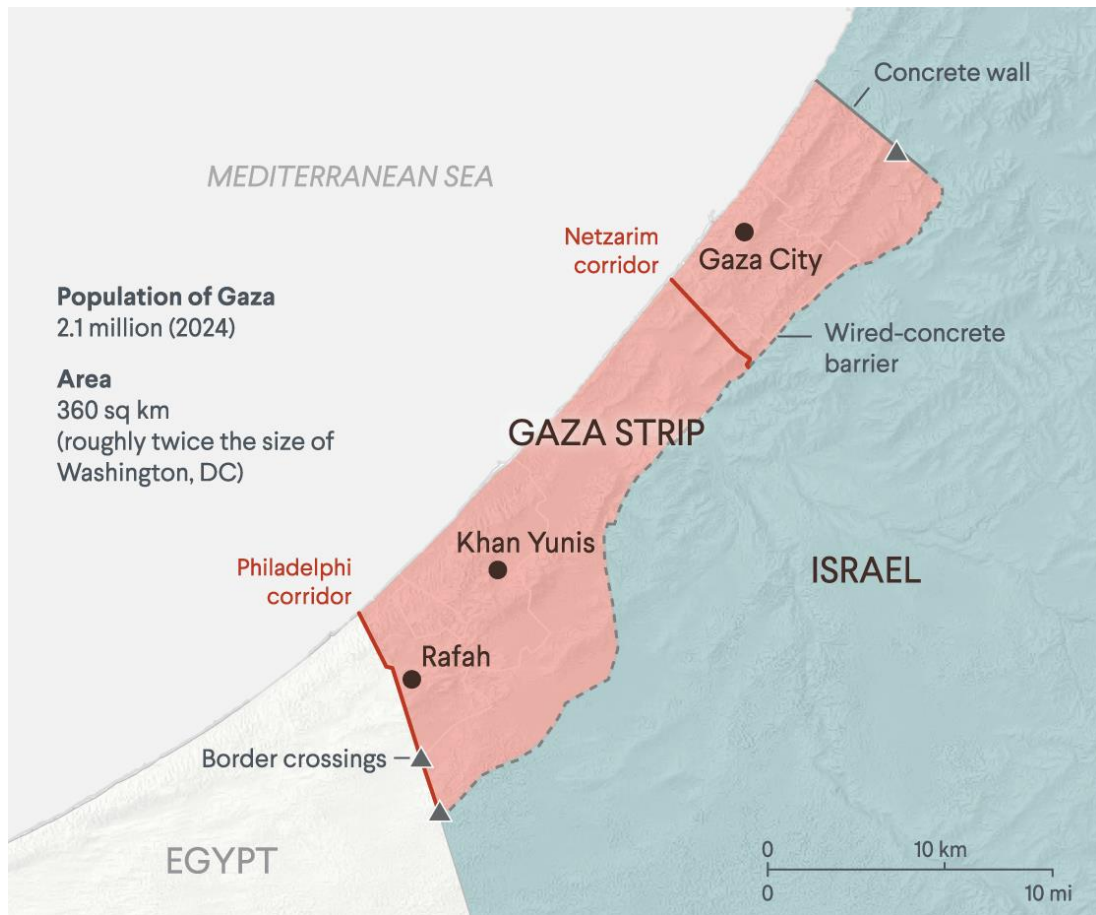
Hamas has demanded during previous rounds of negotiations that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) leave the Gaza Strip entirely as part of any cease-fire. The group softened that demand after the Israelis killed Yahya Sinwar—Hamas's leader in the Gaza Strip—in October 2024. The deal indicates that Israel would withdraw entirely from the Gaza Strip.

More on:

[Israeli-Palestinian Conflict](#)

[Middle East](#)

[United States](#)



Sources: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; CIA World Factbook.

It would be unexpected if the Israeli government agrees to withdraw from this area. Israeli officials have argued over the last fifteen months of war that the problem in Gaza between 2005 and 2023 was the absence of Israel's security services and their inability to conduct regular counterterror operations as the IDF and Shin Bet, the Israeli domestic security agency, do in the West Bank.

WHAT IS LEFT OF HAMAS FORCES AND LEADERSHIP IN GAZA?

Hamas has proven to be resilient despite Israel's killing of large numbers of its fighters and leaders (estimated to be seventeen thousand), in addition to many others wounded or captured. After fifteen months of fighting, it can still launch rockets into Israel, and there are daily reports that Israeli soldiers are killed in Gaza, a toll that now stands at more than eight hundred. The group is not as well organized or trained as it was at the beginning of the war, but Hamas is still able to recruit fighters at a rate that outstrips Israel's ability to kill them. The risk for Israel of getting mired in a guerilla conflict with no clear exit is evident.

Contrary to expectations that Hamas's grip on Gaza would diminish following Sinwar's death, the group remains in charge in Gaza. One tangible sign of this is Hamas's ability to replenish its ranks by promising aid and medical care for the families of new recruits. Because the Israeli government has refused to invest in a so-called "Day After" plan, beyond ruling out a role for the Palestinian Authority in Gaza, the United States and its partners in the region have been unable or unwilling to empower alternatives to Hamas.

WHAT DOES THE DEAL MEAN FOR HUMANITARIAN RELIEF FOR PALESTINIANS IN GAZA?

The cease-fire and hostage agreement will save lives and provide an opportunity for more humanitarian assistance to reach [Gazans in need](#). The underlying logic of the cease-fire is to make it permanent. The negotiators hope that after the three phases are complete, relief will become routine and the reconstruction of Gaza can begin. In the first phase, displaced Palestinians are to be allowed to return to their homes while some six hundred trucks of humanitarian aid would enter Gaza each day. The ramp up of relief aid, of course, presupposes that supporters of the cease-fire can outmaneuver its opponents.

IS THE U.S. ROLE IN THE CONFLICT LIKELY TO CHANGE WITH THE INCOMING TRUMP ADMINISTRATION?

It is hard to know. President-elect Donald Trump warned that there would be consequences if the hostages were not released by the time he returned to the Oval Office on January 20. It was not clear what he meant. The agreement after so many months of failure reflects a number of factors: Israel's diminishing returns in Gaza, especially as Hamas has demonstrated an ability to recruit new fighters; Hamas being under significant military pressure and wanting to escape the war it began with as much of its organization intact; and the new U.S. administration, which has influence and goodwill with Israel and a tougher rhetorical (so far) approach to Hamas and Iran.

The United States is likely to remain committed to helping ensure Israeli security through weapons sales and intelligence sharing. It remains unclear whether U.S.-Israel cooperation will extend to a possible strike on Iran's nuclear facilities. During his first term, Trump only opted once to use military force against Iran when he ordered the assassination of Quds Forces commander Qassem Soleimani. His maximum pressure campaign seemed intended to compel the Iranian leadership into a negotiation for a revised or broader nuclear agreement. The region has changed much since Trump's first term. The Iranians are weaker, but, as a result, they are plausibly more motivated to weaponize their nuclear program. This will encourage either a U.S.-Israeli effort to preclude this outcome or new negotiations. Either option is possible.

This work represents the views and opinions solely of the author. The Council on Foreign Relations is an independent, nonpartisan membership organization, think tank, and publisher, and takes no institutional positions on matters of policy

IDF COMPLETE RAID ON NORTH GAZA HOSPITAL, SAYS SOME 240 TERROR SUSPECTS ARRESTED

**Military says facility was a 'key stronghold' for Hamas,
detains hospital's director, Oct. 7 terrorists;
also says it evacuated hundreds of patients to other hospitals**

[TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Emanuel Fabian](#) 28 December 2024

The Israeli military said on Saturday that it had completed an operation against Hamas at northern Gaza's Kamal Adwan Hospital and the surrounding area.

Some 240 suspected terror operatives were detained, including the medical center's director and 15 terrorists who participated in the October 7, 2023, onslaught on southern Israel.

The Israel Defense Forces, which last operated against Hamas at Kamal Adwan in October, said the operation was launched because the hospital had "once again become a key stronghold for terrorist organizations and continues to be used as a hideout for terrorist operatives."

The army said the hospital was still used by Hamas "despite repeated calls to refrain from allowing [terror operatives] to exploit hospitals for military activities."

The operation was led by the IDF's 162nd Division. At the start of the raid, the IDF said troops of the 401st Armored Brigade surrounded the hospital, detained several terror operatives, and killed additional gunmen.

Members of the Navy's Shayetet 13 commando unit then carried out "precise activities" inside the hospital, during which they located and captured weapons, including grenades, handguns, ammunition, and other military equipment, according to the IDF.

The Navy's Shayetet 13 commando unit operates at northern Gaza's Kamal Adwan hospital, in a video released by the IDF on December 28, 2024. (Israel Defense Forces)

Over 240 members of Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and others suspected of being members of terror groups were detained amid the operation, the military said.

The IDF said some of the terror operatives "tried to impersonate patients and medical staff, and some tried to escape in ambulances."

Among those detained was the director of Kamal Adwan, Hussam Abu Safiya, who the IDF said is suspected of being a Hamas operative.

The Hamas-run health ministry also said Abu Safiya was detained, but a statement posted to his Instagram account said, "All that is being circulated about Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya being arrested is false news," adding, "thank God he is fine, but the communications and network are very bad."

At least 15 of those arrested at the hospital and the surrounding area participated in the October 7 onslaught, according to the military. Several members of Hamas's engineering and anti-tank forces were also arrested in the operation.

The suspects were questioned by field interrogators from the Military Intelligence Directorate's Unit 504 and the Shin Bet security agency. The IDF said many admitted to interrogators that they had participated in "terror activity" in the hospital area.

During the operation, the military said operatives launched RPGs and anti-tank projectiles at troops from an area near the hospital, and attempted other attacks.

There were no injuries among the Israeli forces, and the operatives behind the attacks were killed, the IDF said. It added that a drone strike eliminated a cell of gunmen whose members tried to flee the area.

Before launching the operation, the IDF said it enabled the evacuation of 350 patients, caregivers, and medical personnel to other hospitals, in an effort coordinated by the Defense Ministry's Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT).

In the weeks prior to the operation, "tens of thousands of liters of fuel, food, and medical supplies for the essential functioning of the hospital" were delivered to Kamal Adwan.

During the raid itself, the IDF said another 95 patients, caregivers, and medical personnel were evacuated from Kamal Adwan to the nearby Indonesian Hospital, where 5,000 liters of fuel, two generators, and medical equipment were delivered "to maintain and operate essential systems in the hospital."

Hundreds of Palestinian civilians also left the hospital area "via defined evacuation routes," the military added.

The IDF [denied that Israeli troops had set fire](#) to the hospital as claimed by Hamas.

IDF spokesperson Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani pushed back on Hamas's account. "While IDF troops were not in the hospital, a small fire broke out in an empty building inside the hospital that is under control," he said, adding that a preliminary investigation had found "no connection" between military activity and the fire.

"Running with unsubstantiated reports on the cause of this fire shows nothing but questionable journalistic integrity," said Shoshani.

Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry had accused Israeli troops of setting fires in several parts of Kamal Adwan, including the lab and surgery department, and said that 25 patients and 60 health workers remained in the hospital.

The ministry also said Israeli troops had entered the hospital, taken staff and patients outside and forced them to strip in winter weather.

Unverified video circulating on social media purported to show patients and staff being marched outside in front of IDF tanks.

The IDF [last operated at the Kamal Adwan facility in late October](#), detaining dozens of terror operatives and locating and destroying weapons and terror infrastructure.

At the time, the military released footage from the interrogation of a detained individual, who identified himself as a driver and paramedic for Kamal Adwan Hospital and Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City.

He alleged in the footage that Hamas was using ambulances at the hospital to move operatives around.

“Hamas military operatives are present. They are in the courtyards, at the gates of the buildings, in the offices,” he said when asked about the terror group’s operations around Kamal Adwan.

“They operate ambulances to transport their wounded military operatives and to transport them for their missions,” he went on. “This is instead of using the ambulances for the benefit of civilians.”

“We, the public in the northern Gaza Strip, are sick of this situation,” he said when asked if he had anything more to add. “We have had enough; they [Hamas] are stationed in the hospitals, stationed in the schools.”

Hamas has fought from within hospitals throughout the war and even periodically hid some of the Israeli hostages kidnapped on October 7 inside them. International law generally prohibits targeting hospitals during wartime, but hospitals can lose this protection if used for military purposes.

Since October, Israel has intensified its land and air offensive in northern Gaza, stating its goal is to prevent Hamas from regrouping in the area.

Israel had ordered civilians to evacuate the area amid preparations to invade Gaza in October 2023 in response to the Hamas onslaught, which saw thousands of terrorists storm southern Israel to kill some 1,200 people and take 251 hostages.

AJC UPDATE MAY 15 2025

AJC May 15 2025

Here are American Jewish Committee's top stories and resources of the day to help you stay informed, share the facts, and rally your networks to take action in support of Israel and against rising antisemitism.

You can expect to receive the next Update on Monday, May 19.

AJC wishes you a joyous Lag BaOmer holiday!

Follow us on [FACEBOOK](#), [INSTAGRAM](#), [LINKEDIN](#), [X](#), and [TIKTOK](#) for daily news and updates.

Forward this to your friends and networks. They can sign up at [AJC.ORG/UPDATE](https://ajc.org/update).



1. What To Know About President Trump's Middle East Tour

During his multi-stop Middle East visit, President Trump pushed a broad diplomatic and economic agenda.

In Saudi Arabia: Trump announced \$142 billion in arms deals and a \$600 billion investment pledge, expressing hope Saudi Arabia would soon join the Abraham Accords—a milestone he called “a special day in the Middle East.” Trump also announced lifting U.S. sanctions on Syria to encourage ties with Israel.

On Thursday, Israel's Channel 12 reported that Israel is holding UAE-sponsored talks with Syria's al-Sharaa. Discussions have reportedly included Syria joining the Abraham Accords.

In Qatar: Trump said the U.S. is “getting close” to a deal and urged the Iranian regime to “stop sponsoring terror” and end its nuclear ambitions permanently. During his visit, the U.S. and Qatar signed agreements “to generate an economic exchange worth at least \$1.2 trillion.”

In the UAE: The U.S. and the UAE finalized a technology framework agreement aimed at increasing bilateral cooperation and curbing China's influence in the region.

AJC Analysis in *Algemeiner*: Benjamin Rogers, AJC Director of Middle East and North Africa Initiatives, explores what's at stake as President Trump visits the Middle East and why now is a critical moment to reignite Israeli-Arab integration. [Read the op-ed.](#)

2. What to Know About U.S.-Iran Negotiations

Over the weekend in Oman, U.S. negotiators reported they held “difficult but useful” nuclear talks with Iran, focusing on limiting uranium enrichment. Iranian officials voiced skepticism, with Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi calling the talks challenging, while President Masoud Pezeshkian condemned the U.S. as “the most destructive force” in the region. Despite progress, Israeli leaders remain wary of any Iran deal that preserves uranium enrichment, viewing it as a threat to regional security.

3. AJC in the News: Pope Leo XIV's Letter to AJC Covered Around the World

Following his election as the 267th pope, Pope Leo XIV sent a [personalized message to AJC](#) pledging “to continue and strengthen the Church’s dialogue and cooperation with the Jewish people in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council’s Declaration *Nostra Aetate*,” the groundbreaking 1965 declaration that transformed Catholic-Jewish interactions and which AJC was instrumental in helping to shape. This unprecedented outreach to AJC, so early in Pope Leo’s papacy, has been covered internationally in Jewish, Catholic, and major media outlets, including [Reuters](#), [National Catholic Register](#), and [Jewish News Syndicate](#). At the personal invitation of the Vatican, Rabbi Noam Marans, AJC Director of Interreligious Affairs, and Lisa Palmieri-Billig, AJC’s Rome-based Liaison to the Holy See, will represent AJC at this Sunday’s Inauguration Mass at St. Peter’s Square in Vatican City.

Go Deeper | This analysis by Rabbi Marans in the [Jewish Telegraphic Agency](#) and our latest AJC explainer on the [Four Things to Know About Pope Leo XIV and the Future of Catholic-Jewish Relations](#) provide an in-depth look at AJC’s leadership in fostering allyship across Catholic and Jewish communities worldwide.

4. U.S. House of Reps Passes Resolution Calling on Elected Leaders to Counter Antisemitism

The U.S. House of Representatives approved [a bipartisan resolution](#) on Wednesday, in the middle of Jewish American Heritage Month, that calls on the executive branch and state and local leaders to take “all possible steps to ensure the safety, security, and dignity of American Jews in all aspects of their lives, including the workplace, college and university campuses, synagogues, and at home.” The resolution also honors Jewish American inventors who made an impact on American’s daily lives,

including Irving Naxon who conceived the slow cooker, Sylvan Goldman who designed the first shopping cart, and Ruth Handler who introduced Barbie to the world.

What AJC is Saying: “We commend the House of Representatives for passing a resolution during Jewish American Heritage Month calling on elected leaders to condemn and counter antisemitism. This month is a great opportunity for Americans to reflect on the contributions and challenges of Jewish Americans throughout our history. Thank you to [Reps. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla), Mariannette Miller-Meeke (R-Iowa), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-Pa), and Troy Carter (D-La)] for leading this important resolution.” [Share on X.](#)

5. Day 587 Hostages Update: U.S. Envoy Steve Witkoff Shares New Proposal; Negotiations Continue in Qatar

The Latest on Hostage Talks | U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff has outlined a new proposal in Doha to free all hostages in Gaza, end the war, and remove Hamas from power, according to several news reports. While Israel has engaged seriously, Hamas continues to stall, offering only vague signals and rejecting key terms such as disarming, according to news reports. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu reaffirmed that Israel is “not giving up on a single one” of Israel’s war aims, as talks remain focused on securing the release of all 58 remaining hostages. Witkoff told hostage families in Tel Aviv this week that diplomacy has worked “more often than not,” but only when paired with pressure. While Israel has a diplomatic team on the ground in Doha pushing for a deal, Israel’s security cabinet has made clear it’s prepared to escalate militarily if Hamas refuses the deal.

6. War and Additional Updates: Pregnant Israeli Murdered in West Bank Terror Attack; IDF Targets Muhammad Sinwar; Houthis Fire More Missiles at Israelis

Pregnant Israeli Woman Murdered | In devastating news overnight, Israeli Tzeela Gez succumbed to her wounds sustained in a West Bank terror shooting while driving to the hospital to deliver her baby with her husband, Hananel. May Tzeela’s memory be a blessing. Hananel was lightly wounded in the attack and the baby, who was delivered via emergency cesarean, is in serious condition. The IDF has launched a manhunt for the Palestinian terrorist. Israeli President Isaac Herzog strongly condemned the shooting, calling it a “spine-chilling, horrific act of terror that shakes us to the core.”

IDF Targets Sinwar | The IDF continued its targeted airstrikes against terror cells operating in an underground command and control facility in the European Hospital in southern Gaza today, eliminating several terrorists and destroying key infrastructure. The military is reportedly targeting Hamas chief Muhammad Sinwar, the brother of Yahya Sinwar and mastermind of the October 7

massacre, who was killed by the IDF in October 2024. The IDF has not confirmed if Sinwar was killed in any of the strikes.

Houthis Fire More Missiles at Israelis | The Iran-backed Houthis continued to indiscriminately fire ballistic missiles at Israel over the last day. Israel's defense systems intercepted the missiles and no injuries were reported. At least one of the missiles was fired during President Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia. Since October 7, 2023, the Houthis have launched around 375 projectiles at the Jewish state.

7. Campus Update: AJC Commends NYU's Swift Response to Graduation Speech Falsely Accusing Israel of Genocide

What AJC is Saying on X | "We thank New York University for its swift and unequivocal response to the unsanctioned and one-sided speech at the Gallatin School's graduation, which falsely accused Israel of committing genocide. As the school wrote, it's a shame "that this moment was stolen by someone who abused a privilege that was conferred upon him." NYU's clear denouncement and commitment to disciplinary action sends an important message that graduation is not a bully pulpit." Share now.

AJC's Center for Education Advocacy disseminates thoughtful guidance for education administrators on a range of topics, including how to mitigate protests at graduation and commencement ceremonies.

Why it Matters Right Now: AJC led a landmark collaboration with higher education associations representing thousands of colleges and universities to fight campus antisemitism by committing to "continuing consequential reform and transparent action." The joint pledge is a direct result of AJC's proven work alongside academic leaders in creating safe and inclusive spaces for Jewish students and faculty.

Listen to AJC's Director Academic Affairs Dr. Sara Coodin and President of the American Council on Education Ted Mitchell discuss this collaboration on AJC's *People of the Pod* podcast.

8. AJC Marks 60 Years of German-Israeli Diplomatic Relations

The AJC Berlin Lawrence and Lee Ramer Institute for German-Jewish Relations and the University of Potsdam co-hosted an academic conference marking the 60th anniversary of German-Israeli diplomatic relations earlier this week. As the first American Jewish organization to establish a post-Holocaust presence in Germany, AJC is proud to help deepen this vital partnership. The conference traced the evolution of these ties, from the early relationship between David Ben-Gurion and Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, to contemporary perspectives on German-Israeli relations, as well as what the future holds for the alliance. Focusing on the history of diplomacy, panelists from Germany,

Israel, and the U.S. explored the influence of personal relationships between heads of government, academic collaboration, and the role of European integration.

9. In D.C., AJC's Transatlantic Friends of Israel Calls for Transatlantic Strategy on Iran

Transatlantic Friends of Israel (TFI), a cross-party, inter-parliamentary group spearheaded by AJC, released a statement Thursday signed by legislators from the United States and Europe urging decisive and strategic action to deter the Iranian regime's aggression and destabilizing behavior. The TFI interparliamentary group released the urgent appeal this morning alongside an AJC-convened bipartisan roundtable discussion on Capitol Hill. The event was led by TFI Co-Chairs Andrew Garbarino (R-NY) and Brad Schneider (D-IL), and included a delegation of leading European parliamentarians, including Andreas Minnich, the Chairman of Austria's TFI Chapter and a member of the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP). [Read the statement.](#)

10. New AJC Explainer: Cannes, Hamas, and the Weaponization of Grief

The glamorous Cannes Film Festival draws Hollywood stars to the French Riviera annually. But this year, instead of honoring artistic expression and human dignity, some celebrities are using Cannes to amplify a false narrative: accusing Israel of genocide. [Here's what you need to know about the false genocide claim and how the tragic death of Fatima Hassouna is being manipulated.](#)

[Noa Argamani: We Can't Heal Until Every Hostage Comes Home](#)



In an exclusive sit-down interview at AJC Global Forum 2025, Noa Argamani, one of the most recognized survivors of Hamas captivity and who was named one of *TIME* magazine's 100 Most Influential People of 2025, delivers a powerful and emotional call to action. As an Israeli and Jewish woman, Noa urges the world to keep talking about the hostages still held in Gaza, including her partner, Avinatan. "It could have been any of us," she says. "Time is running out—we cannot look away." [Watch now.](#)

AJC is a strictly non-partisan 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization.

AJC neither supports nor opposes candidates for elective office.

FOR NOW, VICTORY IS STILL WITHIN REACH: 10 TRUTHS ABOUT THE GAZA WAR, 20 MONTHS IN

**Israeli troops are again manoeuvring inside Gaza, hoping this will be the knockout blow;
but Hamas is still fighting and doesn't seem desperate for a deal**

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL [Lazar Berman](#) 5 June 2025



A woman and a little girl look at a mural showing female Israeli soldiers taken hostage during the October 7, 2023, Hamas-led attack on Israel, in Tel Aviv, January 18, 2025 (AP Photo/Oded Balilty)

More than 600 days after the October 7, 2023, Hamas massacre, Israeli soldiers are once again ramping up an operation that, the country's leaders say, is the key to finally winning the war.

In the meantime, hostages remain in Gaza, it is still unclear what exactly will lead to Hamas's defeat, and Israel's standing in the world continues to slip.

We don't know what will happen next — whether more hostages will be released, when the war will come to an end, what the promised total victory will constitute, and what Israel's relationships abroad will look like in the aftermath.

Still, there are core insights into the war and its wider context that can help understand where the campaign stands now, and where it should head in the future.

1. ISRAEL'S WAR AGAINST HEZBOLLAH HAS BEEN A RUNAWAY SUCCESS...

Before Hamas's October 7, 2023, invasion and slaughter in southern Israel, the Iran-backed terror group Hezbollah in Lebanon was far more dangerous and capable than Hamas, and Israel behaved accordingly over the last decade. A state of mutual deterrence persisted across Israel's northern border, as Israel drew up war plans and Hezbollah did the same, expanding its capabilities as the years went by.

Were conflict to break out with Hezbollah, the IDF predicted, 2,000 rockets a day would rain down on Israel, taking a ghastly toll while paralyzing the country.



Hezbollah supporters wave portraits of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and their group's flags, during an election campaign, in the southern suburb of Beirut, Lebanon, May 10, 2022. (AP Photo/Hussein Malla)

The campaign played out very differently. Hezbollah entered the war on October 8, 2023, and months of back-and-forth rocket attacks and airstrikes ensued. Then, after deciding to escalate in the late summer of 2024, Israel carried out a series of high-profile operations, detonating booby-trapped beepers and assassinating the terror group's Hassan Nasrallah and the leadership of the elite Radwan force.

Demoralized and overwhelmed, Hezbollah couldn't do anything to stop Israel's limited ground invasion, and accepted a humiliating ceasefire. Israel still has troops in Lebanon and carries out strikes on Hezbollah targets, with no response from the once-feared organization.

A new president representing the anti-Hezbollah faction is now in power in Beirut, with firm US and French backing, and the Lebanese Army has reportedly dismantled most of Hezbollah's posts and weapons stockpiles in the country's south, with the help of Israeli intelligence.



Newly elected Lebanese President Joseph Aoun reviews the honor guard upon his arrival at the Lebanese Parliament to be sworn in as a new president, in Beirut, Lebanon, Jan. 9, 2025. (AP/Hussein Malla)

And as a nice bonus, shortly after Hezbollah threw in the towel, the Bashar Assad regime collapsed in Syria, replaced by a weak new government that has no interest in conflict with Israel.

2. ...WHEREAS THE GAZA CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN A HALTING MUDDLE

At the tactical level, the IDF has performed impressively in Gaza. It can reach anywhere it wants in the Strip, easily rolled up Hamas defenses early in the war, and has adapted to the complex challenges presented on a battlefield prepared by Hamas for 17 years.

It has also killed all of Hamas's top leadership in Gaza, and the vast majority of its battlefield commanders.



Palestinians inspect the damage at a site hit by an Israeli operation targeting Hamas's shadowy military commander Muhammad Deif in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, July 13, 2024.

(AP Photo/Jehad Alshrafi)

Yet Hamas fights on. And it remains the only force in the Strip able to assert control over the population: Nearly 20 months after it perpetrated the worst slaughter of Jews since the Holocaust, Hamas is still not defeated.

Israel has not been clear about how exactly tactical success leads to the strategic goal of defeating Hamas. Is it through taking territory? Israel seemed to think so early in the war, boasting about the areas it had captured — Gaza City, the Netzarim Corridor, the Philadelphi Corridor, the Rafah Border Crossing.

But there is no one particular piece of territory that Hamas needs to hold onto in order to outlast Israel. Almost anywhere will do.

Perhaps the killing of Hamas fighters is the key to victory?

“Another battalion dismantled, another commander killed, another infrastructure destroyed, this is the way to eventually pressure for the release of the hostages,” said then-IDF chief of staff Herzi Halevi in April 2024.

Israel has certainly taken tens of thousands of Hamas gunmen off the battlefield, severely eroding Hamas's effectiveness. Yet there are still thousands left, more than enough to reassert control and start rebuilding if Israel withdraws.

Another theory of victory sees Hamas's leadership as its center of gravity. The IDF has killed Yahya and Mohammed Sinwar, Mohamed Deif, Marwan Issa, and almost all brigade and battalion commanders. But the group has not given up or splintered into rival factions.



Palestinians take part in an anti-Hamas protest, calling for an end to the war with Israel, in Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip on March 26, 2025. (AFP)

Israel hasn't managed to get the population to overthrow Hamas either. There have been occasional protests, which are either put down by Hamas or dissipate. Israel plays up these demonstrations, but it hasn't provide an incentive for Gazans to turn against Hamas with the promise of a rapid improvement in conditions. It has tried to get the population to turn against Hamas by limiting humanitarian aid — but that has failed, and eroded support for the war among Israel's allies.

It seems to be quietly arming Gazan criminal clans as well.

Now Israel is pursuing the idea that offering humanitarian aid is the key to victory — provide it, but keep it out of Hamas hands, and the terrorists lose their funding and control of the population. The new Gaza Humanitarian Fund is designed to test that proposition. Its rollout has been bloody and chaotic, but Hamas's opposition to it is a good sign.

It will have to be expanded, made safer, and supported by other countries and aid organizations in order to permanently weaken Hamas's hold over Gazans.

3. ISRAEL NEEDS A 'DAY AFTER' VISION

For a number of reasons, but primarily coalition politics, the government refuses to elucidate a clear vision of what Gaza would look like after Israel's "total victory."

Hamas is not immune to military defeat, like so many observers argue. That defeat becomes much harder to achieve, however, without a plan for alternative governance. It would give more purpose to military operations, and would impose an overarching logic on IDF actions.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is treating Trump's "Gaz-a-Lago" idea to resettle Palestinians as his vision for the future of Gaza, which is a convenient way to dodge having to actually come up with one.



This aerial photo shows displaced Gazans gathering in an area in Nuseirat on January 26, 2025, to return to their homes in the northern part of the Gaza Strip. (Photo by AFP)

A postwar plan would also increase international support for Israel's military campaign. Legitimacy to continue operations that impose harsh costs on Gaza's population is easier to maintain when allies believe that the suffering is leading to a better future. Without that vision, it's hard for even Israel's closest friends to understand why they should support more death and hunger.

4. OPERATION GIDEON'S CHARIOTS IS, SO FAR, NO DRASTIC CHANGE

On May 5, a senior Israeli defense official said the IDF would launch its major offensive against Hamas in the Gaza Strip, dubbed "Gideon's Chariots," if no hostage deal was reached with the terror group by the end of US President Donald Trump's visit to the region the next week.

Trump came and went. No deal was reached.



IDF troops operate in the Gaza Strip, in an image released on June 3, 2024. (Israel Defense Forces)

The "Gideon's Chariots" objective, according to defense officials, is nothing less than the defeat of Hamas in Gaza and the release of all hostages.

According to one official, "a central component of the plan is the extensive evacuation of the entire Gazan population from combat zones, including from northern Gaza, to areas in southern Gaza, while creating separation between them and Hamas terrorists, in order to allow the IDF operational freedom of action."

“Unlike in the past, the IDF will remain in every area that is conquered, to prevent the return of terror, and will handle every cleared area according to the Rafah model, where all threats were leveled and it became part of the security zone,” he said.

Though all the IDF’s active ground brigades are in Gaza, the operation is not a rapid, aggressive one.

Instead, it boasts incremental gains. Military officials say that the IDF is aiming to take 75% of the Strip within two months, and that the army is shifting its focus away from trying to eliminate as many terrorists as possible to instead capture territory and destroy Hamas’s infrastructure.

A map shared Tuesday by the IDF showed five divisions moving further into Gaza.



A map revealed by the IDF on June 3, 2025, showing its ongoing ground offensive against Hamas, with the Gaza Division operating in the Rafah area; the 36th and 98th divisions pushing into Khan Younis from the south and east; the 252nd operating in Gaza City and the Netzarim Corridor area; and the 162nd fighting Hamas in the Strip’s north. (IDF)

If, for whatever reason — external pressure, troop shortages — Israeli forces end up leaving these areas, then the much-vaunted intensified campaign will essentially be a replay of what the IDF has been doing at the height of its military operations over the past year and a half.

The difference is that the IDF says it intends to hold onto the captured territory until Hamas gives in. Could that make the difference? Potentially. But if Hamas’s goal is to simply survive, it’s not clear why it wouldn’t hunker down along with the rest of the Gazan population until something changes — US pressure on Israel or another temporary ceasefire deal.

Even as the IDF slowly retakes territory in Gaza, it’s clear that Israel is still focused primarily for now on pushing Hamas to accept a hostage deal, not on definitively defeating Hamas militarily.

5. ISRAEL THINKS IT HAS ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD...

Since October 7, Israel has operated as if it has no time limits in its Gaza war.

Its initial ground campaign was designed to be slow and deliberate, not to bring the war to a rapid decision as Israel's classic military doctrine holds.



Undated photo apparently shows troops of the IDF's Nahal Brigade outside Hamas's courthouse in Gaza City (Used in accordance with Clause 27a of the Copyright Law)

With inadequate intelligence on Hamas and the Gaza Strip, and a lack of confidence in its ability to dust off its ground maneuver capabilities, the IDF moved slowly in its major ground offensive in late 2023 and early 2024. It used massive firepower to protect its forces, which advanced only as fast as its bulldozers could clear routes.

And Israel didn't attack in multiple sectors simultaneously, as military doctrine would anticipate. It started with Gaza City, then shifted to Khan Younis in December, and — faced with threats from the US Biden administration — only began its Rafah operation in May 2024.

A long war only raises the costs for Israel: more strain on reservists, more harm to the economy, and more erosion of Israel's diplomatic standing.

There were some understandable reasons for a slower pace: Israel doesn't want to risk striking areas where hostages may be held, and two hostage deals brought temporary ceasefires.

Nevertheless, no rush has been seen to win the war and move on to building a new future in Gaza and the region.

That is a risky approach. The Trump administration has given Netanyahu plenty of room to do what he wants with Gaza, but the longer it remains a problem with no obvious movement toward a resolution the greater the risk of Trump getting sick of backing the campaign.

Europe and pro-Western Arab states are ramping up their efforts to end the war, and are sure to bring this goal up in their meetings with Trump. Eventually, it might work.

6. ...AND HAS MADE VICTORY HARDER TO ACHIEVE THROUGH A LACK OF MILITARY AND POLITICAL DISCIPLINE

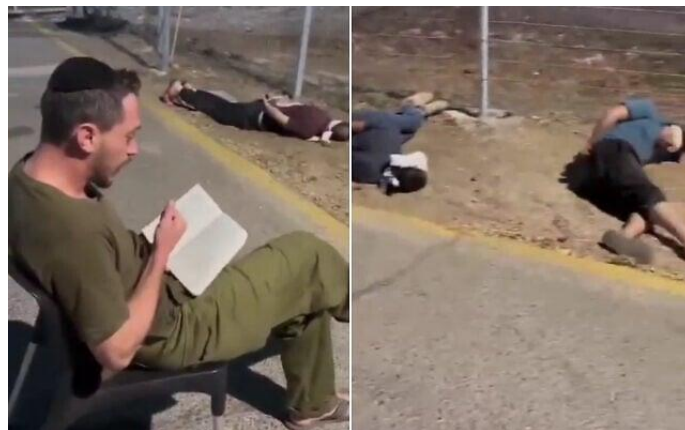
Israel's international legitimacy in the war was always going to start seeping away, from the moment the IDF's guns opened fire.

In the aftermath of the October 7 Hamas attack, Israel seemed to think that, given the scale of the atrocities, no one was going to get in the way of its military campaign. It did not prioritize limiting civilian casualties, and has played politics with the provision of humanitarian aid throughout the war.

Both of these mistakes have increasingly pushed allies to call for an end to the war, without conditioning it on the return of hostages or the defeat of Hamas.

The IDF brass didn't help either. Active and reserve soldiers began uploading videos from the battlefield to their social media accounts for the world to see. Some of it was juvenile tomfoolery; much was inappropriate partisan opinion; and there was even footage depicting war crimes.

Instead of swiftly cracking down on the perpetrators, whose videos were collected by anti-Israel groups and by international courts, the IDF failed to get a handle on the trend. Strategic and irreversible damage was done to the IDF's image, and to the war effort.



An Israeli reservist reads Talmud to Palestinian detainees in the West Bank, in a video posted online on October 6, 2024. (X screenshot: used in accordance with Clause 27a of the Copyright Law)

Government ministers and MKs have caused similar harm in front of microphones.

Agriculture Minister Avi Dichter said the war was "Gaza's Nakba."

"Erase Gaza from the face of the earth," said Likud lawmaker Galit Distel-Atbaryan. "Let the Gazan monsters rush to the southern border and flee into Egypt, or die. And let them die badly. Gaza should be wiped off the map."

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich predicted that the Strip would be "totally destroyed."

Such statements from ministers and lawmakers are a pillar of the International Court of Justice's genocide case against Israel.

Netanyahu offered tepid suggestions to his government to take more care with their utterances, but has not cracked the whip on ministers who harm Israel's campaign for their own political gain.

It should be noted that the countries criticizing Israel have adopted a hypocritical stance since the beginning of the war. They purport to care deeply for the lives of Gazans, but didn't demand escape routes for civilians, as they did for Syrians and Ukrainians. They point to fears of Israel not letting Palestinians return to Gaza — but shouldn't it be the personal choice of individual Gazans whether to protect their physical well-being or risk the dangers of war in order to hold onto Palestinian land?

7. HAMAS IS PLAYING TO SURVIVE

Israel believes time is on its side. Hamas reads the situation differently. It is convinced that eventually, domestic or international pressure will force Israel to end the war, which would mean victory for Hamas.



Illustrative: Palestinian Hamas fighters and people gather in Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip, as preparations take place for the release of three Israeli hostages as part of the seventh hostage-prisoner swap on February 22, 2025. (Bashar Taleb / AFP)

Its entire goal at this stage is to survive the war with a core of fighters and commanders in Gaza.

If it manages that, it will remain the most powerful force in the Strip. At some point, it will find the opportunity to slowly rearm, and possibly reassert full control.

This, of course, is the major sticking point in talks with Hamas. The terror organization insists that any further release guarantee an end to the war. Israel refuses to grant Hamas victory, and a deal remains out of reach.

8. THIS GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL IN GETTING HOSTAGES RELEASED

Though it faces international opprobrium and angry protests over the issue — including over its refusal to accept a deal that would bring home all the hostages in exchange for an end to the war — the Netanyahu government has managed to free the majority of hostages. Out of 251 taken on October 7, 148 have made

it home alive, mostly through deals with Hamas, but several through military operations and sporadic releases by Hamas.

Israel has brought home another 51 bodies.



Newly released hostage Omer Wenkert embraces his parents after being freed from Gaza at an IDF facility near the border, February 22, 2025. (IDF)

Finding a way to free 199 hostages from a ruthless terrorist organization that revels in the killing of Jews is no small feat. Though the government may not be formally prioritizing the freeing of the hostages over the defeat of Hamas, to the ire of much of the country, it certainly has harmed its own military campaign in order to avoid endangering hostages and to conduct hostage release deals.

It continues to delay full implementation of the much-ballyhooed ground campaign in order to keep the door open for another hostage release by Hamas in exchange for an extended ceasefire.

9. ISRAELIS MUST ASK CLEARLY: HOW MUCH TO GIVE UP FOR 20 HOSTAGES?

Families of hostages and their supporters call clearly and loudly for a deal that brings all the hostages home, at the price of ending the war if necessary.

They make a number of arguments.

One is that once Israel brings all of the hostages home, it can restart the war the minute Hamas violates the terms of the ceasefire, which it is sure to do.

That is simply not realistic. Hamas is brutal, bloodthirsty, and ruthless, but isn't stupid. Before giving up the hostages, its most valuable asset, it would make sure it had every rock-solid guarantee in place that Israel couldn't just resume the fight.



Protesters demand the release of hostages and the end of the war against Hamas in Tel Aviv, May 31, 2025. (Yael Gadot/Pro-Democracy Protest Movement)

The most reliable guarantee is a UN Security Council resolution imposing a range of harsh sanctions on Israel if it goes back to war. Hamas can't initiate such a resolution. But if that's what stands between an end to the war and more bloodshed in Gaza, it is absolutely conceivable that the US, Britain, and France would support it.

There is no way to get all the hostages home if Hamas believes there is any chance Israel will go back into Gaza

To put it starkly, there is no way to get all the hostages home if Hamas believes there is any chance Israel will go back into Gaza.

A second, moral argument is that there is an ethical imperative to bring back the hostages while they are still alive, and this trumps the goal of destroying Hamas.

This approach has guided Israeli decision-making in its repeated hostage release deals over the years. It has time and again brought home a small number of hostages while releasing hardened terrorists, some of whom have gotten right back to work killing Israelis.



Screen capture from video of former Hezbollah hostage Israeli Elhanan Tannenbaum. (YouTube. Used in accordance with Clause 27a of the Copyright Law)

According to former Mossad chief Meir Dagan, 231 Israelis were killed by the terrorists released in the 2004 deal that freed Elhanan Tannenbaum and brought home the bodies of 3 IDF soldiers.

Famously, Yahya Sinwar — the Hamas leader who masterminded October 7 — was one of the 1,027 security prisoners released in the 2011 deal that freed one IDF soldier, Gilad Shalit.

There is a difference this time, however. The previous deals were pure swaps, and did not force Israel to prematurely end a military campaign.

This time, it would.

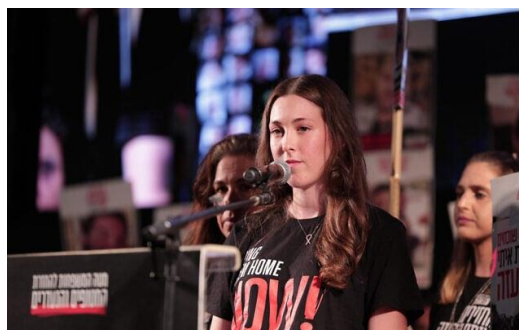


Kibbutz tractors make a shape of a hostage ribbon at a parking lot in Israel, May 31, 2025. (Yossi Yaron/Kibbutz Movement)

The decision, then, should be laid out clearly. It's a choice between winning a war against a terrorist organization, and saving the lives of about 20 people — the number of hostages assumed to be alive in Gaza. Or, as the Hostage and Missing Families Forum says: "Save the hostages. End the war."

Choosing the lives of the hostages over victory would not be unprecedented, but would be extremely rare in the history of war. Russia agreed to halt military operations in Chechnya and engage in talks after Chechen terrorists took almost 2,000 civilians hostage in Budyonnovsk in 1995.

In 1360, after King John II was captured by the English, France agreed to cede significant territories to secure the release of its monarch in the Treaty of Brétigny.



Released hostage Naama Levy speaks at Tel Aviv's Hostages Square, on May 24, 2025. (Alon Gilboa/Pro-Democracy Protest Movement)

But the few obscure historical examples fly in the face of the logic of war. If the goal was to avoid the deaths of a small number of citizens, no country would go to war at all, as wars are fought with the knowledge that soldiers will be sacrificed for political aims.

If Israel's war to defeat Hamas isn't worth the lives of 20 citizens, then why would it be worth the lives of the 425 soldiers that have fallen in the 20 months of fighting?

One could argue, however, that, given the failure of the security services to protect the country on October 7, this case is unique. Civilians were snatched from their homes, off-duty and conscript soldiers found themselves in sudden and desperate fights, and the military for hours failed to take actions that could have prevented many of the hostages from being taken. There is a moral obligation owed to these Israelis, the argument goes, and if it is not fulfilled, the covenant between the state, the military and the public will be irrevocably shattered.

10: A NEW LANGUAGE AND MORAL EQUATION HAS EMERGED IN THE CURRENT HOSTAGE CRISIS

The Hostages and Missing Families Forum, and the hostage movement as a whole, has demanded that Israel's absolute priority be bringing every hostage home. #Untilthelasthostage, says the slogan printed on their posters.

The straightforward goal of bringing every hostage home, one would hope, is accepted by all without question.

But the call in this case is more specific. It is an insistence that the government make whatever concessions are necessary to get every last captive, living and dead, back from Gaza.

It's a morally reasonable position.

It was absent, however, for the decade before October 7, during which the bodies of two IDF soldiers and two living civilians were held by Hamas in Gaza. By the standards established since the Hamas invasion, there should have been mass protests for years demanding the government free prisoners and grant other concessions to Hamas in order to get every last hostage home.

When the family of Hadar Goldin led a march in 2022 to mark eight years since his body was taken by Hamas, while calling for the release of the body of Oron Shaul and of living civilians Avera Mengistu and Hisham al-Sayed, they were joined by only hundreds of Israelis, not tens of thousands.



Demonstrators march with members of the Goldin family, whose son Hadar was killed during the 2014 war in the Gaza Strip, to demand the return of his remains and the return of other Israelis held in Gaza back to Israel, in Kfar Saba on August 3, 2022. (JACK GUEZ / AFP)

Successive Netanyahu governments, along with the Naftali Bennett-Yair Lapid government, did not treat the issue as a priority, and the public followed suit.

The current crisis has also seen captives slain in Gaza being referred to as hostages. The reasoning is clear — to stress the value of bringing bodies home for proper burial in Israel, even if it means paying a painful price.

But that's not the terminology that was used before October 7. Hostages referred to the living. News outlets, including this one, spoke of Hamas holding “two hostages” until October 7, in addition to the bodies of the two IDF soldiers.

Now Israeli leaders and journalists speak about 56 hostages, of whom 20 are still living.

It may be that the October 7 attacks were so unprecedented that it has changed the way Israelis think about hostages, living or dead.

There is also an undeniably political aspect to the protests. Some percentage of the demonstrators — it is impossible to say how large — is firmly in favor of a full hostage deal that ends the war because it has been anti-Netanyahu since long before the war.

At the same time, the language being used risks obscuring a difficult conversation that must be had: How much should Israel give up for the return of bodies? Calling them hostages indicates that the price should be nearly identical to living hostages. That is the choice Israel made in the Tannenbaum deal.

Is it what Israel should be doing now? That question has pressing real-world consequences, and obscuring the urgent need for an answer is ultimately not in the country's best interest.

Israel is facing a barbaric enemy, which had the better part of two decades to prepare for a war in which it put its own people in harm's way by design. Israel's war aims are just and reasonable.

But 20 months after October 7, Israel has achieved none of its goals. It has performed countless impressive feats on the battlefield and even on the diplomatic front. Without the right leader and strategy, however, those successes don't add up to victory.

Victory is still attainable. The longer Israel continues to avoid being decisive, the more likely it is that victory will slip out of reach.

ISRAELI NAVY GEARS UP TO BLOCK GRETA THUNBERG'S HIGH-PROFILE PROTEST SHIP HEADED FOR GAZA

Freedom Flotilla's Madleen, sailing under UK flag, set to reach Israeli territorial waters in coming days; clashes with activists would likely spark uproar

UK turns down request to intervene, says Israeli official

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Emanuel Fabian](#), [Lazar Berman](#) and [Tol Staff](#) 6 June 2025



Climate activist Greta Thunberg boards the Madleen boat before setting sail for Gaza along with activists of the Freedom Flotilla Coalition, departing from the Sicilian port of Catania, Italy, June 1, 2025.

(AP/Salvatore Cavalli)

The Israeli Navy is expected to block a high-profile activist mission sailing to Gaza to challenge Israel's blockade, should the boat near Israel's territorial waters in the coming days.

Clashes aboard the Madleen, which was organized by the pro-Palestinian, anti-Israel Freedom Flotilla Coalition, would likely spark diplomatic outrage, with France and Britain reportedly monitoring the situation.

London has so far rejected Israeli requests to prevent the boat, flying under a UK flag, from reaching Israeli waters, an official in Jerusalem told The Times of Israel.

"They can act," said the official, "but they say they only will if there is a safety risk."

The UK asked Israel to ensure the safety of boat and its crew, said the official, calling the mission "the selfie flotilla."

Among the 12 activists on the ship are Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, Brazilian activist Thiago Avila, Irish "Game of Thrones" actor Liam Cunningham, and Rima Hassan, a French-Palestinian European Parliament member.

Hassan, one of six French citizens on board, was [barred](#) in February from entering Israel over her past statements supporting sanctions and armed struggle against the country.

Israeli defense officials told The Times of Israel that they are monitoring the boat's route, as the activists take a detour to pick up Sudanese migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean.

Still, if the boat continues to Gaza, it will be intercepted by the Navy, the officials said. At its current pace, the Madleen would likely reach the Strip sometime over the weekend. The boat may be towed to the Ashdod port or left at sea, the Kan public broadcaster reported earlier this week.



Climate activist Greta Thunberg, center, waits to board the Madleen boat, before setting sail for Gaza along with activists of the Freedom Flotilla Coalition, departing from the Sicilian port of Catania, Italy, June 1, 2025. (AP/Salvatore Cavalli)

Responding to a query, the IDF said it was “enforcing the maritime security blockade on the Gaza Strip, and is prepared and ready for a wide range of scenarios that it will handle in accordance with the political echelon’s guidelines.”

A French diplomat was quoted by Channel 12 Thursday night as saying that “France is closely monitoring this boat due to the presence of six French citizens on board. France is prepared to offer aid to our citizens who are on board if necessary.” The diplomat refused to say what would make such intervention necessary, the report said.

A British official cited by Channel 12 said the United Kingdom was also monitoring the situation, and, according to the outlet, implied that the British government was initially unaware that the Madleen was sailing under the UK flag.

The network reported that Israeli sources had said Jerusalem had requested that Britain forbid the ship to fly the UK flag, but Britain refused to do so, citing British sailing regulations. The British government reportedly asked Israel to vouch for the safety of the Madleen and its passengers.

Both the [French](#) and [British](#) governments have recently sharpened their tone against Israel's renewed operations in Gaza and the humanitarian situation there.



Damage to the vessel Conscience is seen after what the ship's operators, Flotilla Freedom Coalition, said was an Israeli drone strike in international waters near Malta, May 2, 2025.

(Screen capture: Instagram/Flotilla Freedom Coalition)

Activists on a previous Freedom Flotilla mission, which sailed to Gaza under the flag of Palau early last month, [accused](#) Israel of carrying out a drone strike against their boat off the coast of Malta, where Thunberg had been set to board.

Palau, which has warm ties with Israel, revoked its flag shortly before the attack on the Conscience, according to the activists, who also accused Malta of denying them entry. The damaged boat was [left stranded](#), refused docking in several countries because it had no flag, until Malta [offered](#) to repair it.

The latest Freedom Flotilla mission set sail from Sicily on Sunday. On Thursday, Hassan said the Madleen changed tack to the south to rescue a boat carrying migrants off the Libyan coast.

The migrants reached the ship just as Libya's coast guard overtook the dinghy, but four people jumped into the water and were picked up by passengers on the Madleen, said Hasan.

"We were able to rescue them; they are with us on the boat," she said. It was unclear if the migrants would continue sailing to Gaza with the Madleen, or if the boat would make another detour to bring them to safety.

The mission to Gaza comes as Israel has expanded its [ground offensive](#) in the Strip, some 20 months after the war there was sparked by the Hamas onslaught of October 7, 2023. The offensive followed two months in which Israel halted the flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

Advertisement

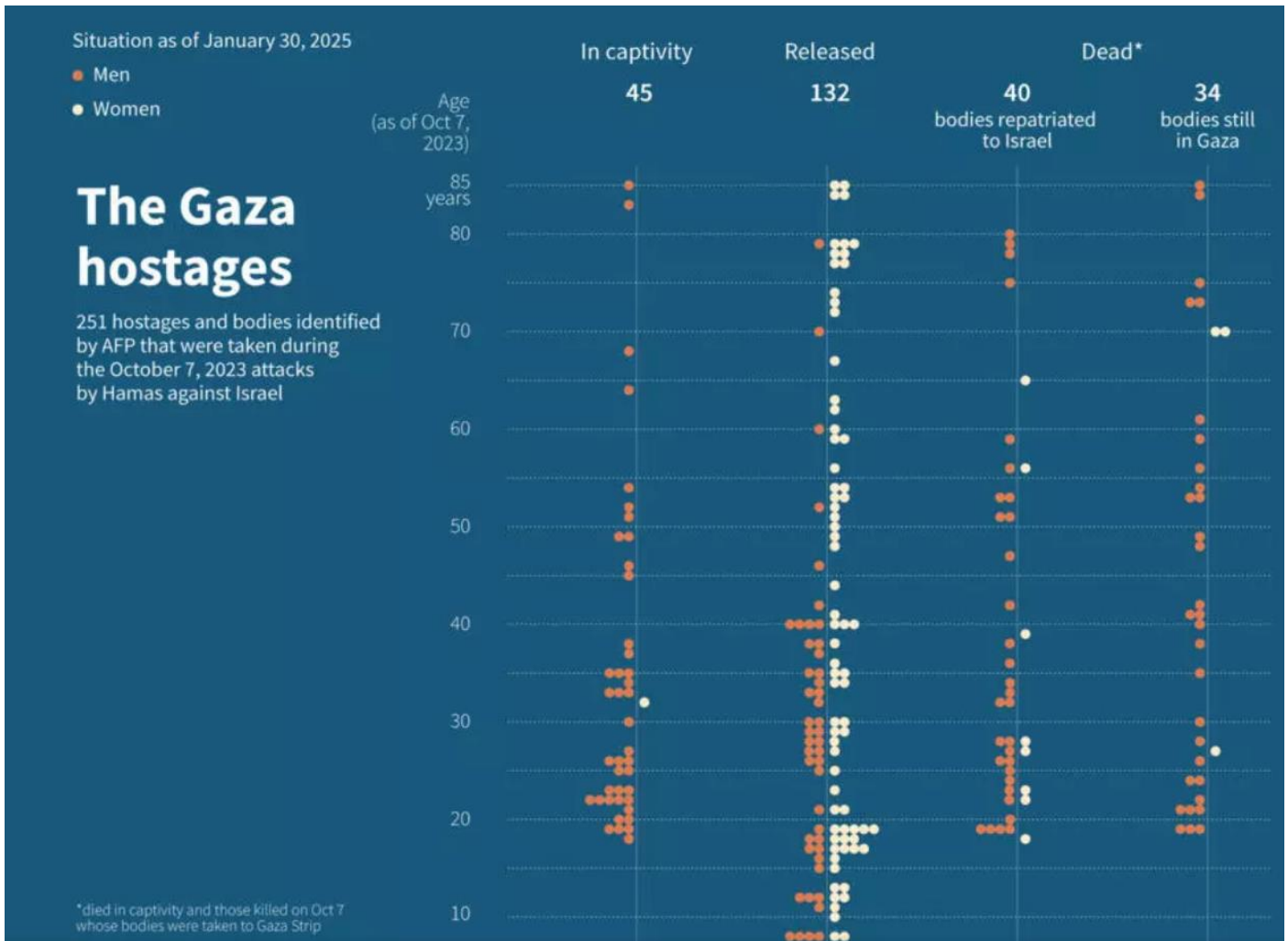
Israel has accused Hamas of hoarding the aid. In a bid to circumvent the terror group, a US- and Israeli-backed aid agency began operating in Gaza last week, but has been accused by other humanitarian organizations of endangering aid-seekers, dozens of whom were [reportedly](#) killed by Israel.

Israel imposed a naval blockade on Gaza soon after Hamas took over the Strip in 2007. In 2012, a Freedom Flotilla mission against the blockade was intercepted by the Israeli Navy.

After the convoy refused orders to reroute to Ashdod, Israeli commandos boarded one of the ships, the Mavi Marmara, which was carrying over 600 passengers. After being met with violent resistance, the commandos opened fire, killing 10 Turkish activists. Ten Israeli soldiers were wounded during the attack.

PART 3 THE HAMAS ISRAEL HOSTAGES

THE GAZA HOSTAGES JANUARY 30, 2025



OVERVIEW OF THE HOSTAGE ABDUCTIONS BY HAMAS AND REACTION

ChatGPT

Along with the devastating death toll, Hamas abducted over 250 individuals and transported them into Gaza. Hostages ranged from infants to elderly civilians, including families, foreign agricultural workers, and IDF soldiers.

Immediately, the fate of these hostages became one of Israel's top concerns. Posters of the missing, candlelight vigils, mass protests, and hostage family organizations quickly emerged, pushing their cause to the forefront of national and international attention.

Families of the Hostages: Fear, Advocacy, and Pressure

The families of the hostages formed an immediate and highly vocal movement. Groups such as the **Hostages and Missing Families Forum** organized protests, launched international campaigns, and met directly with Israeli and world leaders, including President Biden and European heads of state. Their message was clear: **bring them home — now**.

Families demanded that the Israeli government prioritize the safe return of the hostages over continued military operations. Their actions included:

- Organizing marches and hunger strikes.
- Protesting outside the Israeli Defense Ministry and Prime Minister's Residence.
- Advocating for ceasefires and prisoner exchanges, even if it meant controversial concessions.

Many families also criticized the government for its handling of the initial Hamas attack, blaming security and intelligence failures for allowing the abductions to happen in the first place. As the war dragged on, the desperation in their voices grew louder, with some accusing the government of **abandoning** their loved ones.

Israeli Public Opinion: A Nation Divided

The hostage crisis deeply fractured Israeli public opinion, revealing profound divisions in how to balance military goals against humanitarian concerns.

1. **Bring Them Home First Movement:**

A significant portion of the public sympathized with the families' demands. Mass rallies called for a **renewed focus on the hostages**, urging Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government to agree to broader ceasefires and prisoner exchanges, even at the cost of halting the war temporarily. These citizens saw the hostages as "Israel's children" and believed saving lives must be the nation's first priority.

2. **Continue the War First Advocates:**

On the other hand, a strong bloc, including many on the political right, feared that making

concessions to Hamas would embolden future terror. They argued that Hamas needed to be dismantled militarily, and that negotiating under pressure would only lead to greater insecurity for Israel in the long run. Some government ministers, notably Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, controversially stated that **returning the hostages was important but not "the most important" goal** compared to defeating Hamas.

3. **Growing Disillusionment and Anger:**

As the war dragged on into 2024 and 2025, with many hostages still in captivity and some confirmed dead, public anger mounted. Accusations that the government had failed to act decisively or had used the hostages as "bargaining chips" fueled widespread protests. The credibility of Netanyahu's government suffered severe blows, with polls showing declining trust across the political spectrum.

Emotional Toll and National Psyche

The hostage crisis has left lasting scars on Israeli society:

- **Fear and Mourning:** Every new announcement of a hostage's death was a national trauma, often broadcast live on television.
- **Unity and Division:** While initially uniting much of the country in grief and determination, over time the crisis exposed deeper political fractures.
- **Symbolism:** The hostages became a symbol of Israeli vulnerability — a nation priding itself on military strength suddenly found itself unable to protect or recover its own people.

The faces of the hostages — on posters, T-shirts, murals, and social media campaigns — became a haunting daily reminder of the war's human cost.

ISRAEL-HAMAS HOSTAGE DEAL – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

[AJC](#) February 22, 2025

On January 19, the first three hostages freed under the deal—[Romi Gonen, 24, abducted from the Nova music festival, and Emily Damari, 28, and Doron Steinbrecher, 31](#), taken from their homes in Kibbutz Kfar Aza—were reported to be in relatively good physical condition. Follow AJC's Explainer, [Who Are the Israeli Hostages Being Released? Full Schedule and Latest Updates](#), for real-time updates. AJC also breaks down what you need to know about the [Palestinian Prisoners Freed in the Hostage Agreement](#) and [What the Hostages Endured in Hamas Brutal Captivity](#).

467 days since grandparents, mothers, children, and wives were torn from their families and held captive in Gaza, the Israeli government and Palestinian terror group Hamas announced a hostage release deal. The deal, brokered by international partners including the U.S., Egypt, and Qatar, follows over 15 months of conflict that began on [October 7, 2023, when Hamas terrorists stormed southern Israel](#), massacring over 1,200 Israelis and taking 251 hostages.

Here's what you need to know about the deal: Hamas is releasing hostages, including Israeli and American citizens, while Israel is releasing Palestinian security prisoners, including those convicted of terrorism and serving life sentences.

WHAT ARE THE PHASES OF THE DEAL?

According to the reports on the agreement, the deal involves a significant exchange of hostages for convicted Palestinian terrorist prisoners, alongside changes to Israeli troop positions in Gaza and humanitarian measures.

As of February 11, 2025, Hamas and other terror groups inside Gaza still hold more than 70 of the 251 hostages taken from Israel on October 7, 2023, including at least 35 of whom are dead, according to the Israeli government. An additional four hostages were already being held by Hamas, including the bodies of Hadar Goldin and Oron Shaul, who died during Israel's Operation Cast Lead in Gaza in 2014. Hamas is also holding captive Israelis Avera Mengistu and Hisham al-Sayed, who crossed into Gaza on their own accord in 2014 and 2015, respectively.

The Israeli Hostage Deal is a Moment for Relief, But Not Celebration

Read Now: Op-Ed by AJC CEO Ted Deutch in The Miami Herald

Phase One

The three-phase agreement covers a span of six weeks and includes the release of 33 hostages, including 12 women and children, men ages 50 and above, and injured civilians, including two Americans.

Three hostages will be released on the first day, and four more on the seventh day. After that, three hostages will be released every seven days, and the final 14 will be released in the final week of the first phase. Among these, five female Israeli soldiers would be exchanged for 50 Palestinian security prisoners each, including 30 serving life sentences for terror.

On Saturday, January 25, [Hamas released four hostages: Naama Levy, Liri Albag, Daniella Gilboa, and Karina Arielev](#). The agreement also includes [the release of Palestinian security prisoners](#), including those who are serving long prison terms for terrorism.

On January 30, three Israeli hostages—[Arbel Yehoud, 29, Agam Berger, 19, and Gadi Moshe, 80](#)—were released. Additionally, five Thai hostages were freed,

On February 1, Hamas released three hostages: [Israeli-American Keith Siegel, French-Israeli Ofer Kalderon, and Yarden Bibas](#).

Three Israeli hostages—[Ohad Ben Ami, Eli Sharabi, and Or Levy](#)—were released from Hamas captivity after 491 days and have arrived safely in Israel on February 8.

On February 15, three hostages—[Russian-Israeli Alexander Troufanov, Argentinian-Israeli Yair Horn, and American-Israeli Sagui Dekel-Chen](#)—were released from Hamas captivity after 498 days.

On February 20, **four bodies were returned to the Jewish state**. Three hostages who were murdered by terrorists have been identified: **Oded Lifshitz, Ariel Bibas, and Kfir Bibas**. The identification process determined that the fourth body was not that of Shiri Bibas (the mother of Kfir and Ariel) and did not match any other hostage. It was an unidentified, anonymous body. **Read more in the IDF's official X post** about Hamas' hostage agreement violation.

AJC Statement on the Return of Murdered Hostages

In the early hours of February 22, Hamas released [Shiri Bibas' body to Israel](#), confirming she was murdered by terrorists in captivity. At approximately 3:00am in Israel on Shabbat, the Jewish day of rest, mourners carrying Israeli and yellow hostage flags lined the 232 highway in southern Israel to pay tribute to Shiri as a convoy with her body passed by.

Later on February 22, [Omer Wenkert, Omer Shem-Tov, Eliya Cohen, Tal Shoham, Avera Mengistu, and Hisham al-Sayed were released by Hamas](#). Avera and Hisham, who both suffer from mental illness, crossed into Gaza in 2014 and 2015, respectively.

As of today, at least 63 hostages are still being held by Hamas terrorists, **five of them U.S. citizens**. Of the 33 captives to be released in Phase One of the hostage agreement, 29 are now home.

Here is the full list of hostages:

Doron Steinbrecher, 31 **(Released)**
 Romi Gonen, 23 **(Released)**
 Emily Damari, 27 **(Released)**
 Liri Albag, 19 **(Released)**
 Karina Arieiev, 20 **(Released)**
 Danielle Gilboa, 20 **(Released)**
 Naama Levy, 20 **(Released)**
 Arbel Yehud, 29 **(Released)**
 Ariel Bibas, 5 **(Body returned; murdered in captivity)**
 Kfir Bibas, 2 **(Body returned; murdered in captivity)**
 Keith Siegel, 65, **(Released)**
 Shiri Silberman Bibas, 33 **(Body returned; murdered in captivity)**
 Agam Berger, 21 **(Released)**
 Ohad Ben Ami, 58 **(Released)**
 Gadi Moshe Moses, 80 **(Released)**
 Keith Siegel, 65 **(Released)**
 Ofer Kalderon, 54 **(Released)**
 Eli Sharabi, 52 **(Released)**
 Itzik Elgarat, 70
 Shlomo Mansour, 86 **(Murdered on October 7, 2023)**
 Ohad Yahalomi, 50
 Oded Lifshitz, 84 **(Body returned; murdered in captivity)**
 Tsahi Idan, 50
 Hisham al-Sayed, 36 **(Released)**
 Yarden Bibas, 35 **(Released)**
 Sagui Dekel-Chen, 36 **(Released)**
 Yair Horn, 46 **(Released)**
 Omer Wenkert, 23 **(Released)**
 Sasha Trufanov, 28 **(Released)**
 Eliya Cohen, 27 **(Released)**
 Or Levy, 34 **(Released)**
 Avera Mengistu, 38 **(Released)**
 Tal Shoham, 39 **(Released)**
 Omer Shem-Tov, 22 **(Released)**

Additionally, during this phase, Israel agreed to withdraw from specific population centers in Gaza, facilitate the return of displaced Palestinians to northern Gaza, and allow the entry of 600 humanitarian aid trucks daily, up from roughly 250 per day, while maintaining control of the strategic Gaza-Egypt border region

known as the [Philadelphi Corridor](#). This border has been used by Hamas to smuggle into the Gaza Strip vast amounts of weapons which the terror group then utilizes to carry out attacks on Israel.

It's important to note that during Phase One, there are no restrictions on Israel's ability to continue its efforts to defend Israelis from threats emanating from Gaza.

FREED ISRAELI HOSTAGES: WHAT THEY ENDURED IN CAPTIVITY AND HOW THEY SURVIVED

Phase Two

The rest of the remaining hostages, numbering 65, will only be freed if the sides can agree on a second phase for the truce.

The deal stipulates that negotiations for the second phase are to begin 16 days after implementation of phase one and with the goal being the release of all remaining hostages, a permanent ceasefire, and the full withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza.

The release of the remaining 65 hostages will only be freed if the sides can agree on a second phase for the truce. These negotiations will begin approximately two weeks into the halt in the fighting.

The second phase involves the release of all remaining hostages, primarily male Israeli soldiers, in exchange for additional Palestinian prisoners and a complete Israeli withdrawal from Gaza.

Among those released in the second phase could potentially be [American Edan Alexander, 21, who joined the IDF after graduating from high school in New Jersey](#). He was on duty the morning of October 7. His family last saw him in a propaganda video released by Hamas shortly after Thanksgiving.

Phase Three

The third phase would see the return of remaining hostages' bodies in exchange for a Gaza reconstruction plan spanning three to five years, supervised by international entities.

Four Americans are presumed dead, with their bodies still being held: Itay Chen, 19; Omer Neutra, 23; Gadi Haggai, 73; and Judi Weinstein Haggai, 70. The bodies of 37 hostages have already been recovered and brought back to Israel by Israeli troops.

The full scope of the plan for a post-war Gaza has yet to be determined, including who would govern the territory. Israel has insisted that Hamas, [which is sworn to Israel's destruction and has controlled the territory since 2007](#), should not be involved in a post-war Gaza. The Israeli government has also opposed the involvement of the Palestinian Authority, which administers portions of the West Bank and administered Gaza [before its ouster by Hamas in 2007](#).

WHO ARE THE PALESTINIAN TERROR PRISONERS BEING RELEASED BY ISRAEL?

On January 19, the first set of 90 Palestinian prisoners were released in exchange for three hostages held by Hamas - Romi Gonen, Doron Steinbrecher, and Emily Damari.

[The prisoners to be released include prominent figures linked to Palestinian terror groups](#), such as Khalida Jarrar, 62, of the U.S.-designated terror group the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP); Dalal Khaseeb, 53, sister of former Hamas leader Saleh Arouri; and Abla Abdelrasoul, 68, wife of detained PFLP leader Ahmad Saadat, who ordered the 2001 assassination of Israeli tourism minister Rehavam Ze'evi.

Israel has already insisted that high-profile prisoners such as Marwan Barghouti will not be one of them.

Pro-Palestinian activists have long called for the release of Barghouti, a leader of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, who still exercises influence from behind bars. Barghouti was convicted in 2004 on five counts of murder and sentenced to five life sentences and 40 years for orchestrating a number of deadly attacks on Israel during the First and Second Intifadas.

Activists also have called for the release of Ahmad Sa'adat, secretary-general of the [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine \(PFLP\)](#), who was imprisoned for his role in the assassination of Israeli Tourism Minister Rehavam Ze'evi in 2001.

PFLP is a decades-old internationally designated terrorist organization that partnered with a West German terror group in 1976 to hijack an Air France flight, diverting it to Entebbe, Uganda. They murdered the Fogel family in 2011, carried out the 2014 Jerusalem synagogue massacre, and killed 17-year-old Rina Shnerb in 2019. PFLP was also involved in Hamas' October 7 massacre of Israelis.

Additionally, slain [Hamas terror leader Yahya Sinwar](#), the architect of the October 7 massacre, whose body is being held by Israel, will also not be released, according to Arab media reports.

What is AJC saying?

American Jewish Committee welcomed the first stage of the agreement that secures the release of 33 hostages abducted during Hamas' October 7, 2023, massacre of Israelis. [AJC CEO Ted Deutch](#) expressed gratitude to "the Biden Administration, the incoming Trump Administration, and other global partners" while emphasizing the need to "ensure that every hostage is reunited with their loved ones."

Ted added: "We cannot wait to see the first hostages come home to their families, but the critical work to free every hostage – regardless of age, gender, or nationality – must continue. The international community must persist in its efforts to ensure that every hostage is reunited with their loved ones."

[Click here to read the full AJC statement](#)

HOW ARE ISRAELI AND WORLD LEADERS REACTING?

Israeli President Isaac Herzog acknowledges the "deeply painful, challenging, and harrowing" terms of the hostage release deal, but emphasizes its necessity, urging sensitivity toward affected families and vowing to "continue to act with all our might until every stage of the deal is realized and the last hostage returns."

Israeli Opposition Leader Yair Lapid emphasizes the need to secure the return of all hostages, thanking international partners, including Presidents Trump and Biden, and pledging political support "until the last hostage" comes home. National Unity chairman Benny Gantz welcomes the deal, urging efforts to use the ceasefire period to recover all abductees and apply pressure to replace Hamas, stating, "It is possible."

In a statement, U.S. President Joe Biden hailed "many months of intensive diplomacy" by the U.S., Egypt, and Qatar. "My diplomacy never ceased in their efforts to get this done," the outgoing president said.

In subsequent on-camera remarks, Biden said he was "deeply satisfied this day has finally come, for the sake of the people of Israel and the families waiting in agony, and for the sake of the innocent people in Gaza, who suffered unimaginable devastation because of the war."

President-elect Donald Trump wrote on social media: "This EPIC ceasefire agreement could have only happened as a result of our Historic Victory in November, as it signaled to the entire World that my Administration would seek Peace and negotiate deals to ensure the safety of all Americans, and our Allies."

He added, “I am thrilled American and Israeli hostages will be returning home to be reunited with their families and loved ones.”

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, among the first Arab leaders to comment on the Gaza cease-fire, highlighted “more than a year of tireless efforts, brokered by Egypt, Qatar, and the United States,” and stressed “the urgent need to accelerate the delivery of humanitarian aid to address the current catastrophic humanitarian situation.”

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THE PREVIOUS ISRAEL-HAMAS AGREEMENT AND HOSTAGE RELEASE?

In an agreement reached on November 21, 2023, between Israel and Hamas, 50 Israeli hostages abducted during the October 7 attacks were released in exchange for 150 Palestinian prisoners and a four-day pause in fighting, later extended to allow the release of 108 hostages in total.

The phased releases included women, children, and elderly individuals, many from Kibbutzim like Nir Oz and Be’eri, which suffered devastating losses.

Additionally, foreign hostages were also included in the phased releases. Among them were 10 Thai nationals and one Filipino released in the initial group on November 24. Additional Thai nationals were freed in subsequent releases, including four on November 25 and three on November 26. These workers had been abducted during the October 7 attacks while living and working in southern Israel.

WHAT HAS AJC BEEN DOING TO ADVOCATE FOR THE RELEASE OF THE HOSTAGES?

Since Hamas’ attack on October 7, [AJC has worked tirelessly alongside more than 50 hostage families](#), advocating globally to keep their stories front and center with officials, including over 200 members of Congress, diplomats, and faith leaders. Through nearly 500,000 messages sent from its online action center, AJC supporters worldwide have urged immediate action to bring the hostages home, while the organization facilitated congressional vigils, roundtables, and high-level meetings to amplify families’ voices.

AJC has also engaged the global diplomatic community, connecting officials from 20+ countries with families of hostages and organizing impactful advocacy events across Europe and the U.S. From meetings with UN leaders in New York to community events in Los Angeles, Dallas, and Philadelphia, AJC has mobilized leaders, celebrities, and civic groups to push for the hostages’ release, emphasizing unity and relentless efforts to #BringThemHomeNow.

HAMAS HOSTAGE CEREMONIES ANGERED US, SPURRING PRESSURE FOR PLAN TO PUSH GROUP OUT

**Diplomats say Hamas's use of performances as show of force
has roiled Trump administration,
which now more forcefully demands Arab allies come up with plan to oust terror group**

[TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Jacob Magid](#) 25 February 2025



Israeli hostages Tal Shoham left, and Avera Mengisto are put on stage by Hamas in Rafah, southern Gaza Strip, on Saturday, Feb. 22, 2025. (AP/Jehad Alshrafi)

The elaborate propaganda-filled hostage-release ceremonies that Hamas has been holding throughout the first phase of the ceasefire have undercut the terror group's chances to remain in power in Gaza, two international diplomats told The Times of Israel.

Hamas has sought to use the ceremonies to demonstrate that it remains in control of the coastal enclave after over 15 months of war with Israel. Israel and others have denounced the displays as “humiliating” and demanded they stop before any more prisoners are released in exchange for hostages.

Hostages have been paraded on stages surrounded by heavily armed masked gunmen, given “release certificates” and “gift bags,” and made to wave to crowds of civilians brought in to watch the spectacle and thank their captors. On Saturday, two hostages not set to be freed in the current phase of the deal were brought to a handover in a vehicle that parked close to the stage, and filmed in a propaganda video.

The stages have been festooned with posters of slain Hamas military leaders, and slogans vowing that the terror group would remain in control, some even mocked US President Donald Trump's plans to relocate Gazans. Similar ceremonies have been held for the release of the bodies of slain hostages.

A senior Arab diplomat and a senior European Union diplomat speaking on condition of anonymity this week said that the performances have led the Trump administration to massively ratchet up its pressure on its Arab allies to advance a plan for the post-war management of Gaza that sees Hamas removed from power.

“This was something that the Arab states wanted before but were resigned to the fact that it wasn’t possible, given that Israel had tried to defeat Hamas for over a year and couldn’t succeed,” the EU diplomat said.



Coffins apparently containing the bodies of slain Israeli hostages Shiri Bibas, her two children Ariel and Kfir, and Oded Lifshitz, are displayed on a stage with a propaganda message before being handed over to the Red Cross by Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists in Khan Younis, Gaza Strip, Feb. 20, 2025. (AP Photo/Abdel Kareem Hana)

“Hamas has been sending signals that it is prepared to give up ruling Gaza. Giving up its weapons will be far more difficult, but that has been discussed in the region in recent weeks,” the senior Arab diplomat adds.

Washington’s Arab allies — led by Egypt — are putting together a plan for the post-war management of Gaza that envisions Hamas stripped of its governing power, while allowing Palestinians to remain in the Strip, contrary to Trump’s idea for the US to take over Gaza, the two diplomats said.



Hamas fighters are deployed in Rafah ahead of the planned release of two among six Israeli hostages set to be handed over to the Red Cross, Gaza Strip, on Feb. 22, 2025. (AP/Jehad Alshrafi)

They acknowledged that the proposal has the same basic framework as ones discussed over the past year with the Biden administration — Arab states take part in Gaza's security and reconstruction alongside and at the invitation of the Palestinian Authority.

But the diplomats speculated that the plan is unlikely to be implemented due to the Israeli government's refusal to grant a Gaza foothold to the PA, which Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has likened to Hamas.

This leaves an eventual return to the war as the most likely scenario, the two diplomats lamented, pointing to increasing acquiescence in Washington to that result.

The two officials credited Hamas's hostage release ceremonies, but an Israeli official said Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer's decision last month to screen for US Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff compilation footage from Hamas's October 7 onslaught had a profound impact on the top Trump aide.

"I've got some context that was important for me to have," Witkoff said last week.

The US envoy will depart for the region in the coming days, with Israel slated to be the first stop on a whirlwind tour.



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (C) meets with US special envoy Steve Witkoff (3rd R) and National Security Adviser Michael Waltz (3rd L), accompanied by Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer (2nd R), National Security Adviser Tzachi Hanegbi (2nd L), Ambassador to the US Yechiel Leiter (R), and Chief of Staff Tzachi Braverman (L) and military secretary Roman Gofman (bottom C) in Washington on February 4, 2025. (Avi Ohayon/GPO)

He said Sunday that his initial goal will be extending the ongoing hostage deal's first phase.

Witkoff insisted that the second phase is still a US objective, but envisions an end to the war that Netanyahu is not prepared to accept, even in exchange for all remaining hostages.

The Trump administration is adapting to Jerusalem's position and has already been moving away from the framework drawn up by former US president Joe Biden. Witkoff has repeatedly trashed the proposal's third phase over its "unrealistic" five-year reconstruction timeline.

But the break from the Biden plan has extended further, with Witkoff's decision to rework the terms of phase one.

He also appeared to alter the terms of phase two, saying Sunday that it is "much about two things — a permanent ceasefire and the fact that Hamas cannot be allowed to come back into the government."

The publicly available annexes of the agreement make no mention of the latter idea, though, and the senior Arab diplomat said that redacted passages don't either.



People pay their respects ahead of the funeral service of murdered Israeli hostage Oded Lifshitz, in Rishon Lezion, February 25, 2025. (Miriam Alster/Flash90)

Before phase one can even be extended, Witkoff along with Arab mediators Qatar and Egypt are working to overcome an impasse regarding the stage's last batch of releases.

Israel was supposed to free 602 Palestinian security prisoners on Saturday but refused to do so, citing Hamas's humiliating hostage release ceremonies and the botched release of Shiri Bibas's body.

A variety of formulas have been discussed to convince Israel to free the prisoners this week in exchange for the final four bodies of slain hostages slated for release in phase one, the Israeli official said.

Jerusalem has insisted that Hamas release the bodies before it releases the prisoners, while the terror group has thus far refused, according to the Israeli official.



A woman mourns next to pictures of portraits of late Israeli hostages Ariel (L) and Kfir (2nd-L) Bibas, Oded Lifshitz (C-top) and Shiri Bibas (C-bottom) as people gather at Hostages Square in Tel Aviv, ahead of the hostage release on February 22, 2025 (Jack GUEZ / AFP)

The mediators have secured a commitment from Hamas not to hold a ceremony when it releases the four hostages' bodies, although a similar assurance was given before the release of the Bibas family last week, the Israeli official revealed, adding that Hamas's leadership abroad either didn't want or wasn't able to get its Gaza-based leaders on board.

While an agreement remains elusive, the Israeli official said he was optimistic that the mediators would succeed in securing a compromise.

But that only gets the sides through the end of the week, the mediators are hoping that such a deal could give momentum for a further extension through the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, which starts next week. "We're thinking in terms of days, not weeks," the Israeli official said.

HAMAS SAYS IT REJECTS ISRAEL'S 'FORMULATION' OF EXTENDING FIRST GAZA CEASEFIRE PHASE

**Netanyahu set to hold consultation later Saturday evening on state of ceasefire agreement,
as Hamas source blames Israeli 'procrastination' for lack of progress in talks**

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL [Agencies](#) and [Tel Staff](#)¹ March 2025



The 24 hostages presumed to be alive who are still held by Hamas:

Top row, from left: Elkana Bohbot, Matan Angrest, Edan Alexander, Avinatan Or, Yosef-Haim Ohana, Alon Ohel. Second row, from left: Evyatar David, Guy Gilboa-Dalal, Bipin Joshi, Rom Braslavski, Ziv Berman, Gali Berman. Third row, from left: Omri Miran, Eitan Mor, Segev Kalfon, Nimrod Cohen, Maxim Herkin, Eitan Horn. Bottom row, from left: Matan Zangauker, Bar Kupershtein, David Cunio, Ariel Cunio, Tamir Nimrodi, Pinta Nattapong. (Hostages Families Forum)

Hamas said on Saturday that it rejected Israel's "formulation" of an extension to the first phase of the hostage-ceasefire deal in Gaza, under which the ceasefire would be maintained and further living hostages released in return for Palestinian terrorists and detainees.

The first, 42-day phase of the agreement formally expires Saturday. Thirty-three Israeli hostages have been released — eight of them dead, along with five Thai nationals. Nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners have been freed.

Despite expectations that negotiations would resume at the weekend, the terror group's spokesperson, Hazem Qassem, also told Al-Araby TV there were no current talks for a second ceasefire phase in the Gaza Strip.

Under the ceasefire outline agreed by Israel and Hamas on January 19, the remaining living hostages — believed to number 24 — are to be released during the second stage of the deal, during which the IDF would complete a full withdrawal from Gaza. A third stage is also planned, during which the bodies of hostages killed on October 7 or in captivity would be released, and the war would end permanently. After the Hamas announcement, Hebrew media reported that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu scheduled consultations with senior ministers and defense officials on the state of the deal at 7:30 p.m. Saturday. The premier also [held an extensive telephone discussion](#) on Friday evening, which, in a rare instance, continued into Shabbat.

Officials from Israel, Qatar, Egypt and the United States had been involved in negotiations on the second phase in Cairo, with negotiators from Jerusalem returning home on Friday. Hamas did not attend the negotiations, but its position has been represented through Egyptian and Qatari mediators.

Basem Naim, a member of Hamas's political bureau, told the Associated Press there had been "no progress" before Israeli negotiators left Cairo.

It was unclear whether those mediators would return to Cairo to resume talks on Saturday as had been expected, and Naim said he had "no idea" when negotiations might resume.

Saudi Television station Asharq cited a source close to Hamas on Saturday who blamed "Israel's procrastination" for the lack of a deal on the second phase.

The source said Jerusalem is seeking to extend the current first phase and that Hamas considers this "a violation of the agreement." The second phase is meant to include the release of remaining hostages and steps leading to a permanent end to the war, including a withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Strip.

The source added that the terror group "demanded that the mediators oblige Tel Aviv to implement all the terms of the agreement, because Israel is the one that continues to violate and breach the agreement, as it is delaying entering into the second phase negotiations."

The first phase of the ceasefire was set to end on Saturday, and the warring parties have yet to clarify what would happen if no agreement was reached by then. Two Israeli government officials told Reuters on Friday that Israel was seeking to extend the initial phase, with Hamas freeing three hostages each week in exchange for Palestinians held by Israel.

Meanwhile, a senior Western diplomat told The Times of Israel on Friday that Israel was gearing up to return to war with Hamas, believing the ceasefire will not last for more than several weeks.

While the IDF's tactics in such a renewed conflict would ostensibly shift from the last year of fighting, with Israeli military and political officials pledging a more intensive campaign, the Western diplomat briefed on Jerusalem's preparations said there did not appear to be a strategic shift in Israel's approach regarding the advancement of an alternative to Hamas.

The government is still prioritizing the dismantlement of Hamas's governing and military capabilities, believing that no alternative can be established in Gaza until the terror group has been defeated, the diplomat said. However, the diplomat argued that this approach was "misguided," asserting that planning and implementing an alternative to Hamas must happen simultaneously with the IDF's campaign against the terror organization.

"Otherwise, what you will have is indefinite Israeli occupation and Hamas insurgency," the diplomat said.



Hamas terrorists stand watch over Gazans at a funeral ceremony for people killed during the war with Israel, at the Shati refugee camp north of Gaza City on February 28, 2025. (BASHAR TALEB / AFP)

An Israeli official sent a statement to reporters Thursday rejecting any withdrawal of IDF troops from the so-called Philadelphi Corridor along the Gaza-Egypt border, despite the deal's requirement that it do so by the 50th day of the ceasefire.

Israel contends that the border zone is a major smuggling route that will be used by Hamas to bring more weapons and fortifications into Gaza to rebuild its decimated forces unless it is policed by Israeli troops.

Both Hamas and Egypt reject a continued Israeli presence there.

"We will not leave the Philadelphi Corridor. We will not allow the Hamas murderers to again roam our borders with pickup trucks and guns, and we will not allow them to rearm through smuggling," the Israeli official said.

Israel, with backing from the US, has repeatedly said it will not allow Hamas any role in the future governance of Gaza and that it is prepared to resume fighting to prevent such an outcome. Netanyahu has also refused any role for the Ramallah-based Palestinian Authority.

SOME RELEASED HOSTAGES WERE HELD IN TUNNELS WITH NO HUMAN CONTACT FOR MONTHS, IDF SAYS

**Military doctor refuses to discuss possible torture or abuse to maintain their privacy;
says hostages' injuries were not properly treated, they bear signs of mild starvation**

[REUTERS](#) and [Tel Staff](#) 27 January 2025



Top (L-R) Karina Arie, Liri Albag; bottom (L-R) Naama Levy, Daniella Gilboa, the four Israeli released hostages, at Rabin Medical Center in Petah Tikva, January 25, 2025 (Israel Defense Forces)

Some of the hostages released from Gaza during the ceasefire had been held in Hamas tunnels for up to eight months straight, deprived of daylight and with little to no human contact, an Israeli general said on Monday.

Three Israeli civilians and four soldiers — all women — have been released so far in the ceasefire, which began on January 19. In return, Israel has released 290 Palestinian convicts and detainees.

“Some of them told us that they’ve been in the past few months, that they’ve been through the entire time, in tunnels, underground,” the deputy chief of the Israeli military’s medical corps, Colonel Dr. Avi Banov, told journalists online.

“Some of them were alone through the entire time they were there,” he said. “Those who said they were together were in better shape.”

The military oversees the first health checks that the hostages receive upon their arrival in Israeli territory.

The hostages said their treatment improved in the days leading up to their release, Banov said, when they were allowed to shower and change their clothes and received better food. They appeared to be smiling in videos on the days of their release.



This image grab from a handout video released by the Hamas terror group shows Israeli hostages Emily Damari (L), Romi Gonen, center, and Doron Steinbrecher with bags and folders bearing the logo of Hamas's armed wing, as they sit in a Hamas vehicle before being handed over to the International Committee of the Red Cross in the Gaza Strip on January 19, 2025. (Screen capture: Hamas/AFP)

However, Eitan Gonen, father of Romi Gonen, 24, who was released last week, stressed that their smiles were not an indication they were being treated well by Hamas.

"The smiles aren't a testament to the conditions they were under; they're because of the [hostages'] joy that they're no longer in the hands of the Nazis. If you were rescued from hell, and someone offered you a hand, wouldn't you smile?" he told Walla on Monday.

Citing the hostages' privacy, Banov would not say whether any of the seven hostages released since last week bore signs of torture or abuse.

Some had not received proper treatment for wounds sustained when they were captured during the Hamas-led attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, and some showed signs of "mild starvation," he said.

Among the hostages who were released recently, [Emily Damari](#) is missing two fingers as a result of being shot in her hand on October 7, and Daniella Gilboa still has a bullet in her leg that her aunt said will be removed in the near future.

The three civilians, released on the first day of the ceasefire, were discharged from hospital on Sunday. The four soldiers, freed in the ceasefire's second swap on Saturday, were still being treated in another medical center.



Romi Gonen reunites with her family at Sheba Medical Center in Ramat Gan, January 19, 2025.

(Maayan Toaf/GPO)

Eitan Gonen told the Kan public broadcaster that “Romi is amazing. We met a mature, amazing woman who stunned us all.”

Gonen would not elaborate on her medical condition or details of her ordeal. But he said that while in captivity she had heard some of the radio interviews he had given.

EXPERTS REACT: EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE ISRAEL-HAMAS CEASE-FIRE AND HOSTAGE DEAL

By [ATLANTIC COUNCIL](#) experts January 15 2025

Now comes the even harder part. On Wednesday, negotiators from Israel and Hamas [agreed](#) to a cease-fire in Gaza and the release of the remaining hostages taken by the terrorist group during its October 7, 2023 attack.

The deal, mediated by US, Qatari, and Egyptian officials, will take place over three phases, each slated to last six weeks. **During the first phase**, Hamas will release thirty-three hostages—women, children, and those over fifty years of age—and Israel will release hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, begin to withdraw from some areas, and facilitate a significant increase in humanitarian aid into Gaza. **In the second phase**, Hamas is slated to free the remaining male hostages while Israel withdraws from Gaza. **The third phase** would include the return of deceased hostages and the beginning of reconstruction.

Does this deal, which now heads to the Israeli cabinet for approval, really mark the end of the war? What's next for Gaza's reconstruction, Israel's security, and wider regional efforts such as Israeli-Saudi normalization? Below, Atlantic Council experts share their answers to these and other pressing questions.

CLICK TO JUMP TO AN EXPERT ANALYSIS:

[Jonathan Panikoff: The war has widened the gap over the prospect of a two-state solution](#)

[Shalom Lipner: The “Trump effect” will help Netanyahu sell this deal to his hard-liners](#)

[Ahmed Fouad Alkhatib: The deal risks freezing the conflict with no political horizon](#)

[Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley: Israel's military victory has come at immeasurable cost to its global standing](#)

[Carmiel Arbit: Is this the end of the “bromance” between Trump, Netanyahu, and the Israeli far right?](#)

[Liz Cathcart: The disparities are striking, but there is never an “equal” hostage deal](#)

[Danny Citrinowicz: Now Israel needs to aim for normalization with Saudi Arabia](#)

[Thomas S. Warrick: Who governs postwar Gaza when the shooting stops?](#)

[Marc Polymeropoulos: The human cost of the war in Gaza is about to become clear—with repercussions for the region](#)

[Alex Plitsas: Now for the hard part—a long-term solution for Gaza](#)

THE WAR HAS WIDENED THE GAP OVER THE PROSPECT OF A TWO-STATE SOLUTION

The cease-fire between Israel and Hamas is likely to end this long and painful chapter for both Israelis and Gazans. Gaza is completely destroyed, with tens of thousands of innocent lives lost over the past fifteen months. Israel is safer today than it was on October 6, but at a painful [cost](#) of more than four hundred Israel Defense Forces (IDF) members killed and hundreds more injured.

In addition to the deaths and devastation in both Gaza and Israel, the war will be remembered for widening the gap over the prospect of a two-state solution. For many [Arab](#) states and [European](#) nations, the conflict was a turning point to reprioritize or declare their support for a sovereign and independent state of Palestine. At the same time, Israelis across the political spectrum remain fundamentally horrified and gobsmacked by the idea that after the suffering they've experienced—October 7 was the greatest single-day loss for the Jewish people since the Holocaust—anyone would think that now is the time to create an independent state of Palestine. Many in Israel would view such an outcome as increasing the odds of more October 7-type attacks happening. Moreover, the war may also be remembered as leading to a rise in global anti-Semitism, with a recent [study](#) finding a worldwide surge of such views among adults, especially younger ones.

But the war has also reshaped the Middle East in more unexpected ways. After months of tit-for-tat attacks between Hezbollah and Israel—prompted by the Lebanon-based group attacking Israel on October 8 and originally vowing not to stop until there was a cease-fire in Gaza—Hezbollah today is utterly diminished. Most of its military capabilities have been destroyed, and its leadership has been eliminated. That result is reshaping Lebanon, where a new [president](#) and [prime minister](#) are taking power, giving hope to many in the country that, for the first time in decades, Hezbollah will not be controlling the strings. The war has also helped lead to the end of the Assad regime in Syria, and it has put Iran in its weakest position in the region since the 1979 Revolution.

What comes next for Israel, Gaza, and the region is less clear. The ceasefire has multiple stages that if broken could result in a resumption of fighting. But the reality is that Hamas is battered and much of the group's leadership has long sought an end to the conflict. In Israel, the Netanyahu government is also unlikely to break the ceasefire. President-elect Donald Trump has made clear that he wants a sustainable ceasefire in place by the time he gets into office. Breaking the deal could endanger Israel's relationship with the new Trump administration and it could potentially jeopardize coordination and Israeli policy preferences being given due consideration when it comes to Iran. Iran is, after all, the issue that Netanyahu views as the most important in the relationship. Longer term, the reconstruction of Gaza, the security of Israel, and the future of normalization all remain unclear.

But those will all be the next set of challenges to address. Today, most people in Gaza will simply rejoice at not having to fear explosions from Israeli missiles and gunfire; and in Israel, most will rejoice in the knowledge that the hostages, at long last, will come home.

—[Jonathan Panikoff](#) is the director of the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Middle East Security Initiative and a former deputy national intelligence officer for the Near East at the US National Intelligence Council.

THE “TRUMP EFFECT” WILL HELP NETANYAHU SELL THIS DEAL TO HIS HARD-LINERS

The hopeful moment of an imminent cease-fire between Israel and Hamas comes with the subtext of circumstances that have facilitated the signing of this agreement—which has been on the table since last May—only now. US President Joe Biden has [attributed](#) apparent changes of heart to “extreme pressure” on Hamas, a transformed “regional equation” that has put Iran and Hezbollah on the defensive, and also “dogged and painstaking American diplomacy.” Israel’s calculus has been impacted similarly by mounting IDF casualties, vociferous calls to liberate the hostages and, in a different vein, Netanyahu’s improved prospects to garner political support for the controversial bargain.

But the real game-changer has been, to [quote](#) incoming National Security Advisor Mike Waltz, “the Trump effect.” The president-elect’s ominous (if amorphous) [threat](#) that “all hell will break out in the Middle East” unless the captives are released before his inauguration energized the parties to reach a compromise before that deadline, lest they suffer those consequences. Additionally, from the perspective of Israel’s government, expectations that the incoming administration will offer strong support for Jerusalem on a host of issues—e.g. confronting Iran, cementing relations with Saudi Arabia, and supporting Jewish settlement in the West Bank—provided extra impetus to placate Trump.

Those aspirations will also play a pivotal role in Netanyahu’s struggle to keep his parliamentary majority intact. Although he should have enough votes to approve the deal, many of his core allies are vehemently opposed to any framework that would suspend the pursuit of “total victory” over Hamas, as he has promised repeatedly to achieve. Their objections will feature prominently when the cabinet convenes to consider the package on Thursday. The prime minister, who has assured these critics that Israel will not relent in its campaign to dismantle Hamas, will be encouraging their instincts to remain in the coalition and wait to [advance](#) their policy priorities under Trump—however [dubious](#) that opportunity may prove to be.

Meanwhile, this latest halt in the fighting will be no less tentative. Under the terms of the arrangement, Hamas will be securing freedom for about one thousand convicted terrorists, doubling the quantity of humanitarian aid coming into Gaza, and benefiting from extensive IDF pullbacks. The [pledge](#) of Waltz that “Hamas has to be destroyed to the point that it cannot reconstitute” notwithstanding, the possibility of the group’s resurgence—in the absence of any other authority—cannot be discounted.

—[Shalom Lipner](#) is a nonresident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Middle East Security Initiative who previously worked in foreign policy and public diplomacy during his time at the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem, where he served in the administration of seven consecutive Israeli premiers.

THE DEAL RISKS FREEZING THE CONFLICT WITH NO POLITICAL HORIZON

The declaration of a ceasefire and hostage deal between Hamas and Israel is a welcome respite for the more than two million Palestinian civilians trapped in a vicious war they didn't start and were powerless to stop. Though much can go wrong between now and the time of the implementation of the deal on January 19, not to mention the potential impasse once the first phase is over, the absence of war may indeed provide space for a more optimistic pathway forward. Gazans will experience relief from the horrors of the relentless Israeli bombardment and attacks that have killed and maimed so many in the coastal enclave. However, Palestinians in Gaza will emerge out of this deal with the greatest humanitarian, political, and strategic losses. Not a dollar of reconstruction money will go into Gaza as long as Hamas controls the coastal enclave and in the absence of a political horizon.

The most significant risk ahead is that there will be a potential freezing of the conflict, in which Gaza remains destroyed and in ruins, entirely dependent on a few hundred trucks per day to sustain the population and stabilize the humanitarian catastrophe. This, of course, would allow Hamas the best of two worlds: It would not be responsible for actual governance or providing for its populace, but it would benefit from a steady stream of goods and items it can siphon and tax. Once again, such a scenario would be horrendously painful for the civilian population in Gaza, many of whom have no homes to return to and are unable to sustain themselves beyond the scope attainable through basic humanitarian and commercial aid and supplies.

It's tempting for analysts to examine alternatives to Hamas's rule now that there is an impending cease-fire. Such discussions are not only premature but also have ultimately proven irrelevant to the intractably static nature of Gaza's governance landscape, which has hardly changed for almost two decades. This remains true even though Hamas is financially, politically, and militarily severely weakened, with little to no prospect for replenishing the material resources and geopolitical ballast that have enabled it to remain afloat for so many years in Gaza.

Most painful of all, many in Gaza are asking why their loved ones are dead or maimed, their homes destroyed, their businesses shattered, and their lives in shambles. These sacrifices were imposed upon them and feel utterly useless to the Palestinian national project for freedom and independence. The incoming US administration's regional priorities, coupled with the possibility of a rejuvenated push for a peace process, may be the only hope for Gaza's recovery, reconstruction, renaissance, and evolution.

—[Ahmed Fouad Alkhatib](#) is a resident senior fellow with the Scowcroft Middle East Security Initiative at the Atlantic Council's Middle East Programs.

ISRAEL'S MILITARY VICTORY HAS COME AT IMMEASURABLE COST TO ITS GLOBAL STANDING

The forty-two-day cease-fire just agreed to by Israeli and Hamas negotiators is a whimpering close to a conflict that began with shock and awe. It started, of course, with a heinous attack that left more than one thousand people dead in Israel and humiliated the vaunted IDF. More than a year of bombing and fighting followed, which left tens of thousands of Palestinians dead and injured and destroyed the basic infrastructure that supports health, education, housing, and more. The very futures of Palestinian survivors and those coming into the world soon have been blighted by a deliberate strategy. The full extent of the impact of that strategy will be known soon.

The cost for the release of even one thousand prisoners is one Palestinians likely count as far too dear. Hamas, in the short term, is the clear loser.

Israel won. But it may be a Pyrrhic victory.

The conflict gave Israel the opportunity to strike crippling blows against its most dangerous foes: Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran. But the brutality of its conduct has undoubtedly cost Israel in terms of economic strength, global reputation, and international standing. The latter two will not be revived soon. Israel is more isolated from the region and beyond than anyone could have imagined on October 8, 2023.

In the long term, however, Hamas's actions reminded the world of Occupied Palestine. This war reminded the world that Palestinians are not a "non-people," as acknowledged by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken [on Tuesday](#) at the Atlantic Council. And Hamas's provocation led the Israeli government to show just how ruthless its treatment of Palestinians can be. The unrelenting response to the October 7 attack stripped away Israel's reasonable, humane, peace-loving, good guy image for millions of people around the world, including in the United States.

THAT IMAGE WILL TAKE A LONG TIME TO RESTORE.

**HAMAS IS LIKELY TO ABIDE BY THE CEASE-FIRE. PALESTINIANS HAVE EVERYTHING TO
LOSE IF IT DOESN'T. AS WE SAW DURING THE WAR, THE DRIVER OF WHAT HAPPENS
NEXT—WHETHER THE CEASE-FIRE LASTS PAST THE FIRST PHASE—IS ISRAEL.**

—[Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley](#) is a nonresident senior fellow at the Scowcroft Middle East Security Initiative of the Atlantic Council's Middle East Programs and at the Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security. Abercrombie-Winstanley served as the US ambassador to the Republic of Malta and as special assistant for the Middle East and Africa to the secretary of state. Her Middle East assignments included election monitoring in the Gaza Strip and an assignment where she supported gender equality in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as the first woman to lead a diplomatic mission there.

IS THIS THE END OF THE “BROMANCE” BETWEEN TRUMP, NETANYAHU, AND THE ISRAELI FAR RIGHT?

Wednesday's announcement of a cease-fire agreement between Israel and Hamas was met with a feeling of elation around the world and agony for many in Israel. In its first phase, the agreement would ensure the release of at least thirty of Israel's hostages and would be accompanied by much-needed relief in Gaza. The agreement marks a clear victory for both Trump and Biden, Biden who had worked tirelessly to secure a cease-fire for the past fifteen months and whose terms were largely adopted, and Trump for his ability to push it over the finish line through threats alone. That the incoming and outgoing administrations were able to work together hand in glove to push this over the finish line is not only a powerful demonstration of the United States' bipartisan approach to the region; it also signifies a decorum in the transition of power that many in the United States crave.

However welcome by many, the agreement and its timing also expose Netanyahu for his deluge of failures in handling the war, thus explaining his continued reticence to accept it. Netanyahu had promised to secure the release of all hostages—and to the devastation of so many Israelis, too many will come home in body bags. Hamas has not been decisively defeated in the ways that he had promised his people—to the contrary, Netanyahu's failure to support a meaningful pathway to new governance in Gaza has only created a power vacuum in the Strip where extremism will fester and Hamas—either in name or ideology—could reemerge in time. And while details of the agreement are still unfolding, it would appear that Netanyahu's maximalist positions demanding Israeli control over both the Philadelphi and Netzarim corridors through the final stages of a cease-fire have both been largely abandoned, at least in practice.

If the agreement proceeds, the beginning of Trump's term could mark an end to Netanyahu as chief negotiator in this conflict and, more strikingly, an end to the “bromance” between the two leaders before Trump even moves into the Oval Office. Members of the Israeli far-right—once proudly donning their MAGA hats—are faced with the reality that their ambitions for a continued conflict and possible resettlement of Gaza are not shared by the United States' new president.

Netanyahu's woes in managing his far-right flank will worsen and yet their power in Israel will diminish as Trump, who has made clear that he wants the conflict to be over and to move on to a long sought-after regional deal with the Saudis, will exert only greater influence in determining whether a second or third phase of the cease-fire is achieved. Perhaps this will give Netanyahu the political cover he will need to survive, but it will also only bring him closer to a moment of reckoning in which he must face his public for his responsibility in allowing October 7 to happen—and his failure to deliver a decisive victory in response.

—[Carmiel Arbit](#) is a nonresident senior fellow for Middle East Programs and the Scowcroft Middle East Security Initiative at the Atlantic Council.

THE DISPARITIES ARE STRIKING, BUT THERE IS NEVER AN “EQUAL” HOSTAGE DEAL

As part of a deal reached between Israel and Hamas, thirty-three living and deceased Israeli hostages held by Hamas in Gaza are set to be released. In exchange, Israel will [reportedly](#) release thirty Palestinian prisoners for every Israeli civilian and fifty for every Israeli female soldier released.

Does this disproportionate exchange make for a bad deal? On the surface it may seem so, making it difficult to remember the core of the problem of hostage taking—the hostages that Hamas took and held for nearly fifteen months were innocent individuals: civilians, soldiers, parents, and children. There would be no “equal” deal for these hostages when talking about humans being held as pawns. Countries negotiating for hostage releases must do what is needed to get their people home. And, in this case, Hamas effectively used the hostages they are holding to get to this point.

These releases only represent a third of the approximately one hundred hostages Hamas continues to hold. It was expected that this deal would not include the release of all hostages held, as the agonizing and lengthy negotiations to reach a deal involve not only the exchange of people held but also a cease-fire and options for increased aid. While the release of thirty-three hostages held by Hamas in Gaza is not the perfect outcome, it is a good one. It means thirty-three fewer individuals suffering the horrific conditions of being held hostage and thirty-three families who can have closure, in addition to the other positive outcomes for civilians in Gaza.

This deal will reportedly last forty-two days. Looking past those forty-two days for the hostages and Gaza alike, there is little clarity. Though the deal could allow for more hostage releases in subsequent phases, the work continues as there is no certain path for the release of the remaining hostages, prolonging their suffering and that of their families, communities, and countries fighting for their freedom.

—Liz Cathcart is a member of the Atlantic Council Counterterrorism Project and the executive director of Hostage US.

NOW ISRAEL NEEDS TO AIM FOR NORMALIZATION WITH SAUDI ARABIA

The prisoner-of-war deal concluded between Israel and Hamas is a bad deal for Israel, but one that it had no choice but to implement. Israel has a moral obligation to return its abductees even at the heavy price of releasing terrorists and accepting Hamas remaining in the Gaza Strip.

But in order for this deal to serve Israel’s strategic interests, there must be political continuity in the form of Israeli consent to the return of the Palestinian Authority to Gaza, and the utilization of this move to promote diplomatic normalization with Saudi Arabia.

Because 2025 appears to be a decisive year regarding the Iranian nuclear issue, the deal in Gaza will make it possible to focus international attention on Iran. Together with an Israeli-Saudi normalization, greater focus on Iran will strengthen the Israeli posture in the Middle East.

If Israel seeks to return to the war in Gaza, then it will find the Trump administration and the whole international community against it. Israel must complete the cease-fire agreement in Gaza and Lebanon. It must also work with the new US administration and with Arab neighbors to strengthen the Palestinian Authority in Gaza and the West Bank, and offer a political horizon based on what US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the [“deal of the century”](#) during Trump’s first term.

“Absolute victory” for Israel will only come from normalization with Saudi Arabia, not any other military move.

—[Danny Citrinowicz](#) is a nonresident fellow with the Atlantic Council’s Middle East Programs and a member of the Atlantic Council’s [Iran Strategy Project](#) working group. He previously served for twenty-five years in a variety of command positions units in Israel Defense Intelligence.

WHO GOVERNS POSTWAR GAZA WHEN THE SHOOTING STOPS?

Despite the talk about the sticking points in the negotiations, the real sticking point underlying everything still has not been resolved: Who will control postwar Gaza? Hamas wants to ensure it has the ability to rebuild and re-arm, and Israel is equally determined to prevent this. The agreement calls for postwar arrangements to be discussed during phase two, but make no mistake, no one is ready for what this will really require.

Both the [outgoing Biden administration](#) and the [incoming Trump administration](#), as well as the Netanyahu government, understand that the essential requirement for a lasting peace is that Hamas has no role in postwar Gaza. Even Hamas surrogates are signaling that Hamas knows it will have to [step back from governing Gaza—for now](#). What is needed is a workable postwar plan that puts Gaza under international administration for a transitional period. But [how that is set up](#), and who participates in it, will make the difference between success and failure. The [bare-bones plan](#) outgoing US Secretary of State Antony Blinken described on Tuesday at the Atlantic Council would not succeed as is in preventing Hamas’s eventual return.

Given the tensions in Israeli politics—Netanyahu reportedly agreeing to the [expansion of Israeli settlements](#) in the West Bank carries real dangers—prospects for a negotiated outcome in the next [twelve weeks](#) are extremely slim. Fighting could resume. Trump’s presidency will toughen Netanyahu’s position, and the Palestinians really need to take to heart what incoming Trump National Security Advisor Mike Waltz said on January 15: [“There is nothing but downside”](#) to holding out. The Trump administration will likely step back for a while and wait to see what the Israelis and Palestinians are able to do on their own.

The tensions in Palestinian politics also create a different danger. Just as Israel has failed to come up with a viable postwar plan, the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah is in even worse shape. The voices that dominate Palestinian civil society want international recognition of the justice of the Palestinian cause,

apparently failing to recognize that the people they are talking to are not able to deliver what they want. Ramallah and Palestinian civil society need to broaden who they talk to about the future of Palestine.

—[Thomas S. Warrick](#) is a nonresident senior fellow in the Scowcroft Middle East Security Initiative and a former deputy assistant secretary for counterterrorism policy in the US Department of Homeland Security.

THE HUMAN COST OF THE WAR IN GAZA IS ABOUT TO BECOME CLEAR —WITH REPERCUSSIONS FOR THE REGION

The human cost of the war will become even more evident as a cease-fire takes effect. The visuals over the next several days and weeks will not only be jarring, but also may have political repercussions.

The Israeli hostages, who have likely endured unspeakable suffering, including rape and torture, will now be seen up close and personal by the Israeli public, who will then relive the trauma of October 7. This may reignite anger against Hamas and the Palestinians as a whole and further harden Israeli views toward a future two-state solution.

At the same time, this outcome may cause a backlash against Netanyahu, who essentially accepted an agreement that was on the table for many months. It was a delay that increased suffering and likely led to the death of some of the hostages. Let's not forget that a tenet of Israel's social compact with its citizen soldiers is that it will go to any lengths to bring them home if they are captured. There is a legitimate question as to whether Netanyahu adhered to this sacrosanct compact.

In addition, as Gaza opens up to the international press and to aid organizations, and as reconstruction efforts begin, the world is going to see devastation and death at every corner, on a truly dramatic scale. There are likely hundreds of bodies (or more) still buried in Gaza under tons of rubble. Entire neighborhoods are flattened. The humanitarian situation is dire. While some countries in the region may now see an opportunity for further normalization with Israel, many in the Arab world will get even more of a sense of the immense horror in Gaza as it opens up, and they could then question any rapid pace of change with Israel.

—[Marc Polymeropoulos](#) is a nonresident senior fellow in the Forward Defense practice of the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security. He worked for twenty-six years at the Central Intelligence Agency before retiring in July 2019 at the senior intelligence service level.

NOW FOR THE HARD PART—A LONG-TERM SOLUTION FOR GAZA

Despite the length of time and difficulty of the negotiations, this interim deal is actually the easier part. The difficult part is the long-term solution to the conflict and release of the remaining hostages. There is still no clear picture of the long-term governance and security in Gaza that would be required to facilitate reconstruction at the end of the conflict.

Hamas wants complete and total withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip and a permanent end to hostilities. Israel still sees Gaza as a security issue that will require a military presence, and there is currently no partner for peace or stability who can be relied upon to administer Gaza.

If Hamas and the Palestinian people in Gaza reject a security force and governing authority, then it could lead to a protracted insurgency in Gaza. As previously noted, Israel and Hamas had reached an interim security deal a year ago that failed to advance a broader peace. So, while the deal should be celebrated, there is still a lot of difficult work ahead to define Gaza's future and Israel's security.

—[Alex Plitsas](#) is a nonresident senior fellow with the Scowcroft Middle East Security Initiative, the head of the Atlantic Council's Counterterrorism Project, and a former chief of sensitive activities for special operations and combating terrorism in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/experts-react/everything-you-need-to-know-know-about-the-israel-hamas-cease-fire-and-hostage-deal/?mkt_tok=NjU5LVdaWC0wNzUAAAGYFFOicExaEFRaUyruiUbcVVZaxC-l2hXPxEtX-H_pE90ySlocX4U6y_aH904SQmm6QcbOj3E-aXUNdhpiNqInlwKxX2NaJcjsE8sTtXvpURqv5g

ISRAEL ENDORSES NEW US PLAN FOR HALF OF HOSTAGES TO BE RELEASED NOW, CEASEFIRE MAINTAINED

As phase 1 period ends, PM's office backs what it says is Witkoff proposal for permanent ceasefire and all hostages freed by end of Passover; Hamas: Israel reneging on deal

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Lazar Berman](#) [Tol Staff](#) 2 March 2025



A sprawling tent camp for displaced Palestinians sits adjacent to destroyed homes and buildings in Gaza City, Gaza Strip, March 1, 2025, during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

(AP Photo/Abdel Kareem Hana)

As the status of the Gaza ceasefire entered limbo early Sunday with the formal end of its 42-day first phase, Israel said it would wait an unspecified period of time before taking any action, while unveiling details of what it said was an American outline for the release of the remaining hostages and a permanent ceasefire.

Minutes after midnight and following a four-hour security consultation with top officials, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office declared that it was endorsing what it described as a proposal by US President Donald Trump's special Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff, which would see the ceasefire with Hamas extended through Ramadan and Passover, during which all hostages could potentially be released. Ramadan, which began Friday night, runs until March 29. Passover ends on April 19.

According to Israel's account of Witkoff's proposal, half of the remaining hostages — living and dead — would be released on the first day of the extended ceasefire, and the remaining captives would be released at the end of the period if a permanent ceasefire is reached.

Terror groups in the Gaza Strip are holding 59 hostages, including the bodies of at least 35 confirmed dead by the Israel Defense Forces. Two of the 24 abductees presumed alive, as well as three of the dead captives, don't hold Israeli citizenship. Dozens of foreign nationals have so far been freed by Hamas outside of the framework of hostage deals with Israel, meaning any future exchange of hostages for Palestinian security prisoners is expected to include as many as 22 living captives and at least 32 bodies. Netanyahu's office said Witkoff had suggested the outline due to his impression that "at this stage, there is no option to bridge the gaps between the sides on ending the war, and that additional time is needed for talks about a permanent ceasefire."



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (left) meets then-US president-elect Donald Trump's Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff, at his office in Jerusalem, January 11, 2025. (Prime Minister's Office Spokesperson)

The statement claimed that Hamas has so far rejected the US plan, and implied that if this stance isn't changed, Israel could resume the war against the Palestinian terror group that was sparked by the latter's October 7, 2023, onslaught and which has been on pause since January 19.

Hamas has indeed publicly [rejected](#) Israel's proposal to extend the first stage of the deal, insisting that the deal proceed with phase two — which includes the release of all remaining living hostages, a full withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza, and a permanent end to the war. Israel has largely refused to negotiate the details of phase two for the past month.

During the first phase, 33 Israeli hostages were released, eight of them dead, in exchange for nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners, including many convicted terrorists serving hefty jail sentences. Five Thai nationals held hostage in the Gaza Strip were freed separately.

Responding to Israel's announcement, senior Hamas official Mahmoud Mardawi told AFP the terror group was insisting on the implementation of the second phase, arguing that Israel was "reneging on the agreements it has signed."

"The only way to achieve stability in the region and the return of the prisoners is to complete the implementation of the agreement... starting with the implementation of the second phase," Mardawi said.

"This is what we insist on and we will not back down from it."

The marathon meeting Saturday evening — headed by Netanyahu and attended by Defense Minister Israel Katz, senior defense officials, and Israel's negotiating team — was convened to formulate Israel's path ahead amid the deadlocked negotiations. As of Sunday, the first phase of the truce is over and hasn't been extended, no second phase has been negotiated, and fighting can therefore resume at any time.

But Jerusalem decided to wait before taking such a step.

Netanyahu's office said Hamas has yet to accept Witkoff's plan, saying: "If Hamas changes its position, Israel will immediately enter negotiations on all the details of the Witkoff plan."

The statement did not directly threaten a return to war, instead reminding the public — and Hamas — that the initial agreement allows Israel to return to fighting after March 1 if negotiations are deemed ineffective. The Prime Minister's Office claimed in its statement that Hamas had repeatedly violated the agreement, while Israel was in full compliance.

However, the agreement states that talks on phase two of the deal will begin "no later than day 16." Israel has not engaged in indirect talks with Hamas on the second phase of the agreement until after day 42. Additionally, the IDF didn't start withdrawing its forces from the Philadelphi Corridor on the Gaza-Egypt border on Saturday, despite the deal requiring Israel to start this process on day 42.

Before Saturday's high-level consultations, the premier also [held an extensive telephone discussion](#) on Friday evening as well, which, in a rare instance, continued into Shabbat.

Under the ceasefire outline agreed by Israel and Hamas on January 19, the remaining living hostages were to be released during the second stage of the deal, during which the IDF would complete a full withdrawal

from Gaza. A third stage is also planned, during which the bodies of hostages held by Gazan terror groups would be released, the war would end, and the reconstruction of Gaza would begin.

Senior Israeli officials, including Defense Minister Israel Katz, have said in recent days that the military was preparing for the option of the war resuming.

IDF PREPARES FOR RAPID RETURN

Channel 12 news reported Saturday that IDF troops have been drilling the past few days for a potential rapid return to areas in Gaza from which the IDF withdrew under the deal, including a return to the Netzarim Corridor, and for the movement of the civilian populace from the north of the Strip to humanitarian areas in southern Gaza.

Two IDF divisions are currently deployed to a buffer zone on the Gaza border, including the Philadelphi Corridor. An Israeli official sent a statement to reporters Thursday rejecting any withdrawal of IDF troops from the corridor along the Gaza-Egypt border, despite the deal's requirement that it start pulling out forces on the 42nd day of the ceasefire, and complete the process on day 50.

Israel contends that the border zone is a major smuggling route that will be used by Hamas to bring more weapons and fortifications into Gaza to rebuild its decimated forces unless it is policed by Israeli troops.

Both Hamas and Egypt reject a continued Israeli presence there.



View of the Philadelphi Corridor, the Egypt-Gaza border area in southern Gaza's Rafah, October 20, 2024. (Emanuel Fabian/Times of Israel)

Witkoff is expected to visit Israel soon, likely this coming week. The Ynet news site reported early Sunday, without citing sources, that Jerusalem would likely hold off on renewing the fighting until the visit.

An Israeli official told The Times of Israel that Witkoff would not travel to the region until late in the week at the earliest, as he plans to remain in the United States for Trump's State of the Union address on Tuesday. Witkoff said last weekend that he would travel to the region on Wednesday but ended up pushing back his trip, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky came to Washington. Trump has expanded Witkoff's portfolio to include Russia-Ukraine negotiations, but the Mideast envoy was not seen in the Oval Office during Friday's explosive meeting between Trump and Zelensky.

Officials from Israel, Qatar, Egypt and the US had been involved in negotiations on the second phase in Cairo, with negotiators from Jerusalem returning home on Friday. Hamas did not attend the negotiations, but its position has been represented through Egyptian and Qatari mediators.

Jacob Magid contributed to this report.

ISRAEL FEARS FOR CONDITION OF REMAINING HOSTAGES, AS INTEL SUGGESTS MALE CAPTIVES TREATED WORSE THAN WOMEN

CNN WORLD [JEREMY DIAMOND](#) and [ROB PICHETA](#), February 11 2025

When [three Israeli hostages](#) emerged at the weekend, emaciated and gaunt after 16 months in Hamas captivity, Israelis were shocked by the images.

But inside the Israeli government, top officials were not surprised.

The Israeli government has had intelligence for months indicating that many of the remaining living hostages are in poor health, two Israeli officials tell CNN. "It wasn't a surprise for us," one Israeli official said.

And many of the remaining Israeli hostages are also believed to be in even worse condition, the officials said. "From this moment onward, we expect worse scenes," a second Israeli official said.

Eli Sharabi, Or Levy and Ohad Ben Ami were paraded by Hamas militants during [a handover ceremony](#) on Saturday, the three latest Israeli hostages to be freed by the militant group since the implementation of the ceasefire-for-hostages deal between Israel and Hamas.

The three men appeared drastically thinner than before their release, and their relatives subsequently raised concerns about their physical and mental treatment during their captivity.

The current status of hostages abducted by Hamas and its allies on October 7

In total, 251 people in Israel were taken on October 7, 2023. The Israeli government says 58 are still in Gaza as of February 27, 2025.

Still in Gaza 58

Presumed alive 24



Presumed dead 34



Recovered 193

Released 137



Rescued by Israeli military 8



Recovered dead 45



Escaped, then accidentally killed by Israeli military 3



Note: Data through February 27, 2025.

Source: Office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

Graphic: Amy O'Kruk, CNN

Hamas has since [postponed the next hostage release](#) scheduled to take place in Gaza on Saturday “until further notice,” accusing Israel of breaking the ceasefire deal. This has heightened fears surrounding the status and wellbeing of the dozens of Israelis still being held in the enclave.

Israel’s intelligence indicates that Hamas has been treating male hostages worse than female captives, the second official said, and there is especially heightened concern for the condition of the male soldiers held captive by Hamas.

Many male hostages have been fed less and kept in far worse conditions, the officials added, citing Israeli assessments.



Ben Ami, Sharabi and Levy seen before and after their captivity. Hostages and Missing Families Forum Evidence supporting that intelligence has only grown in recent days, as the freed hostages and their families described elements of their captivity.

Or Levy’s brother Michael said when he saw his brother on Saturday for the first time in 16 months, he wasn’t the same person who left home on October 7, 2023.

“He came back in poor physical condition. Anyone who saw the pictures and videos couldn’t ignore it. For 16 months, he was hungry, barefoot and in constant fear that every day can be his last,” Michael said, according to the Hostages Families Forum Headquarters.

A TALE OF TWO GATHERINGS

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) Aron Schoenfeld Feb 28 2025



Waiting to pay last respects to the Bibas family. (courtesy)

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In the last two days, I attended two large gatherings here in Israel. Both were a blend of Chareidi, Modern Orthodox, less religious, and non-religious individuals. Both were non-political—no protests, no yelling, no fighting, and no sides to choose. Both created a sense of unity and a feeling of togetherness with everyone there. But that is where the similarities end.

On Wednesday morning, my son and I stood along the highway in Ra'anana to pay our last respects to Shiri, Kfir, and Ariel Bibas. Wrapped in our Israeli flag, we watched as the van carrying their bodies passed, followed by the countless cars and motorcycles escorting them to their final resting place. The road was lined with a sea of orange—orange balloons released into the sky, a symbol of the Bibas children. There were tears everywhere. In that moment, for that hour, we were one.



Less than forty-eight hours later, I was with that same son and my two other children in Jerusalem, immersed in the music of Hanan Ben Ari. He is more than a performer; he is a voice that transcends differences. The crowd was a mirror of the funeral—Chareidim, Modern Orthodox, seminary students, and secular Israelis—united in song. For two hours, we danced, sang, and surrendered ourselves to the power of music. And yet, even in celebration, we did not forget. Through his stories of hospital visits and friends still in captivity, we remembered those still being held hostage, the injured, and the fallen. But for those two hours, we were one.



In Israel, we do not dwell on the past or worry too much about the future. We live in the now. When I moved here five years ago, I quickly learned that no one leaves voicemails. If it's urgent, you send a WhatsApp. People here prioritize what is important now. The shift between joy and sorrow, between fear and relief, happens in an instant. One morning, we are crying over the bodies of murdered hostages, and the next, we are celebrating the new month of Adar with music and laughter.

It reminds me of the famous story of the king who sought a phrase that would make him happy when he was sad and sad when he was happy. After many failed attempts, a poor jeweler presented him with a ring inscribed with the words: "This too shall pass." It became his reminder that no matter the moment—joy or sorrow—nothing is permanent.

Such is life in Israel. We are always just seconds away from another tragedy, like the car ramming in Pardes Chana yesterday that left 20 injured. But we are also moments away from miracles, like when bombs meant to explode on buses during rush hour were delayed, detonating in the evening when the buses were empty, sparing lives.

From the start of the war, my organization, Smiles for the Kids, has been dedicated to helping families affected by the conflict. The ability to transform a frown into a smile, even for just a few moments, is what drives me and the work we do.

This is life in Israel. We move from funerals to weddings, from watching hostages return to seeking shelter from rocket sirens. But we focus on the present—on mourning and celebrating together. And when we stand as one, no matter our backgrounds, we are a powerful nation, bound together, destined to endure in our eternal homeland.

WHY DID ISRAEL RESUME THE WAR IN GAZA?

[npr Daniel Estrin](#) March 19, 2025

Heard on [Morning Edition](#) Listen · **3:173**-Minute Listen **Playlist**

[Transcript](#)

TEL AVIV, Israel — Mediators were holding ceasefire talks with Hamas in the wee hours of the morning Tuesday when the [surprise Israeli strikes began](#), according to a senior Hamas official.

Deception was the point, an Israeli official said.



[Middle East crisis — explained](#)

[Israel declares ceasefire 'over' as it launches airstrikes in Gaza killing hundreds](#)

At 2:10 a.m., Israel launched about ten minutes of strikes from naval ships and dozens of warplanes after weeks of preparations for an offensive that was kept inside closed circles in the Israeli military. Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss what was happening behind the scenes.

What followed was one of the deadliest days of [the Gaza war](#), with more than 400 people killed in nighttime airstrikes on homes, according to Gaza health officials, including five Hamas officials and women and children. Israel said it was targeting Hamas mid-level leaders, and officials in Gaza who tally the death tolls do not distinguish between Hamas-affiliated combatants and civilians.

Israelis were surprised by the return to war, too. More than half of [the living Israeli hostages](#) freed under the latest ceasefire deal — 14 out of 25 living Israelis freed in the last several months — said the move endangered the lives of the 24 other hostages still held in Gaza and believed to be alive.

Hamas has not yet fired back at Israel, nor has it budged from its position.

Why did Israel break the ceasefire?

ISRAEL BROKE THE CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT REACHED

BY THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION. IT WANTS NEW TERMS UNDER TRUMP

Leading Israeli defense analysts and former officials have made an admission: Israel violated [the ceasefire deal](#) that began on Jan. 19, the last full day of the Biden administration.

[Middle East crisis — explained](#)

[What went wrong? Israel's spy agency lists failures in preventing Oct. 7 attack](#)

"There's no other way to explain it: Israel knowingly violated the cease-fire agreement with Hamas – with American approval – because it didn't want to fully meet the terms it had committed to two months ago," [wrote Amos Harel](#), a defense affairs columnist for Israel's left-leaning Haaretz newspaper.

According to the Israel-Hamas agreement, on the 16th day of the ceasefire, the sides were supposed to enter talks regarding the permanent end of the war. Israel refused to hold those talks, as agreed, so long as Hamas remained in control in Gaza.

The specific terms of the deal were never officially published. And though the deal was clinched with involvement from the incoming Trump administration, it was sealed under the auspices of the Biden administration in its waning days. Israel saw itself as having leeway to try to extract new terms under President Trump.

Trump's Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff presented a proposal last week for new ceasefire terms — releasing more hostages before beginning end-of-war talks — and Israel says it is returning to war to pressure Hamas to agree to those terms.

HAMAS WAS REGROUPING

AMID THE LACK OF WAR WITHOUT GIVING UP ADDITIONAL HOSTAGES

On Mar. 1, the ceasefire entered a twilight zone.

Phase one of the deal — exchanging a group of Israeli hostages for Palestinian prisoners — was over. But phase two — a full troop withdrawal from the Gaza border with Egypt, and moves toward a permanent end of the war — had not begun.

Proposals and counterproposals were made. The U.S. and Hamas held secret talks which then stopped when they were leaked.

All the while, Hamas continued to recover. Israel had allowed in a surge of aid supplies. Hamas government leaders in Gaza began emerging from tunnels and hideouts, deploying officials and displaying their control of the territory.

In a Facebook post that was subsequently removed after criticism from Gaza residents, the Hamas-run Gaza City municipality said it was seeking to collect taxes among Gaza residents living amid the rubble of the previous 15 months of war.

Hamas was trying to retrofit unexploded Israeli ordinance from the war for its own weapons stockpiles, according to Tamir Heyman, the head of Israel's leading national security think tank, the Israeli Institute for National Security Studies.

"Hamas haven't read the picture. They thought that they have a huge leverage of the hostages in their hand. And they thought they would get a ceasefire, and not paying anything," said former Israeli military intelligence chief Amos Yadlin in a briefing to reporters. "This was the target of the attack...to tell Hamas, you are going to pay (a) high price for not accepting Witkoff proposals."

Israel began a [supplies blockade on Gaza](#) this month to pressure Hamas to accept its terms. Hamas engaged with mediators but did not budge from its core demand to adhere to the original deal, remove Israeli troops from the Gaza-Egypt border and begin talks on the end of the war.



[Middle East crisis — explained](#)

[How the Gaza war has remade the Middle East](#)

Egypt is presenting a new proposal to return to a ceasefire, according to an Egyptian official who was briefed on the offer and not allowed to discuss it publicly but spoke to NPR on condition of anonymity: that Hamas would release around five sick and wounded Israeli hostages and some bodies of dead hostages, in exchange for a ceasefire, the entry of aid and beginning the second phase of the ceasefire deal. It is virtually the same proposal that had been on the table before the return to war, except for the demand to remove Israeli troops from the border area.

A RETURN TO WAR HELPS NETANYAHU IN HIS BATTLE TO STAY IN POWER

Netanyahu has a deadline: his government must pass a national budget in two weeks, or face the prospect of his government collapsing, triggering new elections.

Returning to war paved the way for Netanyahu to bring his far-right ally Itamar Ben Gvir back inside the coalition and beef up his governing majority. Ben Gvir had quit because of the January ceasefire with Hamas, and returned Tuesday with the resumption of the war.

The new offensive in Gaza also allowed Netanyahu to distract from an unprecedented move: his announcement this week that he wishes to fire his domestic security chief from the Shin Bet agency, a move that sparked street protests, with more underway on Wednesday.

Netanyahu's move to fire him is part of a campaign to blame Israel's security services for [failing to thwart the Hamas attack](#) Oct. 7, 2023, and deflect from accusations that Netanyahu himself shoulders responsibility. It comes on the heels of a Shin Bet investigation into Netanyahu's aides over allegations they secretly provided consulting services to Qatar during the war.

"Netanyahu's true objective appears increasingly clear: a gradual slide toward an authoritarian-style regime, whose survival he will try to secure through perpetual war on multiple fronts," [wrote Harel](#).

It is unclear if hostage families' protests against the return to war will make any difference.

"The gates of hell have opened? For me the gates of hell have opened today," Ruhama Buhbut told Israeli Channel 12. Ruhbut's son, Elkana, is still held hostage in Gaza.

The strikes could last at least another two weeks until Israel passes its national budget, giving Netanyahu a stronger position in power and more flexibility to resume a ceasefire, analysts say.

THE RETURN TO WAR IN GAZA HAS DRAGGED IN THE HOUTHIS AND COULD PORTEND AN EVENTUAL ATTACK ON IRAN

The renewal of war in Gaza, coupled with conflict involving the Houthis, could lead to further escalation including Iran.



[Middle East](#)

[Trump blames Iran for Houthi attacks on shipping after U.S. strikes in Yemen](#)

Iranian-backed Houthis in Yemen disrupted international shipping routes and fired missiles at Israel throughout the first 15 months of the Gaza war. After Israel resumed the war in Gaza Tuesday, the Israeli military says it intercepted a ballistic missile fired from Yemen toward Israel.

The [U.S. struck Houthi targets](#) in Yemen last weekend, and U.S. fighter jets thwarted a Houthi retaliation on a U.S. warship. [President Trump warned Iran](#), a backer of the Houthis, of "dire consequences" if Houthi attacks do not stop.

"The possibility of an Israeli or American attack on Iran is going up due to this declaration," Yadlin said. Israel has made no secret of its interest in lobbying President Trump to support a strike against Iran's nuclear program.

Abu Bakr Bashir in London, Yanal Jabarin in Jerusalem and Itay Stern in Tel Aviv contributed to this story.

HAMAS STUDYING US 'BRIDGE' PROPOSAL ON CEASEFIRE AS ISRAEL ESCALATES RETURN TO WAR

REUTERS [Nidal Al-Mughrabi](#) and [Jana Choukeir](#) March 21, 2025

Three days after Israel effectively abandoned the two-month-old truce, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said the military was intensifying its air, land and sea strikes and would also evacuate civilians to the southern part of Gaza,

Katz said Israel would continue its campaign until Hamas released more hostages and was totally defeated.

However, while Israeli airstrikes inflicted serious damage on Hamas this week, killing its Gaza government chief and other top officials, Palestinian and Israeli sources say Hamas has shown it can absorb major losses and [still fight and govern](#).

Hamas said it was still debating Witkoff's proposal and other ideas, with the goal of reaching a deal on prisoner releases, ending the war, and securing a complete Israeli military withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

A Palestinian official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Reuters Egypt had also put forward a bridging proposal, but Hamas had yet to respond. The official declined to provide details on the plan, which he said was under consideration.

Two Egyptian security sources said Egypt had suggested setting a timeline for the release of the remaining hostages alongside a deadline for a full Israeli pullout from Gaza with U.S. guarantees.

The sources said the U.S. had signalled initial approval while Hamas' and Israel's responses were expected later on Friday.

A first phase of the truce ended at the start of this month, but Israel and Hamas could not overcome differences over terms for launching the second phase. Hamas held up further hostage releases and Israeli military action then resumed.

After two months of relative calm, Gazans were again fleeing for their lives under Israel's new, all-out air and ground campaign, accompanied by another halt to aid deliveries.

Katz said the longer Hamas kept refusing to free remaining hostages, the more territory it would lose. Of the more than 250 originally seized in Hamas' October 2023 attack on Israel, 59 remain in Gaza, 24 of whom are thought to be alive.

US BLAMES HAMAS FOR RESUMPTION OF ISRAELI ONSLAUGHT

Israeli airstrikes on Tuesday killed more than 400 Palestinians, one of the deadliest days of the [17-month-old war](#).

On Friday, five people including three children were killed in an Israeli airstrike that hit a house in the Tuffah district of Gaza City in the enclave's north, while two people - a woman and her daughter - were killed by tank fire in Abassan near Khan Younis in the south, according to Palestinian medics.

Hours later, the Israeli military said it had intercepted two projectiles from northern Gaza after alerts were activated in the Israeli city of Ashkelon. No Palestinian group immediately claimed responsibility.

The United States told the U.N. Security Council that [Hamas was to blame](#) for the deaths since hostilities resumed.

"Hamas bears full responsibility for the ongoing war in Gaza and for the resumption of hostilities. Every death would have been avoided had Hamas accepted the bridge proposal that the United States offered last Wednesday," acting U.S. ambassador Dorothy Shea told the council.

The United Nations' Palestinian relief agency UNRWA, one of the largest providers of food aid in Gaza, said it only had enough flour to distribute for the next six days.

"We can stretch that by giving people less, but we are talking days, not weeks," UNRWA official Sam Rose told reporters in Geneva by video link from Gaza.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza was once again alarming, UNRWA said.

"Six of 25 bakeries that the World Food Programme were supporting had to close down," Rose added.

"This is the longest period since the start of conflict in October 2023 that no supplies whatsoever have entered Gaza. The progress we made as an aid system over the last six weeks of the ceasefire is being reversed."

Israel's blockade has pushed up prices of fuel and essential foods, forcing many to ration their meals.

The war began after Hamas militants attacked Israeli communities near the Gaza border on October 7, 2023, killing 1,200 people, according to Israeli tallies.

More than 49,000 Palestinians have been killed in the ensuing conflict, according to Gaza's health authorities, with much of the densely populated territory reduced to rubble.

Reporting by Jana Choukeir in Dubai and Nidal al Mughrabi in Cairo; additional reporting by Ahmed Shalaby in Cairo, Olivia Le Poidevin in Geneva, and Michelle Nichols; editing by Mark Heinrich and Kevin Liffey

PART 4

WHAT IS HAMAS ?

WHAT IS HAMAS?

COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS Kali Robinson, April 18 2024

Summary

- Hamas is an Islamist militant group that spun off from the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in the late 1980s. It took over the Gaza Strip after defeating its rival political party, Fatah, in elections in 2006.
- Governments including the United States and European Union have designated Hamas a terrorist organization over its attacks against Israel, which have included suicide bombings and rocket attacks.
- Israel has declared war on Hamas following its surprise assault on the country's south in October 2023, the deadliest attack in Israeli history.

INTRODUCTION

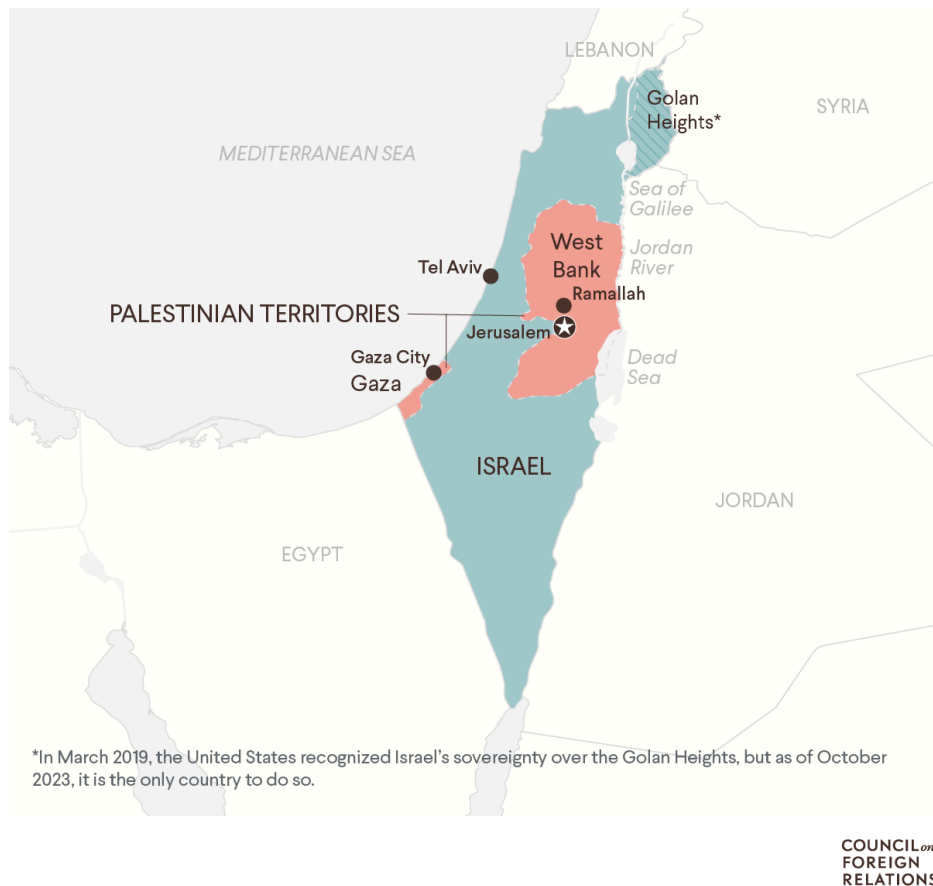
Hamas is an Islamist militant movement that has controlled the Gaza Strip for nearly two decades. It also violently rejects Israel's existence. In October 2023, Hamas infiltrated southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people and taking dozens more hostage. In response, the Israeli military has attempted to eradicate the group, an effort that had reportedly killed more than thirty-three thousand Palestinians as of mid-April 2024. With Hamas's regional partners—known as the “axis of resistance”—now targeting Israel, the war threatens to embroil much of the Middle East.

Dozens of countries have designated Hamas a terrorist organization, though some apply this label only to its military wing. Iran provides it with material and financial support, counting it [among a coalition](#) of regional allies that includes Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Lebanon's Hezbollah, Yemen's Houthis, and various pro-Tehran militias in Iraq and Syria, among other groups. Along with Qatar, Turkey harbors some of Hamas's top leaders, who have used the Turkish financial system to help fund the organization's activities. Hamas's rival party, Fatah, which dominates the Palestinian Authority and rules in the West Bank, has formally renounced violence, though it has not always upheld that vow in times of high Israeli-Palestinian tensions. The split in Palestinian leadership and Hamas's unwavering hostility toward Israel diminished prospects for stability in Gaza ahead of the ongoing war, which has only cast the territory into further despair.

WHAT ARE THE GROUP'S ORIGINS?

Hamas, an acronym for Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya (“Islamic Resistance Movement”), was founded by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, a Palestinian cleric who became an activist in local branches of the Muslim Brotherhood after dedicating his early life to Islamic scholarship in Cairo. Beginning in the late

1960s, Yassin preached and performed charitable work in the West Bank and Gaza, both of which Israel occupied following the 1967 Six-Day War.



Yassin established Hamas as the Brotherhood's political arm in Gaza in December 1987, following the outbreak of the first intifada, a Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. At the time, Hamas's purpose was to engage in violence against Israelis as a means of restoring Palestinian backing for the Brotherhood, which was losing political support to Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), a Gaza-based, Iran-sponsored organization that had begun pursuing terrorist operations against Israel.

Hamas [published its charter](#) in 1988, calling for the murder of Jews, the destruction of Israel, and in Israel's place, the establishment of an Islamic society in historic Palestine. In what observers called an attempt to moderate its image,

Hamas [presented a new document](#) [PDF] in 2017 that removed explicit references to killing Jews but still refused to recognize Israel.

The revised charter also hinted that Hamas could accept a future Palestinian state along the borders established before the Six-Day War, which are generally recognized internationally as the borders of the West Bank and Gaza. The new document says only that the matter should depend on "national consensus."

Hamas first employed suicide bombing in April 1993, five months before Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin signed the Oslo Accords. The historic pact established limited self-government for parts of the West Bank and Gaza

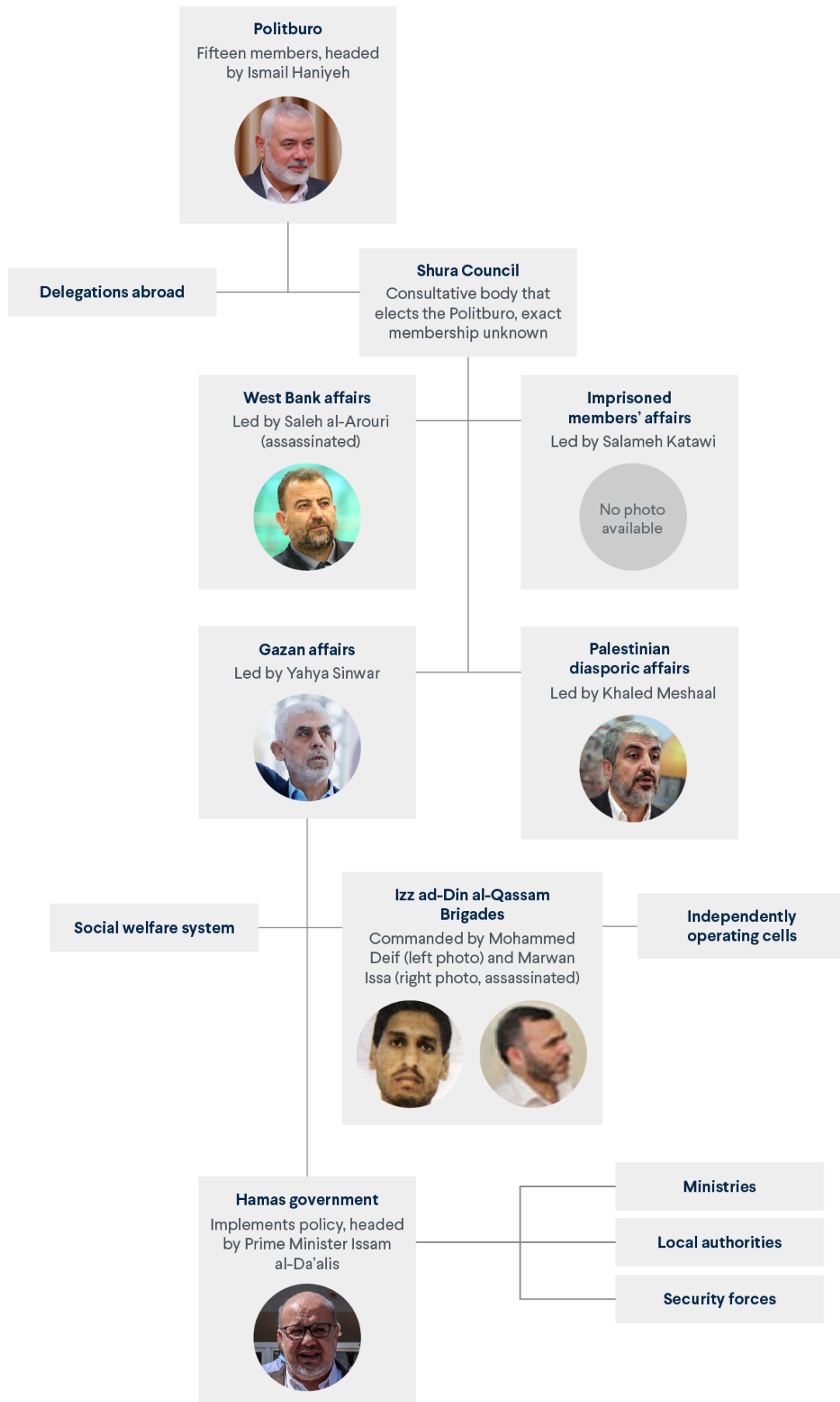
under a newly created entity called the Palestinian Authority (PA). Hamas condemned the accords, as well as the PLO's and Israel's recognition of each other, which Arafat and Rabin officially agreed to in letters sent days before Oslo.

In 1997, the United States designated Hamas a foreign terrorist organization. The movement went on to spearhead violent resistance during the second intifada, in the early 2000s, though PIJ and Fatah's Tanzim militia were also responsible for violence against Israelis.

WHO ARE ITS LEADERS?

Hamas has a host of leadership bodies that perform various political, military, and social functions. General policy is set by an overarching consultative body, often called the politburo, which operates in exile. Local committees manage grassroots issues in Gaza and the West Bank.

Hamas's Governing Structure



Ismail Haniyeh currently serves as political chief, having replaced longtime leader Khaled Meshaal in 2017. Haniyeh has operated from Doha, Qatar, since 2020, reportedly because Egypt [restricts his movement](#) into and out of Gaza. Hamas leaders established a presence in Qatar after falling out with their previous host, Syria, when Palestinian refugees participated in the 2011 uprising that preceded the [Syrian Civil War](#). Some senior Hamas figures [reportedly operate](#) out of the group's offices in Turkey.

Day-to-day affairs in Gaza are overseen by Yahya Sinwar, who previously headed Hamas's military wing and served twenty-two years in an Israeli prison for masterminding the abduction and killing of two Israeli soldiers in 1988. He was among the more than one thousand Palestinian prisoners freed in 2011 in exchange for an Israeli soldier held by Hamas. As of June 2021, Gaza's de facto prime minister is Issam al-Da'alis.

Internal elections that [concluded in 2021](#) gave Meshaal leadership of Hamas's diaspora office, while Salameh Katawi was elected to manage the affairs of imprisoned members. Deputy politburo chairman and Lebanon affairs director Saleh al-Arouri was voted leader of the group's West Bank branch, a post he held until his January 2024 death by a suspected Israeli drone strike.

Marwan Issa and Mohammed Deif jointly commanded Hamas's military wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, until Issa was reportedly killed by an Israeli air strike in March 2024, though his death is not yet confirmed. Israeli forces killed Yassin, Hamas's founder, in 2004.

HOW IS HAMAS FUNDED?

Historically, Palestinian expatriates and private donors in the Persian Gulf provided much of the movement's funding. Today, Iran is one of Hamas's biggest benefactors, contributing funds, weapons, and training. Though Iran and Hamas briefly fell out after backing opposing sides in Syria's civil war, Iran [provides some \\$100 million annually](#) [PDF] to Hamas, PIJ, and other Palestinian groups designated as terrorist organizations by the United States, according to 2021 U.S. State Department estimates. Iran was quick to [praise Hamas's assault](#) on Israel in late 2023 and pledge its continuing support for the Palestinian group.

Turkey has been another stalwart backer of Hamas—and a critic of Israel—following President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's [rise to power](#) in 2002. Though Ankara insists it only supports Hamas politically, it has been accused of [funding Hamas's terrorism](#), including through aid diverted from the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency.

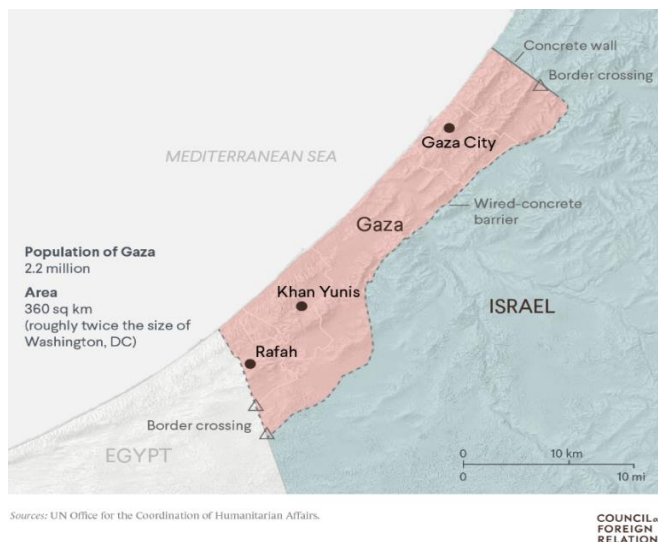
Egypt and Israel [closed their borders](#) with Gaza in 2006–07, restricting the movement of goods and people into and out of the territory. For years after the blockade began, Hamas collected revenue by taxing goods moving through a sophisticated network of tunnels that circumvented the Egyptian crossing into Gaza; this brought staples such as food, medicine, and cheap gas for electricity production into the territory, as well as construction materials, cash, and arms. Egypt shut down most of the tunnels breaching its territory but began to allow some commercial goods to enter Gaza through its Salah al-Din border crossing in 2018. As of 2021, Hamas reportedly [collected upward of \\$12 million per month](#) from taxes on Egyptian goods imported into Gaza.

DOES FOREIGN AID FOR GAZA GO THROUGH HAMAS?

Before the current war, Israel allowed Qatar to provide Gaza with hundreds of millions of dollars in annual assistance through Hamas. But foreign aid generally reaches Gaza via the PA and UN agencies, namely the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), though Hamas has reportedly [diverted some of this aid](#). As a designated terrorist entity, Hamas and its government are cut off from official assistance that the United States and European Union (EU) provide to the West Bank. Some Islamic charities in Western countries have channeled money to Hamas-backed social service groups, prompting the U.S. Treasury to freeze their assets. The latest Israel-Hamas war has exacerbated the [already extreme poverty](#) in Gaza, where more than one million people needed aid before the fighting broke out. The Egyptian-Israeli blockade keeps Gaza mostly cut off from the world, reliant on the little international assistance allowed past Israeli inspectors. UNRWA remains the primary aid distributor, but it suffered a [massive funding cut](#) following accusations that it employed Hamas members involved in the October 7 massacre. Its top donor, the United States, paused funding for a year in March 2024, while around a dozen other countries issued their own, open-ended pauses or announced that future UNRWA funding would depend on the results of investigations into the allegations.

HOW HAS HAMAS GOVERNED GAZA?

Hamas became the de facto authority in Gaza shortly after Israel withdrew from the territory in 2005. The following year, Hamas won a majority of seats in the PA's legislature and formed a government. It earned votes for the social services it provided and as a rejection of the incumbent Fatah, which many voters perceived as having grown corrupt at the helm of the PLO and delivering little to Palestinians through its negotiations with Israel. The outcome was unacceptable to Fatah and its Western backers, and the party ousted Hamas from power in the West Bank. In Gaza, Hamas routed Fatah's militias in a week of fighting, resulting in a political schism between the two Palestinian territories. Palestinians have not voted for a legislature since 2006, nor a president since 2008.



“The Hamas-controlled government has no effective or independent mechanisms for ensuring transparency in its funding, procurements, or operations.”

Freedom House

As Hamas took over the remnants of PA institutions in the strip, it established a judiciary and put in place authoritarian institutions. In theory, Hamas has governed in accordance with the PA's [sharia-based](#) Palestinian Basic Law; but it has generally been [more restrictive](#) than the law requires, including by controlling how women dress and enforcing gender segregation in public. The watchdog group Freedom House [found in 2020](#) that the "Hamas-controlled government has no effective or independent mechanisms for ensuring transparency in its funding, procurements, or operations." Hamas also represses the Gazan media, civilian activism on social media, the political opposition, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), leaving it without mechanisms for accountability.

HOW HAS HAMAS CHALLENGED ISRAEL?

For decades, Hamas's attacks on Israel mostly involved rocket and mortar strikes, mass shootings, and suicide bombings. Iranian security officials say that Tehran has provided Hamas with some weapons, but that Hamas gained the ability to build its own missiles after training with Iran's [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps](#) (IRGC) and proxies. Israeli security officials [estimate](#) that Hamas had about twenty thousand rockets and mortars in its arsenal at the start of its current war with Israel. The group has also carried out incursions into Israeli territory, killing and kidnapping soldiers and civilians.

Prior to the 2023 conflict, Hamas and Israel had their deadliest fighting in years in 2021, when Hamas fired rockets into Israel following [weeks of tensions](#) between Palestinians and Israelis in Jerusalem. Some analysts say that Hamas wanted to bolster its reputation as the [defender of the Palestinian cause](#) after the PA postponed the 2021 elections. During the eleven-day conflict, Hamas and PIJ fired more than four thousand rockets from Gaza, killing ten Israeli civilians and injuring more than three hundred others. The United States and Egypt brokered a cease-fire to the conflict.

HOW WAS HAMAS'S ATTACK ON ISRAEL IN 2023 DIFFERENT?

Hamas's 2023 assault on southern Israel, "Operation al-Aqsa Storm," was extraordinary in its strategy, scale, and secrecy, analysts say. It began early on October 7, the Jewish Sabbath and an important Jewish holiday, with Hamas launching several thousand rockets into southern and central Israel, hitting cities as far north as Tel Aviv. Hamas militants also breached the heavily fortified Gaza border and infiltrated many southern Israeli towns and villages, killing nearly 1,200 people and wounding and kidnapping scores more. Fighters livestreamed videos of their actions, showing that the attack was especially brutal, with some militants appearing to perpetrate what experts say could be [ruled war crimes](#); in March 2024, [UN investigators said](#) there were "reasonable grounds to believe" some Hamas members committed sexual violence against hostages and those killed on October 7. Military leader Mohammed Deif said Hamas [undertook its assault](#) in response to Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands and its various "crimes" against the Palestinian people.

The October 7 attack is the deadliest in Israel's seventy-five-year history and has inflicted a deep psychological trauma on its people, with some analysts drawing comparisons to the surprise Pearl Harbor and September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States. "It is completely unprecedented that a

terrorist organization would have the capacity or the wherewithal to mount coordinated, simultaneous assaults from the air, sea, and land,” [writes CFR Senior Fellow Bruce Hoffman](#).

The operation also showcased an unprecedented level of support for coordination with Hamas by Iran and its network of regional allies, an anti-West, anti-Israel coalition known as the axis of resistance. The [Wall Street Journal reports](#) that Hamas likely planned the October 7 attack with Iran’s knowledge, if not its direct authorization, though U.S. and Israeli officials have said they have no evidence of this. The axis’s subsequent attacks on Israel-linked targets, particularly by Lebanon’s [Hezbollah](#) and [Yemen’s Houthis](#), have raised fears that the war in Gaza will balloon into a regional conflagration.

HOW DO PALESTINIANS VIEW HAMAS?

Palestinian opinions of Hamas are mixed. Before October 7, the group [had been unpopular](#) [PDF] in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, though Palestinians in both territories preferred Hamas to other political factions. Many experts say that PA President Mahmoud Abbas canceled the 2021 Palestinian national elections to [prevent a likely Hamas victory](#).

After October 7, support for Hamas in Gaza rose four percentage points and nearly quadrupled in the West Bank, according to a [December 2023](#) survey, though this was not enough for it to gain majority support in either territory. “Palestinians believe that diplomacy and negotiations are not an option available to them, that only violence and armed struggle is the means to end the siege and blockade over Gaza, and in general to end the Israeli occupation,” West Bank–based pollster [Khalil Shikaki told CNN](#). However, he added that “no one should see this as support for any atrocities that might have been committed by Hamas on that day.”

WHAT’S NEXT FOR HAMAS?

Israel is seeking to eradicate the group and free around 130 hostages still held in Gaza, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warning of a “long and difficult war.” After the first [five months of fighting](#), the Israeli military had “certainly done considerable damage to Hamas, which is no longer capable of firing rockets into Israel and has seen thousands of its fighters either killed, wounded, or captured,” writes CFR Senior Fellow Steven A. Cook. Israeli officials say Hamas [no longer constitutes](#) an organized fighting force in northern Gaza, while its Gaza-based leaders, such as Sinwar, are thought to be hiding below ground in the south.

Despite these setbacks, Hamas leaders have [yet to concede](#) to Israeli demands to cease fighting and free the remaining hostages, and they reportedly envision a role for themselves in Gaza’s postwar leadership. Hamas and Palestinian Authority negotiators have held talks on cooperating in a technocratic government that administers Gaza once the fighting ends. But some experts say that the Israeli government is unlikely to accept such an outcome, having so far rejected temporary cease-fires that could have given Hamas time to regroup. “The Israelis are clearly willing to countenance international opprobrium for rejecting what they regard as a bad cease-fire deal that will allow Hamas to survive and fight another day,” [Cook writes](#).

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

For *Foreign Affairs*, CFR Distinguished Fellow Martin Indyk discusses [why Hamas attacked Israel](#) in 2023 and why Israel was taken by surprise.

These Backgrounders by CFR's Kali Robinson explain what to know about [Palestinian governance](#) beyond Gaza and about U.S. policy on the [Israeli-Palestinian conflict](#).

Palestinian economist Raja Khalidi [makes a case](#) for establishing a Palestinian state amid the war in Gaza in this *Foreign Affairs* article.

The Israeli NGO Gisha [maps access to the Gaza Strip](#) [PDF] and documents restrictions on the movement of people and goods enforced by Israel and Egypt.

The European Council on Foreign Relations [maps Palestinian politics](#).

THE 1988 COVENANT OF THE HAMAS

– MAIN POINTS

FAS Note: This is a translation of excerpts of the original 1988 charter of Hamas. A translation of the full document is [here](#).

A [revised](#) Hamas Document of General Principles and Policies was issued in 2017.

INFORMATION DIVISION, ISRAEL FOREIGN MINISTRY - JERUSALEM

Mail all Queries to ask@israel-info.gov.il URL: <http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il> gopher://israel-info.gov.il

The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement was issued on August 18, 1988. The Islamic Resistance Movement, also known as the HAMAS, is an extremist fundamentalist Islamic organization operating in the territories under Israeli control. Its Covenant is a comprehensive manifesto comprised of 36 separate articles, all of which promote the basic HAMAS goal of destroying the State of Israel through Jihad (Islamic Holy War). The following are excerpts of the HAMAS Covenant:

GOALS OF THE HAMAS:

'The Islamic Resistance Movement is a distinguished Palestinian movement, whose allegiance is to Allah, and whose way of life is Islam. It strives to raise the banner of Allah over every inch Palestine.' (Article 6)

ON THE DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL:

'Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it.' (Preamble)

THE EXCLUSIVE MOSLEM NATURE OF THE AREA:

'The land of Palestine is an Islamic Waqf [Holy Possession] consecrated for future Moslem generations until Judgment Day. No one can renounce it or any part, or abandon it or any part of it.' (Article 11)

'Palestine is an Islamic land... Since this is the case, the Liberation of Palestine is an individual duty for every Moslem wherever he may be.' (Article 13)

THE CALL TO JIHAD:

'The day the enemies usurp part of Moslem land, Jihad becomes the individual duty of every Moslem. In the face of the Jews' usurpation, it is compulsory that the banner of Jihad be raised.' (Article 15)

'Ranks will close, fighters joining other fighters, and masses everywhere in the Islamic world will come forward in response to the call of duty, loudly proclaiming: 'Hail to Jihad!'. This cry will reach the heavens and will go on being resounded until liberation is achieved, the invaders vanquished and Allah's victory comes about.' (Article 33)

REJECTION OF A NEGOTIATED PEACE SETTLEMENT:

'[Peace] initiatives, and so-called peaceful solutions and international conferences are in contradiction to the principles of the Islamic Resistance Movement... Those conferences are no more than means to appoint the infidels as arbitrators in the lands of Islam... There is no solution for the Palestinian problem except by Jihad. Initiatives, proposals and international conferences are but a waste of time, an exercise in futility.' (Article 13)

CONDEMNATION OF THE ISRAEL-EGYPT PEACE TREATY:

'Egypt was, to a great extent, removed from the circle of struggle [against Zionism] through the treacherous Camp David Agreement. The Zionists are trying to draw other Arab countries into similar agreements in order to bring them outside the circle of struggle. Leaving the circle of struggle against Zionism is high treason and cursed be he who perpetrates such an act.' (Article 3)

ANTI-SEMITIC INCITEMENT:

'The Day of Judgment will not come about until Moslems fight Jews and kill them. Then, the Jews will hide behind rocks and trees and the rocks and trees will cry out: 'O Moslem, there is a Jew hiding behind me, come and kill him.' (Article 7)

'The enemies have been scheming for a long time and have accumulated huge and influential material wealth. With their money, they took control of the world media... With their money they stirred revolutions in various parts of the globe... They stood behind the French Revolution, the Communist Revolution and most of the revolutions we hear about. With their money they formed secret organizations - such as the Freemasons, Rotary Clubs and the Lions - which are spreading around the world, in order to destroy societies and carry out Zionist interests... They stood behind World War I and formed the League of Nations through which they could rule the world. They were behind World War II, through which they made huge financial gains. There is no war going on anywhere without them having their finger in it.' (Article 22)

'Zionism scheming has no end, and after Palestine they will covet expansion from the Nile to the Euphrates River. When they have finished digesting the area on which they have laid their hand they will look forward to more expansion. Their scheme has been laid out in the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion'.' (Article 32)

'The HAMAS regards itself the spearhead and the vanguard of the circle of struggle against World Zionism... Islamic groups all over the Arab world should also do the same, since they are best equipped for their future role in the fight against the warmongering Jews.' (Article 32)

THE REVISED 2017 COVENANT OF THE HAMAS

– MAIN POINTS

**FAS NOTE: THIS IS A TRANSLATION OF EXCERPTS
OF THE ORIGINAL 1988 CHARTER OF HAMAS.
A TRANSLATION OF THE FULL DOCUMENT IS [HERE](#).**

**A [REVISED](#) HAMAS DOCUMENT OF GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND POLICIES
WAS ISSUED IN 2017.**

INFORMATION DIVISION, ISRAEL FOREIGN MINISTRY - JERUSALEM

The Islamic Resistance Movement “Hamas” A Document of General Principles and Policies

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of all worlds. May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon Muhammad, the Master of Messengers and the Leader of the mujahidin, and upon his household and all his companions.

Preamble:

Palestine is the land of the Arab Palestinian people, from it they originate, to it they adhere and belong, and about it they reach out and communicate.

Palestine is a land whose status has been elevated by Islam, a faith that holds it in high esteem, that breathes through it its spirit and just values and that lays the foundation for the doctrine of defending and protecting it.

Palestine is the cause of a people who have been let down by a world that fails to secure their rights and restore to them what has been usurped from them, a people whose land continues to suffer one of the worst types of occupation in this world.

Palestine is a land that was seized by a racist, anti-human and colonial Zionist project that was founded on a false promise (the Balfour Declaration), on recognition of a usurping entity and on imposing a fait accompli by force.

Palestine symbolizes the resistance that shall continue until liberation is accomplished, until the return is fulfilled and until a fully sovereign state is established with Jerusalem as its capital.

Palestine is the true partnership among Palestinians of all affiliations for the sublime objective of liberation.

Palestine is the spirit of the Ummah and its central cause; it is the soul of humanity and its living conscience.

This document is the product of deep deliberations that led us to a strong consensus. As a movement, we agree about both the theory and the practice of the vision that is outlined in the pages that follow. It is a vision that stands on solid grounds and on well-established principles. This document unveils the goals, the milestones and the way in which national unity can be enforced. It also establishes our common understanding of the Palestinian cause, the working principles which we use to further it, and the limits of flexibility used to interpret it.

THE MOVEMENT:

1. The Islamic Resistance Movement “ Hamas ” is a Palestinian Islamic national liberation and resistance movement. Its goal is to liberate Palestine and confront the Zionist project. Its frame of reference is Islam, which determines its principles, objectives and means.

THE LAND OF PALESTINE:

2. Palestine, which extends from the River Jordan in the east to the Mediterranean in the west and from Ras Al-Naqurah in the north to Umm Al-Rashrash in the south, is an integral territorial unit. It is the land and the home of the Palestinian people. The expulsion and banishment of the Palestinian people from their land and the establishment of the Zionist entity therein do not annul the right of the Palestinian people to their entire land and do not entrench any rights therein for the usurping Zionist entity.

3. Palestine is an Arab Islamic land. It is a blessed sacred land that has a special place in the heart of every Arab and every Muslim.

THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE:

4. The Palestinians are the Arabs who lived in Palestine until 1947, irrespective of whether they were expelled from it, or stayed in it; and every person that was born to an Arab Palestinian father after that date, whether inside or outside Palestine, is a Palestinian.

5. The Palestinian identity is authentic and timeless; it is passed from generation to generation. The catastrophes that have befallen the Palestinian people, as a consequence of the Zionist occupation and its policy of displacement, cannot erase the identity of the Palestinian people nor can they negate it. A Palestinian shall not lose his or her national identity or rights by acquiring a second nationality.

6. The Palestinian people are one people, made up of all Palestinians, inside and outside of Palestine, irrespective of their religion, culture or political affiliation.

ISLAM AND PALESTINE:

7. Palestine is at the heart of the Arab and Islamic Ummah and enjoys a special status. Within Palestine there exists Jerusalem, whose precincts are blessed by Allah. Palestine is the Holy Land, which Allah has blessed for humanity. It is the Muslims’ first Qiblah and the destination of the journey performed at night by Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. It is the location from where he ascended to the upper heavens. It is the birthplace of Jesus Christ, peace be upon him. Its soil contains the remains of thousands of Prophets, Companions and Mujahidin. It is the land of people who are determined to defend the truth – within Jerusalem and its surroundings – who are not deterred or intimidated by those who oppose them and by those who betray them, and they will continue their mission until the Promise of Allah is fulfilled.

8. By virtue of its justly balanced middle way and moderate spirit, Islam – for Hamas - provides a comprehensive way of life and an order that is fit for purpose at all times and in all places. Islam is a religion of peace and tolerance. It provides an umbrella for the followers of other creeds and 4 religions who can practice their beliefs in security and safety. Hamas also believes that Palestine has always been and will always be a model of coexistence, tolerance and civilizational innovation.

9. Hamas believes that the message of Islam upholds the values of truth, justice, freedom and dignity and prohibits all forms of injustice and incriminates oppressors irrespective of their religion, race, gender or nationality. Islam is against all forms of religious, ethnic or sectarian extremism and bigotry. It is the religion

that inculcates in its followers the value of standing up to aggression and of supporting the oppressed; it motivates them to give generously and make sacrifices in defence of their dignity, their land, their peoples and their holy places.

JERUSALEM:

10. Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine. Its religious, historic and civilizational status is fundamental to the Arabs, Muslims and the world at large. Its Islamic and Christian holy places belong exclusively to the Palestinian people and to the Arab and Islamic Ummah. Not one stone of Jerusalem can be surrendered or relinquished. The measures undertaken by the occupiers in Jerusalem, such as Judaization, settlement building, and establishing facts on the ground are fundamentally null and void.

11. The blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque belongs exclusively to our people and our Ummah, and the occupation has no right to it whatsoever. The occupation's plots, measures and attempts to judaize Al-Aqsa and divide it are null, void and illegitimate. The Refugees and the Right of Return:

12. The Palestinian cause in its essence is a cause of an occupied land and a displaced people. The right of the Palestinian refugees and the displaced to return to their homes from which they were banished or were banned from returning to – whether in the lands occupied in 1948 or in 1967 (that is the whole of Palestine), is a natural right, both individual and collective. This right is confirmed by all divine laws as well as by the basic principles of human rights and international law. It is an 5 inalienable right and cannot be dispensed with by any party, whether Palestinian, Arab or international.

13. Hamas rejects all attempts to erase the rights of the refugees, including the attempts to settle them outside Palestine and through the projects of the alternative homeland. Compensation to the Palestinian refugees for the harm they have suffered as a consequence of banishing them and occupying their land is an absolute right that goes hand in hand with their right to return. They are to receive compensation upon their return and this does not negate or diminish their right to return.

THE ZIONIST PROJECT:

14. The Zionist project is a racist, aggressive, colonial and expansionist project based on seizing the properties of others; it is hostile to the Palestinian people and to their aspiration for freedom, liberation, return and self-determination. The Israeli entity is the plaything of the Zionist project and its base of aggression.

15. The Zionist project does not target the Palestinian people alone; it is the enemy of the Arab and Islamic Ummah posing a grave threat to its security and interests. It is also hostile to the Ummah's aspirations for unity, renaissance and liberation and has been the major source of its troubles. The Zionist project also poses a danger to international security and peace and to mankind and its interests and stability.

16. Hamas affirms that its conflict is with the Zionist project not with the Jews because of their religion. Hamas does not wage a struggle against the Jews because they are Jewish but wages a struggle against the Zionists who occupy Palestine. Yet, it is the Zionists who constantly identify Judaism and the Jews with their own colonial project and illegal entity.

17 Hamas rejects the persecution of any human being or the undermining of his or her rights on nationalist, religious or sectarian grounds. Hamas is of the view that the Jewish problem, anti-Semitism and

the persecution of the Jews are phenomena fundamentally linked to European history and not to the history of the Arabs and the Muslims or 6 to their heritage. The Zionist movement, which was able with the help of Western powers to occupy Palestine, is the most dangerous form of settlement occupation which has already disappeared from much of the world and must disappear from Palestine. The position toward

Occupation and Political Solutions:

18. The following are considered null and void: the Balfour Declaration, the British Mandate Document, the UN Palestine Partition Resolution, and whatever resolutions and measures that derive from them or are similar to them. The establishment of "Israel" is entirely illegal and contravenes the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and goes against their will and the will of the Ummah; it is also in violation of human rights that are guaranteed by international conventions, foremost among them is the right to self-determination.

19. There shall be no recognition of the legitimacy of the Zionist entity. Whatever has befallen the land of Palestine in terms of occupation, settlement building, Judaization or changes to its features or falsification of facts is illegitimate. Rights never lapse.

20. Hamas believes that no part of the land of Palestine shall be compromised or conceded, irrespective of the causes, the circumstances and the pressures and no matter how long the occupation lasts. Hamas rejects any alternative to the full and complete liberation of Palestine, from the river to the sea. However, without compromising its rejection of the Zionist entity and without relinquishing any Palestinian rights, Hamas considers the establishment of a fully sovereign and independent Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital along the lines of the 4th of June 1967, with the return of the refugees and the displaced to their homes from which they were expelled, to be a formula of national consensus.

21. Hamas affirms that the Oslo Accords and their addenda contravene the governing rules of international law in that they generate commitments that violate the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Therefore, the Movement rejects these agreements and all that flows 7 from them, such as the obligations that are detrimental to the interests of our people, especially security coordination (collaboration).

22. Hamas rejects all the agreements, initiatives and settlement projects that are aimed at undermining the Palestinian cause and the rights of our Palestinian people. In this regard, any stance, initiative or political programme must not in any way violate these rights and should not contravene them or contradict them.

23. Hamas stresses that transgression against the Palestinian people, usurping their land and banishing them from their homeland cannot be called peace. Any settlements reached on this basis will not lead to peace. Resistance and jihad for the liberation of Palestine will remain a legitimate right, a duty and an honour for all the sons and daughters of our people and our Ummah. Resistance and Liberation:

24. The liberation of Palestine is the duty of the Palestinian people in particular and the duty of the Arab and Islamic Ummah in general. It is also a humanitarian obligation as necessitated by the dictates of truth and justice. The agencies working for Palestine, whether national, Arab, Islamic or humanitarian, complement each other and are harmonious and not in conflict with each other.

25. Resisting the occupation with all means and methods is a legitimate right guaranteed by divine laws and by international norms and laws. At the heart of these lies armed resistance, which is regarded as the strategic choice for protecting the principles and the rights of the Palestinian people.

26. Hamas rejects any attempt to undermine the resistance and its arms. It also affirms the right of our people to develop the means and mechanisms of resistance. Managing resistance, in terms of escalation or de-escalation, or in terms of diversifying the means and methods, is an integral part of the process of managing the conflict and should not be at the expense of the principle of resistance.

THE PALESTINIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM:

27. A real state of Palestine is a state that has been liberated. There is no alternative to a fully sovereign Palestinian State on the entire national Palestinian soil, with Jerusalem as its capital.

28. Hamas believes in, and adheres to, managing its Palestinian relations on the basis of pluralism, democracy, national partnership, acceptance of the other and the adoption of dialogue. The aim is to bolster the unity of ranks and joint action for the purpose of accomplishing national goals and fulfilling the aspirations of the Palestinian people.

29. The PLO is a national framework for the Palestinian people inside and outside of Palestine. It should therefore be preserved, developed and rebuilt on democratic foundations so as to secure the participation of all the constituents and forces of the Palestinian people, in a manner that safeguards Palestinian rights.

30. Hamas stresses the necessity of building Palestinian national institutions on sound democratic principles, foremost among them are free and fair elections. Such process should be on the basis of national partnership and in accordance with a clear programme and a clear strategy that adhere to the rights, including the right of resistance, and which fulfil the aspirations of the Palestinian people.

31. Hamas affirms that the role of the Palestinian Authority should be to serve the Palestinian people and safeguard their security, their rights and their national project.

32. Hamas stresses the necessity of maintaining the independence of Palestinian national decision-making. Outside forces should not be allowed to intervene. At the same time, Hamas affirms the responsibility of the Arabs and the Muslims and their duty and role in the liberation of Palestine from Zionist occupation.

33. Palestinian society is enriched by its prominent personalities, figures, dignitaries, civil society institutions, and youth, students, trade unionist and women's groups who together work for the achievement of national goals and societal building, pursue resistance, and achieve liberation.

34. The role of Palestinian women is fundamental in the process of building the present and the future, just as it has always been in the process of making Palestinian history. It is a pivotal role in the project of resistance, liberation and building the political system. The Arab and Islamic Ummah:

35. Hamas believes that the Palestinian issue is the central cause for the Arab and Islamic Ummah.

36. Hamas believes in the unity of the Ummah with all its diverse constituents and is aware of the need to avoid anything that could fragment the Ummah and undermine its unity.

37. Hamas believes in cooperating with all states that support the rights of the Palestinian people. It opposes intervention in the internal affairs of any country. It also refuses to be drawn into disputes and conflicts that take place among different countries. Hamas adopts the policy of opening up to different states in the world, especially the Arab and Islamic states. It endeavours to establish balanced relations on the basis of combining the requirements of the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people's interests on the one hand with the interests of the Ummah, its renaissance and its security on the other.

THE HUMANITARIAN AND INTERNATIONAL ASPECT:

38. The Palestinian issue is one that has major humanitarian and international dimensions. Supporting and backing this cause is a humanitarian and civilizational task that is required by the prerequisites of truth, justice and common humanitarian values.

39. From a legal and humanitarian perspective, the liberation of Palestine is a legitimate activity, it is an act of self-defence, and it is the expression of the natural right of all peoples to self-determination.

40. In its relations with world nations and peoples, Hamas believes in the values of cooperation, justice, freedom and respect of the will of the people.

41. Hamas welcomes the stances of states, organisations and institutions that support the rights of the Palestinian people. It salutes the free peoples of the world who support the Palestinian cause. At the same time, it denounces the support granted by any party to the Zionist entity or the attempts to cover up its crimes and aggression against the Palestinians and calls for the prosecution of Zionist war criminals.

42. Hamas rejects the attempts to impose hegemony on the Arab and Islamic Ummah just as it rejects the attempts to impose hegemony on the rest of the world's nations and peoples. Hamas also condemns all forms of colonialism, occupation, discrimination, oppression and aggression in the world.

May 2017

THE ROAD TO OCTOBER 7: HAMAS' LONG GAME, CLARIFIED

Abstract: When Hamas took over the Gaza Strip by force of arms in 2007, it faced an ideological crisis. It could focus on governing Gaza and addressing the needs of the Palestinian people, or it could use the Gaza Strip as a springboard from which to attack Israel. Even then, Hamas understood these two goals were mutually exclusive. And while some anticipated Hamas would moderate, or at least be co-opted by the demands of governing, it did not. Instead, Hamas invested in efforts to radicalize society and build the militant infrastructure necessary to someday launch the kind of attack that in its view could contribute to the destruction of Israel. This article explores the road from Hamas' 2007 takeover of Gaza to the October 2023 massacre.

COMBATING TERRORISM CENTER AT WEST POINT [Devorah Margolin](#), [Matthew Levitt](#)

October/November 2023 Volume 16, Issue 10

Go to

[The Road to October 7: Hamas' Long Game, Clarified](#)

HAMAS: WORDS AND DEEDS...

WILSON CENTER

By Ambassador [Mark A. Green](#) on *October 24, 2023*

In its original 1988 charter, Hamas states that “There is no solution for the Palestinian problem except by Jihad.” In a 2017 version of its charter, Hamas claimed to reject the “persecution of any human being or the undermining of his or her rights on nationalist, religious or sectarian grounds.” On October 7, 2023, it launched a terrorist attack that killed more than 1,300 people in Israel.

Hamas was established in Gaza at the end of 1987 as both an arm of the Muslim Brotherhood and a rival to another designated terrorist group: the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. In line with its belief that “[The day that enemies usurp part of Muslim land, Jihad becomes the individual duty of every Muslim](#),” Hamas not only [condemned the historic Oslo Accords](#) but declares that international peace proposals and conferences are “[but a waste of time, and vain endeavors](#).”

Such pronouncements and a string of violent acts made it easy for the US State Department to [designate](#) Hamas a “foreign terrorist organization.” Others like the European Union, Japan, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom have taken similar steps.

By 2017, it appeared that Hamas wanted to reshape, or at least clarify, its public image in some quarters. It took steps to soften some of the most extreme language of its [1988 charter](#) by issuing new statements and declarations that, while not repealing or superseding the original document, supplemented it with more ambiguous terms and rhetoric. For example, the original charter called it “[compulsory that the banner of Jihad be raised](#).” In 2017, Hamas portrayed itself as a resistance movement aiming to “[liberate Palestine and confront the Zionist project](#).” In 1988, Hamas explicitly acknowledged its links to the Muslim Brotherhood, but the [2017 Hamas Charter](#) is devoid of references to the Brotherhood. In 1988, Hamas declared that the “Day of Judgment will not come about until Muslims fight Jews and kill them.” By 2017, Hamas claimed its mission wasn’t “a struggle against Jews or Judaism,” but a “struggle...against the Zionist occupation....”

While the tone and terms of the 2017 charter may be different from the extremist provisions of its 1988 predecessor, the newer document still hints at the violence and hatred at the organization’s core. Article 25 provides that “Resisting the occupation with all means and methods is a legitimate right guaranteed by divine laws and by international norms and laws. At the heart of these lies armed resistance...”

On October 7, Hamas terrorist forces attacked Israel by land, sea, and air, killing at least 1,300 people—including at least 31 Americans, most of whom were unarmed civilians—injuring thousands more, and taking over 150 civilians and soldiers hostage.

In 2017, Hamas dressed up their terrorist objectives in more ambiguous, less violent terms. But in 2023, they made clear what they really stood for—in President Biden’s words, “the destruction of the State of Israel and the murder of Jewish people.”

Little has changed since their anti-Semitic, anti-human, jihadist beginnings.

This blog was researched with the assistance of Caroline Moody.

THERE ARE NO CIVILIANS IN GAZA

**In a culture where terrorists in the field don't wear uniforms,
where large families have sizable stocks of weapons,
and where children are taught to kill and die,
the externals don't matter.**

JNS Daniel Greenfield June 13 2024

Americans expected Osama bin Laden to be found in a cave in Afghanistan. In reality, he was living comfortably in a military town in Pakistan under the protection of local authorities. Similarly, Israeli hostages, including the four who were rescued last Saturday, have come home telling stories of being kept captive in “civilian” households.

Many in the West fundamentally misunderstand what Islamic terrorism is. It's not a “fringe group of extremists,” as politicians and the media describe it, but an ethnic and religious movement. The religious values of Islamic terrorists are universally shared by the vast majority of Muslims, while the ethnic ones ground Islamic warfare in the interests of specific clans and families.

Hamas is an arm of the Muslim Brotherhood and has a widespread base of support across the Muslim world, which is dotted with branches of the Brotherhood. But its ethnic power base is also grounded in the key clans and families that control Gaza. That is why Hamas still retains the support of the majority of the Muslim colonists currently occupying Gaza. It's also why those same “civilians” held Israeli hostages prisoner and could be trusted not to inform on them.

The latest Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research poll shows that 71% of Gazans support the Hamas atrocities of Oct. 7, and 56% expect Hamas to win the war. Some 62% in Gaza are happy Hamas's performance during the war, and 59% want Hamas to stay in power.

That's because they are Hamas and the terror group is also them.

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The “Palestinian” myth is that the Muslim colonists occupying parts of Israel are the “indigenous” people. The reality is that they were Arab settlers who arrived with and after the Islamic conquest of Israel. Some, like the notorious Husseini clan, which produced Hitler's mufti, Hajj Amin al-Husseini, were relatively recent arrivals. The most powerful and wealthiest of these large families took control of urban areas, as the Husseinis tried to do in Jerusalem, and became a vital part of the Ottoman feudal order, serving as mayors and muftis. When the Ottomans were defeated, the clans fought to reclaim their power with movements like the **[Muslim Brotherhood](#)**, also known as Hamas.

Hamas is an ideological Islamist movement, but its control over Gaza depends on these large families. That's why the idea that most people have that Hamas is a fanatical movement that exists apart from ordinary people and can be fought and defeated apart from them is wrong.

That's also why so few of the hostages have been rescued. Like the recently rescued four, the hostages are largely dispersed among "civilian" clan families across neighborhoods controlled by them. These families are formally civilian households, but many of their members are affiliated with Hamas. Rather than being an army whose members belong foremost to Hamas, they are more like the mafia and belong foremost to their extended clan, and choose to lend their support to Hamas.

It's not just that Hamas uses human shields, which it certainly does, it's that its infrastructure depends on clans whose adults provide fighters, and whose women and children act as human shields for the greater glory of the clan and Islam. The same clans that will kill teenage girls for violating family honor will also serve up even younger children as human shields for honor.

There is no way for Israel to rescue its hostages without going into dense neighborhoods under the control of the clans to get them out. And that will lead to firefights and "Black Hawk Down" moments. Clan members, who never identify themselves as such, will cry that they were massacred. And foreign leaders and the media will condemn the deaths of "civilians."

Defeating Hamas without civilian casualties is impossible because the Islamic terrorist group not only operates among civilians but is rooted in the society of Gaza. The clans that run Gaza, that provide the manpower that controls UNRWA institutions, and that are the mainstays of Hamas are also the large families that dominate the businesses, cultural and religious life in Gaza.

There's no meaningful distinction between civilians and Hamas. Some clans reject Hamas authority and Israel has tried to solicit some of them to run Gaza. For now, with few results. The U.S. strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq had similarly depended on swaying certain clans, elders and warlords into abandoning Al-Qaeda or the Taliban, with very temporary success.

Eventually the Taliban or Al-Qaeda, rebranded as the Islamic State, returned. And some of the same men we had armed and trained turned their guns on us. It is an almost inevitable outcome of counterinsurgency (COIN). When bringing democracy to the Muslim world fails, Westerners begin competing with jihadists for the support of the clans, only to be stabbed in the back.

The jihadists have the Quran on their side. To Muslims, their terrorism will always be more righteous than our fumbling efforts to avoid civilian casualties and collateral damage. Appealing to moderates or promising a better life will not win their support. On the contrary, it only infuriates the imams in their mosques and the influential clan leaders into opposing us.

Instead, we must reckon with the reality that there are few civilians in Gaza or the Muslim world generally. And those who legitimately are civilians should be measured by their deeds, not their clothing. In a culture where terrorists in the field don't wear uniforms, where large families have sizable stocks of weapons, and where children are taught to kill and die, the externals don't matter.

There are no civilians in Gaza. The vast majority of the population supports Hamas or some Islamic terrorist movement. Only a tiny minority opposes Islamic terrorism and wants peace.

The distinction is not between soldiers, terrorists and civilians, but enemies and non-combatants. Israel and Western nations should stop thinking about civilians, a concept that does not apply in a battlespace where terrorists wear street clothes and entire neighborhoods are controlled by clans that hide hostages in plain sight and think about enemies and neutrals.

An enemy is anyone, regardless of clothing or sex, who is aligned with Islamic terrorists.

Every poll continues to show that the vast majority of those in Gaza are aligned with the enemy. And if that were not the case, the war would have long since ended once locals informed the authorities of where the hostages are and where the remaining Hamas terrorists are set up.

Israel is not just at war with an organization, but with an enemy culture. As is most of the world, whether it chooses to admit it or not. The war is not defined by what they wear, but by what they think. As long as human shields, female suicide bombers and child soldiers abound, the war cannot be fought by treating civilians as noncombatants while hunting elusive terrorists.

The only way to defeat an enemy is to fight him as he is, not as we would like him to be.

It would be a far cleaner and neater war if Islamic terrorists fought like conventional armies. They do not.

And it is time to fight them on their own terms instead.

Hamas can't be defeated by waiting until its terrorists take off their civilian clothes and put on uniforms.

Hamas are the civilians. They are the ones holding the hostages. The only way to free the hostages and defeat the terrorists is to destroy the terror culture in whatever form it takes.

The opinions and facts presented in this article are those of the author,
and neither JNS nor its partners assume any responsibility for them.

HAMAS BACK ON GAZA STREETS AFTER WAR WITH ISRAEL

Gaza City (Palestinian Territories) (AFP) – After more than a year hiding in tunnels and dodging air strikes, uniformed Hamas fighters returned to the ruined streets of Gaza hours into a ceasefire, defying Israel's vow to crush them.

[rfi](#) 22/01/2025



Hamas fighters were out in force at the start of the ceasefire, with dozens taking part in the hostages release on Sunday © Omar AL-QATTAA / AFP/File

With the world watching on Sunday as Hamas handed over three Israeli hostages to the Red Cross, dozens of balaclava-wearing fighters in the group's signature green headbands were seen at the packed Gaza City square marshalling the chaotic events.

The day after, Hamas's deputy interior minister for the territory was out and about in Gaza City, declaring that Gazans were "living in a moment of victory".

While Hamas was back on the streets, Israeli forces were withdrawing from the territory's densely populated areas.

The destruction they left behind was staggering, yet Hamas appears to have survived, in spite of Israel's stated objective from the outset of the war of eradicating the group once and for all.

"When you set yourself complete elimination (as a goal), if there is one man standing it can be regarded as failure," said Yossi Mekelberg, a Middle East expert at Chatham House.

'FIERCEST BOMBARDMENT'

This could prove a problem for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who pledged in the aftermath of Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack on Israel to destroy the group.

"They were under the fiercest bombardment that such an organisation could ever sustain and they are still there and they are still recruiting," Mekelberg said.

Israel decimated Hamas's ranks and killed many of its top leaders, including Ismail Haniyeh and his successor Yahya Sinwar. On Tuesday, Israel's army chief said its campaign had killed "nearly 20,000 Hamas operatives".

Mekelberg cautioned that it was too early to assess Hamas's overall condition, and acknowledged it had suffered heavy losses, but "on your TV, you see that they are still there, with their bandanas and all their masks".

Muhammad Shehada, of the European Council on Foreign Relations, said Israel had specifically targeted civil servants, police and ministers, as part of its efforts to dismantle Hamas's governing ability.

"The continued presence of these officials and forces represents a symbol of defiance, showing they remain operational despite the onslaught," he said.

On Monday, Hamas presented itself as triumphant for having survived, saying in a statement that "Gaza, with its great people and its resilience, will rise again to rebuild what the occupation has destroyed and continue on the path of steadfastness until the occupation is defeated".

'GAME OF WHACK-A-MOLE'

The ceasefire is in its infancy and many questions remain about the future of the Gaza Strip and Hamas.

Michael Horowitz, a Middle East analyst at the security consultancy Le Beck, said Hamas had made a show of strength both to deter rivals within the Palestinian ranks and to show Israel "that any additional rounds of fighting won't lead anywhere".

That Hamas was not defeated was down to "one key reason", he said, namely that Israel "hasn't tried to replace Hamas as a governing entity in Gaza".

Netanyahu has repeatedly insisted that the Ramallah-based Palestinian Authority have no role in the Gaza Strip. This "solely security-focused" vision, said Horowitz, meant "Israel has been stuck in a game of whack-a-mole".

Eva Koulouriotis, an independent Middle East analyst, said Hamas retained "overwhelming popularity" in Gaza, while "attempts... to provide a popular base for the Palestinian Authority and to reject Hamas's rule have failed".

The destruction brought by the war did breed resentment towards Hamas among Gazans, said Shehada, but many were conflicted.

People "also feel a sense of pride" that Hamas's armed wing, the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, defied Israel's might, he noted.

"It revolves around the fact that people have been humiliated... And then it brings a source of pride".

The health ministry in the Hamas-run territory has put the death toll at more than 47,100, the majority civilians, figures the UN considers reliable.

That devastation was in retaliation for Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel, which resulted in the deaths of 1,210 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally of official Israeli figures.

Horowitz said the scale of destruction was among the worst of any urban battle in recent memory, adding it eclipsed the damage done to Mosul in Iraq during the campaign to dislodge the Islamic State group.

But ultimately, said Mekelberg, Israel's military campaign didn't "deal with the root causes of the conflict", echoing a call by UN chief Antonio Guterres for the ceasefire to be a "first step" towards a long-term political settlement between Israel and the Palestinians.

Only in that way, Mekelberg said, can Israel "create space between (Hamas) and the rest of the (Palestinian) people".

WHY IS HAMAS CLASSED AS A TERRORIST GROUP?

(THIS IS THE AI RESPONSE FROM CHATGPT)

Hamas is classified as a terrorist group by several countries and organizations due to its use of violence and tactics targeting civilians, as well as its broader political and ideological objectives.

Here is a detailed explanation of the reasons behind this designation:

1. VIOLENT ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS

One of the primary reasons Hamas is designated as a terrorist organization is its long history of attacks targeting civilians, both Israeli and foreign. These attacks include:

1. **Suicide Bombings:** During the Second Intifada (2000–2005), Hamas carried out numerous suicide bombings in buses, restaurants, and public spaces within Israel, killing and injuring hundreds of civilians.
2. **Rocket Attacks:** Hamas regularly launches indiscriminate rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip into Israeli cities and towns. These rockets often target civilian areas without differentiation between combatants and non-combatants, a violation of international humanitarian law.
3. **Kidnappings:** Hamas has been involved in high-profile kidnappings, including the 2006 capture of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, which they used as leverage for a prisoner exchange.

2. INDISCRIMINATE AND ASYMMETRIC WARFARE

Hamas is frequently criticized for using tactics that violate international laws of war, particularly the principles of distinction and proportionality, which require combatants to distinguish between military and civilian targets and to avoid excessive force.

1. **Hamas:** fires rockets indiscriminately from civilian areas in Gaza into Israel, often targeting civilian populations.
2. **Uses tunnels** for cross-border attacks, often to launch surprise raids on civilian or military targets.
3. **Carries out urban warfare** in heavily populated areas, sometimes escalating violence during periods of conflict, leading to civilian casualties.

3. HUMAN SHIELDS AND CIVILIAN USE IN CONFLICT

Hamas has been accused of using civilians as human shields, positioning military infrastructure such as rocket launchers and weapons caches in schools, hospitals, and residential buildings.

1. This strategy increases the risk of civilian casualties and has drawn widespread condemnation from international human rights organizations. It complicates Israel's military response, as any retaliation risks civilian harm.

4. REFUSAL TO RECOGNIZE ISRAEL AND CALLS FOR ITS DESTRUCTION

Hamas has consistently refused to recognize the state of Israel and has called for its destruction.

1. The Hamas Charter (1988) explicitly rejects Israel's right to exist and advocates for the establishment of an Islamic state in all of historic Palestine, including Israel. This ideological position fuels Hamas' violent resistance against Israel, rather than participating in peace negotiations or recognizing international agreements like the Oslo Accords.

5. CONNECTIONS TO OTHER TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS

Hamas has historical ties to other groups labeled as terrorist organizations, such as Hezbollah and Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

1. These connections are viewed as part of a broader network of militant Islamist groups that engage in asymmetric warfare and terrorism. Hamas has received financial, military, and logistical support from Iran, enabling it to develop a more sophisticated arsenal of weapons.

6. POLITICAL CONTROL AND ARMED WING

Hamas is unique among many terrorist organizations in that it also functions as a political party, governing the Gaza Strip since 2007 after a violent conflict with the Palestinian Authority's Fatah faction.

1. Despite its political role, Hamas maintains an armed wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, which is responsible for carrying out many of the attacks and military operations against Israel. This dual nature—political and military—complicates the group's classification, but its armed actions remain the focus of its terrorist designation.

7. INTERNATIONAL TERRORIST DESIGNATIONS

The following countries and organizations officially classify Hamas as a terrorist group:

1. **United States:** Designated Hamas as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) in 1997 due to its attacks on civilians and its opposition to peace efforts.
2. **European Union (EU):** Hamas has been on the EU's terrorist list since 2003, following a wave of suicide bombings and attacks during the Second Intifada.
3. **Canada, Australia, and Japan** have similarly designated Hamas as a terrorist entity.
4. **Israel:** As the primary target of Hamas' attacks, Israel considers the group a direct threat to its existence and has consistently labeled it as a terrorist organization.

8. HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Hamas has been accused of committing serious human rights violations, not only in its attacks on Israel but also in its governance of Gaza.

1. This includes suppressing dissent, executing alleged collaborators, and violating the rights of political opponents within the Gaza Strip. Such practices contribute to Hamas' negative international image.

9.CONCLUSION

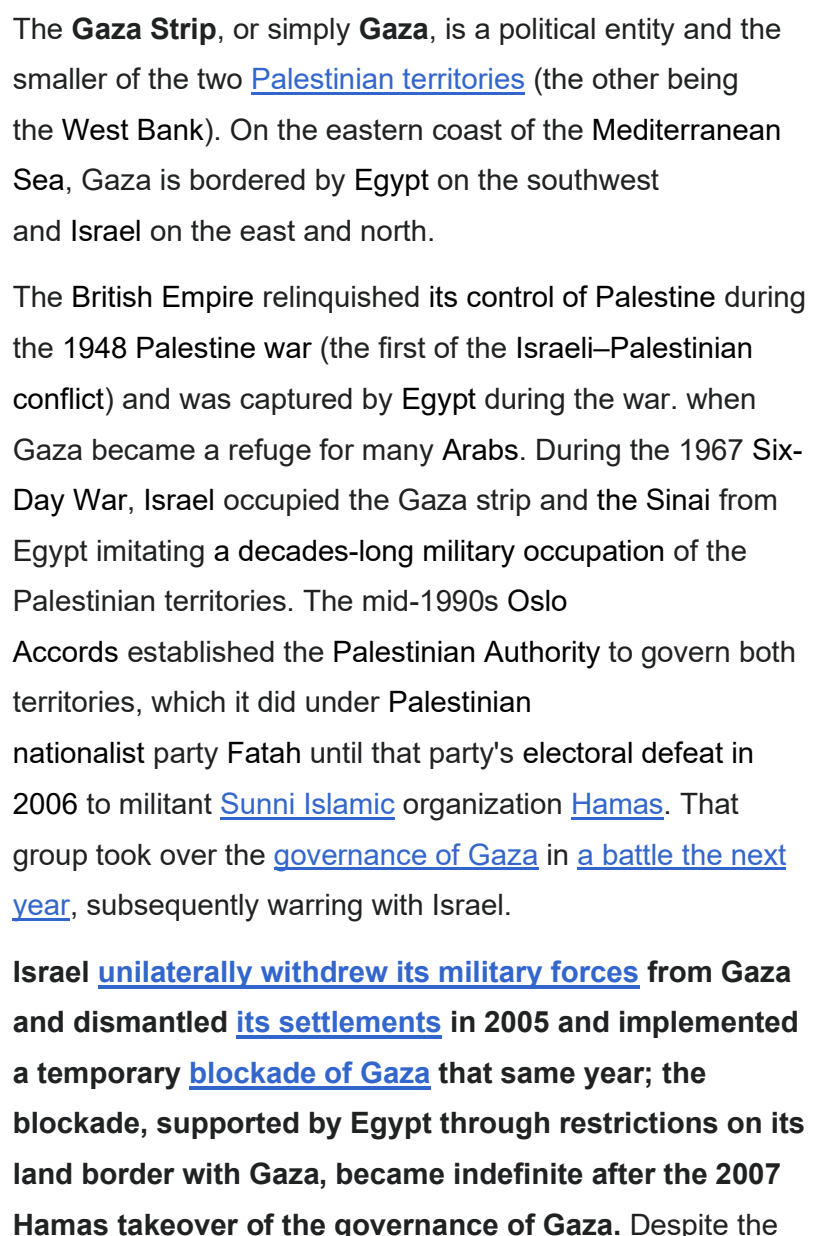
Hamas is classified as a terrorist group primarily due to its targeting of civilians, its use of violence and asymmetric warfare, and its rejection of Israel's right to exist.

1. The group's tactics—including suicide bombings, rocket attacks, kidnappings, and the use of civilians as human shields—are widely seen as violations of international law, leading to its designation as a terrorist organization by many governments and international bodies. Despite its political role in Gaza, Hamas' violent activities and ideological stance continue to drive its classification as a terrorist entity.

Go to the source document which is

Mandatory Palestine

to use the links in these frames



Israeli disengagement, the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and many human-rights organizations continue to consider Gaza to be held under Israeli military occupation, due to what they consider Israel's effective military control over the territory; Israel disputes that it occupies the territory and the [Israeli Supreme Court](#) has found that since the disengagement Israel no longer occupies Gaza.^{[13][14][15]} The land, sea, and air blockade prevents people and goods from freely entering or leaving the territory, resulting in a \$17 million loss in exports and leading to Gaza often being called an "open-air prison".^{[16][17]} The UN, as well as at least 19 human-rights organizations, have urged Israel to lift the blockade.^[18]

The Gaza Strip is 41 kilometres (25 miles) long, from 6 to 12 km (3.7 to 7.5 mi) wide, and has a total area of 365 km² (141 sq mi).^{[19][20]} With around 2 million [Palestinians](#)^[21] on approximately 365 km² (141 sq mi) of land, Gaza has a high [population density](#) ([comparable](#) to that of [Hong Kong](#)).^{[22][23]} The majority of Palestinians in Gaza, which contains eight refugee camps, are descendants of refugees who [fled or were expelled](#) from the area that became Israel after the [1948 Arab–Israeli War](#).^[24] Sunni Muslims make up most of Gaza's population, with a [Palestinian Christian](#) minority. Gaza has an annual population growth rate of 1.99% (2023 est.), the [39th-highest](#) in the world.^[25] Gaza's unemployment rate is among the highest in the world, with an overall unemployment rate of 46% and a youth unemployment rate of ~70%, according to the [Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics](#), while the population has one of the highest literacy rates in the world.^{[26][27][28]}

FATAH-HAMAS CONFLICT

The **Fatah– Hamas conflict** ([Arabic](#): النزاع بين فتح وحماس *an-Nizāʿ bayna Fataḥ wa-Ḥamās*) is an ongoing political and strategic conflict between [Fatah](#) and [Hamās](#), the two main Palestinian political parties in the Palestinian territories, leading to the [Hamās takeover of the Gaza Strip](#) in June 2007. The [reconciliation process](#) and unification of Hamas and Fatah administrations remains unfinalized and the situation is deemed a [frozen conflict](#).

The Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights has found that over 600 Palestinians were killed in the fighting from January 2006 to May 2007.^[14] Dozens more were killed or executed in the following years as part of the conflict.

Hamas was founded in 1987,^{[15][16]} soon after the [First Intifada](#) broke out, as an offshoot of the Egyptian [Muslim Brotherhood](#).^[17] It is a [Palestinian Sunni-Islamist](#) fundamentalist organization,^{[18][19]} which is regarded, either in whole or in part, as a [terrorist organization](#) by [several countries and international organizations](#), most notably by [Israel](#), the [United States](#) and the [European Union](#).^{[20][21][22]}

Tensions between Fatah and Hamas began to rise in 2005 after the death of [Yasser Arafat](#) in November 2004. After the [legislative election on 25 January 2006](#), which resulted in a Hamas victory, relations were marked by sporadic factional fighting. This became more intense after the two parties repeatedly failed to reach a deal to share government power, escalating in June 2007 and resulting in [Hamās' takeover of Gaza](#).^[23] A major issue was control over the border crossings, especially the [Rafah Border Crossing](#).

Hamas leader [Ismail Haniya](#) formed a [new PA government](#) on 29 March 2006 comprising mostly Hamas members. Fatah and other factions had refused to join, especially as Hamas refused to accept the Quartet's conditions, such as recognition of Israel and earlier agreements. As a result, a substantial part of the international community, especially Israel, the United States and European Union countries, refused to deal with the Hamas government and imposed sanctions. Following the abduction by Hamas militants of [Gilad Shalit](#) on 25 June 2006 in a cross-border raid via a tunnel out of Gaza, Israel detained nearly a quarter of PLC members and ministers on the West Bank during **August 2006**, intensified the boycott of Gaza and took other punitive measures.^{[24][25][26]}

HAS PALESTINIANS' PERCEPTION OF HAMAS CHANGED?

Ten months into the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, criticism on the street of the militant group Hamas appears to be growing. But gauging public opinion during a war is difficult.

[DW](#) [Tania Krämer](#) in Jerusalem 08/23/2024 August 23, 2024



Ten months into the Israel-Hamas war, there's growing criticism of the Hamas militant group Image: Abed Rahim Khat/dpa

Abeer, who asked to be identified only by her first name, is currently sheltering in the Nusseirat refugee camp in central [Gaza](#). Ten months into the war, with new cease-fire talks underway in Doha and Cairo, it is hard for Palestinians like her to know who or what to believe anymore.

"People are just very tired, exhausted and fed up with this reality. They are just hoping that the war will end and that they will announce a cease-fire," she said.

[Qatari, Egyptian and US mediators](#) are currently working on a three-phase [cease-fire agreement](#) that would include the release of some of the Israeli hostages.

The daily bombardment by the Israeli military and the almost constant search for a safe place amidst widespread destruction and constant displacement, leaves little time to think ahead. But Abeer is also angry with the militant Islamist group [Hamas](#), designated a terrorist organization by the US, Germany, the EU and others, which has ruled Gaza since 2007.



Israel-Hamas conflict: Civilians 'paying the price'

"How could I support an organization that is not trying to reach a cease-fire and end the war? They do not represent me," Abeer told DW via voice message "On a personal level, I want them to disappear, and I am not alone. Who wants to stay with a movement that is causing deaths and destroying our lives?"

There appears to be growing criticism of Hamas in Gaza, with some people even posting angry rants against the group on social media.

"There is wider criticism of Hamas, in the streets, in tents and on social media, and there are several reasons for this," journalist Fathi Sabbah told DW via voice message from Khan Younis. "The war has lasted much longer than expected and people can no longer bear the burden of the war and its devastating consequences, such as daily lack of water and electricity, high prices, lack of income and cash flow problems."

[Israel launched retaliatory attacks](#) after Hamas-led militants killed 1,200 Israelis and abducted 251 people on October 7, 2023. Last week, the war passed another grim milestone: According to the Hamas-run Health Ministry in Gaza, over 40,000 people have been killed in Gaza. More than 10,000 people are missing, most presumed dead under the ruins of destroyed homes. Large areas of Gaza have been reduced to rubble. Israel claims it has killed 17,000 militants.



Israel has ordered more people to leave certain areas in Khan Younis
Image: Habboub Ramez/ABACAI/MAGO IMAGES

DIRE LIVING CONDITIONS FOR PALESTINIANS

It remains difficult to gauge public opinion about the militant group. During 17 years of repressive rule by the de facto Hamas government, people have generally preferred to voice criticism in private for fear of reprisals.

"There were demonstrations in Gaza some months before the war. People became critical because living conditions were worsening, and they blamed Hamas for that. I imagine now there is much more criticism because of the suffering of Gazans," said Khalil Shikaki, a public opinion specialist and pollster in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

The rare protests in Gaza were often triggered by the difficult economic situation under Israel's decade long blockade of the Gaza Strip. Hamas security forces generally responded by cracking down on demonstrators, arbitrarily arresting journalists and political opponents. These crackdowns have been widely documented by Palestinian and international human rights groups.

Now, 10 months into the war, some Gaza residents are no longer holding back.

"The government and the [Hamas] organization have dragged the country into an unequal conflict," said Mahmoud, who has been displaced multiple times in the current war and is now sheltering in Deir al-Balah in central Gaza.

"For 17 years, Hamas ruled the Gaza strip, facing many social, economic and political problems, caused by the [Israeli] siege that was imposed due to Hamas' intransigence," he told DW via voice message. "This is just another disaster they have brought upon us."

There has always been both opposition to and support of Hamas's rule in Gaza. The Islamist movement seized power from the Palestinian Authority in 2007. Israel, and partly Egypt, tightened its land, sea and air blockade of Gaza, isolating the people in the tiny territory from the rest of the world for many years.



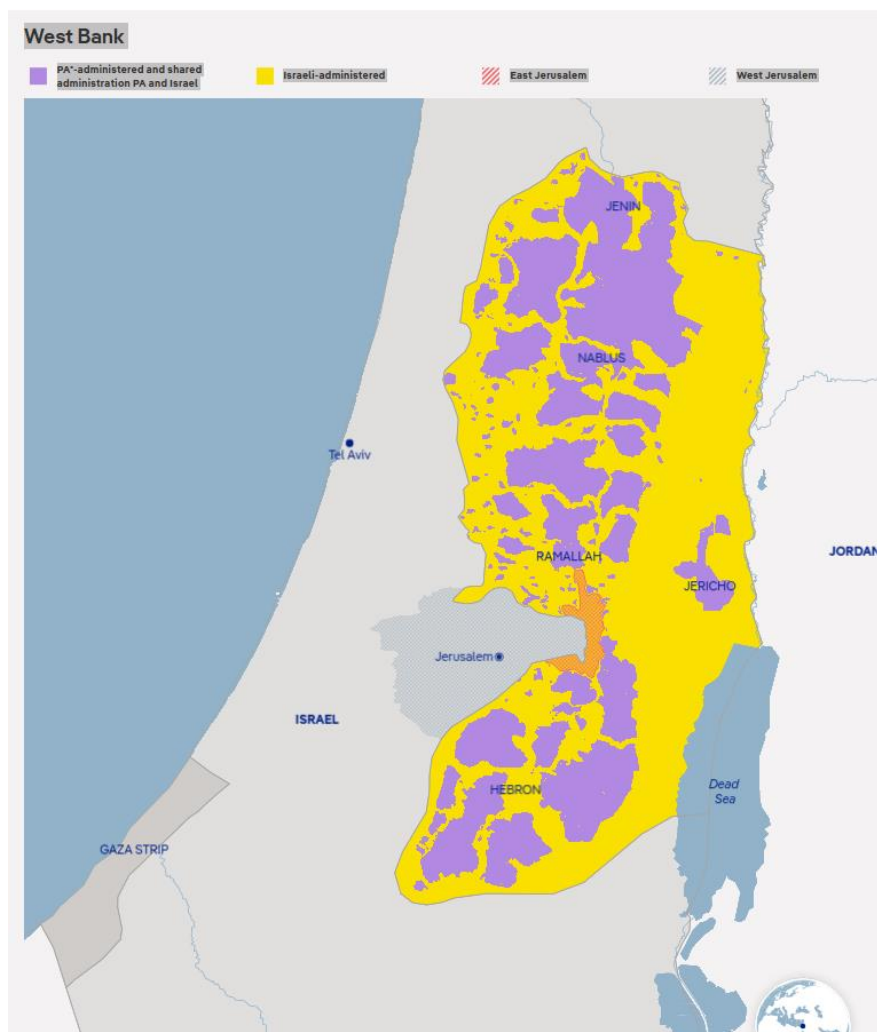
POLLSTERS PROVIDE A MIXED PICTURE

Recent opinion polls by Palestinian pollsters give a mixed picture of Hamas' standing among Gazans. The extreme situation in Gaza has made it difficult to conduct polls. Northern Gaza and areas of heavy fighting, said one pollster, are inaccessible to field researchers conducting face-to-face interviews.

In a survey published in May by the [Arab World Research and Development group](#) (AWRAD) in Ramallah, just 24% of the respondents in Gaza said they had "positive" feelings about Hamas. When asked about whether things in Palestine were heading in the right or wrong direction, 70% of Gazans said "wrong" and just 27% said "right."

In its poll, the [Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research](#) (PSR) shows more support for Hamas. In July, 38% of Gazans said that they support Hamas. According to this poll, 24% favor the secular Fatah party, while 15% support third parties, and 24% said they don't know.

In the [Israeli-occupied West Bank](#) however, Hamas has seen an increase in support. But questions about actual voting patterns remain theoretical, as the last time Palestinians were able to vote was in the 2006 legislative elections, won by Hamas. The election was almost immediately followed by international and domestic political turmoil.



Veteran Ramallah pollster Khalil Shikaki says those who supported Hamas before the war have not changed their minds. "They share Hamas basic values, they are religious, they don't believe in separation between state and religion. And these values don't change overnight," explained Shikaki. Hamas is also deeply rooted in parts of the society through its charity and social work.

Ibrahim Madhoun is an Istanbul-based Palestinian analyst considered close to Hamas. He says that Hamas is aware of the criticism, but that this is part of the struggle.

"There is no doubt that this war is heavy, destructive and catastrophic for the people of the Gaza Strip, and the [Israeli] occupation was brutal in it, and there are many voices that reject the war," said Madhoun. "Sometimes they blame the occupation and sometimes Hamas, and as long as there is war these voices will continue."



Most Palestinians say they don't want to see Hamas return to power after the war ends

Image: Hatem Khaled/REUTERS

DISPLACEMENT AND DESTRUCTION ERODE SOCIAL STRUCTURES IN GAZA

In Gaza, the war's constant displacement and widespread destruction of whole neighborhoods are eroding social, and in some areas, governing structures. In total, 86% of the Gaza Strip have come under evacuation orders by the Israeli military since October 7, [according to the UN](#). As a result, residents report that law and order have broken down in some areas. Gaza's Hamas-run police force has largely disappeared from the streets as its officers are also targeted by the Israeli military.

If a cease-fire is reached, the question remains of what comes next for Gaza.

According to [AWRAD's survey](#), 80% of the respondents in both the West Bank and Gaza want to see a Palestinian-led government. Those critical of Hamas are hoping for a change in the [political set up](#).

"People are definitely not ready to accept Hamas rule anymore," said Mahmoud from Deir al-Balah. "The biggest disaster would be for Hamas to return to power after the war."

But it remains uncertain whether the people of Gaza will have a say in their future. [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu](#) has vowed to remove Hamas from power and prevent the Palestinian Authority from returning to Gaza.

Hazem Balousha contributed reporting from Cairo.

Edited by: Rob Mudge; Carla Bleiker

PART 5 - USING FACE MASKS TO HIDE THEIR IDENTITY

FACIAL RECOGNITION PART OF ISRAEL'S ARSENAL IN GAZA WAR

MARKETPLACE [Meghan McCarty Carino](#), [Jesús Alvarado](#), and [Daniel Shin](#)

It's been six months of war in the Gaza Strip since Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7. The destruction and death have been profound, and nearly every aspect of life in the roughly 140-square-mile territory has been upended.

The New York Times recently reported that [the Israeli military is using facial recognition artificial intelligence to monitor Palestinians in Gaza](#). The government hasn't publicly acknowledged it, but reporter Sheera Frenkel spoke to Israeli intelligence officers, military officials and soldiers who confirmed that the technology is being used for mass surveillance.

Marketplace's Meghan McCarty Carino spoke with Frenkel about its role in the conflict, starting with the story of a Palestinian poet, Mosab Abu Toha, who reportedly was arrested and beaten by Israeli forces.

The following is an edited transcript of their conversation.

Sheera Frenkel: Mosab's experience seemed unfortunately quite standard for how Palestinians are suddenly finding themselves under the lens, really, of this facial recognition program. He was trying to flee with his family. His home is originally in the northernmost part of the Gaza Strip, and he was trying to leave Gaza through the southernmost part, Rafah, where if you have permission you can escape to Egypt. He was forced to pass through what was essentially a checkpoint created by Israel. They had closed off other road systems and said this particular road is safe. And they had positioned their military vehicles in such a way that you had to walk almost single file. And when they did that, they asked them to turn and face the tanks. You know, Mosab thought, oh, they're just looking for specific people. He thought maybe they had, Palestinians call it, a collaborator. What he means is they had somebody with them, another Palestinian, who was going to tell them, oh, that person's part of Hamas so that person is, you know, someone you might want to question. But actually, what they were doing was running facial recognition on every single Palestinian who was walking single file down that road and trying to figure out if they were on this database, this list of people that the Israeli army was searching for.

Meghan McCarty Carino: And he was eventually told that his detainment was a mistake. In practice, what kinds of problems come up with using this technology in that way?

Frenkel: Well, in Mosab's specific case, the mistake was actually in the intelligence that had been gathered that suggested that he was part of Hamas. According to the many Israeli intelligence officials I spoke to, there was nothing confirming his involvement in Hamas beyond being named in one single interrogation. But there are a number of mistakes that can happen along the way, as we know, from facial recognition software that's been deployed here in the United States. It's been deployed in a number of countries, it has a high error rate, and depending on the program you're using, that error rate can be anywhere between 1% and 10%. It also seems to not do as well with faces that come from more ethnically diverse backgrounds. Specifically here in America, we've seen that Black Americans are often misidentified. In other countries, it's

often minority groups that the system struggles to identify. And so it's not great at often doing the thing that these governments are using it for.

McCarty Carino: What do you know about the specific facial recognition system that is being used and what kinds of images it's relying on?

Frenkel: In Israel, they're using a couple different programs, and one is this Israeli company called Corsight. They have partnered with the Israeli army, and as we understand it, they've really sort of created a customized way for Israel to upload a database of images and quickly use AI to scan that database. If you go online, you can sort of read Corsight's executives boasting about how their technology is so good that it can be used to reveal faces even if part of the face is obscured or if a person is wearing a mask. We also know that they actually are using Google Photos. They found that Google Photos' ability to identify faces was extremely accurate. For instance, on my phone, I have the Google Photos app. I might put up all my photos there and identify one photo as my daughter. And then I'll tell Google Photos, hey, you know, please find other photos of my daughter. They're able to do that, they're able to look through all my images and find her in all these images, even if only one part of her face is in the actual photo. So they can do that with any database they're given, and we know that this is how Israel is essentially doing it. They're putting up a database of people saying this person is named such and such, please find me other photos of that person.

McCarty Carino: I mean, does that kind of use case have even more potential for bias?

Frenkel: I'm not sure. I mean, it could. I would say that it relies very heavily on the Israelis being certain on their intelligence, right? It relies very heavily on the Israelis being certain that a specific person is who they think they are and in having good intelligence for that specific person being part of Hamas or being a part of another militant group in the Gaza Strip.

McCarty Carino: This was kind of an incredible detail that one system was not found to be reliable enough so the military is also kind of cross-referencing it with a consumer photo app that is obviously not intended to be used in that way.

Frenkel: Right. I mean, I thought that was interesting as well. And ultimately, you know, it's not as though Google built this program for Israel. They are using the off-the-shelf consumer version that any of us would use. I asked repeatedly, if Corsight is not always the most accurate, why are you still using it? And the answer I got back was like, oh, well, it's good enough. And given how many Palestinians are being detained in Gaza, the idea that it would be good enough, you'd think you'd want, you know, the greatest accuracy possible. You'd want systems that could check one another. But, you know, we know that that is not what's happening there. What's happening there is that they are using this as, really, what was described to me as broadly as possible.

McCarty Carino: Israel had already been using a facial recognition system in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, right?

Frenkel: That's correct. Israel began deploying facial recognition first in West Bank cities and then in East Jerusalem. And it's used in a much more regular sort of permanent way there. In the many checkpoints that

dot the West Bank between Palestinian cities and the rest of that territory, there are fixed cameras. And it's known to Palestinians, well, when I pass through this checkpoint, this camera is going to scan my face. It's going to check if I'm wanted, it's going to check if I'm on a list of, you know, people that Israel is looking for. And so that system has been in play for a few years now.

McCarty Carino: What is unique about how it's being used in Gaza?

Frenkel: It's not done with consent. The Palestinians who are walking in these areas are doing so because they've been told this is a humanitarian corridor, this is a safe road to walk down. And actually, it's being designated as the only safe road to walk down if you're trying to reach one part of the Gaza Strip from the other. There is no process in which anyone is telling them, you know, as you walk down this road, we are scanning your faces, we are collecting facial recognition data on you. It's also being done in an interesting way in that it's being done very, very quickly. The experts I spoke to said that the fact that Israel could scan their faces and then within 10 minutes or so, under 10 minutes, have their IDs, have their full names, have quite a thorough profile on them, is very unique.

McCarty Carino: Israel is not the first country to sort of use facial recognition kind of to surveil a population like this. Can you tell me more about some of the other examples that you noted?

Frenkel: Well, my colleague Paul Mozur in 2019 [wrote about China's use of facial recognition](#). In that case, they were using facial recognition to seek out a minority Muslim population that lives in China, the Uyghurs, and the police were essentially using it to profile and just search for them. And as we know, China has been trying to suppress that population for some time. We also know that Russia and Ukraine more recently have been using it. We've heard the Ukrainian government talk about using facial recognition to identify Russian soldiers who have been killed in Ukraine. And that's actually part of their PR campaign, to let the Russian public know, hey, your soldiers are dying here. We have the names, we know who they are. And even as the Russian government tries to potentially hide how many Russian soldiers have died in Ukraine, Ukraine has been trying to identify soldiers on its own.

McCarty Carino: What are the implications of this technology sort of increasingly being used in contexts like this?

Frenkel: I think that as more countries, as more governments are willing to implement facial recognition technology, it really becomes more ubiquitous. And I would actually say my colleague Kashmir Hill wrote a really wonderful book about the expanding use of facial recognition technology. It's called "Your Face Belongs to Us." And it really looks at how much this industry has grown and how AI specifically makes this technology so much faster and so much more expansive than it's ever been.

More on this

[You can read more about](#) Israel's previous use of the technology in the West Bank and East Jerusalem as well as a report from Amnesty International [on the problems with facial recognition surveillance](#). The human rights group has been tracking instances of what it sees as troubling applications of these tools in places like Israel, India and the United States.

Of course, one of the big problems with these AI systems is their error rate, as Sheera Frenkel pointed out. Police departments in the U.S. that use these systems have made a growing number of alleged wrongful arrests.

[On the show last year](#), we spoke to an attorney who is representing a Detroit man he said was misidentified as a suspect by facial recognition AI. At the time he told us there were at least five known cases of police misidentification involving this technology and that all of the misidentified men were Black.

One of the big facial recognition companies is Clearview AI. Last year, “Marketplace” host [Kai Ryssdal](#) [talked to The New York Times’ Kashmir Hill](#) about her book on Clearview, which Frenkel referenced, called “Your Face Belongs to Us.”

PRIVATE GROUPS USE FACIAL RECOGNITION TO UNMASK ANTI-ISRAEL CAMPUS PROTESTERS FOR DEPORTATION

Amid push by Trump administration to revoke visas from foreign students involved in violence, an array of private groups are working to identify and report them to authorities

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [ADAM GELLER](#) 29 March 2025, 11:56 am



Pro-Palestinian, anti-Israel demonstrators line up across from police on University of Virginia campus in Charlottesville, Va., May 4, 2024. (Cal Cary/The Daily Progress via AP)

NEW YORK (AP) — When a protester was caught on video in January at a New York rally against Israel, only her eyes were visible between a mask and headscarf. But days later, photos of her entire face, along with her name and employer, were circulated online.

“Months of them hiding their faces went down the drain!” a fledgling technology company boasted in a social media post, claiming its facial-recognition tool had identified the woman despite the coverings.

She was anything but a lone target. The same software was also used to review images taken during months of pro-Palestinian, anti-Israel marches at US colleges. A right-wing Jewish group said some people identified with the tool were on a list of names it submitted to US President Donald Trump’s administration, urging that they be deported in accordance with his call for the expulsion of foreign students who participated in “pro-jihadist” protests.

Bomb shelters make good neighborsKeep Watching

Many of the protests saw open support for Hamas, the US-proscribed terror group that sparked the Gaza war with the October 7, 2023 onslaught in southern Israel that killed some 1,200 people, most of them civilians, and saw another 251 taken hostage into Gaza. Many of the protests have also veered into open antisemitism and seen Jewish students targeted on campuses.

Other pro-Israel groups have enlisted help from supporters on campuses, urging them to report foreign students who participated in the protests against the war in Gaza to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency.

The push to identify masked protesters using facial recognition and turn them in is blurring the line between public law enforcement and private groups. And the efforts have stirred anxiety among foreign students worried that activism could jeopardize their legal status.

“It’s a very concerning practice. We don’t know who these individuals are or what they’re doing with this information,” said Abed Ayoub, national executive director of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. “Essentially, the administration is outsourcing surveillance.”



Protesters attend a demonstration in support of Palestinian activist Mahmoud Khalil, March 10, 2025, in New York. (AP Photo/Yuki Iwamura)

It’s unclear whether names from outside groups have reached top government officials. But concern about the pursuit of activists has risen since the March 8 arrest of Mahmoud Khalil, a Columbia University graduate student of Palestinian descent who helped lead demonstrations against Israel’s conduct of the war.

Immigration officers also detained a Tufts University student from Turkey outside Boston this week, and Trump and other officials have said that more arrests of international students are coming.

“Now they’re using tools of the state to actually go after people,” said a Columbia graduate student from South Asia who has been active in protests and spoke on condition of anonymity because of concerns about losing her visa. “We suddenly feel like we’re being forced to think about our survival.”

Uncertainty about the consequences

Ayoub said he is concerned, in part, that groups bent on exposing pro-Palestinian, anti-Israel activists will make mistakes and single out students who did nothing wrong.

But groups pushing for deportations say their focus is on students whose actions go beyond marching in protests, to those taking over campus buildings and inciting violence against Jewish students.

“If you’re here, right, on a student visa causing civil unrest ... assaulting people on the streets, chanting for people’s death, why the heck did you come to this country?” said Eliyahu Hawila, a software engineer who built the tool designed to identify masked protesters and outed the woman at the January rally.

He has forwarded protesters’ names to groups pressing for them to be deported, disciplined, fired or otherwise punished.



Eliyahu Hawila, a software engineer, tinkers with the coding of a facial-recognition program he wrote to identify masked protesters in New York on March 7, 2025. (AP Photo/Adam Geller)

“If we want to argue that this is freedom of speech and they can say it, fine, they can say it,” Hawila said. “But that doesn’t mean that you will escape the consequences of society after you say it.”

Pro-Israel groups that circulated the protester’s photo claim that she was soon fired by her employer. An employee who answered the phone at the company confirmed that the woman had not worked there since early this year. In a brief phone conversation, the protester, who has not been charged with any wrongdoing, declined to comment on the advice of an attorney.

Calls to report students to the government

The unearthing and spreading of personal information to harass opponents has become commonplace in the uproar over the war in Gaza. The practice, known as doxing, has been used to expose both activists in the US and Israeli soldiers who recorded video of themselves on the battlefield.

But the use of facial-recognition technology by private groups enters territory previously reserved largely for law enforcement, said attorney Sejal Zota, who represents a group of California activists in a lawsuit against facial recognition company ClearviewAI.

“We’re focused on government use of facial recognition because that’s who we think of as traditionally tracking and monitoring dissent,” Zota said. But “there are now all of these groups who are sort of complicit in that effort.”

The calls to report protesters to immigration authorities have raised the stakes.

“Please tell everyone you know who is at a university to file complaints about foreign students and faculty who support Hamas,” Elizabeth Rand, president of a group called Mothers Against Campus Antisemitism, said in a Jan. 21 post to more than 60,000 followers on Facebook. It included a link to an ICE tip line.

Rand’s post was one of several publicized by New York University’s chapter of the American Association of University Professors. Rand did not respond to messages seeking comment. NYU has dismissed criticism that she had any influence with its administrators.

Advertisement



People hold signs as they protest the arrest of former Columbia University anti-Israel student activist Mahmoud Khalil during a ‘Fight for Our Rights’ demonstration at the University of Washington campus in Seattle, Washington, March 15, 2025. (Jason Redmond / AFP)

In early February, messages from a different group were posted in an online chat group frequented by Israelis living in New York.

“Do you know students at Columbia or any other university who are here on a study visa and participated in demonstrations against Israel?” one message said in Hebrew. “If so, now is our time!”

An accompanying message in English by the group End Jew Hatred included a link to the ICE hotline. The group did not respond to requests for comment.

Facial recognition looms over protests

Weeks before Khalil’s arrest, a spokesman for right-wing Jewish group Betar said the activist topped a list of foreign students and faculty from nine universities it submitted to officials, including then-incoming Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who made the decision to revoke Khalil’s visa.

Rubio was asked this week how the names of students targeted for visa revocation were reaching his desk and whether colleges or outside groups were providing information. He declined to answer.

“We’re not going to talk about the process by which we’re identifying it because obviously we’re looking for more people,” he told reporters late Thursday during the return flight from a diplomatic trip to Suriname.

In a one-sentence statement, the Department of Homeland Security, which includes ICE, said the immigration agency is not “working with” Betar, nor has it received any hotline tips from the group. But DHS declined to answer specific questions from The Associated Press about how it was treating reports from outside groups or the usage of facial recognition.



Hundreds of people gather in Somerville, Massachusetts, on March 26, 2025, to demand the release of Rumeysa Ozturk, a Turkish student at Tufts University, who was arrested by federal agents. (AP Photo/Michael Casey)

Betar spokesman Daniel Levy said that some people on its list were identified using the facial-recognition tool called NesherAI created by Hawila’s company, Stellar Technologies, which was launched from his Brooklyn apartment. The software takes its name from the Hebrew word for “eagle.”

Demonstrating the software for a reporter recently, Hawila paused repeatedly to tweak computer code to account for what he said was the just-completed ingestion of thousands of additional photos scraped from social media accounts.

After some delay, the software matched a screenshot of a fully masked protester — seen on video confronting Hawila at a recent march — with publicity photos of a woman who described herself online as a New York artist. He said he would report her to the police for assault.

Hawila, a native of Lebanon, [is no stranger to controversy](#). He was the subject of news stories in 2021 when, after marrying an ultra-orthodox woman in New York, he was confronted with accusations that he lied about being Jewish. Religious authorities have since confirmed that his mother was Jewish and certified his faith, he said.

Hawila said he no longer works directly with Betar but continues to share protesters’ names with it and other pro-Israel groups and said he has discussed licensing his software to some of them. He showed an email exchange with one group that appeared to confirm such contact.

“Technology, when used in good ways, makes the world a better place,” he said.

Trump promised to crack down during campaign

As a candidate, Trump campaigned on a promise to crack down on campus antisemitism and threatened to deport activists with student visas that he called violent radicals.

Soon after the election, Betar claimed on social media that it was working to identify and report international student protesters to the incoming administration.

“Entire university departments have been corrupted by jihadis,” Levy said in a recent e-mail exchange with the AP.

Days before his arrest, Khalil said in an interview that he was aware of Betar’s call for his deportation and that it and other groups were trying to use him as a “scapegoat.”

Students protesting Israel’s conduct in Gaza have been unsure what to make of Betar, which the Anti-Defamation League recently added to its list of extremist groups. The ADL has also voiced support for revoking the visas of foreign student activists.

At the University of Pittsburgh, leaders of Students for Justice in Palestine said they spoke with police in November after an online message from Betar that said it would be visiting the school to “give you beepers” — an apparent reference to Israel’s detonation of thousands of electronic pagers last fall to kill and wound members of Lebanon’s Hezbollah.

Ross Glick, who was Betar’s executive director at the time, said that the message was “a tongue-in-cheek dark joke,” not a threat.

Both sides said police eventually decided no action was warranted. Months later, Betar said that Pitt students were among those on its deportation list.

Students dependent on visas fear being targeted

The efforts to target protesters have fueled anxiety among international students involved in campus activism.

“They’ve abducted someone on our campus, and that is a key source of our fear,” said the Columbia student from South Asia.

She recounted cancelling spring break plans to travel to Canada, where her husband lives, for fear she would not be allowed to reenter the US. She has also shut down her social media accounts to avoid drawing attention to pro-Palestinian posts.

And, because her apartment is off campus, she said she offered accommodation to other international students who live in university housing and are wary of visits by immigration officers.



Activists don keffiyehs as students and faculty of Drexel University and University of Pennsylvania erect an encampment to protest against Israel amid the war with Hamas in Gaza at the University of Pennsylvania campus in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on April 25, 2024.

(Matthew Hatcher / AFP)

Leaders of Students for Justice in Palestine chapters at George Washington University and Pittsburgh said some international students have asked to have their email addresses and names removed from membership lists to avoid scrutiny.

A Columbia graduate student from the United Kingdom said that when he joined a pro-Palestinian encampment last year, he never considered whether it might affect his immigration status.

Now he's rethinking an incident in October, when someone scattered fliers in a campus lounge celebrating the 2023 Hamas attack on Israel that sparked the war. A classmate who supports Israel accused him and others in the room of being responsible for the fliers and snapped their photos, according to the student, who said he had nothing to do with the material distributed.

"My main worry ... is that he shared those photos and identified us and shared it with a larger group of people," the student said.

Other students have been dismayed by an atmosphere that encourages students to inform on their classmates.

"It really bothered me because this cultivates this environment of reporting on each other. It kind of gives memories of dictatorship and autocratic regimes," said Sahar Bostock, who was among a group of Israeli students at Columbia who wrote an open letter criticizing efforts to report pro-Palestinian protesters.

"I had to say, 'Do you think this is right?'"

Times of Israel Staff contributed to this report

THE TROUBLE WITH PROTEST MASK CHIC

THE SPECTATOR Patrick West 12 October 2024

We in Britain have become used to the hallmarks of anti-Israeli protests. There are the slogans decrying 'genocide'. There are chants in sympathy of terrorist organisations. There's the explicit or insinuated anti-semitism. But one sinister feature making its transition across the Atlantic is the appearance of the face mask.

Footage widely circulated online this week showed an Israeli supporter in New York being attacked by a pro-Palestine activist, who proceeded to stamp and spit on the Israeli flag while shouting profanities. Nothing new here, you might say. It's all part of the vitriol we expect these days, even on the first anniversary of that terrible [massacre](#) in Israel. Video footage of pro-Palestinian campaigners shoving phones in the face of another Israeli supporter in New York and shouting abuse at him are also unlikely to surprise many. Sadly, these scenes from the United States are routinely repeated throughout the West.

What is disquieting in its apparent novelty, however, is that many of these assailants had their faces covered. Troublingly, the spectacle in New York of masked agitators threatening or performing violent acts, has been repeated across North America.

The trend among far-left radicals for sporting face masks is well-established in the US, the disguise being a must-have accessory for Antifa campaigners with a penchant for creating mayhem. So it's only logical that face covering is becoming common in anti-Israeli protests that are growing in similar vehemence and fury. Logical, too, that they are starting to crop up over here.

In anti-Western protests this year, masks have started to be seen in Britain. *Jewish News* reporter Lee Harpin saw several on display at a demonstration in London's Russell Square last Saturday. They may not yet be as common as they are stateside, but knowing our proclivity to import the worst aspects of US radical politics, it would only seem a matter of time before they are.

Wearing a face mask in public became normalised, of course, during the pandemic and lockdown years of 2020-21, years that also saw the swell of radical agitation and Black Lives Matter protests. The two phenomena taken together, it no longer became deemed strange to go on large demonstrations, chant divisive and inflammatory slogans, all the while having one's face covered. A dangerous bar had been lowered.

For anti-Israeli activists and anti-Western poseurs, it's also convenient that today's radical chic accessory, the keffiyeh, can be employed to conceal one's face and therefore one's identity. Among demonstrators, there's not just the logistical imperative behind hiding one's face, the fear of facing prosecution from the law, of landing oneself in trouble at work should one's behaviour be caught on camera, or even having your parents catch you in the act. There is the aura of danger, the frisson of excitement, that comes with donning a face mask.

Most popular

[Jonathan Sacerdoti](#) **We need an inquiry into BBC Arabic**



It is the perfect expression of radical chic, performative politics as fashion. If in the form of banners proclaiming 'I Love Hezbollah' – as seen again in London the other day – we have the articulation of terrorist chic, then in the face mask we have the embodiment of bandit chic.

The fashion for posturing against the West as an extended form of teenage rebellion is nothing new. Jane Fonda did so famously during the Vietnam War; and it was Tom Wolfe who, in turn, coined the phrase 'radical chic' in 1970. Dressing up in foreign garb, embracing the exotic 'other', is also a long-established weakness of indulged Westerners who seek to turn their back on their own culture (how ironic that many pro-Palestinian sympathisers are now indulging in their own brand of 'Orientalism').

Most of today's belligerent anti-Western agitators are young. And while youthful politics have forever been prone to performative, radical chic, now they are reaching their apex in an era of shallow, shouty online self-regard.

Online discourse, which determines so much of the nature of politics in the real world, is given to exaggeration and hyperbole. This is the nature of a medium in which each participant clamours for ever-more hits and 'likes', and does so through upping the ante, by making increasingly outrageous and outlandish claims. This is why youthful politics today is both so vociferous and vacuous. It's about posing and seeking attention. It's what happens when the political is reduced to the personal.

The face mask as a political accessory is a threat to law and order. Those who wear it want to be seen as dangerous, radical and interesting. They are none of those things. Protest mask chic on the streets of London is one US import we could all do without.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY CALLS IN POLICE AFTER ANTI-ISRAEL ACTIVISTS INVADE LIBRARY

**Demonstrators call for an 'intifada revolution,' disrupting studies before finals week,
as the Ivy league school grapples with pressure from Trump administration**

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Luke Tress](#) 8 May 2025



Anti-Israel protesters take over Columbia University's Butler Library before getting removed by police,
on May 7, 2025, in New York City.

(X; used in accordance with Clause 27a of the Copyright Law/Anusha Subramanian via Reuters)

NEW YORK — Columbia University called in police to arrest anti-Israel demonstrators on Wednesday after the activists reignited campus protests with an invasion of the main university library.

The renewed protest came amid heavy federal scrutiny of the university by the Trump administration and took place immediately before final exams.

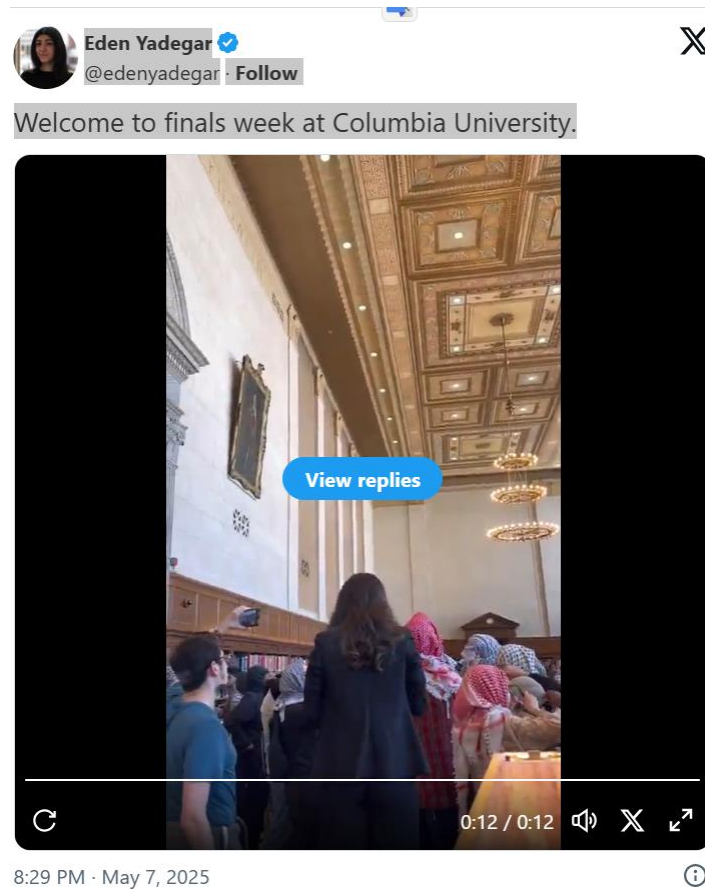
The campus coalition of protest groups, Columbia University Apartheid Divest, sent out a video of the protest on Telegram late Wednesday afternoon.

The clip showed masked protesters chanting “Free Palestine” to the beat of a drum, led by a demonstrator standing on a table. The group shared [photos](#) of vandalism inside the library, including graffiti that said, “We will always come back for Palestine.” In the past, the group has voiced [open support for violence](#) and terror groups.

In an emailed statement, the group said it had “flooded” the library.

“The flood shows that as long as Columbia funds and profits from imperialist violence, the people will continue to disrupt Columbia’s profits and legitimacy. Repression breeds resistance,” the statement said.

The protesters issued demands, including “full financial divestment from Zionist occupation, apartheid and genocide,” a boycott of “complicit institutions,” and amnesty for all students and staff “targeted” with disciplinary procedures.



[Video](#) shared by Jewish students showed masked protesters [shoving past a security guard](#), filing into a library room and putting on keffiyehs while chanting, “There is only one solution, intifada revolution.”

Campus officials told the protesters that they needed to show their student identification cards to leave the building.

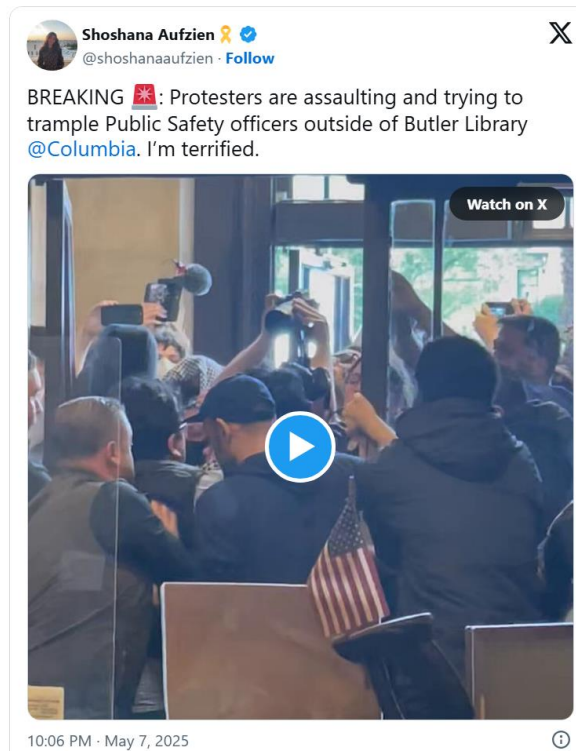
“If you fail to do so you will be arrested,” a public safety officer told demonstrators through a megaphone, video showed.

“We are asking you to please leave,” he said, drawing angry shouts of “let us go” from protesters.

The university said in a statement that the protesters had taken over a library reading room.

“These disruptions of our campus and academic activities will not be tolerated. Individuals found to be in violation of University Rules and policies will face disciplinary consequences,” the statement said.

During the standoff between the protesters and campus security, other activists attempted to force their way into the building, injuring two university safety officers, acting Columbia President Claire Shipman said in a statement.



One Jewish student posted a video of individuals blocking his access to the library, and saying, "Don't let this guy in. He's a fucking Zionist."

Shipman said the university called in police because the situation was unsafe and the administration believed many individuals were on site who were not affiliated with the university. Within Our Lifetime, the leading anti-Israel protest group in the city, had sent out a message to its followers urging them to rally at the campus, which is closed to the public, and held a march in the area.

"Requesting the presence of the NYPD is not the outcome we wanted, but it was absolutely necessary to secure the safety of our community," Shipman said. "Disruptions to our academic activities will not be tolerated."

Footage from the scene showed police leading a line of handcuffed, masked protesters out of the building.



New York leaders condemned the demonstration, while backing the right to peaceful protest.

New York City Mayor Eric Adams voiced support for Jewish New Yorkers.

“To parents of students protesting: call your children and make clear that breaking the law is wrong,” Adams added. “We will not tolerate hate or violence.”

New York Governor Kathy Hochul said in a statement, “Everyone has the right to peacefully protest. But violence, vandalism or destruction of property are completely unacceptable.”

The NYPD confirmed on Wednesday night that protesters had been taken into custody, but did not yet have information on the number of arrests or charges.

The university’s response was a stark contrast to last year, when protesters set up an unauthorized encampment on the university lawn. The administration at the time negotiated with the demonstrators, and only called in police weeks later after the protesters smashed their way into a campus building.

Jewish students and faculty voiced support for the university’s response.

“Strong words and action from Columbia,” Brian Cohen, the head of Columbia’s Kraft Center for Jewish Student Life, said on X. “I appreciate all that President Shipman and the Public Safety team did to restore order at Butler Library.”

Wednesday’s takeover occurred during days set aside for studying ahead of the university’s final exams next week.

The university commencement is scheduled for May 21. Last year’s commencement was canceled due to protests.

WITNESSES SAY THE ISRAELI ARMY IS USING FACIAL RECOGNITION TECHNOLOGY IN ITS ASSAULT ON NORTH GAZA

Witness testimony from northern Gaza shows that Israel is using facial recognition technology to organize how it conducts mass arrests and forcible displacement.

Some Palestinians say the technology is also being used to carry out field executions.

MONDOWEISS By **Tareq S. Hajjaj** October 31, 2024 [16](#)



Displaced Palestinians ordered by the Israeli military to evacuate the northern part of Gaza flee amid an Israeli military operation in Jabalia, October 25, 2024.

(Photo: © Mahmoud Issa/Quds Net News via ZUMA Press Wire/APA Images)

Ishaaq al-Daour, 32, was sheltering with his family at the UN-run Abu Hussein School in Jabalia refugee camp when the Israeli army stormed the shelter on October 20, forcing over 700 hundred people out of the school and leading them into a large ditch that had been dug in advance by the military.

“They made all of the men go down into the ditch first,” al-Daour told *Mondoweiss* from the Remal neighborhood in Gaza City. “Then they ordered us to climb out of the ditch one by one and stood each of us in front of a camera that had been installed nearby.”

The army made the men stand in front of the “camera” for at least three minutes per person, al-Daour said, long enough for the cameras to scan their faces and reveal personal data seemingly already stored in the Israeli military’s system. After the scans, al-Daour said the soldiers would reveal information about each individual, including their “name, age, work, family members and names, place of residence, and even their personal activities.”

“When they suspected someone, they took him away [to an unknown location]” al-Daour said. As for those who had relatives who belonged to Palestinian resistance movements or who personally belonged to

resistance factions, al-Daour speculated that “their fate was immediate death,” citing stories he had heard from others in Gaza, whose friends and relatives were taken at checkpoints and had not been seen again, or who returned to Gaza in body bags.

Al-Daour is one of the thousands of people who were expelled from the Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza and ordered to move south at gunpoint by the Israeli army. The forced exodus of thousands out of Jabalia is part of an Israeli offensive on northern Gaza that started on October 5. Its objective is to implement a proposal put forward by a group of senior Israeli generals that aims to empty northern Gaza of its inhabitants through starvation and bombardment, the so-called “[Generals’ Plan](#).”

Survivors from Jabalia like al-Daour report that the Israeli army is using facial recognition technology to screen residents in the ongoing assault, often identifying people from long distances and picking them out from a crowd.

Witnesses say that the Israeli army has set up security checkpoints throughout northern Gaza where the facial recognition technology is being deployed. The military is also reportedly using this technology when it storms shelters for the displaced. Witnesses report that in these cases Israeli forces will corral people in enclosed places, usually ditches dug by military bulldozers, and process them individually.



A crowd of Palestinians holding up their ID cards are forced to pass through an Israeli army checkpoint near Jabalia at gunpoint. (Photo: Social Media)

Mondoweiss spoke to several survivors from Jabalia, who said that the Israeli army is using quadcopter drones to “identify people immediately from a distance,” and that soldiers are stopping people at checkpoints to conduct “camera scans” that lasts for several minutes. Witnesses say these were particularly unnerving as they stood awaiting an uncertain fate. Witnesses also report that the army picked people out of a crowd at checkpoints using what they described as a “red laser pointer” that was either mounted on a tank or on a soldier’s rifle.

Witnesses told *Mondoweiss* that after the army scans people’s faces, most people are detained for field interrogations. During these encounters, soldiers use what Ishaq al-Daour describe as “psychological tactics” to unsettle the people being questioned, claiming that they know everything about their lives and that if they lie in their answers, “they will be killed.”

The questions are typically wide-ranging, al-Daour said. “They ask us about our relatives, our neighbors, the movements of the resistance fighters on the ground, who we know from them, and who they are. They convince us that they already know everything about us by mentioning intimate details about our lives, and then they threaten us with killing if we lie.”

ISRAEL’S USE OF FACIAL RECOGNITION THROUGHOUT THE WAR

While *Mondoweiss* could not independently verify the nature of the “cameras” being described by witnesses, the use of facial scanning and facial recognition technology by the Israeli army has been well documented.

Facial recognition technology used by Israel pulls from a database of information about Palestinians that has been built up over the years, including on Palestinians in the West Bank. One of those databases is called Wolf Pack, which [according to Amnesty International](#), contains extensive information on Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, “including where they live, who their family members are, and whether they are wanted for questioning by Israeli authorities.”

In the old city of Hebron in the southern West Bank, Israeli surveillance cameras use a facial recognition system called Red Wolf on Palestinians who pass through checkpoints in the city. “Their face is scanned, without their knowledge or consent, and compared with biometric entries in databases which exclusively contain information about Palestinians,” Amnesty described in a May 2023 report.

It is unclear whether the facial recognition technology used throughout the ongoing assault on northern Gaza is the Red Wolf system or the other systems that the Israeli army has been reported to have used throughout the war on Gaza. In March, the [New York Times reported](#) that Israel’s cyber-intelligence division Unit 8200 used facial recognition technology developed by Corsight, an Israeli company, in combination with Google Photos. Together, these technologies enabled “Israel to pick faces out of crowds and grainy drone footage,” the *Times* said.

Likewise, it’s unclear whether these facial recognition systems are drawing upon data from Wolf Pack or another Israeli database, but media attention has recently focused on how that data is being processed and generated through a number of controversial AI programs to identify potential targets. Programs like

“[Lavender](#),” “[The Gospel](#),” and “Where’s Daddy” have pushed [Human Rights Watch](#) to warn against their use of “faulty data and inexact approximations to inform military actions.” Several [media exposés have also shown](#) how some of these AI systems loosely identify civilians as targets for assassination or alert the Israeli army to target members of Hamas when they are with their families.

Testimonies gathered by *Mondoweiss* for this report and in [previous reporting](#) confirm that the brutal Israeli invasion in northern Gaza is utilizing these technologies as a means of organizing how it conducts mass arrests, field executions, and ethnic cleansing.

‘IT WAS THE MOST TERRIFYING MOMENT IN MY LIFE’

Hiba al-Fram is one of the displaced people who passed through the army’s checkpoints during the Jabalia invasion. She says she was subjected to a facial and retinal scan, an experience she described as terrifying.

“Everyone was standing in the line, men and women, and everyone held up their IDs in their hands. Soldiers were using lasers to check our ID cards from a distance before we reached them,” she told *Mondoweiss*. *Mondoweiss* could not confirm what lasers the military was using.

Al-Fram said that the army picked people out of the queue using a “laser” pointer affixed to a tank. She described the army shining the laser on the ID cards and calling on people to advance towards the checkpoint, where the soldiers set up a camera.

“The soldiers arrested over 100 men in front of my eyes; they arrested them in front of their wives, and they were beating them, cursing them, and threatening to kill them and their families. Many wives saw their husbands in this situation.”

“The soldiers were telling the women: ‘We will kill you by a sniper bullet, we will run over your skulls with tanks, we will stone you to death, we will make you bleed to death,’” al-Fram continued. “The women were terrified and thought they would be killed.”

Then, the soldiers would gather five women at a time and walk them to a security check or a scan of the face or eye. “They arrested two women in front of me from the crowd based on their face scans. People later said they were relatives of people known to be members of armed factions, but they were women. They were carrying children.”

“The soldiers ordered them to give their children to other women. The mothers started to panic like crazy. They looked around frantically for any woman they knew to give their children to,” al-Fram continued.

“We would walk towards the face-scanning point in utter terror in our hearts, walking between dozens of tanks and soldiers pointing their weapons at us. And we would stand there for 3 or 5 minutes. They were the worst minutes of my life. A person’s fate was decided based on that scan: either arrest, beating and humiliation, or release them and force them to leave towards the south.”

After the soldiers take the face scan, the questions about neighbors and relatives begin. “They asked us where they are, where we can find them, when we last saw them. We did not know anything about these details, so we did not lie when we said we did not know. They would threaten us that if we lied, they would uncover the lie and shoot us immediately.”

Of all the terrifying moments experienced by residents of northern Gaza, many say that they experienced their most terrifying moments when they were stopped at an Israeli checkpoint.

“The most terrifying and frightening moments were the moments when you stand in front of the camera to get your face scanned,” Abdul Karim al-Zuwaidi, a journalist in northern Gaza, told *Mondoweiss*.

Before al-Zuwaidi reached the facial recognition point on his way toward Gaza City, he saw many young men being arrested by the army. As a Palestinian journalist working in the Gaza Strip, he like many of his colleagues is at particular risk of being targeted.

“The minutes we stand in front of the camera feel like years,” al-Zuwaidi said. “As a journalist conveying our message to the world, I was terrified.”

Al-Zuwaidi said that during their march south, many Jabalia residents would attempt to avoid upcoming checkpoints, often to no avail. “We had heard the stories about the checkpoints and how they were arresting people, so we tried in whatever way possible to avoid passing through them, but there was no way of escaping.”

“When we are examined, and the scan shows that one of us will be arrested, the soldiers start beating and cursing them before they take them away and they disappear. We saw this scene play out in front of us for dozens of young men.” Al-Zuwaidi did not see himself what information was revealed to the soldiers by the scans, but he said the soldiers would repeat aloud what details they were seeing on their screens, including peoples’ personal information, names, relatives, and more.

While people were waiting for the scan, al-Zuwaidi said that soldiers would curse at and beat the young men. The army severely beat al-Zuwaidi while he was standing and waiting for his turn. “They were dirty in their treatment of us,” he said. “But what can we say in response to a military armed with all these weapons and ready to kill?”

“They used every humiliating method against ordinary people,” he added.

Tareq S. Hajjaj

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PART 6

HAMAS - DIPLOMACY AND CONFLICT

HAMAS DIPLOMACY: FROM HANIYEH TO SINWAR

[THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY](#) Aaron Y Zelin Aug 28 2024

The group has sought to build legitimacy and prepare for a postwar role in Gaza by engaging with various countries since October, but the death of Ismail Haniyeh will complicate those efforts.

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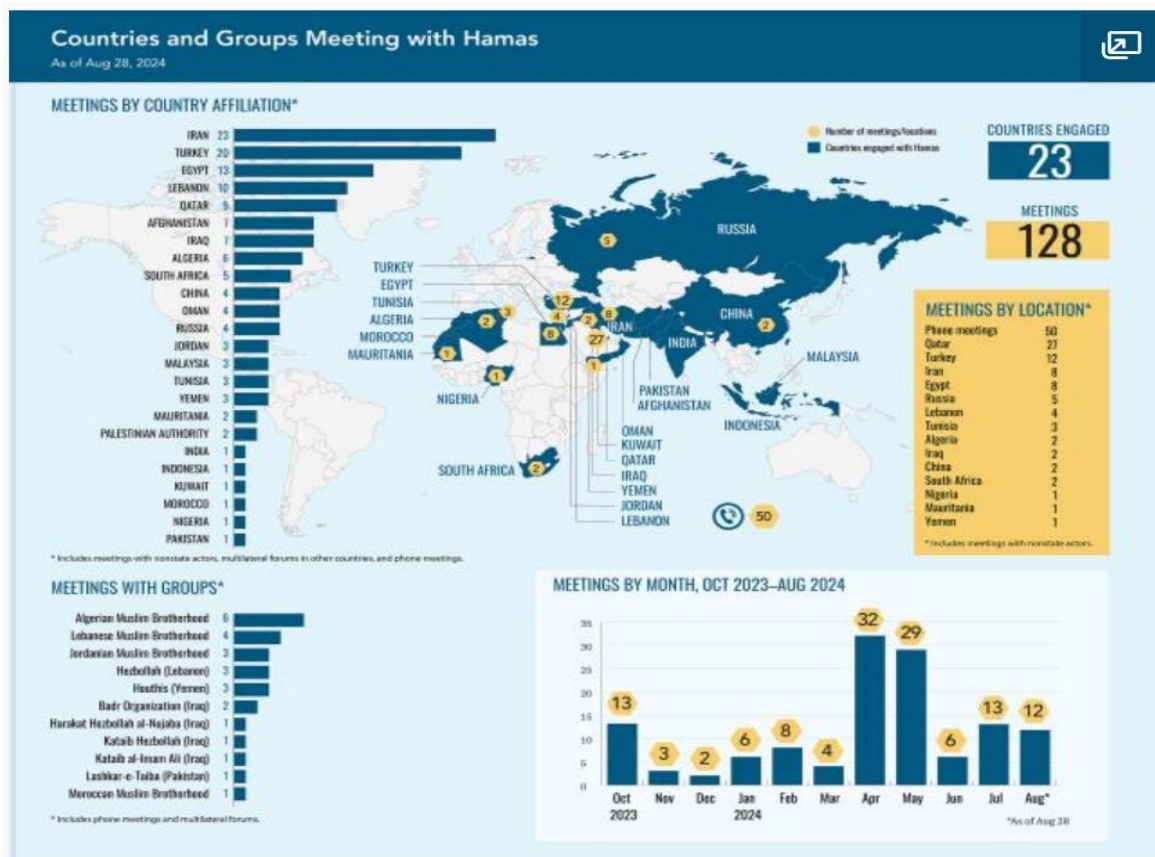
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After conducting the world's largest terrorist attack since 9/11 and sparking a tragically destructive war in Gaza, Hamas has spent months conducting a diplomatic campaign to garner support and gain political cover on the world stage. These efforts increase the chances that the group will remain a key actor in the Palestinian arena after the war, potentially undermining Israel's pledge to eradicate or at least defang it. Yet the recent assassination of Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh—who took part in nearly three-fourths of its diplomatic engagements during the war—will likely complicate its future charm offensives.



WHO IS MEETING WITH HAMAS?

Since the October 7 attack, Hamas has regularly promoted its diplomatic meetings with foreign officials, political parties, local NGOs, and other groups via its official Telegram channels and website. As of August

28, it had engaged in 128 such meetings either in person or via phone (or 134 if one includes each country's presence at a multilateral engagement). Twenty-three countries were involved in these meetings, whether in the form of government officials, political parties, or nonstate actors that operate within their borders. In contrast, Hamas had only 37 diplomatic engagements in the year prior to the October 7 attacks, meaning it is on pace for a fivefold annual increase.

All of Hamas' encounters served various purposes: congratulating Hamas for the October 7 attack, publicly supporting its claims, as well as calling for an end to Israel's military campaign, greater humanitarian access to Gaza, and a ceasefire agreement. In other cases, Hamas appeared to avoid heavily publicizing certain engagements due to apparent political sensitivities—for example, when it [opened](#) a political office in Iraq in June or [met with](#) the Pakistani terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba in August.

Unsurprisingly, the meetings also show that Iran is the group's biggest diplomatic backer, not just its main military patron. The Islamic Republic was the first country to congratulate Hamas on the October 7 attack and has steadfastly supported it via numerous phone conversations and in-person meetings in Tehran and Qatar. Among other issues, the two allies have discussed broad strategic matters and specific responses to Israel's actions in Gaza and regionally.

Elsewhere, Qatar and Turkey have served as key venues for supporting Hamas diplomacy. Doha also provides a safe space for the group to meet with other Palestinian militants fighting Israel, most recently hosting talks between members of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad on August 22. Egypt has played an important role in Hamas diplomacy as well—but as an intermediary in negotiations with Israel, not as an ally of the group.

In other countries, Hamas has often met with a range of actors, from elected officials and groups that have representation in the government to designated terrorist groups (in some cases, all of these labels apply). For example, meetings in Iraq and Lebanon have included the Badr Organization, Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, Kataib Hezbollah, Kataib al-Imam Ali, Lebanese Hezbollah, and the [Lebanese Muslim Brotherhood](#) (notably, most of these groups are backed by Iran). In Jordan and Morocco, Hamas did not meet with royal officials, just members of local Muslim Brotherhood branches (which hold parliamentary seats). In Pakistan and Yemen, it only engaged with Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Houthis, respectively.

Beyond its traditional allies, Hamas has also engaged politicians and civil society actors in various parts of Africa to garner greater international support:

- During a week-long diplomatic marathon in Algiers this February, Hamas described meeting with “thirty political parties and ten associations, and holding meetings with media outlets and Algerian notables.”
- In Tunis, Hamas participated in group forums in January and May while meeting with political actors and unions across the spectrum, from leftists to Islamist factions like Ennahda.
- In Mauritania, Hamas leader Khaled Mashal gave a speech at a November festival in support of the Palestinian cause.
- In Nigeria, Hamas conducted a four-day visit in February that included meeting with political officials and religious actors to explain the situation in Gaza.

- In South Africa, Hamas officials conducted multiple trips to Cape Town, Durban, Pretoria, and Johannesburg, meeting with various political actors (e.g., the African National Congress), local NGOs, and religious figures. The aim of these visits was twofold: to share details on the Gaza war, and to link the group's cause to South Africa's experience under apartheid. In April, Haniyeh met with Nelson Mandela's grandson—Zweliwile "Mandla" Mandela, a convert to Islam—in Istanbul to further link their causes.

Notably, a large proportion of the group's diplomatic meetings in recent years have been conducted by phone rather than in person (e.g., 40 percent during the war, 33 percent the previous year). Although the restrictions on travel to or from Gaza may partially explain this trend (especially during wartime), it also suggests that questions persist about the group's legitimacy. Despite its claims to the contrary, Hamas is not the officially recognized leader of the Palestinian national movement; that role still belongs to Fatah via the Palestinian Authority. In contrast, another nationally focused jihadist actor—the Taliban's Islamic Emirate—[conducts](#) most of its diplomacy in person and inside its territory, despite lacking formal UN recognition as the government of Afghanistan. The differences are clear: the Taliban controls all of Afghanistan, has a monopoly over national politics, and is not restricted by a de facto blockade on its territory.

Thus, even as Hamas measurably expands its diplomatic activity during the war, there remains a ceiling on how far this engagement can potentially go for now. Haniyeh's death will likely lower this ceiling, and quite literally—his role as head of the Hamas Political Bureau has been taken over by military commander Yahya al-Sinwar, who continues to prosecute the war from bunkers and tunnels beneath Gaza.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

In addition to meetings abroad, Hamas has sought to sway public opinion about the October 7 attack in writing, most prominently with a January publication it titled "This Is Our Narrative: Why al-Aqsa Flood?" This document attempts to justify the group's mass murder of civilians and underplay its involvement in rape and other war crimes. To make sure the message reached as large an audience as possible, Hamas promptly translated the document from Arabic to English, French, Farsi, Russian, Malay, Urdu, Chinese, Turkish, and Spanish.

The group has also attempted to situate itself as the sole voice on Palestine, in part by praising countries for taking actions it perceives as beneficial to the Palestinian cause. For example, Hamas has:

- Thanked the [African Union](#) and [Arab League](#) for backing its struggle;
- Thanked [Armenia](#), [the Bahamas](#), [Ireland](#), [Norway](#), [Slovenia](#), [Spain](#), and [Trinidad and Tobago](#) for recognizing a Palestinian state post-October 7;
- Praised [Bolivia](#), [Brazil](#), [Chad](#), [Chile](#), [Colombia](#), [Honduras](#), [South Africa](#), and [Turkey](#) for breaking ties with Israel post-October 7;
- Congratulated [South Africa](#) for opening a "genocide" case against Israel at the International Court of Justice, and praised [Egypt](#), [Libya](#), [Spain](#), and [Turkey](#) for subsequently joining the case.

After Haniyeh

In the months after the October 7 attack, Haniyeh took part in 73 percent of Hamas's publicly announced diplomatic engagements. How will the group fill this gap now that he is gone?

Of course, at least some Hamas engagements are likely conducted out of the public view, so Haniyeh's outsized role may not represent the full picture. As noted above, however, naming Sinwar as his successor will necessarily complicate the group's diplomatic activities—meeting with the commander in person will likely be impossible even if officials wanted to take that risk, and speaking with him by phone is likely difficult as well because it could reveal where he is hiding. Some diplomacy could plausibly be done via couriers, but that is no substitute for the in-person legitimacy that Haniyeh was seemingly helping Hamas rebuild with certain constituencies.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Biden administration can and should continue pushing for a Gaza ceasefire regardless of who is representing Hamas. Yet the group's decision to situate its political and military power in one person could impede such efforts, making the war more likely to drag on.

Washington should also do more to curb the major increase in Hamas diplomatic engagement on the world stage—otherwise, the group could wind up being legitimized as the sole voice of Palestine despite starting a destructive war and losing much of its infrastructure in Gaza. For example, the State Department could exert far more pressure on U.S. allies and partners that host or meet with Hamas. If private conversations or official demarches do not have the desired effect, the administration may need to call these countries out publicly.

[Aaron Y. Zelin](#)

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ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

[cfr GLOBAL CONFLICT TRACKER](#) October 6 2024

Hamas launched its deadly attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, prompting the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to engage in aerial campaigns and ground operations within the Gaza Strip. Efforts to free the more than one hundred remaining Israeli and foreign [hostages](#) taken by Hamas have been largely unsuccessful, and their location and health status are unknown. Almost two million Gazans—more than 85 percent of the population—have [fled](#) their homes since October 2023. Recent casualty estimates from the Hamas-run Gazan Health Ministry place the [death toll](#) in Gaza at around 42,000, though such numbers are challenging to verify due to limited international access to the strip. Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is attempting to facilitate a [ceasefire and hostage release deal](#) between the two parties.

The conflict has sparked increased regional tensions across the Middle East. Hezbollah fighters in Lebanon have engaged in cross-border skirmishes with the IDF, Yemen's Houthi rebels have [shot](#) missiles at Israel and commercial ships in the Red Sea, and other Iran-backed groups have [launched](#) dozens of attacks on U.S. military positions in Iraq and Syria. (For more on the direct confrontation between Iran and Israel and the role of the United States, visit the "[Confrontation with Iran](#)" page. For more on the direct confrontation between Hezbollah and Israel, visit the "[Instability in Lebanon](#)" page.)

BACKGROUND

The [Israeli-Palestinian conflict](#) dates back to the end of the nineteenth century. In 1947, the United Nations adopted [Resolution 181](#), known as the Partition Plan, which sought to divide the British Mandate of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states. On May 14, 1948, the State of Israel was created, sparking the first Arab-Israeli War. The war ended in 1949 with Israel's victory, but 750,000 Palestinians were displaced, and the territory was divided into 3 parts: the State of Israel, the West Bank (of the Jordan River), and the Gaza Strip.

Over the following years, tensions rose in the region, particularly between Israel and Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Following the [1956 Suez Crisis](#) and Israel's invasion of the Sinai Peninsula, Egypt, Jordan, and Syria signed mutual defense pacts in anticipation of a possible mobilization of Israeli troops. In June 1967, following [a series of maneuvers](#) by Egyptian President Abdel Gamal Nasser, Israel preemptively attacked Egyptian and Syrian air forces, starting the Six-Day War. After the war, Israel gained territorial control over the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip from Egypt; the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan; and the Golan Heights from Syria.

Six years later, in what is referred to as the Yom Kippur War or the October War, Egypt and Syria launched [a surprise two-front attack](#) on Israel to regain their lost territory; the conflict did not result in significant gains for Egypt, Israel, or Syria, but Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat declared the war a victory for Egypt as it allowed Egypt and Syria to [negotiate over previously ceded territory](#). Finally, in 1979, following a series of cease-fires and peace negotiations, representatives from Egypt and Israel signed the [Camp David Accords](#), a peace treaty that ended the thirty-year conflict between Egypt and Israel. Even though the Camp David Accords improved relations between Israel and its neighbors, the question of Palestinian self-determination and self-governance remained unresolved. In 1987, hundreds of thousands

of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip rose up against the Israeli government in what is known as the first intifada. The 1993 [Oslo I Accords](#) mediated the conflict, setting up a framework for the Palestinians to govern themselves in the West Bank and Gaza, and enabled mutual recognition between the newly established Palestinian Authority and Israel's government. In 1995, the [Oslo II](#) Accords expanded on the first agreement, adding provisions that mandated the complete withdrawal of Israel from 6 cities and 450 towns in the West Bank.

In 2000, sparked in part by Palestinian grievances over Israel's control over the West Bank, a stagnating peace process, and former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's [visit](#) to the al-Aqsa mosque—the third holiest site in Islam—in September 2000, Palestinians [launched](#) the second intifada, which would last until 2005. In response, the Israeli government approved the [construction of a barrier wall](#) around the West Bank in 2002, despite [opposition](#) from the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. Factionalism among the Palestinians flared up when [Hamas](#) won the Palestinian Authority's parliamentary elections in 2006, deposing longtime majority party Fatah. This gave Hamas, a political and militant movement inspired by the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, control of the Gaza Strip. Gaza is a small piece of land on the Mediterranean Sea that borders Egypt to the south and has been under the rule of the semi-autonomous Palestinian Authority since 1993. The United States and European Union, among others, did not acknowledge Hamas' electoral victory, as the group has been considered a terrorist organization by western governments since the late 1990s. Following Hamas' seizure of control, [violence broke out](#) between Hamas and Fatah. Between 2006 and 2011, a series of failed peace talks and deadly confrontations culminated in an agreement to reconcile. [Fatah entered into a unity government](#) with Hamas in 2014.

In the summer of 2014, [clashes](#) in the Palestinian territories precipitated a [military confrontation](#) between the Israeli military and Hamas in which Hamas fired nearly three thousand rockets at Israel, and Israel retaliated with a major offensive in Gaza. The skirmish ended in late August 2014 with a [cease-fire](#) deal brokered by Egypt, but only after 73 Israelis and 2,251 Palestinians were [killed](#). After a wave of violence between Israelis and Palestinians in 2015, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah [announced](#) that Palestinians would no longer be bound by the territorial divisions created by the [Oslo Accords](#).

In March of 2018, Israeli troops [killed](#) 183 Palestinians and wounded 6,000 others after some Palestinians stormed the perimeter fence between the Gaza Strip and Israel and threw rocks during an otherwise peaceful demonstration. Just months later, Hamas militants fired over one hundred rockets into Israel, and Israel [responded](#) with strikes on more than fifty targets in Gaza during a twenty-four-hour flare-up. The tense political atmosphere resulted in [a return to disunity](#) between Fatah and Hamas, with Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah party controlling the Palestinian Authority from the West Bank and Hamas *de facto* ruling the Gaza Strip.

The Donald J. Trump administration reversed longstanding U.S. policy by [canceling](#) funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency, which provides aid to Palestinian refugees, and [relocating the U.S. embassy](#) from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The Trump administration also helped broker the [Abraham Accords](#), under which Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates normalized relations with Israel, becoming only the third and fourth countries in the region—following Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994—to do so. Similar deals followed

with [Morocco](#) [PDF] and [Sudan](#). Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah [rejected](#) the accords, [as did Hamas](#).

In early May 2021, after a court [ruled](#) in favor of the eviction of several Palestinian families from East Jerusalem properties, protests erupted, with Israeli police [employing](#) force against demonstrators. After several consecutive days of violence, Hamas, the militant group that governs Gaza, and other Palestinian [militant groups](#) launched hundreds of [rockets](#) into Israeli territory. Israel responded with artillery bombardments and airstrikes, [killing](#) more than twenty Palestinians and hitting both [military](#) and non-military infrastructure, including residential buildings, [media headquarters](#), and [refugee](#) and [healthcare facilities](#). After eleven days, Israel and Hamas agreed to a [cease-fire](#), with both sides claiming victory. The fighting [killed](#) more than 250 Palestinians and at least 13 Israelis, wounded nearly 2,000 others, and [displaced](#) 72,000 Palestinians.

The [most far-right and religious government](#) in Israel's history, led by Benjamin 'Bibi' Netanyahu and his Likud party and comprising two ultra-Orthodox parties and three far-right parties, was inaugurated in late December 2022. The coalition government [prioritized](#) the expansion and development of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, [endorsed discrimination](#) against LGBTQ+ people on religious grounds, and voted to [limit](#) judicial oversight of the government in May 2023 after a [delay](#) due to nationwide protests in March.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In early October 2023, Hamas fighters [fired](#) rockets into Israel and stormed southern Israeli cities and towns across the border of the Gaza Strip in a surprise attack, [killing](#) more than 1,300 Israelis, injuring 3,300, and [taking](#) hundreds of hostages. One day after the October 7 attack, the Israeli cabinet formally [declared war](#) against Hamas, followed by a [directive](#) from the defense minister to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to carry out a "complete siege" of Gaza. It is the most significant escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in several decades.

Israel [ordered](#) more than one million Palestinian civilians in northern Gaza to evacuate ahead of a ground invasion that began on October 27th. The ground invasion began in the north in conjunction with Israel's continued aerial assault. The first stage of the ground invasion [ended](#) on November 24 with the hostage-for-prisoner swap that also allowed more aid into Gaza. After seven days, the war resumed—particularly in [Khan Younis](#), the largest city in southern Gaza that Israel claims is a Hamas stronghold.

Under pressure from its principal ally, the United States, Israel announced it would begin to withdraw soldiers from the Gaza Strip in January 2024. Since then, military analysts speculate that the IDF has [pulled out](#) at least 90 percent of the troops that were in the territory a few months ago, leaving one remaining brigade. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, however, is unwavering in his [position](#) that an Israeli offensive in Rafah, the southernmost city in the Gaza Strip where over one million Palestinians have taken refuge, is essential to eradicating Hamas.

In mid-March, Israel conducted a two-week raid on al-Shifa Hospital, the largest medical center in Gaza. Israel claimed Hamas was operating out of al-Shifa, and it reportedly killed 200 fighters and captured an additional 500. The U.S. intelligence community later [determined](#) that Hamas had used al-Shifa as a command center and held some hostages there, but the Islamist group evacuated the complex days prior

to the Israeli operation. In late April, two mass graves were [discovered](#) at al-Shifa and Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, another target of an Israeli operation. More than 300 bodies were found among the two sites; the United Nations has called for an independent investigation.

On April 1, Israel launched an airstrike on an Iranian consular building in Damascus, Syria, killing multiple senior Iranian military officers. In response, Iran engaged directly in the war by [launching](#) over 300 drones and missiles at Israel on April 13. Though Israel was able to ward off the attack and only sustained minor damage to an air base, the escalation marked Iran's first-ever direct attack on Israel. As Israel weighed an extensive counterstrike on multiple military targets in Iran, the United States and other allies [advised](#) against actions that they feared would further widen the war. Israel ultimately launched a more limited [aerial strike](#) on military bases in Isfahan and Tabriz on April 19. Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi later [downplayed](#) the response, suggesting Iran aimed to avoid further escalation.

In late July, tensions rose between Israel and Iran-backed proxy groups when a Hezbollah airstrike killed eleven people in a Druze village in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights. Israel retaliated by assassinating a top Hezbollah leader in Beirut, Lebanon, for which it claimed responsibility. Hours later, Hamas' top political leader, Ismail Haniyeh, was killed in Tehran while attending the Iranian presidential inauguration. Israel [did not claim responsibility](#) for Haniyeh's death; however, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated Israel would "exact a very heavy price from any aggression." As Hamas' leader in the negotiations over a ceasefire in Gaza, Haniyeh's killing further dampened prospects for regional de-escalation. Iran vowed to retaliate but has delayed its response. A month later, Israel launched a wave of pre-emptive strikes against a significant rocket and drone attack by Hezbollah. After [exchanging heavy fire](#), both parties signaled they sought to reduce tensions.

Gaza is desperately low on water, fuel, and supplies as Hamas has rejected the most recent cease-fire proposals mediated by the United States and Egypt, while Israel has [limited](#) the amount of aid that can enter. Many humanitarian agencies [suspended](#) their operations after Israel killed seven World Center Kitchen employees in an airstrike. The World Food Programme warns famine is now [imminent](#) in Gaza. Only eleven out of thirty-five hospitals in the strip [remain](#) partially functional due to attacks on medical infrastructure and a lack of basic supplies. The World Health Organization has [warned](#) of disease spread in addition to mounting civilian casualties.

The displacement of millions more Palestinians presents a [challenge](#) for Egypt and Jordan, which have absorbed hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in the past but have resisted accepting anyone during the current war. They fear that Gazans, many of whom were already displaced from elsewhere in Israel, will not be allowed to [return](#) once they leave. Egypt also [fears](#) that Hamas fighters could enter Egypt and trigger a new war in the Sinai by launching attacks on Israel or destabilizing the authoritarian regime of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi by supporting the Muslim Brotherhood. So far, negotiations have resulted in only 1,100 people [exiting](#) Gaza through the Rafah border crossing to Egypt. The other 1.5 million displaced Gazans—70 percent of the territory's population—remained [confined](#) to southern Gaza and face increasingly dire living conditions and security risks.

While the United States [said](#) there was "no direct evidence" that Iranian intelligence and security forces directly helped Hamas plan its October 7 attack, Iran has a [well-established patronage relationship](#) with

Hamas and other extremist groups across the Middle East. Israel has exchanged artillery fire with Iran-backed [Hezbollah](#) almost daily and [struck](#) Syrian military targets and airports, prompting concern that the war could expand north. To the south, [Yemen's Houthi rebels](#) have launched multiple rounds of missiles at Israel as well. Meanwhile, the Islamic Resistance of Iraq, a coalition of Iranian-backed militias, has [claimed responsibility](#) for dozens of attacks on U.S. military targets in Iraq and Syria since the war began.

More on The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

[What Is Hamas? CFR Backgrounder August 19, 2024](#)

[Who Governs the Palestinians? CFR Background May 28, 2024](#)

[One Year After the October 7 Attacks CFR.org October 2, 2024](#)

[U.S. Aid to Israel in Four Charts CFR.org May 31, 2024](#)

[Where Will Israel's Multifront War End? Foreign Affairs October 2, 2024](#)

[The Israel-Palestine Crisis: Causes, Consequences, Portents International Crisis Group May 14, 2021](#)

[Israel-Hamas Conflict: U.S. Policy and Options for Congress Congressional Research Service April 16, 2024](#)

[The Israel-Hamas War: The Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza CFR In Brief February 8, 2024](#)

[Washington's New Mideast Balancing Act CFR In Brief April 14, 2024](#)

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PALESTINIAN ROCKET ATTACKS ON ISRAEL FROM 2000

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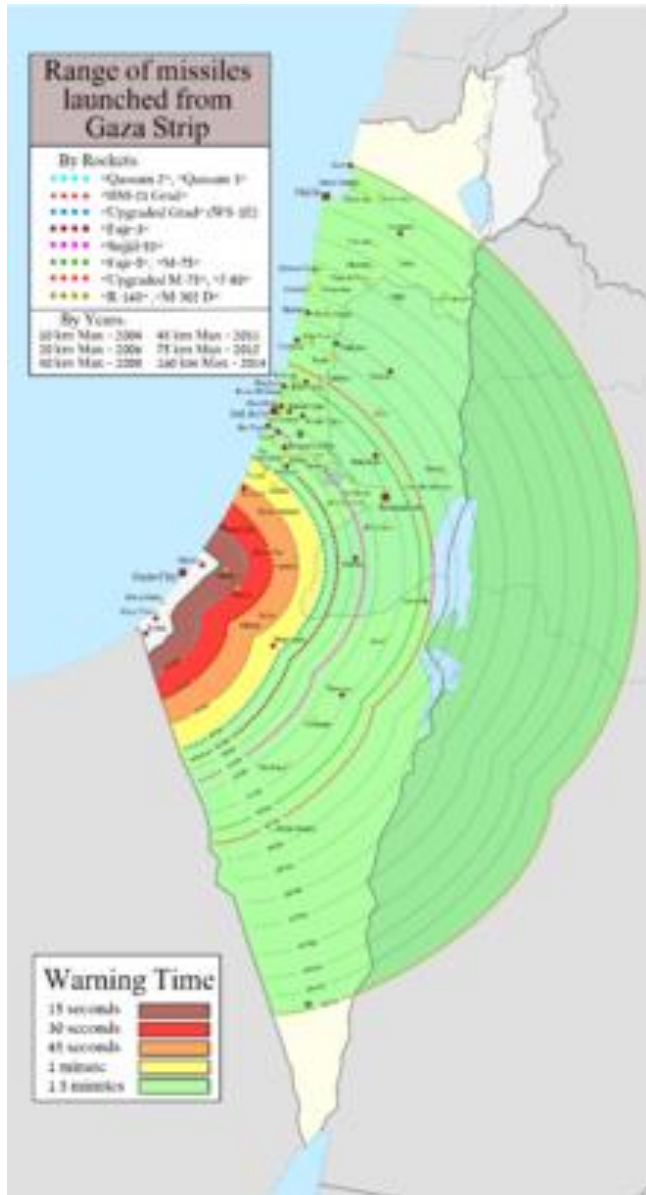
OVERVIEW

RANGE OF MISSILES LAUNCHED FROM GAZA STRIP (10-160 KM).

In the cycle of violence, rocket attacks alternate with Israeli military actions. From the outbreak of the [Al Aqsa Intifada](#) (30 September 2000) through March 2013, 8,749 rockets and 5,047 mortar shells were fired on Israel,^[34] while Israel has conducted several military operations in the Gaza Strip, among them [Operation Rainbow](#) (2004), [Operation Days of Penitence](#) (2004), [Operation Summer Rains](#) (2006), [Operation Autumn Clouds](#) (2006), [Operation Hot Winter](#) (2008), [Operation Cast Lead](#) (2009), [Operation Pillar of Defense](#) (2012), [Operation Protective Edge](#) (2014), [Operation Guardian of the Walls](#) (2021) and [Operation Swords of Iron](#) (2023).

OVERVIEW

Attacks began in 2001. Since then (August 2014 data), almost 20,000 rockets have hit southern Israel,^{[35][36]} all but a few thousand of them since [Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip](#) in August 2005. Hamas justified these as



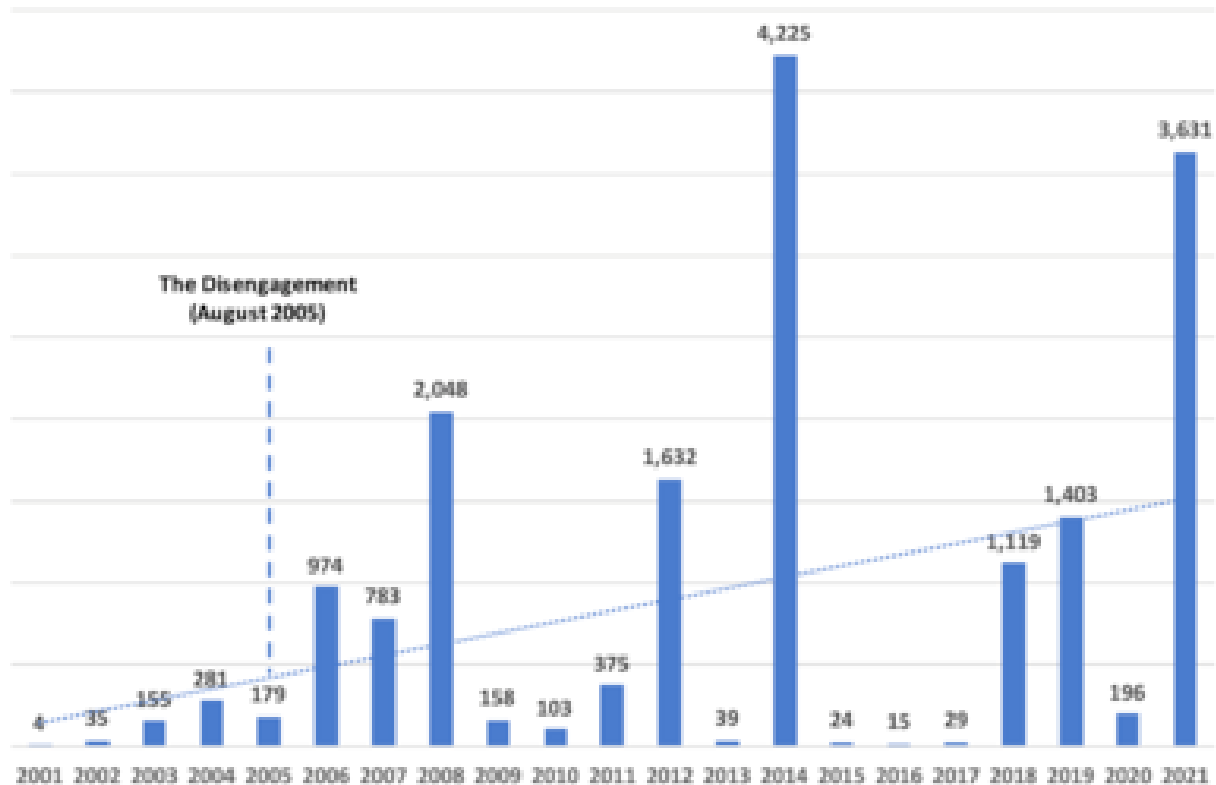


Figure 2. Number of rockets fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip by year.

Sources: Ben Sasson-Gordis (2016) and Meir Amit Terrorism and Information Center (2017–2022).

Rocket attacks fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip, 2001-2021^[48]

counter-attacks to the [Israeli blockade of Gaza](#). The rockets have killed 28 people and injured hundreds more. The range of the rockets has increased over time. The original Qassam rocket has a range of about 10 km (6.2 mi) but more advanced rockets, including versions of the old Soviet Grad or Katyusha have hit Israeli targets 40 km (25 mi) from Gaza.^[37]

Some analysts see the attacks as a shift away from reliance on [suicide bombing](#), which was previously Hamas's main method of attacking Israel, as an adoption of the rocket tactics used by the Lebanese group [Hezbollah](#).^[38]

Participating Groups

All the Palestinian armed groups carry out rocket and mortar attacks, with varying frequency.^[28] The main groups are [Hamas](#), [Islamic Jihad](#),^[39] the [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine](#),^[40] the [Popular Resistance Committees](#),^[41] [Fatah](#),^[42] and the [Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine](#).^[28] In June 2007, Hamas took over from Fatah as the de facto governing authority in the Gaza Strip,^[43] while Fatah holds the presidency of the [Palestinian National Authority](#).

Islamic Jihad has involved other Palestinians in the activities, running summer camps where children were taught how to hold a Qassam rocket launcher.^[44] One Islamic Jihad rocket maker, [Awad al-Qiq](#), was a science teacher and headmaster at a United Nations school. Christopher Gunness, a UNRWA spokesman,

said the UN had "zero-tolerance policy towards politics and militant activities in our schools", but that they "cannot police people's minds."^[45]

A 2007 report by [Human Rights Watch](#) found "little evidence that Palestinian security forces were making efforts to prevent rocket attacks or to hold responsible the militants who launch them." In some cases, "Palestinian security officials themselves acknowledged they were not acting to stop the attacks."^[46]

The Israeli [Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center](#) estimated that in 2007^[47] the proportions of rockets fired from the Gaza Strip were:

- 34% – [Palestinian Islamic Jihad](#) ([Al Quds](#))
- 22% – [Hamas](#) ([Qassam](#))
- 8% – [Fatah](#) ([Kafah](#))
- 6% – [Popular Resistance Committees](#) ([al Nasser](#))
- 30% – unknown

Statistics

Precisely counting the number of rockets fired is impossible, and differing estimates have been given. The injury figures and attack counts below are attributed to the [Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#).^[192] Prior to 4 September 2005, the majority of attacks were against Israeli targets within the Gaza Strip.^[192]

Annual number of attacks and casualties ^{[182][193][194][195][196]}						
Year	Dead	Injured	Rocket attacks	Mortar attacks	Total attacks	Total attacks % change
2001	0		4		4+	
2002	0		35		35+	▲ 775%
2003	0		155		155+	▲ 343%
2004	4		281		281+	▲ 81%
2005	2		401	854	1,255	▲ 346%
2006	2	371	1,722	55	1,777	▲ 42%
2007	2	578	1,276	1,531	2,807	▲ 58%

Annual number of attacks and casualties^{[182][193][194][195][196]}

Year	Dead	Injured	Rocket attacks	Mortar attacks	Total attacks	Total attacks % change
2008	8	611	2,048	1,668	3,716	▲ 32%
Israeli and Egyptian blockade of Gaza after Operation Cast Lead to stop missile fire into Israel ^[197] and arms import into Gaza. ^{[198][199]}						
2009	0	11	569	289	858	▼ 77%
2010	1	35	150	215	365	▼ 57%
2011	2	81	419	261	680 ^[200]	▲ 86%
2012	6 ^{[180][201]}	284+	2,256 ^[202]	17	2,273+ ^{[203][204]}	▲ 234%
2013	0		32	12	44	▼ 98%
2014	6	80	2,800	1,700	4,500 ^[205]	▲ 9000%
2015*	0	0	3 ^[206]	0	0	▼ 9000%
Total*	33	1971+	12,338	6,500	18,928	

19,000 ROCKETS LAUNCHED AT ISRAEL SINCE HAMAS'S OCTOBER 7 ATROCITIES

[FDD](#) June 11, 2024 | Flash Brief

Listen to analysis 3 min

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Hamas and other terrorist groups have launched more than 19,000 unguided rockets at Israel since the October 7 massacre in southern Israel, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) [said](#) on June 10. “The projectiles were mostly fired from the Gaza Strip, although the portion of rocket attacks from Lebanon has been steadily growing in recent months. Thousands of those rockets have been intercepted by air defense,” *The Times of Israel* [reported](#). The IDF data includes only projectiles that crossed into Israeli territory. On October 21, two weeks after Hamas launched its attack, the IDF [noted](#) that one in five Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad rockets are misfired, landing within Gaza. Hamas has also [admitted](#) that some of its rockets misfire.

The new data illustrates that rocket fire continues to terrorize Israel. In April, the IDF [said](#) that approximately 9,100 rockets crossed into Israel from Gaza and that approximately 3,100 rockets had crossed into Israel from Lebanon.

EXPERT ANALYSIS

“Hamas began its war on Israel with an unprecedented barrage of thousands of rockets. Israel has been able to successfully intercept rockets and reduce the Hamas threat over eight months of war. However, the threat has now shifted, as Hezbollah is increasing its attacks using drones. This illustrates how Israel is forced to contend with a rapidly changing battlefield as it counters Iranian-backed terrorist threats.” — [Seth J. Frantzman](#), *FDD Adjunct Fellow*

“With the guidance of Iran, Hamas and Hezbollah have been able to develop significant arms manufacturing capabilities over the years. This effort has culminated in the current conflict, where their ability to produce and deploy weapons has made a tangible impact. The most striking example of this is the array of rockets and drones deployed by Hezbollah and Hamas against Israel.” — [Joe Truzman](#), *Senior Research Analyst at FDD's Long War Journal*

IDF PREPARES TO DEFEND AGAINST ‘SWARMS’ OF HEZBOLLAH DRONES

The IDF is preparing to defend against “swarms” of Hezbollah drones, according to a new [report](#) from Israel’s *Ynet News*. “The recent demonstration of Hezbollah’s capabilities, which have intensified in recent weeks, still represents only a small fraction of the Iran-backed terror group’s aerial arsenal which the IDF believes to include an array of precision munitions supplied mainly by Iran over the past decade, or weapons that have undergone upgrade and modifications based on lessons learned in the conflict,” *Ynet* noted. The IDF also [said](#) on June 10 that Israeli air defenses have intercepted more than 150 drones throughout the Gaza war and corresponding fighting along the Israel-Lebanon border. Hezbollah has been intensifying its drone attacks on Israel.

ISRAEL STRIKES ROCKET LAUNCHING POST IN GAZA USED BY HAMAS TO ATTACK TEL AVIV

[FDD](#) August 14 2024

Listen to analysis 3min

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

Israeli Air Force jets struck more than 40 targets in Gaza on August 14, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said. Among the sites hit was a rocket-launching position located in a humanitarian [corridor](#) that was used by Hamas terrorists to [fire](#) two rockets at Tel Aviv on August 13, one of which landed in the Mediterranean Sea, with the second failing to even leave Gaza. A Hamas statement on its Telegram channel attributed to its spokesman Abu Obeidah claimed that the terrorist group had attempted to “bombard Tel Aviv and its suburbs with two M90 missiles [long-range rockets with a 90-km range] in response to the Zionist massacres against civilians and the deliberate displacement of our people.”

IDF spokesperson Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani said in a [post](#) on social media that “Hamas terrorists continue to terrorize Israelis and endanger the Gazans around them.” A separate IDF statement [noted](#) that the “Hamas terrorist organization continues to deliberately embed its military assets used to carry out attacks against Israel next to humanitarian infrastructure and the civilian population inside the Gaza Strip.”

Hamas [launched](#) rockets from a humanitarian [corridor](#) toward central Israel, the IDF [said](#) on August 14. “Hamas terrorists continue to terrorize Israelis and endanger the Gazans around them,” IDF spokesperson Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani said in a [post](#) on social media. He also posted footage of Hamas launching the two rockets aimed at Tel Aviv. “The Hamas terrorist organization continues to deliberately embed its military assets used to carry out attacks against Israel next to humanitarian infrastructure and the civilian population inside the Gaza Strip,” the IDF [added](#).

EXPERT ANALYSIS

“The brazen attempt to target Tel Aviv with rockets by firing them from a humanitarian route in Gaza illustrates how Hamas continues to use every civilian area in Gaza for terrorist purposes. Hamas knows that the humanitarian routes and areas in Gaza are key areas for providing support to civilians, and it is now trying to hide in these areas to use them for protection.” — [Seth J. Frantzman](#), *FDD Adjunct Fellow*

“Hamas and other terrorist groups feel compelled to demonstrate they are actively fighting Israel despite intense IDF pressure. One of the most visible ways to convey this is by launching rockets at communities and cities in Israel. If Hamas and its allies are unable to carry out such attacks, it would serve as a significant indication that Israel has severely compromised their capacity for warfare.” — [Joe Truzman](#), *Senior*

Research Analyst at FDD's Long War Journal

ISRAEL ENCOURAGES CIVILIANS TO EVACUATE AREAS NEAR KHAN YOUNIS

In the wake of continued terrorist threats from areas near Khan Yunis, the IDF [encouraged](#) civilians to evacuate several areas near the southern Gazan city. IDF Arabic Spokesperson Lt. Col. Avichay Adraee posted a [map](#) of an area in the Bani Suheila neighborhood that has been used by terrorists as he called on civilians to move west toward a humanitarian zone. In addition, the IDF continued to carry out precision strikes against terrorists in Gaza, which came as Hamas [told](#) pro-Iranian media outlets in the Arab world that it would not [participate](#) in ceasefire talks with Israel scheduled for August 15.

RELATED ANALYSIS

[“Israel Issues Warning Over Iran, Hamas Destabilization of Jordan and West Bank,”](#) FDD Flash Brief

[“ Hamas Terrorist Released Through Ceasefire Deal Strikes Again in West Bank,”](#) FDD Flash Brief

[“ Hamas Shuns New Talks on Gaza Ceasefire,”](#) FDD Flash Brief

ISRAELI MILITARY LAUNCHES NEW GROUND OPERATION IN GAZA

The Israel Defense Forces announced the incursion just over a day after it broke the ceasefire with a sprawling bombing campaign that killed hundreds across the enclave.

NBC NEWS Matt Bradley March 19, 2025, 5:08 PM GMT / Updated March 20, 2025

TEL AVIV — Israel's military sent ground troops back into [the Gaza Strip](#) on Wednesday, the spokesperson for the Israel Defense Forces announced, just over a day after it [broke a two-month ceasefire](#) with a [sprawling bombing campaign](#) that [killed hundreds](#) across the enclave.

The "targeted ground operation" has focused on the central and southern Gaza Strip over the past 24 hours, the IDF said in a statement.

Ground troops had also retaken about half of the "Netzarim Corridor," the IDF said, referring to the Israeli-built roadway that bisects Gaza and has been used to cut off traffic between the [northern and southern parts of the enclave](#).

Hamas said in a statement Wednesday evening that Israel's ground incursion "constitutes a new and dangerous violation of the signed ceasefire agreement."

Israel's defense minister issued a bellicose statement, threatening that the military would once again begin evacuating civilians from combat zones.

"The air force attack against Hamas terrorists was only the first step. The rest will be much more difficult and you will pay the full price," Defense Minister Israel Katz said in the statement. "If all the Israeli hostages are not released and Hamas is not eliminated from Gaza — Israel will act with forces you have never known before."

[Middle EastAt least 16 people killed after ordnance from Syria's 13-year conflict explodes in port city](#)



[Middle East ConflictTrump orders strikes on Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen and issues new warning](#)

The return of Israeli ground forces marks the collapse of a U.S.-negotiated ceasefire that had largely quieted the fighting in Gaza for two months after 15 months of war laid it to waste.

Alongside its statement, the IDF circulated a video that showed Israeli tanks, as well as infantry soldiers walking, taking up positions and gathering in groups around destroyed homes in what the IDF said was central Gaza.

Under the terms of the treaty, which went into effect Jan. 19, Israeli forces had gradually withdrawn their ground operations to Gaza's periphery. Though the treaty dramatically diminished the intensity of the fighting, health officials in Gaza said Israeli forces had [killed at least 160 people](#) during the two-month truce.

More than 400 people were killed in Israeli airstrikes in the renewed offensive early Tuesday, according to Palestinian health officials, and at least a dozen were killed Wednesday.

An American security company and Egyptian security contractors who worked for a Qatari-Egyptian committee had been securing the Netzarim Corridor. They vacated the roadway today ahead of advancing Israeli forces.

At about 9 a.m. local time Wednesday, Israel's Arabic-language spokesman published a map on social media advising residents in Gaza to vacate areas around the perimeter and move toward the coast, highlighting two square blocks of territory in the enclave's northeast and southeast for urgent evacuation.

In the Sabra neighborhood of Gaza City on Wednesday, people used hammers and other tools to dig into the rubble of a four-story building that was hit by an airstrike early that morning.

Mohammed Al-Hattab said there were 30 people in the building, children and the elderly. They rescued a 6-month-old baby and a 1-year-old, but others were killed, he said.

A 3-year-old boy was partially visible under the rubble — his upper body exposed, his lower half pinned beneath a heavy slab of concrete. Beside him lay his father, lifeless, yet still holding his hand. Nearby, their mother's lifeless body was covered with a blanket.

For hours, neighbors struggled to pull them out, thwarted by a lack of heavy machinery.

"Enough of these wars, we are exhausted by them," Al-Hattab said. "Enough of these wars."

The demise of the hard-won peace treaty ends a short period of calm in Gaza and threatens a return to the kind of Israeli attacks that Palestinian health officials say have already killed more than 48,000 people.

Israel ended the peace treaty because, it said, Hamas refused to hand over the remaining hostages held in Gaza.

Both sides agreed to a three-phase treaty in late January, with the details of each subsequent phase set to be negotiated during the proceeding period. The first phase of the treaty expired March 1, and repeated attempts to either extend the first phase or negotiate a move toward the second phase have failed.

There were almost weekly exchanges of hostages for Palestinian prisoners during the ceasefire's first phase. By the time it ended this month, Hamas had released 33 hostages for about 1,900 Palestinian prisoners.

But while Hamas repeatedly tried to negotiate toward the second phase of the treaty, which would lead to a more permanent truce and eventually the full withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza, Israel pushed for a weekslong extension of the first phase.

Steve Witkoff, President Donald Trump's Middle East envoy, presented multiple "bridging" proposals that would have extended the first phase of the treaty. After Hamas refused, hewing to its insistence on negotiating toward the second phase, Israel's government scrapped the treaty and moved to renew the fighting.

50,000 KILLED IN GAZA SINCE START OF ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR, HEALTH MINISTRY SAYS

CNN Nadeen Ebrahim and Ibrahim Dahman, March 24, 2025

[‘I would prefer this over killing children.’ Why some Israeli teens are choosing jail over the army](#)
[8 minute read](#)

More than 50,000 Palestinians have been killed in [Gaza](#) since Israel’s war with Hamas began, the territory’s health ministry said Sunday, a grim milestone for a war with no end in sight as Israel resumes fighting and warns of even tougher days ahead.

The ministry on Sunday reported 41 more deaths in the past 24 hours, bringing the toll to 50,021.

Authorities in Gaza do not distinguish between civilians and Hamas fighters when reporting casualty figures, but the health ministry and the [United Nations say](#) the majority of deaths are women and children. And the true toll [could be much higher](#), with many thousands believed to still be under the rubble.

On Monday, the ministry published a list of names of 15,613 children under the age of 18 who it said had been killed in Israeli military operations in Gaza. Among them, 890 children were under the age of 1, and 274 were born and died during the war. Almost a quarter, 26%, were under the age of 5.

[Related article Israel intensifies southern Gaza offensive as Hamas says senior figure killed in strike](#)

The Israeli military told CNN that the Hamas-controlled ministry’s figures are “replete with inconsistencies and false determinations,” adding that the ministry tends to “record deaths unrelated to the conflict, such as natural deaths.”

The Israel Defense Forces added that it is “committed to mitigating civilian harm during operational activity in strict accordance to international law,” and that it “distinguishes between civilians and combatants as required by its legal obligations and entrenched values.”

The death toll surged as Israel [resumed](#) its war with Hamas last week, ending a two-month ceasefire in Gaza. Tuesday’s renewed airstrikes made it one of the deadliest days for Palestinians since the war began, with more than 400 killed by Israeli fire, according to the health ministry. By Wednesday, Israel had also resumed its ground operation in the enclave.

Israel launched a war on Hamas in Gaza on October 7, 2023, following the militant group’s surprise attack on southern Israel that killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took 251 hostage, according to Israeli authorities.

Hamas called the latest offensive a “new and dangerous breach” of the ceasefire agreement. The militant group says it is committed to the ceasefire agreement it signed with Israel in January, but on Thursday fired its first rockets at Israel since the truce collapsed.

Gazans are left with little hope that the killing will slow as Israeli officials warn that what's to come will be significantly worse.

Defense Minister Israel Katz last week warned Hamas that Israel will maintain a permanent presence in parts of Gaza unless the hostages in Gaza are released.

Katz said Friday that he'd instructed the Israeli military "to seize additional areas in Gaza, while evacuating the population, and to expand the security zones around Gaza in order to protect Israeli communities and IDF soldiers through permanent maintenance of the territory by Israel."

Soon after the renewed campaign began, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said: "I want to assure you: This is just the beginning."

Almost all of Gaza's population of more than 2 million has been displaced from their homes. The enclave's healthcare system has been severely damaged, with hospitals often becoming the center of fighting. A humanitarian crisis and famine in parts of Gaza are unfolding, as Israel blocked aid from entering Gaza earlier this month and as its latest operation impedes distribution. And the UN on Monday said it would reduce its presence in Gaza – but not leave the enclave entirely – amid the renewed attacks including one on a UN compound that killed a UN worker last week and severely injured six others.

Negotiations to extend the ceasefire have been moribund nearly from the day it went into effect January 19. Hamas has insisted on sticking to the initial framework signed with Israel in January, which would have seen parties move to a second phase on March 1. Under the terms of the second phase, Israel would have had to withdraw entirely from Gaza and commit to a permanent end of the war. In exchange, Hamas would release all living hostages.

The second phase never happened, and Israel resumed the war, citing Hamas' alleged rejection of "two concrete mediation proposals presented by the US" and its "threats to harm IDF soldiers and Israeli communities" as justification for its attacks on Gaza.

Israel does not dispute that a significant number of Palestinian civilians have been killed in its war in Gaza. It has however long argued that the health ministry's figures are exaggerated, and that Hamas embeds itself between civilians, using them as "human shields."

The United Nations and United States State Department have repeatedly said they believe the health ministry's figures to be accurate, and independent academic studies have estimated that the true toll is likely to be far higher.

CNN cannot independently verify the numbers and the Israeli government does not allow foreign journalists to independently enter Gaza.

CNN's Mick Krever, Lauren Izso, Abeer Salman, Kareem Khadder, Jo Shelley and Catherine Nicholls contributed reporting.

['Enough war': Why Gazans are protesting Hamas now 6 minute read](#)

GAZA PHOTOJOURNALIST, FAMILY KILLED IN GAZA STRIKE; IDF SAYS IT TARGETED HAMAS OPERATIVE

Fatima Hassouna, 25, was subject of documentary due to premiere at Cannes next month; military hits 40 targets across Strip, captures and destroys tunnels in north of the enclave

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Emanuel Fabian](#) and [Agencies](#) 18 April 2025



IDF troops operate in the Gaza Strip, in a handout photo published on April 18, 2025.

(Israel Defense Forces)

A young Gazan photojournalist, Fatima Hassouna, was killed in an Israeli strike in northern Gaza this week, [according to the Guardian](#).

The British newspaper reported Friday that Hassouna, 25, was killed Wednesday along with 10 members of her family, including her pregnant sister, several days before she was due to be married.

"If I die, I want a loud death," she wrote on social media, according to the report. "I don't want to be just breaking news, or a number in a group, I want a death that the world will hear, an impact that will remain through time, and a timeless image that cannot be buried by time or place."

Hassouna was the subject of the documentary "Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk" set to premiere at the Cannes Film Festival in May.

The Israel Defense Forces said the strike targeted a Hamas operative involved in attacks on soldiers and civilians.

"Prior to the strike, measures were taken to minimize the risk to civilians, including the use of precision munitions, aerial surveillance, and additional intelligence," it said.

The military also accused Hamas of "systematically violating international law, while cynically and brutally using the population as a human shield for terror activity."

Also Friday, the military said the Israeli Air Force struck some 40 targets in the Gaza Strip over the past day, with targets including terror operatives, buildings used by terror groups and weapons depots, as troops continue to operate on the ground across the Strip.

Palestinians said that at least 24 people were killed in the strikes.

In the Tel Sultan and Shaboura areas of southern Gaza's Rafah, the military said, troops of the Gaza Division destroyed Hamas infrastructure and killed several operatives during an ambush.

In northern Gaza, the 252nd Division destroyed a weapons depot and directed drone strikes on operatives, the army said.

Additionally, during recent operations in Gaza City's eastern neighborhood of Shejaiya, the IDF said reservists of the Jerusalem Brigade, now in their fourth round of reserve duty in Gaza, located several tunnels and a weapons depot.

The military said the operations in Shejaiya are intended to expand a buffer zone along the Gaza border. The area is relatively elevated and overlooks the Israeli border communities of Nahal Oz, Kfar Aza and Sa'ad.

This past week, the IDF said the reserve brigade eliminated a cell of operatives that was planning a sniper attack on the forces.

The tunnels and weapon depot located by the reservists were demolished by the elite Yahalom combat engineering unit, the army added.

A Hamas tunnel in Gaza City's Shejaiya neighborhood is demolished in a video published by the IDF on April 18, 2025. (Israel Defense Forces)

Gaza's Hamas-controlled civil defense agency said that 24 people were killed in strikes across Gaza, including 10 people were killed in an overnight attack near the southern city of Khan Younis.

"Our crews recovered the bodies of 10 martyrs and a large number of injuries from the house of the Baraka family and the neighboring houses targeted by the Israeli occupation forces in the Bani Suhaila area east of Khan Younis," spokesman Mahmoud Bassal said on Telegram.

The agency also reported at least 14 others allegedly killed in multiple Israeli strikes across the territory, including at least two strikes which it said hit tents sheltering displaced people.

There was no immediate IDF comment on the specific strikes in question. Israel has said, in general, that it seeks to minimize civilian fatalities and stresses that Hamas uses Gaza's civilians as human shields, fighting from civilian areas including homes, hospitals, schools, and mosques.

SOLDIERS COMPLAIN OF LACK OF FOOD

After troops of the Golani Brigade operating in Gaza complained they were not receiving enough food due to kosher-for-Passover restrictions, the chief of the Technological and Logistics Directorate, Maj. Gen. Mishel Yanko, entered the Strip on Friday morning to inspect the matter personally, the military said.

Yanko met with several units in Gaza “in order to ensure that the troops are receiving the necessary food and logistics response.”

The IDF said it has a 24/7 hotline running throughout Passover where soldiers can issue complaints regarding food.

On Thursday, reports emerged that Golani soldiers who are fighting in Rafah complained to their parents that they were only eating matzah with chocolate spread and had not had a single hot meal in several days.



Chief of the Technological and Logistics Directorate Maj. Gen. Mishel Yanko speaks with troops in the Gaza Strip, April 18, 2025. (Israel Defense Forces)

The IDF on March 18 resumed its attacks against Hamas with a surprise wave of airstrikes, ending a two-month ceasefire. Efforts to restore the truce have so far failed.

The IDF says it continues to ramp up pressure on Hamas to bring the terror group to agree to a hostage deal, but was not moving ahead with a major offensive just yet.

The war in Gaza began on October 7, 2023, when some 5,000 Hamas-led terrorists invaded southern Israel from the Gaza Strip, killing some 1,200 people and taking 251 hostages amid acts of brutality and sexual assault.

Terror groups in the Gaza Strip are still holding 59 hostages — 24 of whom are believed to be alive, and 35 of whom have been confirmed dead — including 58 of those abducted on October 7.

According to Gaza’s Hamas-run health ministry, more than 50,000 people in the Strip have been killed or are presumed dead in the fighting so far. The toll cannot be verified and does not differentiate between civilians and fighters.

Israel assesses it has killed about 20,000 combatants in Gaza as of January, as well as some 1,600 terrorists inside Israel during the Hamas onslaught.

Israel's toll in the Gaza ground offensive and military operations along the border stands at 410.

Times of Israel staff contributed to this report.

HAMAS CLAIMS GROWING GAZA PROTESTS AGAINST ITS RULE ACTUALLY AIMED AT ISRAEL

In first comment since Gazans began taking to streets, terror group claims demonstrations being manipulated by ‘enemy and other parties with political agendas’

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Nurit Yohanan](#) and [Agencies](#)

Hamas responded Thursday to growing public protests inside Gaza by insisting the demonstrations are directed against Israel and the ongoing war, rather than against the terror group ruling the Strip.

Thousands of Gazans have taken to the streets this week in rare displays of public anger against Hamas, chanting for the end of the group’s nearly two-decade rule after it plunged the enclave into war by attacking southern Israel on October 7, taking hundreds of hostages, many of whom it is still holding.

Senior Hamas official Basem Naim told the Qatari channel Al-Araby that “demonstrations are expected from people facing extermination, against war and destruction.”

What Matters Now to Haviv Rettig Gur: Death penalty for terrorists?Keep Watching

Despite multiple media reports, images, and videos from protests, as well as media interviews with Gazans to the contrary, Naim claimed the rallies are being misrepresented as criticizing Hamas’s de facto regime.

“People are calling to stop the aggression, but the enemy and other parties with political agendas are diverting the spontaneous protests to serve the occupation’s agenda and trying to portray it as if the demonstrators are against the resistance,” he said — a reference to Hamas and other terror groups in Gaza.

“Those who are trying to portray the protests as demonstrations against Hamas are the same people who have been doing this for years from Arab and European cities to serve (foreign) interests,” he added, without specifying which actors he was referring to.

Naim further claimed that the authoritarian Islamist group allows residents to show dissent.

“We understand well that our people are politically diverse, and we protect both opinions and opposing views,” he said. “No one has the right to forbid anyone from expressing their opinion. But the people took to the streets calling to stop the war and end the aggression.”

On Wednesday, [thousands of people rallied](#) throughout Gaza, chanting “Hamas out.” The protest followed a smaller demonstration a day earlier in Beit Lahiya, north of Gaza City, which drew wide media attention.

Some protest participants spoke directly to the media Wednesday, criticizing Hamas over the war.

“They made the residents into rabbits, and now they have broken free of the fear because they have nothing to lose,” a Gazan man named Sami Ubayed told Israel’s Ynet news outlet.

“Residents have no water or electricity. Hamas is destroying Gaza and making us into stones, they must be removed from power. We won’t stop demonstrating, Hamas needs to be flexible and release the hostages.”

Demonstrators carrying banners reading, “Hamas does not represent us,” were seen marching in Gaza City and the town of Beit Lahiya in the north of the territory.

In Beit Lahiya, where a similar but far smaller protest took place Tuesday, about 3,000 people demonstrated Wednesday, with many chanting, “The people want the fall of Hamas.” In the hard-hit Shejaiyeh neighborhood of Gaza City, dozens of men chanted, “Out, out out! Hamas get out!”

In some incidents, protesters at rallies urged Hamas to release hostages it is holding to expedite an end to the war that has devastated most areas of Gaza, making conditions harsh for residents.



Palestinians take part in an anti-Hamas protest, calling for an end to the war with Israel, in Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip on March 26, 2025. (AFP)

War erupted on October 7, 2023, when Hamas led some 5,000 attackers to invade southern Israel, killing 1,200 people, mostly civilians. As they rampaged murderously through the region, the terrorists abducted 251 people, also mostly civilians, who were taken as hostages to the Gaza Strip.

Israel retaliated with a military campaign to destroy Hamas and save the hostages. A complex, three-phase ceasefire that included the release of hostages in batches began on January 19 but collapsed after its first stage as Israel renewed air strikes amid mutual accusations of violations and as Hamas stopped releasing hostages.

The terror group has violently cracked down on previous protests. This time, no outright intervention was apparent, which some saw as a sign of its waning power in the wake of Israel’s military campaign. The group’s armed personnel are also thought to be keeping a low profile since Israel resumed military action in Gaza earlier this month following the two-month ceasefire.

Protests are relatively rare events in Gaza, especially against Hamas, which has maintained an iron grip on the Strip since it violently ousted the Palestinian Authority from the territory in 2007.

While there have been more public statements by individuals in Gaza against Hamas rule since the war started, large-scale demonstrations against the group have been almost nonexistent.

The last documented protest in the Strip against Hamas took place in January 2024, when Palestinians in Deir al-Balah and Khan Younis called for an end to the war, the end of the terror group's rule over Gaza, and the release of the Israeli hostages.

Before the war, anti-Hamas protests were also relatively rare events and were often suppressed violently by the terror group.

Israel has vowed to escalate the war until Hamas returns the 59 hostages it still holds — 24 of them believed to be alive. Israel is also demanding that the group give up power, disarm, and send its leaders into exile.

Hamas has said it will only release the remaining captives in exchange for Palestinian prisoners, a complete end to war, and an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza.

Hamas won a landslide victory in Gaza in the last Palestinian elections, held in 2006. It seized power in Gaza from the PA, which is based in the West Bank and dominated by the secular Fatah movement, the following year after months of factional unrest and a week of heavy street battles.

Rights groups say both the Palestinian Authority and Hamas violently suppress dissent, quashing protests in the areas they control and jailing and torturing critics.

PART 7 RAFAH

RAFAH

ISRAEL, HAMAS COMPLETE LATEST CEASEFIRE SWAP AS RAFAH CROSSING OPENS FOR GAZA WOUNDED

Hamas freed three hostages in the southern Gaza Strip on Saturday and Israel released scores of Palestinian prisoners in a fourth round of exchanges as part the Gaza ceasefire deal. The swap came as sick and wounded Palestinian children began crossing to Egypt for treatment through Gaza's Rafah crossing in the first opening of the border since Israel captured it nearly nine months ago.

[FRANCE 24](#) NEWS WIRES 01/02/2025

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Freed Palestinian inmates were greeted by a cheering crowd in the occupied [West Bank](#) city of Ramallah Saturday, after [Hamas](#) released three Israeli hostages from the [Gaza Strip](#) in the [fourth exchange](#) under the group's ceasefire deal with [Israel](#).

Three other buses carrying freed Palestinians also arrived in the southern Gaza city of Khan Yunis, with the inmates in grey prison uniforms met by hundreds of well-wishers.

To display this content from YouTube, you must enable advertisement tracking and audience measurement.

In Ramallah, the bus carrying the inmates struggled to make its way through the jubilant throng of supporters as it arrived from the Israeli-run Ofer Prison.

Several of the freed inmates were hoisted onto the crowd's shoulders, including an elderly man who raised his crutches over his head in a triumphant pose.



A jubilant crowd greeted a busload of freed Palestinian prisoners in Ramallah on Saturday

. © Ahmad Gharabli, AFP

Earlier in Gaza, hostages Ofer Kalderon and Yarden Bibas were paraded on stage by Hamas fighters before being handed over to the [Red Cross](#) in the southern city of Khan Yunis. American-Israeli Keith Siegel was freed shortly thereafter in a similar ceremony at Gaza City's port in the north.

Israel's military later confirmed that all three were back in Israel.

Israeli campaign group the Hostages and Missing Families Forum hailed the release as "a ray of light in the darkness".

French-Israeli hostage Kalderon's uncle Shemi told AFP: "We have waited for this moment for a very long time."

"I hope that this is a sign of the rebirth of the people of Israel, not just of Ofer, not just of the hostages," he said, overcome with emotion.



Hamas fighters escort French-Israeli hostage Ofer Kalderon before handing him over to a Red Cross team in Khan Yunis. © Eyad Baba, AFP

After holding the hostages for more than 15 months, militants in Gaza began releasing them on January 19 under the terms of the ceasefire deal with Israel.

Hamas and Islamic Jihad militants have so far handed over 18 hostages to the International Committee of the Red Cross in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, many of them women and minors.

The Palestinian Prisoners' Club advocacy group had said Israel would free 183 prisoners Saturday.

Hamas sources said a fifth hostage-prisoner exchange would take place next Saturday.

'MIXED EMOTIONS'

During their October 7, 2023 attack on Israel, which started the Gaza war, militants abducted Siegel from the Kfar Aza kibbutz community, and Bibas and Kalderon from kibbutz Nir Oz.



Hamas fighters escort American-Israeli hostage Keith Siegel during his staged release in Gaza City.

© Omar Al-Qattaa, AFP

Militants took a total of 251 people hostage that day. Of those, 76 remain in Gaza, including at least 34 the military says are dead.

Those seized include Bibas's wife Shiri and their two children, whom Hamas has declared dead, although Israeli officials have not confirmed that.

Bibas's sons – Kfir, the youngest hostage, whose second birthday was earlier this month, and his older brother Ariel, whose fifth birthday was in August – have become symbols of the hostages' ordeal.

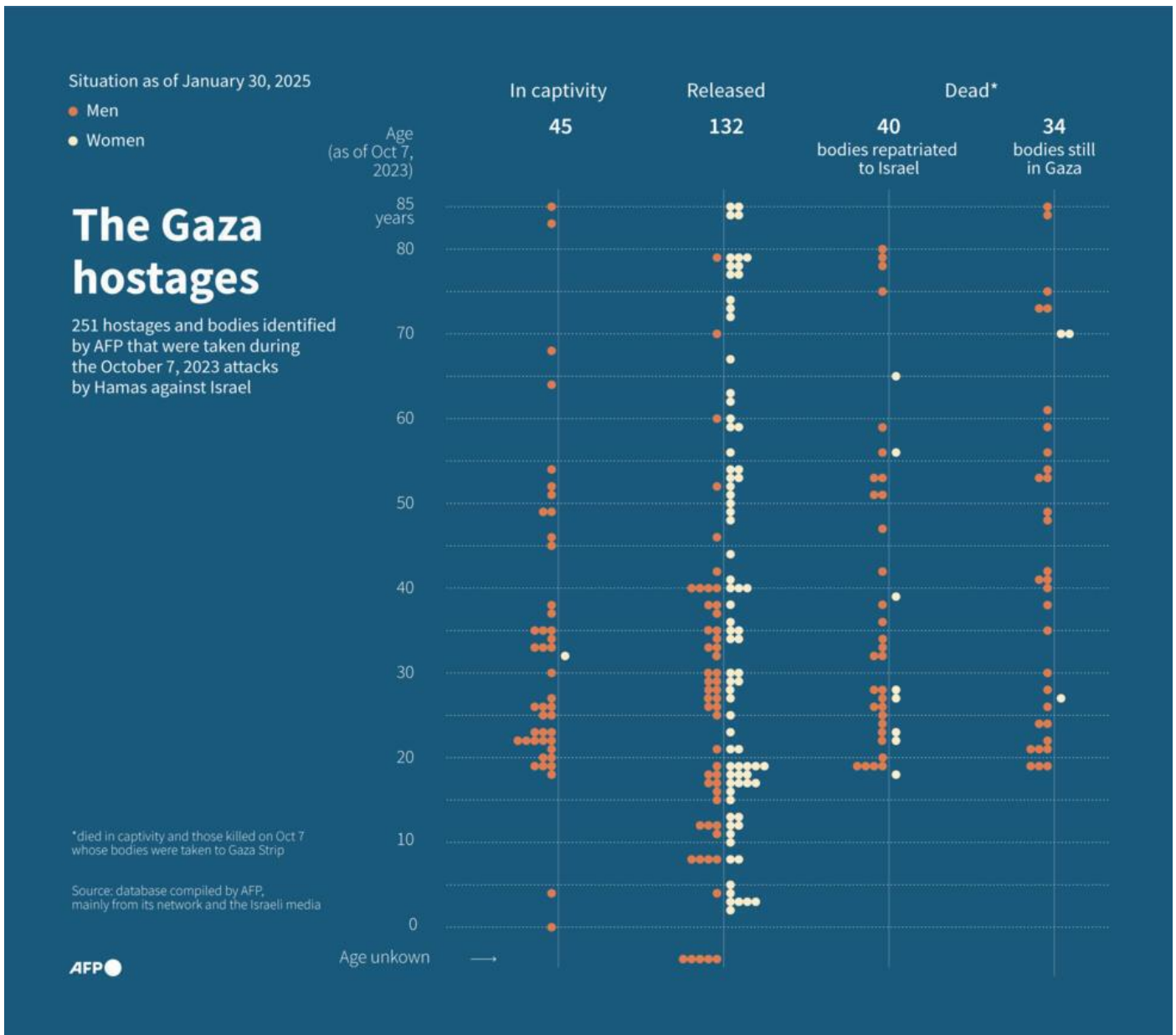
"Our Yarden is supposed to return tomorrow and we are so excited but Shiri and the children still haven't returned," the Bibas family said on Instagram Friday, adding it had "such mixed emotions".



Footage released by the Israeli military showed Bibas being reunited with his sister and father, who held him in a lengthy embrace.

Hundreds had gathered in Tel Aviv's "Hostage Square" to watch the live broadcast of the latest hostage releases.

Sighs of relief ran through the crowd as the three were freed and handed over to the Red Cross, though the mood was mostly sombre.



© Paz Pizarro, Jean-Philippe Chognot, Valentin Rakovsky, AFP

At Tel Aviv's Sheba Hospital, Kalderon, a keen mountain biker, was met by a contingent of cyclist friends and other supporters, beaming and blowing kisses as they chanted his name.

"It's amazing, amazing! A year-and-a-half is culminating in this moment," said Navit Hermesh. "We missed him so much, we worried about him so much, and we are so happy that he's coming back."

Ahead of both exchanges in Khan Yunis and Gaza City, scores of masked Hamas fighters stood sentry, apparently to control onlookers, and large crowds were mostly absent.

It was a sharp contrast to Thursday's frenzied exchange, which drew Israeli condemnation and led it to briefly delay the release of Palestinian prisoners.

'DIFFICULT' SITUATION

Israeli hostage Yarden Bibas pictured ahead of his release in Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip.

© Eyad Baba, AFP

After Saturday's hostage release, Gaza's key Rafah border crossing was reopened, with the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory saying 50 Palestinian patients had gone through the crossing to Egypt.

Egyptian state-linked channel Al-Qahera News showed footage of the first evacuees, including a child with an autoimmune disease, crossing into Egypt to receive treatment.

Muhammad Zaqout, director for Gaza hospitals, said he hoped the number would increase.

"We now have 6,000 cases ready to be transferred, and more than 12,000 cases that are in dire need of treatment," he said.

Rafah was a vital Gaza aid entry point before the Israeli military seized the Palestinian side of the crossing in May.

The fragile ceasefire's 42-day first phase hinges on the release of a total of 33 hostages in exchange for around 1,900 people, mostly Palestinians, held in Israeli jails.

Negotiations for a second phase of the deal are set to start on Monday, according to a timeline provided by an Israeli official.



Trucks loaded with aid wait to cross into Gaza from the Egyptian side of the Rafah border crossing earlier this month. © Khaled Desouki, AFP

The second phase is expected to cover the release of the remaining captives and to include discussions on a more permanent end to the war.

The ceasefire deal was negotiated by mediators Qatar, Egypt and the United States.

US President [Donald Trump](#), who has claimed credit for the deal, is expected to host Israeli Prime Minister [Binyamin Netanyahu](#) at the White House on Tuesday.

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT RAFAH, ITS IMPORTANCE TO HAMAS, AND PROTECTING ITS CIVILIAN POPULATION

[AJC](#) April 3 2025

The southern Gaza city of Rafah sits strategically along the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt and has become a major focal point during Israel's defensive war against Hamas. Here is what to know about the strategic importance of Rafah, Israel's operation, and the future of the Israel-Hamas war.

THE LATEST UPDATES:

Driving the news: Israel has launched a major ground offensive in Rafah, aiming to cut off the city from the rest of Gaza and pressure Hamas into releasing hostages. Israeli forces have seized the "Morag Corridor," a new security zone south of Khan Younis, and intensified airstrikes across Gaza.

Why it matters: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Wednesday that Israeli forces are establishing a new security corridor in southern Gaza that would effectively separate [Rafah from the rest of the Strip, describing it as a "second Philadelphi" corridor](#) in order to increase pressure on Hamas to release hostages. The Philadelphi Corridor is a narrow strip of land separating Egypt from Gaza. Hamas has used the border with Egypt as its main smuggling route to bring in weapons and goods to further its war efforts. Israel has maintained that its presence in the region is key to dismantling Hamas and prevent it from rearming. The announcement comes amid the IDF's renewed efforts in Gaza, with an additional division being deployed to southern Gaza alongside intense airstrikes and preparations for a substantial ground operation into the area.

The big picture:

- **Hostages:** Hamas is still holding 59 hostages, including 35 confirmed dead. Israel insists military pressure will continue until they are freed.
- **Civilians and Evacuations:** The IDF has emphasized that its operations are designed to protect civilians. Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani confirmed that most civilians in southern Gaza's Rafah area had evacuated, and efforts are being made to ensure civilians are not caught in combat zones. The IDF uses messages, flyers, and social media to communicate evacuation orders.
- **Ceasefire talks:** Stalled negotiations remain deadlocked as Israel demands Hamas' complete demilitarization.

What's next: Israel plans to expand its control over Gaza's border regions to continue to exert further pressure on Hamas to release the hostages.

Israel's past operations in Rafah: In May 2024, after months of deliberations and international concerns about the humanitarian impact, Israel launched a limited and phased operation to dismantle the remaining Hamas terror battalions in the city. At the time, some 1.4 million Palestinians resided in the city, with over a million Palestinians evacuating there since Israel launched its war to defend itself following the Hamas massacre on October 7, 2023.

On October 17, 2024, Israeli officials confirmed that Hamas leader [Yahya Sinwar](#) was killed in Rafah. By late June, Prime Minister Netanyahu stated that Israel's operation in Rafah was nearing its end, with four Hamas battalions dismantled. During the operation, Israeli forces uncovered numerous Hamas tunnels in Rafah, including smuggling tunnels used for trafficking weapons and civilians, as well as tunnels used for storing weapons and moving terrorists. In September, the IDF recovered the bodies of six Israeli hostages executed by Hamas, who had been held in a tunnel beneath Rafah.

Why is Rafah strategically important, and why did Israel launch an operation there in 2024?

To return the hostages kidnapped on October 7, prevent Hamas from carrying out another October 7-style massacre of Israelis, shut down the illegal weapons and people smuggling tunnels between Gaza and Egypt, end the Iran-backed terror group's influence over Gaza, and put pressure on Hamas to agree to a deal that will release Israeli hostages.

Every country has a moral obligation to not only protect the safety and security of its citizens but to rescue those taken hostage. Many Israeli analysts believe that pressuring Hamas in Rafah could force the terror organization to get serious about negotiating with Israel and releasing its prisoners. In February 2024, Israel carried out a successful and dramatic rescue operation in Rafah that freed two hostages, Fernando Simon Marman, 60, and Luis Har, 70, who were abducted from Kibbutz Nir Yitzhak on October 7.

In addition, Rafah was the last remaining stronghold for Hamas' military battalions and its leadership. Defeating Hamas' remaining battalions in Gaza is needed to ensure that the Iran-backed terror group no longer has the ability to murder Israelis. Hamas, which calls for Israel's destruction in its charter, has [repeatedly promised to carry out more 10/7-style massacres against Israel](#). Hamas could easily use Rafah as a base to reassert control over the entire Gaza Strip if the war were to end prematurely.

A campaign in Rafah is also essential to eliminate Hamas' and other terrorist groups' underground network of smuggling tunnels between Egypt and Gaza. Shortly after [Hamas gained control of the Gaza Strip](#), throwing out the Palestinian Authority in a bloody coup in 2007, a "tunnel industry" began to thrive under the border between Gaza and Egypt. Hamas has operated most of these tunnels, collecting tolls and trafficking explosives, guns, rockets, and drones. Terrorists also have used the tunnels to go to and from Gaza in order to train in Iran and other countries.

Egypt has previously worked to destroy the tunnels, but smuggling remains a concern. Ridding the area of Hamas and destroying the tunnels once and for all is an Israeli security priority.

What steps did Israel take to protect civilians in Rafah?

While Israel goes to extraordinary lengths to keep Palestinian civilians out of harm's way (more on that below), Hamas specifically puts Palestinian civilians in danger. For example, in Rafah, former IDF spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said in 2024 that "Hamas built everything in a civilian neighborhood — among houses, among mosques, among the population — in order to create its terror ecosystem." Time and again, Hamas uses Palestinians as human shields, purposely driving up the number of innocent Palestinians killed in the war while preserving the lives of the terrorist fighters.

"Israel has implemented more measures to prevent civilian casualties in urban warfare than any other military in the history of war. This includes many measures the U.S. has (or has not) taken in wars and battles but also many measures no military in the world has ever taken," asserts John Spen

cer, Chair of Urban Warfare Studies at the Modern War Institute at West Point, a research center dedicated to the study of war and warfare. [Read more of Spencer's expert analysis.](#)

In Rafah in 2024, Israel again deployed extraordinary steps to ensure Gazans were not in harm's way in Rafah. For instance, before Israel's targeted operation in eastern Rafah neighborhoods, hundreds of thousands of leaflets, phone calls, text messages, and social media posts in Arabic were disseminated to ensure the approximately 100,000 Palestinian civilians in these areas were evacuated out of harm's way to an expanded humanitarian zone in the al-Mawasi and Khan Younis areas of southern Gaza.

The IDF said that the expanded humanitarian zone includes field hospitals and tent camps for displaced Palestinians, while the IDF noted that "there has been a surge of humanitarian aid going into Gaza."

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WATCH: 'POST' VISITS KEY GAZA CORRIDOR, IDF'S LATEST MOVE TO DEFEAT HAMAS IN SOUTHERN GAZA

The IDF is building the Morag Corridor to divide Rafah from Khan Yunis, weaken Hamas holdouts, and increase pressure for a new hostage deal.

THE JERUSALEM POST [YONAH JEREMY BOB](#) APRIL 9, 2025



Jerusalem Post reporter Yonah Jeremy Bob on the junction of Morag between Rafah and Khan Yunis, April 9, 2025. (credit: Yonah Jeremy Bob)

The Jerusalem Post on Wednesday joined the first media visit to Gaza since the January 19 ceasefire and the renewal of hostilities on March 18.

The focus of the visit was touring the Morag Corridor, which the IDF is building into a strategic route for cutting off the deep southern Gaza region of Rafah from the mid-southern Gaza region of [Khan Yunis](#).

The IDF's [36th Division](#), led by Brig.-Gen. Moran Omer, is spearheading the project to expand the Morag Corridor area into a series of military positions and clear a large portion of Palestinian structures in the area to make it impossible to mount a surprise attack above land without being seen.

Moran and Southern Command chief Maj.-Gen. Yaniv Asor also joined the visit.

The IDF said the full length of the corridor could stretch up to 12 km. with a width of a minimum of 300 meters in all directions and could take a few months to complete. This includes demolishing many nearby structures, which could obscure the vision of IDF soldiers guarding the corridor.

On the way to the lookout and meeting point, *the Post* saw areas of the Philadelphi Corridor and Rafah, which were completely destroyed and flattened, with no structures visible in the vicinity.

The Morag junction, the new major corridor the IDF is building between Rafah and Khan Yunis, April 9, 2025. (credit: Yonah Jeremy Bob)

Closing in on the meeting point in the northern region of Rafah, there were more structures still standing, though the destruction nearby was still extensive, and it appears that the IDF plan is to demolish most of the remaining structures other than those deemed necessary for its own continued operations.

THE CORRIDOR'S PURPOSE

The purpose of the new corridor series of military positions – which joins the Netzarim Corridor that cuts off Khan Yunis and Rafah from northern Gaza, as well as the [Philadelphi Corridor](#) that separates Egypt and Gaza – is to make it easier for the IDF to defeat Hamas's remaining forces in Rafah.

IDF sources said Hamas currently has two battalions in Rafah.

That is a far cry from the 4,000-8,000 [Hamas](#) fighters who were in Rafah before the IDF's first invasion of the area in May 2024, but it is still not clear of organized Hamas military resistance.

Defense Minister Israel Katz told the small group of Israeli journalists during the visit that the purpose is to "increase the pressure [on Hamas] to release the hostages and to build a bridge for the continuation of operations for defeating Hamas."

"The IDF is achieving significant goals: evacuating the [Palestinian civilian] population, destroying [terror] infrastructure, segmenting Gaza in new areas in which it had not operated at any prior point in the war, eliminating tunnels, and soon establishing a new corridor... which will cut off the connection between Khan Yunis and Rafah. This will help our operations and make things harder for Hamas," said Katz.



An IDF soldier in Gaza's Morag Corridor, April 2025. (credit: YONAH JEREMY BOB)

MOREOVER, the defense minister stated that though during the ceasefire, Hamas was only willing to release one living hostage to continue any deal that did not include an Israeli promise to end the war, following the renewed hostilities and the establishment of the Morag Corridor, Hamas has upped its offer of hostages for such a temporary ceasefire to five and now eight living hostages.

He added that creating the Morag Corridor and other current IDF operations were making the probability of a new hostage deal according to Israel's terms higher than it was during the ceasefire.

Finally, Katz said there were no plans to restore humanitarian aid deliveries to Gaza, given that the immense aid they received during the ceasefire was sufficient for a period of additional months. Some observers say the already delivered aid was enough for three months from when aid was cut off around a month ago, and some say it was enough for close to half a year.

Further, the IDF said that creating the Morag Corridor has altered Hamas's calculations about the future as it has led to a mass re-evacuation of the Palestinian civilian population from Rafah back to the al-Mawasi humanitarian area.

According to the IDF, at the start of the war, Hamas's highest priority was any military achievements it could attain by killing IDF soldiers in battle or ambushes in Gaza or by killing Israeli civilians with its then-massive rocket arsenal.

At this point, Hamas is barely putting up any military fights against the IDF invasion and is barely firing any rockets on Israeli civilians but is highly concerned about trying to permanently return its civilian population to their residential areas to show it can still assert control and governance over the enclave.

Put differently, if, at the start of the war, Hamas wanted to impress all parties with its military prowess, it has given up on that front and is now mostly just hoping that it does not lose the battle for political control over Gaza's population.

IDF sources said Hamas's weapons manufacturing capabilities have been hit hard by IDF actions but that it still retains a variety of makeshift facilities and that having more forces in the Morag Corridor will make it easier to act speedily against such facilities when they are discovered and before Hamas manufacturers are able to escape.

The IDF said that since the renewed hostilities began on March 18-19, it had killed 300 Hamas terrorists and struck 1,000 targets connected to Gaza terror. The 36th Division, which only entered Gaza more recently, has killed around 75 terrorists and struck around 145 targets.

Related Tags [Gaza](#) [Hamas](#) [IDF](#) [Rafah](#)

ISRAEL'S LATEST WAR PLANS: TO OCCUPY GAZA AND RULE PALESTINIANS

[NPR](#) [Daniel Estrin](#) [Itay Stern](#) [Anas Baba](#) March 24, 2025

Listen · [Transcript](#)



Displaced Palestinians, who flee from Rafah amid ongoing Israeli military operations following Israel's renewed offensive in the Gaza Strip, arrive in Khan Younis, Gaza, on Sunday.

Abdel Kareem Hana/AP

TEL AVIV, Israel — The Israeli military has drawn up plans for a major ground invasion into Gaza to fully occupy the territory within a few months and establish military rule there, according to two people who reviewed the war plans.

This comes as Israel has returned to war in Gaza, ending a two-month ceasefire last week and carrying out intensive airstrikes targeting Hamas officials that has driven up the death toll in the territory past 50,000, according to Gaza health officials.

Both people briefed on the plans said they were presented to Israel's Security Cabinet but that it was unclear if and when the plans would be carried out and whether they are a negotiation tactic to pressure Hamas to release more hostages. They spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the classified plans.

According to one of the people briefed on the plans, Israel would order Gaza's 2.2 million Palestinians into a smaller "humanitarian zone" than the area it has currently designated for civilians. The military is examining options for soldiers to control the distribution of food limited to a minimum caloric amount necessary for survival, the person said.

Occupying Gaza and establishing military rule there would go beyond Israel's stated war goals to end Hamas rule and free hostages captured in the Oct. 7, 2023, attack. The plans were [first published](#) Friday by the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*.

In a statement, the Israeli military told NPR it would "not comment on future operational plans" and that it acts according to the directives of Israel's political leadership.

Separately, Israel's Cabinet said it approved a plan to establish an administration to help Gaza residents emigrate on what it called a voluntary basis, echoing a recent proposal by President Trump.

In Gaza, Issam Zakkout, 62, said the reports about Israel's plans amounted to "psychological warfare."

"Israel comes up with a new plan every day — one day it's displacement, another day it's playing with our minds," Zakkout told NPR. "A person doesn't even know what kind of life he's living in his own country. One day he feels like staying in his home, another day he feels like fleeing from it."

FORMER DEFENSE OFFICIALS DEBATED WHETHER THE MILITARY PLANS WERE WISE

"From the early days of the war, it's been a concern that the lack of a day-after plan — in which all hostages are released, Hamas is removed from power with the support of Arab states, and a credible alternative Palestinian leadership is installed — could lead to a full Israeli reoccupation of Gaza," said Dan Shapiro, who served as U.S. deputy assistant secretary of defense for the Middle East during the Biden administration. "It could last for years. It is not an outcome most Israelis want, and it could cost hostages' lives."

Amir Avivi, a former deputy commander of the Israeli military's Gaza division, said the plans should have been implemented earlier in the war.

"You cannot destroy Hamas without controlling the entire Gaza Strip. Eventually you'll have to control everything," Avivi said. "Bringing a collapse of Hamas as a governmental military entity, this can be achieved in a few months."

Kobi Michael, a researcher of Palestinian affairs at the Israeli Institute for National Security Studies, said the military was gearing up for the conquest of Gaza unless Hamas relented and released hostages.

"In the meantime, pressure is being increased, forces are being gathered, plans are being updated, and efforts are being made to weaken Hamas's resistance and its ability to disrupt a potential ground offensive," Michael said.

Amos Yadlin, former head of Israeli military intelligence, said such a maneuver in Gaza would allow Israel to learn lessons from its previous ground operation, focusing on targeting Hamas tunnels in specific areas and reworking how aid is distributed to civilians.

"This means that this time, operations across the Gaza Strip will take place simultaneously, tunnels will be dealt with differently, and humanitarian aid will be carefully monitored to prevent Hamas from replenishing its stockpiles," Yadlin told NPR. "This phase will include the occupation of parts of the Strip and the establishment of military rule, while maintaining civilian control and distributing food to Gaza residents, who will be concentrated in relatively limited areas. Wherever the (Israeli military) controls the Strip, it would be beneficial for food distribution to be generous."

Israel's defense minister, Israel Katz, issued a different threat Friday: that Israel would permanently annex parts of Gaza if it did not release Israeli hostages.

Michael Milshtein, an Israeli expert in Palestinian affairs and a former military intelligence officer, called it a "worn-out mantra" that would not convince Hamas to change course.

"The growing suspicion is that this serves as a disguise to implement the ideological goal of annexation — an agenda openly declared by senior government officials — under the guise of a 'pragmatic strategic doctrine,'" Milshtein [wrote Monday in an op-ed](#) in the Israeli news site Ynet.

THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S POSITION IS UNCLEAR

Asked to comment on the Israeli plan, a State Department spokesperson said only that "Hamas could release the hostages, which they they still have and the bodies of those that they've killed, and they could lay down their arms and the suffering would end. All of this would end."

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Israel's prime minister discussed Israel's military operations in Gaza in a phone call Sunday, the State Department said, without providing details.

Trump's Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff said Hamas was engaging in more negotiations, and that the Israeli public did not support Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu's return to war in Gaza.

"I think Bibi feels that he's doing the right thing," Witkoff said in a podcast interview with U.S. commentator Tucker Carlson published Friday. "I think he goes up against public opinion, because mostly, because public opinion there wants those hostages home."

ISRAEL IS GRADUALLY INCREASING ITS MILITARY OFFENSIVE IN GAZA

Israel broke the ceasefire with Hamas last week in an effort to pressure the Palestinian militant group to release more hostages under terms that would be more favorable to Israel.

[Middle East crisis — explained](#)

[Hamas fires first rockets since Israel broke recent ceasefire](#)

Since then, Israeli airstrikes in Gaza have killed more than 600 Palestinians, according to Gaza health officials. Israel has killed Hamas political figures in targeted strikes.

The Israeli military said its 36th Division, which took part in ground operations in Lebanon in recent months, is preparing for ground operations.

Israeli Army Radio said it was part of efforts to slowly increase ground operations in Gaza in a pressure tactic against Hamas.

Israeli reservists are exhausted from war, and some say they will refuse to serve in Gaza

The plans to conquer Gaza and maintain continued Israeli military control over it may face challenges from Israeli military reservists.

[Middle East](#)

[Israel launches new Gaza offensive as nationalists march in Jerusalem](#)

Some reservists have spoken to the Israeli media and written social media posts about their exhaustion after serving hundreds of reserve duty days in Gaza over the past year and a half.

Others said they would refuse to return to reserve service in light of recent moves by Netanyahu and his government to weaken the power of the judiciary and fire two top public servants serving as checks to the government. The moves have sparked massive protests across Israel in the past week.

Israeli military Reserve Maj. Nir Avishai Cohen [published a lengthy Facebook post](#) saying he would refuse to continue serving in the reserves. He argued that the Gaza war has turned into a war for the survival of Netanyahu's far-right governing coalition.

"We have reached a point where only refusal and civil disobedience can bring about a change in the current situation and save the country," Cohen wrote. "Each of us must choose which side of history we want to be on. For the sake of Israel, for the future of all people living between the (Mediterranean) Sea and the Jordan (River), now is the time to take action — to refuse."

Alan Dershowitz, an American attorney who has described himself as a friend of Netanyahu, said he opposes the Netanyahu government's latest efforts to overhaul Israel's judiciary.

"It is a stupid thing to do to be prioritizing disputable controversial issues, when Israel is facing external threats that are so serious," said Dershowitz in an interview with Israel Army Radio.

Anas Baba reported from Gaza City. Jawad Rizkallah contributed from Damascus.

IDF advances in Gaza, expands buffer zone to pressure Hamas, but no fighting taking place

Defense Minister Israel Katz claims 'great achievements' bringing terror group closer to agreeing on hostage deal; says military preparing for 'big move' to defeat Hamas



By [Emanuel Fabian](#)

Follow

UPDATE: EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT RAFAH, ITS IMPORTANCE TO HAMAS, AND PROTECTING ITS CIVILIAN POPULATION



[AJC](#) April 3, 2025

The southern Gaza city of Rafah sits strategically along the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt and has become a major focal point during Israel's defensive war against Hamas.

Here is what to know about the strategic importance of Rafah, Israel's operation, and the future of the Israel-Hamas war.

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- **Ceasefire talks:** Stalled negotiations remain deadlocked as Israel demands Hamas' complete demilitarization.

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WHY IS RAFAH STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT, AND WHY DID ISRAEL LAUNCH AN OPERATION THERE IN 2024?

To return the hostages kidnapped on October 7, prevent Hamas from carrying out another October 7-style massacre of Israelis, shut down the illegal weapons and people smuggling tunnels between Gaza and Egypt, end the Iran-backed terror group's influence over Gaza, and put pressure on Hamas to agree to a deal that will release Israeli hostages.

Every country has a moral obligation to not only protect the safety and security of its citizens but to rescue those taken hostage. Many Israeli analysts believe that pressuring Hamas in Rafah could force the terror organization to get serious about negotiating with Israel and releasing its prisoners. In February 2024, Israel carried out a successful and dramatic rescue operation in Rafah that freed two hostages, Fernando Simon Marman, 60, and Luis Har, 70, who were abducted from Kibbutz Nir Yitzhak on October 7.

In addition, Rafah was the last remaining stronghold for Hamas' military battalions and its leadership. Defeating Hamas' remaining battalions in Gaza is needed to ensure that the Iran-backed terror group no

longer has the ability to murder Israelis. Hamas, which calls for Israel's destruction in its charter, has [repeatedly promised to carry out more 10/7-style massacres against Israel](#). Hamas could easily use Rafah as a base to reassert control over the entire Gaza Strip if the war were to end prematurely.

A campaign in Rafah is also essential to eliminate Hamas' and other terrorist groups' underground network of smuggling tunnels between Egypt and Gaza. Shortly after [Hamas gained control of the Gaza Strip](#), throwing out the Palestinian Authority in a bloody coup in 2007, a "tunnel industry" began to thrive under the border between Gaza and Egypt. Hamas has operated most of these tunnels, collecting tolls and trafficking explosives, guns, rockets, and drones. Terrorists also have used the tunnels to go to and from Gaza in order to train in Iran and other countries.

Egypt has previously worked to destroy the tunnels, but smuggling remains a concern. Ridding the area of Hamas and destroying the tunnels once and for all is an Israeli security priority.

WHAT STEPS DID ISRAEL TAKE TO PROTECT CIVILIANS IN RAFAH?

While Israel goes to extraordinary lengths to keep Palestinian civilians out of harm's way (more on that below), Hamas specifically puts Palestinian civilians in danger. For example, in Rafah, former IDF spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said in 2024 that "Hamas built everything in a civilian neighborhood — among houses, among mosques, among the population — in order to create its terror ecosystem." Time and again, Hamas uses Palestinians as human shields, purposely driving up the number of innocent Palestinians killed in the war while preserving the lives of the terrorist fighters.

"Israel has implemented more measures to prevent civilian casualties in urban warfare than any other military in the history of war. This includes many measures the U.S. has (or has not) taken in wars and battles but also many measures no military in the world has ever taken," asserts John Spencer, Chair of Urban Warfare Studies at the Modern War Institute at West Point, a research center dedicated to the study of war and warfare. [Read more of Spencer's expert analysis.](#)

In Rafah in 2024, Israel again deployed extraordinary steps to ensure Gazans were not in harm's way in Rafah. For instance, before Israel's targeted operation in eastern Rafah neighborhoods, hundreds of thousands of leaflets, phone calls, text messages, and social media posts in Arabic were disseminated to ensure the approximately 100,000 Palestinian civilians in these areas were evacuated out of harm's way to an expanded humanitarian zone in the al-Mawasi and Khan Younis areas of southern Gaza.

The IDF said that the expanded humanitarian zone includes field hospitals and tent camps for displaced Palestinians, while the IDF noted that "there has been a surge of humanitarian aid going into Gaza."

IDF ADVANCES IN GAZA, EXPANDS BUFFER ZONE TO PRESSURE HAMAS, BUT NO FIGHTING TAKING PLACE

Defense Minister Israel Katz claims ‘great achievements’ bringing terror group closer to agreeing on hostage deal; says military preparing for ‘big move’ to defeat Hamas

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Emanuel Fabian](#) 9 April 2025



Bcbb IDF soldiers are seen in the Morag Corridor area of the southern Gaza Strip, between Rafah and Khan Younis, April 9, 2025. (Emanuel Fabian/Times of Israel)

RAFAH, Gaza Strip — Little to no fighting has taken place in the Gaza Strip since the Israeli military resumed its offensive against the Hamas terror group several weeks ago.

The Israel Defense Forces has advanced in the Strip’s south, capturing the so-called Morag Corridor, located between the Palestinian cities of Rafah and Khan Younis; [vastly expanded](#) its buffer zone along the Gaza border; carried out over 1,000 airstrikes on Hamas targets, eliminating more than 40 senior officials and mid-level commanders; and located several new tunnels.

The current offensive is aimed at “increasing the pressure on Hamas for the sake of releasing the hostages” and preparing the ground for Israel’s plan to “defeat Hamas,” Defense Minister Israel Katz told reporters on Wednesday during a visit to the Morag Corridor, an area where the IDF has previously not operated.

Katz said the IDF was bringing about “great achievements” during the resumed fighting, including evacuating the civilian population in Rafah and encircling the city.

But those “achievements” do not appear to be affecting Hamas for the time being.

Talks with the terror group to release the remaining 59 hostages still in captivity have seemingly stalled, and at the same time, Hamas operatives are almost entirely not engaging Israeli troops on the ground.



Defense Minister Israel Katz is seen in the Morag Corridor area of the southern Gaza Strip, between Rafah and Khan Younis, April 9, 2025. (Emanuel Fabian/Times of Israel)

The terror group has also been recruiting more fighters and attempting to restock its limited weapon caches. The IDF estimates that the terror group has some 20,000 active fighters, half of what it had before the war.

Israeli officials have said the country is willing to engage in talks on ending the war in Gaza but will insist on achieving its aims — the return of all the hostages, the disarming of Hamas and other Gaza terror groups, the exile of Hamas leaders, and a new governing structure that does not include Hamas.

And if the terror group continues to dig in its heels and refuses to meet Israel's demands, the IDF will eventually call up a large number of reservists to "defeat Hamas," Katz said.

"If Hamas continues its refusal and will not release the hostages soon, the IDF will move to intensive fighting across all of Gaza, until the hostages are released and Hamas is defeated," he said.

Some military officials believe that Hamas will never surrender, no matter how hard the IDF hits it.

Katz said he believed that reaching a new hostage deal with Hamas was "more likely than it was before" because of the new IDF offensive, which he said was pressuring the terror group.

"Moving the population, capturing territory, the continued humanitarian blockade, all of these bring strong pressure on Hamas to release the hostages. I hope that this pressure, alongside the powerful IDF activities, will work, and we will return to the path of releasing the hostages," he said.

Regarding the growing humanitarian crisis in Gaza, after Israel stopped allowing the entry of aid, Katz asserted: "There are no shortages in Gaza, and there is no intention to reopen."

Katz said that if a hostage deal happens, the IDF's current offensive would stop "immediately."

But he said the military was still preparing for "the big move," which would involve drafting numerous reservists to defeat Hamas. "This will happen eventually," he said.

NEW CORRIDOR, EXPANDED BUFFER ZONE

Some 250,000 Palestinians — mostly from Rafah — have evacuated areas in Gaza declared by the IDF as combat zones since March 18, and among them are many terror operatives who are choosing not to fight, according to military estimates.

The IDF launched massive strikes in southern Gaza before troops of the 188th Armored Brigade and Golani Infantry Brigade — operating under the 36th Division — entered the Morag Corridor area for the first time.

The Morag Corridor is set to run for some 15 kilometers from the Israeli border community of Sufa to the coast of the Strip, parallel to the Philadelphi Corridor on the Egypt-Gaza border area, which is also controlled by the IDF.

Once the corridor is fully established, the IDF will have effectively cut off Rafah from Khan Younis.

The military aims to operate inside areas of Rafah to defeat the remaining Hamas forces there, despite [declaring six months ago](#) that the terror group's Rafah Brigade had already been defeated.

So far, the IDF has located several Hamas tunnels in the area between Rafah and Khan Younis, along with other terror infrastructure.

In all, the military estimates that it has destroyed just 25% of Hamas's tunnels across the entire Strip since the beginning of the war. It argues that the main focus has been on Hamas's attack tunnels and those used as command centers or for weapons manufacturing — the majority of which have been destroyed — rather than the numerous tunnels that Hamas uses to move around the Strip.

After Hamas's Rafah Brigade has been defeated, the IDF's buffer zone in southern Gaza will stretch from the Egypt border to the outskirts of Khan Younis — around 5 kilometers away — and include the entire city of Rafah within it — around 20% of the Strip.

The IDF's buffer zone elsewhere on the border with Gaza has also been expanded from several hundred meters to around 2 kilometers in most areas.

Amid all of the new operations in Gaza in the past weeks, the IDF has only reported [one incident](#) of troops coming under fire.

With 20,000 active operatives and apparently no plans to surrender, it is unlikely that Hamas is too weakened to engage the IDF.

Rather, Hamas is preparing, just like the IDF is, for a much more major battle, one that would more than likely endanger the remaining 24 living hostages still being held by the terror group.

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New corridor, expanded buffer zone

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ISRAEL TAKES CONTROL OF RAFAH, CREATING NEW 'SECURITY CORRIDOR' IN GAZA

The IDF has ordered Palestinians to evacuate Rafah.

[abc NEWS](#) [Victoria Beaule](#), [Morgan Winsor](#), and [Nadine El-Bawab](#) April 12, 2025



Trump meets with Israeli PM Netanyahu at White House to discuss tariffs, war in Gaza President Trump and Netanyahu discussed Israel's war with Hamas and the tariffs that the U.S. imposed on virtually all of its trading partners, which have sent world markets reeling.

Israel announced Saturday that its military has completed the establishment of a new security corridor in the Gaza Strip, effectively taking full control over the southern city of Rafah -- which Israel had ordered evacuated -- and cutting it off from the rest of the Palestinian territory.

"The IDF has now completed the takeover of the Morag axis that crosses Gaza between Rafah and Khan Yunis and makes the entire area between the Philadelphi axis and Morag part of the Israeli security zone," Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said in a statement. "IDF activity will soon expand strongly to additional locations throughout most of Gaza and you will have to evacuate the fighting zones."

Over 1,500 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza since Israel [ended the ceasefire](#) on March 18. In total, nearly 51,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza since Oct. 7, 2023.

The IDF has been [expanding its operations](#) in Gaza since it ended the ceasefire in March, earlier this month saying it will capture extensive territories. On April 2, Katz said they will "seize large areas that will be annexed to the security zones of the State of Israel."

Earlier this month, the Israel Defense Forces issued evacuation orders for large swaths of war-torn Gaza, including parts of Khan Yunis and almost all of Rafah.

This came as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced the establishment of the so-called Morag Corridor, describing it as "a second Philadelphi Corridor" that would further divide Gaza and increase pressure on Hamas to release the remaining Israeli hostages.

The so-called Philadelphi Corridor refers to a narrow strip of land along Gaza's border with Egypt that has been under Israeli control since May 2024.

The IDF said Israeli troops were operating in some areas between Rafah and Khan Yunis where they had never operated previously and that the strategy behind establishing the new security corridor was to separate Hamas fighters in Rafah from Khan Yunis, spokesperson Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani said at a press briefing last week.

[MORE: Trump's idea to relocate Palestinians from Gaza could worsen humanitarian crisis: Experts](#)

The IDF said on Saturday that it had "eliminated dozens of terrorists, dismantled underground tunnel routes and Hamas terror infrastructure, and completed the encirclement of Rafah," in the last week and a half.

In an address to Palestinians in Gaza following the completion of the Morag axis, Katz said the IDF is already continuing to expand its territory in Gaza.



Footage released by the Israeli Army says to show Israeli soldiers conducting operations in a location given as Tel Al-Sultan area, Rafah Governorate, Gaza, in this still image taken from an undated handout video, released April 2, 2025.

Israeli Army Handout via Reuters

"This is the last moment to remove Hamas and release all the hostages and bring about an end to the war - IDF activity will soon expand vigorously to additional locations throughout most of Gaza," he said.

"In northern Gaza, residents are also evacuating in Beit Hanoun and other neighborhoods and the area is being taken, expanding the security zone and in the Netzarim Corridor. IDF activity will soon expand strongly to additional locations throughout most of Gaza and you will have to evacuate the fighting zones," Katz said.

Last week, the IDF said at a press briefing that the only thing that can halt the IDF's advance in Gaza is the release of hostages.



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Israeli Army Handout via Reuters

Katz reiterated support for U.S. President Donald Trump's proposal to forcibly expel Palestinians in Gaza and said they are working toward making it possible for Palestinians in Gaza to "voluntarily move to various countries around the world."

In February, Trump departed from decades of U.S. foreign policy, announcing that the U.S. would "clean out" the Gaza Strip and rebuild it, saying Palestinians living there should leave -- a statement that the United Nations and allies, including France and Germany, [have called a violation of international law](#) and said it amounts to ethnic cleansing.

[MORE: Israel will not withdraw from Philadelphi corridor as stipulated in ceasefire](#)



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Trump at one point [threatened to withdraw aid to Egypt and Jordan](#) if they didn't agree to take in Palestinians, though less than 24 hours later, he said, "I don't have to threaten that, I don't think. I think we're above that."

Egypt and Jordan have both firmly opposed taking in forcibly displaced Palestinians.

NETANYAHU: IDF WILL HOLD CAPTURED AREAS IN GAZA UNTIL HAMAS DEFEATED, HOSTAGES FREED

PM says military will no longer withdraw from seized territory; IDF spokesman says new 'wide-scale attack' will move 'majority' of Gazan population to areas 'sterile of Hamas'

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Nava Freiberg](#), [Emanuel Fabian](#) and [Tol Staff](#) 5 May 2025

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Monday that the military will stay stationed in whatever areas of the Gaza Strip are captured until all the goals of the war are reached, a day after the [cabinet voted](#) to intensify combat operations against the Hamas terror group.

In a video posted on his personal X account, Netanyahu said that "last night we sat late into the night in the cabinet and decided on an intensified operation in Gaza."

"This was the recommendation of [IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir] — to move, as he put it, toward the defeat of Hamas," he continued.

"He believes this will also help us rescue the hostages along the way. I agree with him. We are not letting up on this effort, and we will not give up on a single one. That is what we are doing," he said.

"We won't talk about the details because we've already spoken in detail about both of these matters: what we're doing for the hostages, and what we're doing for the defeat [of Hamas]," Netanyahu added.

"One thing will be clear — we're not going in and out [of Gaza] just to call up reserves so they'll come and seize territory, we withdraw from territory, and carry out raids on what remains... That's not the intention. What's our intention? The opposite," he concluded.

IDF Spokesman Brig. Gen. Effie Defrin said Monday evening that the goal of the "new and intensified phase" of the war, dubbed Operation Gideon's Chariots, "is the return of our hostages and the defeat of Hamas's rule."

"These two goals are combined with each other," he said, adding that the offensive "will include a wide-scale attack and the movement of the majority of the Strip's population — this is to protect them in an area sterile of Hamas. And continued airstrikes, elimination of terrorists, and dismantling of infrastructure."

Defrin said the IDF will implement the "Rafah model," whereby all Hamas infrastructure is razed and the area is declared part of Israel's buffer zone, in other parts of the Strip.

An [Israeli official said earlier Monday](#) that the new plan provided for the "conquering of Gaza," retaining the territory, moving of the Palestinian civilian population toward the south of the Strip, attacking Hamas, and preventing the terror group from taking control of humanitarian aid supplies.

According to the official, “a central component of the plan is the extensive evacuation of the entire Gazan population from combat zones, including from northern Gaza, to areas in southern Gaza, while creating separation between them and Hamas terrorists, to allow the IDF operational freedom of action.”

Netanyahu’s video, along with the statements from the IDF spokesman and the official, affirmed what many government figures have said since the cabinet’s decision was announced Sunday night, namely that the IDF will no longer withdraw from captured areas as it has done during much of the first year and a half of the war against Hamas in Gaza.

Some government figures even went a step further than the prime minister, saying that Israel’s goal is to “occupy” the Strip, a word Netanyahu did not use in his statement.

Finance Minister Bezalel [Smotrich said Monday](#) that Israel will not withdraw from Gaza, even if there is another hostage deal, telling Israelis to “stop being afraid of the word ‘occupation.’”

“We are finally going to occupy the Gaza Strip,” the far-right minister said.

Similarly, Culture Minister Miki Zohar said Monday that the real goal of the renewed Israeli offensive against Hamas is “the complete occupation of the Strip,” acknowledging that “such a move endangers those who remain in captivity, but there is no choice left.”

Responding to the cabinet decision and the statements from ministers, the Hostages and Missing Families Forum on Monday accused the government of “choosing territory over hostages,” and noted that “this is against the will of over 70 percent of the people.”

Polls have consistently shown that a large majority of the Israeli public favors a deal that would see all the hostages held in Gaza released, even if it means ending the war.

Gaza Strip and activists protest at the Knesset in Jerusalem, May 5, 2025. (Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)

“The plan approved by the cabinet deserves the name ‘Smotrich-Netanyahu Plan’ for giving up on the hostages and its abandonment of national and security resilience,” the forum said.

Throughout the fighting, Smotrich and others on the far right have urged using the war as an opportunity to reestablish Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip, which existed until a unilateral withdrawal in 2005.

The new plan was also assailed by opposition politicians, who accused the government of prioritizing political survival over the lives of hostages and IDF soldiers.

The Democrats party chairman Yair Golan said that “Occupying the Strip, in practice, for the sake of ‘the survival of the government’ will cost us in blood,” and that the new plan was not formulated to “protect the security of Israel, but in order to save Netanyahu and his government of extremists.”

Avigdor Liberman, chairman of the hawkish Yisrael Beytenu party, charged Monday that “this is a war not for security, but for control,” adding that the government would “do anything” to maintain power, “even at the expense of the lives of hostages and soldiers.”



Displaced Palestinians line up to receive a meal in the northern Gaza Strip, on May 5, 2025.

(Ali Hassan/ Flash90)

The Hamas-led attack on October 7, 2023, which sparked the current war, saw thousands of terrorists storm southern Israel to kill some 1,200 people and take 251 hostages, of whom 58 remain in Gaza, including at least 35 who are thought to be dead, in addition to the remains of a soldier who was killed in the Strip in 2014.

Israel’s toll in the ground offensive against Hamas in Gaza and in military operations along the border with the Strip stands at 414.

More than 52,500 Palestinians have been killed since the war began, according to the Hamas-controlled health ministry.

The figures cannot be independently verified, and do not distinguish between combatants and civilians. Israel says it has killed some 20,000 combatants in battle as of January, and another 1,600 terrorists inside Israel during the Hamas onslaught.

PART 8

HAMAS AND HUMAN SHIELDS

HAMAS' USE OF HUMAN SHIELDS IN GAZA

(1)

[hamas human shields.pdf](#)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hamas, an Islamist militant group and the de facto governing authority of the Gaza Strip, has been using human shields in conflicts with Israel since 2007. According to the Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the war crime of using human shields encompasses “utilizing the presence of a civilian or other protected person to render certain points, areas, or military forces immune from military operations.” Hamas has launched rockets, positioned military-related infrastructure-hubs and routes, and engaged the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) from, or in proximity to, residential and commercial areas.

The strategic logic of human shields has two components. It is based on an awareness of Israel's desire to minimise collateral damage, and of Western public opinion's sensitivity towards civilian casualties. If the IDF uses lethal force and causes an increase in civilian casualties, Hamas can utilise that as a lawfare tool: it can accuse Israel of committing war crimes, which could result in the imposition of a wide array of sanctions. Alternatively, if the IDF limits its use of military force in Gaza to avoid collateral damage, Hamas will be less susceptible to Israeli attacks, and thereby able to protect its assets while continuing to fight. Moreover, despite the Israeli public's high level of support for the Israeli political and military leadership during operations, civilian casualties are one of the friction points between Israeli left-wing and right-wing supporters, with the former questioning the outcomes of the operation.

KEY POINTS

- √ The use of **human shields** can be considered an **example of 'lawfare'** – i.e. the use of the legal system against an enemy by damaging or delegitimising them, tying up their time or winning a public relations victory.
- √ Even if a targeted strike may be justifiable from a legal perspective, **first impressions frame the narrative**. Public opinion tends to be influenced more by images depicting the suffering of innocent civilians than by well-thought-out legal arguments.
- √ National governments should be able to publicly justify their position, and reveal their adversary's use of civilians in combat. This can only be accomplished by thoroughly documenting incidents, preparing supportive messages, and working across multiple channels to convey those narratives.

v Priority should be given to information activities **aimed at the very civilians who are used as human shields**, in order to undermine the adversary and convince civilians to actively or passively refuse to serve as human shields. Such activities need to be coherent, consistent and coordinated.

43 For example: In December 2009, an arrest warrant was issued for the then leader of the opposition Tzipi Livni under charges of war crimes allegedly committed during the 2008-09 Gaza War, when Livni was Foreign Minister. These incidents strained relations between Israel and the United Kingdom, and Israel urged the UK to rethink its policies to prevent a further breakdown. Roni Sofer, "Israel: If UK Doesn't Act, Relations Will Suffer," Ynet, 15 December 2009

SUMMARY

Hamas is an Islamist militant group based in the Gaza Strip, which has been designated by the US, the EU and other countries as a terrorist group. Hamas has been using human shields in conflicts with Israel since 2007. Although the definition of human shields is not consistent among states and inter-governmental organisations, the Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) states the war crime of using human shields encompasses "utilizing the presence of a civilian or other protected person to render certain points, areas, or military forces immune from military operations.

"1 Hamas relies on the Israeli government's aim to minimise collateral damage, and is also aware of the West's sensitivity towards civilian casualties. Hamas' use of human shields is therefore likely aimed at minimising their own vulnerabilities by limiting the Israeli Defense Forces' (IDF) freedom of action. It is also aimed at gaining diplomatic and public opinion-related leverage, by presenting Israel and the IDF as an aggressor that indiscriminately strikes civilians.

Hamas' most common uses of human shields include:

- Firing rockets, artillery, and mortars from or in proximity to heavily populated civilian areas, often from or near facilities which should be protected according to the Geneva Convention (e.g. schools, hospitals, or mosques).
- Locating military or security-related infrastructures such as HQs, bases, armouries, access routes, lathes,³ or defensive positions within or in proximity to civilian areas.
- Protecting terrorists' houses and military facilities, or rescuing terrorists who were besieged or warned by the IDF.
- Combating the IDF from or in proximity to residential and commercial areas, including using civilians for intelligence gathering missions.

By engaging in these acts, Hamas employs a win-win scenario: if indeed the IDF uses kinetic power, and the number of civilian casualties surges, Hamas can use that as a weapon in the lawfare⁵ it conducts. It would be able to accuse the IDF (and Israel) of committing war crimes, which in turn could result in the imposition of a wide

1 Douglas Fischer, "Human Shields, Homicides, and House Fires: How a Domestic Law Analogy Can Guide International Law Regarding Human Shield Tactics in Armed Conflict," *American University Law Review* 57, no. 2 (December 2007): 488. <http://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1029&context=aulr>

2 This modus operandi is inspired by Hezbollah's use of human shields in Lebanon. See: No

Author, "Deadly Hezbollah Chess Match," *The Washington Times*, 26 October 2006.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2006/oct/25/20061025-092622-2090r/>

3 Lathes are used to produce weapons and ammunition, especially rockets and mortar shells.

4 The IDF often uses telephone calls and leaflets to tell occupants to leave before striking. In some cases, the Israelis fire missiles without explosive warheads onto the roof to get Palestinians who had gathered there to leave. The Israelis call it "the knock on the roof." Steven Erlanger and Fares Akram, "Israel Warns Gaza Targets by Phone and Leaflet," *The New York Times*, 8 July 2014. <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/09/world/middleeast/by-phone-and-leaflet-israeli-attackers-warn-gazans.html?mcubz=1>

5 Lawfare refers to the use of the legal system against an enemy, such as by damaging or delegitimising them, tying up their time or winning a public relations victory (From: <https://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/jil/vol43/iss1/>). Originally defined by Dunlap as 'a method of warfare where [international] law is used as a means of realizing a military objective', or 'as a weapon of war' (From: <http://people.duke.edu/~pfeaver.dunlap.pdf>). The term is more broadly understood as the exploitation of real, perceived or even manipulated instances of international law violations in order to undermine the target nation and their values.

array of sanctions. On the other hand, if the IDF limits its use of military power in Gaza to avoid collateral damage, Hamas will be less vulnerable to Israeli attacks, and thereby able to protect its assets while continuing to fight. Hamas' growing strategic distress in the face of recent geopolitical developments will probably push the organisation towards a more pragmatic strategy in the near future. However, the movement is simultaneously preparing itself for yet another round of armed conflict with Israel. If this indeed happens, and in light of the success of the human shield practice, there is every reason to believe Hamas will continue resorting to the use of civilians as human shields.

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HAMAS' USE OF HUMAN SHIELDS IN GAZA (2)

2023 Israel - Hamas War Israeli Accusations

WIKIPEDIA

During the [2023 Israel–Hamas war](#), Israel stated that Hamas has strategically placed portions of its military tunnel system and command network [beneath civilian infrastructure](#), including Gaza's [al-Shifa Hospital](#). Israel released what it said were [videos of interrogations of two alleged members of Hamas' armed wing](#) in which the people on camera supported the assertion that Hamas militants are using hospitals as a means of protection from IDF strikes.^[31] [Human Rights Watch](#), [Amnesty International](#) and [Physicians for Human Rights Israel](#) have denounced such taped alleged confessions, stating that they were likely extracted under torture, violate international law and basic human rights, and should be considered inadmissible as credible evidence.^{[54][55]} They also called on the Israeli government to cease publishing taped "confessions".^[54] The Israeli army accused Hamas of sending over one hundred women and children to a compound it was targeting to act as human shields. It said two of its soldiers were killed while withdrawing from the compound.^[56]

On 8 November, the IDF and Shin Bet footage from what it said was an intercepted phone call and the interrogations of terrorists who participated in the October 7 massacre. The *Times of Israel* reported that "an apparent Hamas operative" said to another man in Gaza that he "can leave with any ambulance" he wants.^[57]

Israel accused Hamas of "double war crimes" in using civilian locations to launch attacks. An IDF spokesman told CBS News that "a systemic abuse by Hamas of sites and locations that are supposed to enjoy special protection under the Geneva Convention and humanitarian law". The IDF shared with CBS photos it said showed Hamas members launching rockets from near UN facilities.^{[58][59]}

On 18 November CNN aired footage taken by the IDF showing what appears to be a person armed with an [RPG](#) launcher entering the premises of [Al-Quds Hospital](#).^[60]

On 19 November the IDF released footage of an underground tunnel under al-Shifa.^[61] The tunnel, which is 160 meter long and 10 meter deep, passes directly under the Qatari building of the hospital; it has air-conditioned rooms, bathrooms, a kitchenette, electricity connections and communication infrastructure, and is protected by a [blast door](#).^[62] The IDF also released [CCTV](#) footage that appears to show two of the hostages being led in the hospital's corridors, as well as Hamas and stolen IDF vehicles in its courtyard.^{[63][64]}

According to Israel, Ahmad Kahlot, who they reported to be the director of [Kamal Adwan Hospital](#) in northern Gaza, while being interrogated by the [Shin Bet](#) said that Hamas had taken control of the hospital as a military operations center and that he himself was Hamas member. Israel said that during the interrogation he said that many hospital staff members served in the [al-Qassam brigades](#).^{[65][66]} According to the Israeli military, he said that Hamas used the hospital for holding an IDF soldier hostage and employed ambulances to transport the bodies of Israeli hostage and that Hamas had separate offices, ambulances, and equipment with distinct colors and signs.^{[65][66]}

On 1 January 2024, the Jerusalem Post released selected footage of the IDF's Unit 504 interrogations of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad militants. The investigation alleged various tactics Hamas employed to exploit Gazan civilians.^[67] Zohadi Ali Zahadi Shahin, an alleged Hamas member, said Hamas prevented civilians from fleeing towards Rafah crossing and instead relocated them to Al-Shifa Hospital where they were kept while Hamas terrorists hid in tunnels underneath. Shahin also said Hamas terrorists would forcibly take over civilian homes, plant explosives, and intimidate residents, with one militant threatening Shahin directly. Another alleged operative, Muhammad Darwish Amara from Palestinian Islamic Jihad, said Hamas planted a bomb in his home where his children were staying to coerce him into participating in terrorist activities.^[67]

These interrogations and use of selected video footage of alleged confessions by alleged Hamas militants have been widely criticized by human rights organizations as they likely involve the use of torture, do not give due process to detainees, and are selectively edited for release.^{[54][55][68]}

Input from other parties

[White House National Security Council](#) spokesperson [John Kirby](#) said that the United States has intelligence indicating that Hamas is using the Shifa Hospital in Gaza City for military purposes, possibly for weapon storage and also for holding captives.^{[69][70]} [National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan](#) stated that "you can see even from [open-source reporting](#) that Hamas does use hospitals, along with a lot of other civilian facilities, for command-and-control, for storing weapons, for housing its fighters... this is Hamas' track record, both historically and in this conflict". According to another US official, "Hamas has a command node under the Al-Shifa hospital, uses fuel intended for it and its fighters regularly cluster in and around [it]."^[71] The US assessment that Hamas and other Palestinian militants were operating within the Al-Shifa hospital included communication intercepts of fighters inside the complex.^[72]

A top Hamas official stated in October 2023 that they are not responsible for the protection of civilians in Gaza, and that instead the UN and in particular Israel are responsible for this under international law given that it is the occupying power over the [Occupied Palestinian Territories](#), which includes Gaza.^[73]

The October 2023 report by the UN Human Rights Council's [Special Rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories Francesca Albanese](#), said that Israel, "despite its obligations as an Occupying Power, deprives Palestinians and their children of their basic human rights as part of its efforts to impede the development of Palestinian society and to permanently frustrate the Palestinians' right to self-determination".^[74] A July 2024 landmark opinion by the UN's top court, the [International Court of Justice](#), also reaffirmed this, stating that Israel should dismantle settlements in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, and end its "illegal" occupation of those areas and the Gaza Strip as soon as possible.^[75] [Human Rights Watch](#) called on both Israel and Hamas to protect civilians under their control and not use them as "human shields."^[14]

Human rights organizations demanded the release of hostages held by Hamas and cautioned that using them to shield military assets is prohibited under international law.^{[76][77]}

HAMAS OFFICIALS ADMIT ITS STRATEGY IS TO USE PALESTINIAN CIVILIANS AS HUMAN SHIELDS

FDD Natalie Ecanow Nov 1 2023

An interviewer recently posed a logical question to Mousa Abu Marzouk, a senior member of the Hamas politburo: “Since you have built 500 kilometers of tunnels, why haven’t you built bomb shelters where civilians can hide during bombardments?”

Abu Marzouk said the tunnels are “meant to protect us” from Israeli aircraft and facilitate attacks on Israeli targets.

“Us” meaning Hamas. Not civilians.

Hamas chooses not to build bomb shelters in Gaza because that would undercut its ability to [use the population as human shields](#).

By putting civilians in or above its military positions, Hamas knows it cannot lose.

Either it will prevent Israel from attacking, since the Israeli military tries to minimize harm to civilians, or if Israel does attack, the use of human shields will ensure high civilian casualties.

Hamas can then hold the death toll against Israel while generating sympathy for itself.

[Hamas uses its hundreds of miles of tunnels](#) for military purposes: to transport weapons and ammunition, store supplies and train its members without exposing them to enemy surveillance and fire.

Equally important, the tunnels are a convenient way for Hamas to hide its military assets underneath civilian infrastructure. That is a textbook use of human shields, which international law prohibits.

Reliant on civilians to protect it from Israeli counterattacks, Hamas cannot afford to let Gaza’s civilian population seek refuge from clashes with the Israel Defense Forces.

Accordingly, Hamas leadership ordered civilians in northern Gaza to defy the IDF’s advice to “evacuate south for your own safety” in advance of Israel’s ground invasion.

Eyad al-Bozom, a spokesman for Hamas’ interior ministry, encouraged Gaza’s residents to “stay put in your homes and your places.”

To its credit, the Biden administration has called out Hamas for employing a strategy whose essence is the commission of war crimes against the same people Hamas supposedly represents.

National Security Council spokesman John Kirby explained on CNN, “Hamas actually gave a counterorder telling Palestinians in Gaza to stay at home. Why? Because having human shields, they think, protects them.”

Hamas’ use of human shields is not new. Hamas has come close to confessing its exploitation of civilians before.

During an organized 2016 uprising at the Gaza border, Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar admitted the group “decided to turn that which is most dear to us — the bodies of our women and children — into a dam blocking the collapse in Arab reality.”

After acknowledging Hamas builds tunnels to protect fighters but not civilians, Abu Marzouk ventured that it is the job of the United Nations, not Hamas, to protect civilians.

It might have been hard to say that with a straight face, since Hamas also has a long record of turning UN facilities into part of its wall of human shields.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), whose mission is to provide relief for Palestinians, has repeatedly found stores of Hamas rockets hidden in tunnels beneath its schools.

In 2018, Congress passed the Sanctioning the Use of Civilians as Defenseless Shields Act, which has lain dormant since becoming law.

The Shields Act, which specifically calls out Hamas, requires the president to impose sanctions on individuals determined to be using human shields, but neither Biden nor his predecessor designated any Hamas leaders. Now would be a good time to start.

Doing so is unlikely to change Hamas' behavior, but it would send an important message both to Americans and leaders in other democratic nations.

It is not Israel but Hamas that bears moral responsibility for the [death of civilians in this war](#).

Hamas seeks to win by generating enough pressure on Israel from its allies to [force an end to Israel's military operations](#). Washington should make clear it will never fall for this ruse; nor should anyone else.

Natalie Ecanow is a research analyst at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

PART 9

**HAMAS TUNNELS, LACK OF AIR RAID SHELTERS,
GAZA STRIP IN MAPS**

PALESTINIAN TUNNEL WARFARE IN THE GAZA STRIP

WIKIPEDIA

A vast network of underground tunnels used for [smuggling](#) and [warfare](#) exists in the [Gaza Strip](#). This infrastructure runs throughout the Gaza Strip and towards [Egypt](#) and [Israel](#), and has been developed by [Hammas](#) and other [Palestinian military organizations](#) to facilitate the storing and shielding of weapons; the gathering and moving of fighters, including for training and communication purposes; the launching of offensive attacks against Israel; and the transportation of Israeli hostages. On several occasions, Palestinian militants have also used this tunnel network, which is colloquially referred to as the Gaza metro,^{[1][2][3]} to infiltrate Israel and Egypt while masking their presence and activities within the Gaza Strip itself. According to Iranian military officer Hassan Hassanzadeh, who commands the [Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps](#) from [Tehran](#), the Gaza Strip's tunnels run for more than 500 kilometres (310 mi) throughout the territory.^[4]

LARGEST TUNNELS

The largest known tunnel was discovered by the IDF on 17 December 2023, during the [Gaza war](#). The tunnel has several branches and junctions, along with plumbing, electricity and communication lines. The largest of the branches discovered had a length of approximately four kilometers and goes down to a depth of 50 meters underground in some areas. The tunnel was wide enough for vehicles to travel inside. IDF also captured footage of the tunnel's construction which was released to the internet and showed Hamas using tunnel-boring machines.^[22] The tunnel was discovered a quarter of a mile from a border crossing, and was described by Israel as designed for "moving massive assets." In one video shown to journalists, [Yahya Sinwar](#)'s brother [Mohammad Sinwar](#) is seen driving a car through what Israel described as the tunnel.^[23]

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND USES

According to Eado Eado Hecht, an Israeli defence analyst specialising in underground warfare, "Three different kinds of tunnels existed beneath Gaza, [smuggling tunnels between Gaza and Egypt](#); defensive tunnels inside Gaza, used for command centres and weapons storage; and—connected to the defensive tunnels—offensive tunnels used for cross-border attacks on Israel", including the capture of Israeli soldiers.^[47]

American ambassador [Daniel B. Shapiro](#) examining a part of the Palestinian tunnel network uncovered by the Israeli military during [Operation Protective Edge](#), 2014

The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, an Israeli security think tank, describes tunnel warfare as a shifting of the balance of power: "Tunnel warfare provided armies facing a technologically superior adversary with an effective means for countering its air superiority." According to the center, tunnels conceal missile

launchers, facilitate attacks on strategic targets like Ben-Gurion Airport, and allow cross-border access to Israeli territory.^[48]

An editorial in [The Washington Post](#) described the tunnels as "using tons of concrete desperately needed for civilian housing" and also as endangering civilians because they were constructed under civilian homes in the "heavily populated [Shijaiyah](#) district" and underneath the al-Wafa Hospital.^[49]

Working on the tunnel system provides an outlet for Hamas militants to be productively engaged in relative peacetime.^[50]

In May 2024, Daphné Richemond-Barak, the author of "Underground Warfare," wrote in [Foreign Policy](#) magazine: "Never in the history of tunnel warfare has a defender been able to spend months in such confined spaces. The digging itself, the innovative ways Hamas has made use of the tunnels and the group's survival underground for this long have been unprecedented."^[51]

[CLICK HERE FOR FULL ARTICLE](#)

HAMAS' TUNNELS OF TERROR MAP DISPLAY

Over the past two decades, Hamas has built a massive underground tunnel network beneath Gaza spanning 350–450 miles long. This map displays only a fraction of that.

HONEST REPORTING

The Tunnel Network

For over two decades, Hamas has built an extensive tunnel system beneath Gaza. These tunnels hide weapons, move terrorists, hold Israeli hostages, and smuggle goods from Egypt. Estimated at 350 to 450 mi long with 5,700 entry points, they're woven into civilian areas—schools, mosques, hospitals, and homes—and turn Gaza's 2 million residents into human shields.

Hamas' Investment: Terror Over Welfare

Hamas has spent \$1 billion over 15 years on these tunnels, with each costing \$3 million and needing 350 truckloads of supplies. This enormous investment of money and supplies into tunnel-building deprives the civilian population of Gaza of much-needed aid and places their lives directly in danger.

About the Map

For the first time ever, this interactive map allows journalists, academics, and curious observers of the Middle East to examine the scope of Hamas' vast tunnel network and to fully understand the degree to which it is embedded within Gaza's civilian infrastructure. This represents a fundamental shift in the narrative that blames Israel for the destruction of Gaza. Hamas has prioritized tunnels over infrastructure and terrorists over civilians. This map gives you the irrefutable, visual evidence to prove it. Based on open source intelligence, this map currently showcases only those tunnels whose whereabouts are publicly available. As more information becomes available, this map will be updated. Though only a fraction of Hamas' network of terror tunnels is currently plotted, this map allows you to simulate what the full network actually looks like.

Settings

Distance Units: Imperial (miles)

Credits

From HonestReporting in partnership with the creators of oct7map.com, Liran Sharir and Adi Maya.

With special thanks to Geo-analyst [Ben Tzion Macales](#) and HonestReporting Board Member [Salo Aizenberg](#).

Many of the locations on this map have been verified using geoconfirmed.org/israel, a community-based geolocating platform.

Contact Us For inquiries, corrections, or additional information about this project, please contact us

MEDIA WATCHDOG PUBLISHES FIRST INTERACTIVE MAP OF HAMAS TUNNELS IN GAZA

Users can explore more than 37 miles of documented tunnels, less than 10% of the infrastructure Hamas is believed to have built underground.

[THE JERUSALEM POST](#) Yuval Levy April 28 2025

The first-ever interactive digital map detailing [Hamas's](#) tunnel network in Gaza was published by Honest Reporting earlier this week, according to a Friday post on X/Twitter by the organization.

“This interactive map offers the first detailed visualization of Hamas' tunnels of terror and key events in the Israel-Hamas war, revealing how Hamas endangers Palestinian civilians while threatening Israeli lives,” Honest Reporting said in a statement on its website.

Discover what's under Gaza.

HonestReporting just launched the only tool of its kind that maps Hamas' tunnel network—buried under homes, hospitals, and schools. Help us expose what Hamas tried to keep hidden.

— HonestReporting (@HonestReporting) [April 27, 2025](#)

Users can explore more than 37 miles of [documented tunnels](#), representing less than 10% of the estimated underground infrastructure Hamas is believed to have built beneath Gaza.

The map details residences, hospital facilities, civilian infrastructure

Key locations highlighted on the map include the former residence of Hamas [leader Yahya Sinwar](#), Hamas's operation base beneath Shifa Hospital, [UNRWA facilities](#), sites of hostage release parades, and areas where Israeli hostages were held following the October 7th attacks.

The map also pinpoints areas of cross-border breaches with Israel and Egypt.



The IDF has exposed a four-kilometer-long, 50-meter deep “strategic” level tunnel
(credit: IDF SPOKESPERSON'S UNIT)

Additionally, the map identifies sites of weaponized civilian infrastructure. According to the source, more than 5,700 tunnel entrance shafts were embedded in residential homes, schools, mosques, and hospitals during the conflict.

Each map marker includes detailed background information, geographic coordinates, relevant images, and embedded links to related reports, along with sources for the details acquired.

Honest Reporting is an Israeli advocacy group and media watchdog. It describes its mission as ensuring “truth, integrity and fairness” in combating “ideological prejudice in journalism and the media, as it impacts Israel.”

Users can explore more than 37 miles of [documented tunnels](#), representing less than 10% of the estimated underground infrastructure Hamas is believed to have built beneath Gaza.

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Key locations highlighted on the map include the former residence of Hamas [leader Yahya Sinwar](#), Hamas’s operation base beneath Shifa Hospital, [UNRWA facilities](#), sites of hostage release parades, and areas where Israeli hostages were held following the October 7th attacks.

The map also pinpoints areas of cross-border breaches with Israel and Egypt.

ISRAEL'S NEW APPROACH TO TUNNELS: A PARADIGM SHIFT IN UNDERGROUND WARFARE

[MODERN WAR INSTITUTE](#) [JOHN SPENCER](#) | 12 February 2024



Before the war against Hamas in Gaza, the Israel Defense Forces were one of the most prepared militaries in the world for underground warfare. The IDF were the only army to have a full brigade-sized unit dedicated to training, manning, equipping, researching, developing new technologies and tactics, learning, and adapting *solely* for underground warfare. Still, the challenges they faced early in their campaign in Gaza, many of which they struggled initially to overcome, speaks to the incredible complexity of subterranean warfare. Their responses to these challenges signal a paradigm shift in modern approaches to underground warfare.

THE LONG LIST OF UNDERGROUND CHALLENGES

One of the main reasons the IDF were unprepared for Gaza's underground spaces was simply that no military had faced anything like it in the past—not even Israeli ground forces. The IDF faced a Hamas military organization that had spent over fifteen years engineering the infrastructure of an entire region—to include over twenty major cities—for war, with the group's [political-military strategy](#) resting on a vast and expensively constructed subterranean network under Gaza's population centers. The Hamas underground network, often called the "[Gaza metro](#)," includes between [350 and 450 miles](#) of tunnels and bunkers at depths ranging from just beneath apartment complexes, mosques, schools, hospitals, and other civilian structures to over [two hundred feet underground](#). There are estimates of over [five thousand separate shafts](#) leading down into Hamas subsurface spaces. In past wars, where underground environments were

used, the tunnel networks were subordinate to the surface and were not built solely under population centers mostly to be used as massive human shields.

IDF investigations and captured Hamas documents [produced reports](#) that it took Hamas a year to dig one kilometer of standard tunnel at a per-kilometer cost of \$275,000. A number of factors—size, type, and function, for examples—can raise the costs well beyond that of a standard mobility tunnel. The variety of tunnels in Gaza makes it difficult to estimate the underground network’s overall cost, but Hamas reportedly spent [\\$90 million](#) to build just three dozen tunnels in 2014, and some analysts place the network’s total cost at [over \\$1 billion](#).

On October 7, 2023, the IDF had a brigade of special operations forces engineers, the [Yahalom unit](#), fully equipped with technologies and tactics to accomplish the full range of underground warfare tasks, from detecting, securing, and mapping tunnels and bunkers to exploiting, clearing, neutralizing, and destroying them. This unit has spent decades researching, developing, testing, and purchasing technologies to overcome the challenge of military operations underground. This work includes a decade-long [antitunnel cooperation](#) and exchange program between Israel and the United States to jointly develop technologies and tactics that address the challenges of underground warfare. The IDF also has a robust military working dog program, [the Oketz unit](#), that includes dogs trained for operating in subterranean spaces.

IDF units like Yahalom had plenty of work to do to prepare for underground warfare. Soldiers need special equipment to breathe, see, communicate, navigate, breach obstacles, and even shoot underground. Almost every piece of their standard military equipment designed for the surface will not work once they enter the subsurface. Line-of-sight and satellite-enabled technologies—including navigation, communication, and drones—are rendered useless. Night-vision goggles that rely solely on ambient light will not work in an environment where there is none. A blast from a weapon or explosive detonated in enclosed underground spaces can cause harmful pressures and blast injuries making it dangerous to even fire a personal weapon if the soldier is not wearing the proper protective gear.

THE CULTURE COMPONENT

A unique challenge that all militaries face in dealing with underground warfare is one of culture. Any military force’s culture is guided by its history, priorities, and warfighting concepts. Whether that culture acknowledges and prepares for the underground challenges described above is determined by an institutional belief about whether or not underground spaces will be prominent features in future warfare. For example, the US Army’s cultural views surrounding tunnels and subterranean spaces is that they are obstacles to be dealt with when encountered. The service’s doctrine [recommends that](#) US soldiers “should avoid entering and operating in subterranean environments when possible.” If entering cannot be avoided, the doctrine describes the primary tasks as clearing and securing the subterranean environment.

The IDF have their own long history of dealing with tunnels, especially cross-border tunnels. Hamas and Hezbollah have used cross-border tunnels in the past to conduct surprise attacks on IDF outposts or small patrols in a bid to kidnap Israeli soldiers. This led to the IDF to develop advanced detection, mapping, and

navigating capabilities, as well as—in an emergency such as a soldier being taken back into a tunnel—the tactics to follow an enemy underground.

The IDF also developed advanced tunnel-striking capabilities with a wide variety of bunker-busting munitions. In the 2021 Operation Guardian of the Walls, the IDF believed they had destroyed [sixty miles](#) of Hamas tunnels in Gaza. Captured documents show that after this 2021 operation, the Hamas leadership [authorized \\$225,000](#) to install more blast doors in tunnel segments to protect against IDF bunker-busting munitions collapsing more of the tunnel beyond the point where the bomb directly strikes. Hamas also increased [production of handbooks](#) showing their fighters how to survive and fight in tunnels.

In general, the IDF culture before 2023 was marked by the belief that tunnels should be dealt with by specially trained forces and that regular troops should only be sent underground as a last resort.

ADAPTING TO TUNNELS

At the beginning of the IDF operations against Hamas in Gaza after the October 7 attack, the IDF targeted many bunkers and tunnels with precision-guided bunker-busting munitions. These strikes were based on intelligence regarding the locations of tunnels, their purpose and value to the enemy, their contents, considerations about the presence of hostages or civilians, and other factors.

Once the ground campaign began, the IDF knew they would be encountering a lot of tunnels. They task-organized squad-sized elements of Yahalom to as many maneuvering units as possible. The force that entered Gaza rapidly learned how to identify visual indicators of tunnel shafts, such as markings on buildings, the presence of infrastructure needed in the tunnels for power or ventilation, and other identifying features.

Once a shaft was located, it was generally secured and then Yahalom was called forward to investigate it. Even identifying a shaft was dangerous and time-consuming. The IDF lost [five soldiers](#) in early November 2023 from a booby-trapped tunnel entrance. Hamas's use of booby traps outside and inside their tunnels was pervasive. In some cases, Hamas tunnels were built with improvised explosive devices embedded into the walls. This allowed Hamas fighters to arm and then leave their booby-trapped tunnels quickly.

If a shaft was determined to be a tunnel it was carefully interrogated, mapped, and searched. Many advanced technologies were used in this process, including drones and robotic devices designed to work underground. In some cases, military working dogs with cameras mounted on their backs were deployed, but the risk of losing dogs to booby traps made this tactic rare. During this time, Israel continued to be reluctant to send troops underground and only did so after tunnels were searched for potential dangers.

In fighting Hamas defenders, the IDF immediately faced enemy brigades, battalions, and companies that each had tunnel networks supporting their operations. In northern Gaza, the IDF had weeklong battles over single neighborhoods because of Hamas's ability to pop in and out these networks and avoid decisive engagement.

In one attempt to combat Hamas's use of their tunnels, the IDF procured and deployed what is reported to be at least [five industrial pumps](#) to push thousands of cubic meters of water per hour into the tunnels to literally flush Hamas fighters out of them. The flooding had minimal impact. In one case, as one IDF officer I spoke to during a research visit told me, it took two weeks for a small Hamas tunnel to fill before the IDF finally saw Hamas fighters on the surface where they could be targeted. Due to the tunnels' porous concrete lining, the water simply drained out of them. Some tunnels were even built with drainage holes in them, while in others blast doors complicated the process. Flooding had little impact and was too time-consuming to use as a primary method to force Hamas fighters out of their tunnels. And ultimately, flooding would not destroy a tunnel.

The more the IDF engaged with the Hamas tunnel network, the more they adapted. Stopping for every suspected tunnel shaft and waiting for Yahalom to investigate severely slowed the momentum of maneuvering forces. Many of the suspected shafts were simply wells, civilian infrastructure, or other types of tunnels. The IDF quickly realized they had to push some of the specialized knowledge of Yahalom lower and to general-purpose soldiers. The regular IDF soldiers began to become proficient at dealing at least with shaft identification, site securing, and initial investigations.

The IDF began to realize that in many areas, the tunnels were a system of systems. Each Hamas company, battalion, and brigade had its own networks of tunnels that factored into how they would fight and move around. Some of these networks connected to each other while others were separate. Once the IDF were able to focus intelligence efforts on determining the classification and architecture of a tunnel system in a specific area or neighborhood, their success in finding and dealing with tunnels significantly increased.

The IDF also developed a typology of Hamas tunnels. Some Hamas tunnels were tactical, such as small-unit tunnels that ran from building to building giving Hamas fighters the ability to hold specific terrain. Some were more operational as they connected different battalions or brigades to each other or provided operational mobility—like the mile-long tunnels running underneath the river basin of central Gaza to connect the region's northern and southern portions. What to do about a specific tunnel and the urgency of action could be determined by proper identification of the type of tunnel that had been encountered.

Despite the IDF adaptations, a challenge remained: that of Hamas forces using the tunnels for their defensive operations as long as they could and then simply lining the tunnels with booby traps as they fell back to different tunnels. The tunnels gave Hamas the ability to control the initiative of most battles in Gaza.

TRANSFORMING TO TUNNELS

One Israeli commander refused to allow Hamas fighters to control the initiative by using their tunnels. When the war in Gaza began, Brigadier General Dan Goldfus—a veteran of the Shayetet 13 unit, a naval special operations unit—commanded the elite 98th Paratroopers Division. In late November 2023, with some of the IDF's best armor, artillery, and engineer units added to its paratroopers and commandos, the division was deployed into Hamas's strongpoint city of Khan Yunis in southern Gaza. The city was considered to be the ["center of gravity"](#) of Hamas's military forces.

General Goldfus learned from what the other IDF divisions had encountered in northern Gaza but also oversaw a rapid learning initiative to study the Hamas tunnels in Khan Yunis. He had his soldiers study the details of each tunnel, traveled into the tunnels with his soldiers, and had soldiers collect on how Hamas protected certain tunnels. He also used his unique connections in the IDF and Israel's intelligence service to develop what might be called all-source intelligence about types and locations of tunnels as well as other trends in Khan Yunis. Eventually, the division built the confidence that it understood the enemy's tunnel network.

General Goldfus developed a plan to enter Hamas's tunnels without Hamas knowing his soldiers were there. This was unlike any IDF unit's approach to tunnels in Gaza yet. His plan was [briefed to his](#) superiors for approval. He was given the approval to take the calculated risks that other units had not to that point. He then started sending his special operations forces, engineers, and others into uncleared tunnels at the exact same time he was maneuvering on enemy forces on the surface.

IDF special operations forces, commandos, and others were equipped with all the specialized equipment needed to breathe, navigate, see, communicate, and shoot underground. General Goldfus's division headquarters refined the ability to control forces moving underground with the tempo of the surface forces. Incrementally, the division refined its tactics to the point its soldiers were conducting raids with separate brigades attacking on the surface while more than one subterranean force maneuvered on the same enemy underground.

For the first time in the modern history of urban warfare, General Goldfus and his soldiers were conducting maneuver warfare simultaneously incorporating the surface and subsurface in dense urban areas. They had turned tunnels from obstacles controlled by the defending enemy into maneuver corridors for the attacker.

More importantly, through General Goldfus's leadership and his soldiers' adaptations, innovations, and hard work, the division began to transform the IDF's culture toward underground warfare. Its tactics were spread to other units, along with the understanding that the old culture of avoiding tunnels was no longer the IDF's approach. The new culture of a deeper understanding of—and, in some cases, using—the enemy's tunnels to facilitate maneuver warfare with simultaneous maneuver on the surface and subsurface is unlike that of any other military in modern history.

THE CHALLENGE THAT REMAINS

There is one subterranean challenge that even General Goldfus and his division could not overcome: destroying tunnels. Israel's strategic goal in Gaza includes destroying Hamas's major military capabilities. This logically requires destroying a certain percentage of the vast underground network the group has so heavily relied on.

Contrary to some reporting, removing Hamas's ability to plan and conduct military operations does [not require destroying](#) all of Hamas's tunnels. Not every tunnel is as important as others. The cross-border tunnels between Gaza and Egypt that served as Hamas's strategic lines of communication—enabling vital

weapons supplies—large tunnels linking northern and southern Gaza or connecting different cities or brigade areas of operations and allowing freedom of movement, and command-and-control tunnels like the [data center](#) found under a United Nations building in Gaza City do require destruction. The destruction of hundreds if not thousands of tactical tunnels that connect different buildings across the Gaza strip is not critical to achieving Israel's military objective and may exceed any reasonable ability Israel has to remove those tunnels.

But there is a gap in military methods for destroying tunnels. Military history has generated far more knowledge about creating tunnels than destroying them. Modern bunker-busting bombs can penetrate the earth in a small area to strike at a target in a tunnel or bunker but cannot effectively destroy the full length of a tunnel.

From [2013](#) to [2019](#), Egypt used sewage and seawater to collapse primitive Hamas smuggling tunnels along its border with Gaza. As discussed earlier, however, this did not work on the more sophisticated tunnels found inside Gaza. In 2018, Israel pumped [wet cement](#) into cross-border Hezbollah tunnels along the northern border with Lebanon. The exact number of metric tons of wet cement required for a single tunnel, while not publicly reported, was substantial. This tactic may block tunnels under the right circumstances, but it is not practical where there are a lot of tunnels to address.

One of the few feasible methods to eliminate a tunnel, used historically and validated by modern case studies, is to place explosives through the full length of it. This is what Israeli forces have been doing in Gaza but they quickly ran into scaling and resourcing problems.

Israel has a couple of explosive options. One of these is injecting liquid TNT into tunnels. This involves [drilling holes](#) into the tunnel at 650-foot intervals—and requires twelve tons of explosives per kilometer. An alternative is methodically placing explosives along the inside of cleared tunnels. Reports show that to demolish just one kilometer of tunnel requires [fifteen metric tons](#) of TNT placed inside the tunnel. The amount of TNT needed for tunnels Israeli forces discovered in Gaza quickly exceeded their supplies of liquid or military-grade explosives like composition C-4. They therefore primarily relied on a field-expedient method of using both their own stockpile as well as captured Hamas explosives designed for other uses such as antitank mines to string together along tunnels.

The harsh reality is that there is likely not enough supply of explosives or enough time to destroy all the tunnels in Gaza. To find all the tunnels and then destroy them would potentially take years. The IDF seem to be focusing limited resources on destroying the tunnels that provided Hamas with the most military value to survive or conduct attacks against Israel.

THE FUTURE

The IDF have already taken their new understanding, culture, and approach to tunnels to another theater in southern Lebanon, where Hezbollah also built a vast tunnel network of hundreds of miles and which is referred to as the "[Land of Tunnels](#)." The [98th Paratroopers Division](#), with its pioneering and advanced

underground warfare skills, was one of the first units to conduct raids into the Hezbollah tunnels found along Israel's northern border.

It is unlikely that any military will face a tunnel system like that in Gaza, where an enemy's political-military strategy rests on the tunnels and they are deliberately placed under civilian areas. But militaries will continue to encounter subterranean environments in warfare. State actors like [China](#), Iran, and [North Korea](#) continue to invest in thousands of miles of military tunnels and bunkers to protect everything from nuclear sites, radar installations, and runways to full military bases. It is also hard to separate urban warfare from underground warfare in major cities that have existing civil infrastructure underground for transportation, water, and other essential services.

The lessons from the IDF's adaptations and, ultimately, transformation of culture toward underground warfare are deeply important for other militaries—especially those whose own cultures are characterized by the notion that tunnels are obstacles that should be avoided or only dealt with when required. The lessons learned by the IDF will save the lives of other soldiers in other battlefields. The IDF have also shown others that subterranean environments can be used for more than only defensive tactics. With the right culture, understanding, intelligence, technologies, and tactics, they can be used for simultaneous maneuvers on the surface and subsurface. That changes everything.

John Spencer is chair of urban warfare studies at the Modern War Institute, codirector of MWI's Urban Warfare Project, and host of the [Urban Warfare Project Podcast](#). He is also a founding member of the [International Working Group on Subterranean Warfare](#). He served twenty-five years as an infantry soldier, which included two combat tours in Iraq. He is the coauthor of [Understanding Urban Warfare](#).

The views expressed are those of the author and do not reflect the official position of the United States Military Academy, Department of the Army, or Department of Defense.

IMAGE CREDIT: IDF SPOKESPERSON'S UNIT

ISRAEL USING AI TO PINPOINT HAMAS LEADERS, FIND HOSTAGES IN GAZA TUNNELS — REPORT

AI programs, including chatbot and audio-based location tool, reportedly developed by Unit 8200 soldiers and reservists from big tech firms, said to have raised ethical concerns

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) By [ToI Staff](#) 26 April 2025



Illustrative: A soldier from the IDF's Military Intelligence Directorate works at a computer. (Israel Defense Forces)

Israel has made unprecedented use of artificial intelligence to wage war in Gaza, with many programs developed through cooperation between enlisted intelligence soldiers and reservists who work at large tech firms, [The New York Times](#) reported Friday, citing European, American and Israeli defense officials.

While Israel's use of AI in warfare has previously been revealed, the latest report details several different ways the IDF has incorporated AI, including a chatbot trained in multiple Arabic dialects that has served the IDF to gauge public sentiment, an AI-infused audio program that pinpoints targets based on sounds "such as sonic bombs and airstrikes," and a facial recognition program that matches hidden or injured faces to real identities.

Israeli officers cited by the Times said the AI helped find hostages and sped up certain tasks, but acknowledged the applications could sometimes be faulty. According to the Times, "some officials have struggled with the ethical implications of the AI tools" because they can lead to increased surveillance, civilian deaths and [wrongful arrests](#).

Responding to the Times, the IDF said specific technologies were confidential and could not be commented on. The newspaper quoted the military as saying Israel "is committed to the lawful and responsible use of data technology tools."

Four Israeli officials cited by the Times said the IDF quickly cleared AI tools for deployment after the Gaza war was sparked on October 7, 2023, when thousands of Hamas-led terrorists stormed southern Israel to kill some 1,200 people and take 251 hostages.

Some uses of AI in Gaza have been previously reported, including a [virtual reality system](#) that helps soldiers scan urban war zones. Israeli-Palestinian activist outlet +972, which first [reported](#) on the Arabic-language chatbot, has also reported on a program called Lavender, said to have helped the IDF amass a list of 37,000 human targets based on their ties to Hamas. The military has [denied](#) using AI to generate such a kill list.

Many of the AI tools were developed in an innovation hub set up by the Military Intelligence Directorate's Unit 8200, according to the Times. Known as "The Studio," the hub helped connect enlisted soldiers with reservists who work at companies such as Meta, Google and Microsoft, the Times said, citing the four Israeli officials.



Then-defense minister Yoav Gallant meets with soldiers of Unit 8200 at one of the unit's bases, May 19, 2024. (Ariel Hermoni/Defense Ministry)

Avi Hasson, who heads the nonprofit Startup Nation Central that connects investors with companies in Israel, told the Times that the reservists "brought know-how and access to key technologies that weren't available in the military."

Meta and Microsoft declined to comment, while Google responded that it had reservist employees in numerous countries and that their work was unrelated to the company, the Times said.

Citing three Israeli and American officials briefed on the matter, the newspaper said the IDF in October 2023 infused AI into decade-old technology in a bid to pinpoint Ibrahim Biari, the commander of Hamas's Central Jabalia Battalion.

The new tool reportedly enabled the IDF to track Biari's phone calls to a Hamas tunnel complex under northern Gaza's densely populated Jabalia refugee camp. A strike on the area was greenlit despite

warnings within the military that several apartment buildings would need to be targeted to ensure Biari was killed. The strike, said to have killed dozens of people, is being probed by the military, which told the Times it was “unable to provide any further information until the investigation is complete.”

The audio tool used to locate Biari has been sharpened over time to more accurately locate people, and has served the IDF in finding hostages in Gaza, the Times said, citing Israeli officers.

Following the Hamas onslaught, Israel also erected temporary checkpoints between the Strip’s north and south, with security cameras capable of sending high-resolution images to an AI facial recognition program, the Times said.



Displaced Palestinians walk through a muddy road amid the destruction in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip on February 6, 2025. (Bashar Taleb / AFP)

Two Israeli intelligence officers cited by the newspaper said the system sometimes had trouble identifying obscured faces, leading to the arrest and interrogation of Palestinians flagged by mistake.

Three Israeli officers cited by the Times said “The Studio” at Unit 8200 also developed an AI large language model capable of handling texts in various dialects of spoken Arabic.

According to the Times, such tools are difficult to develop because most relevant training data appears in standard written Arabic. The IDF, on the other hand, “has decades of intercepted text messages, transcribed phone calls and posts scraped from social media in spoken Arabic dialects,” the Times said, citing the three officers.

The program was said to have been developed in the early months of the war and incorporated into multimedia databases, enabling military analysts to run complicated searches of images and videos, the Times said.



Illustrative: Soldiers of an IDF Military Intelligence Directorate team for the Golani Infantry Brigade are seen working at computers, in a handout photo published November 12, 2023. (Israel Defense Forces)

The chatbot reportedly had difficulty identifying modern slang and words transliterated from English, requiring intelligence officers with knowledge of the dialects to check its output. The program was also said to have provided some wrong answers, such as “returning photos of pipes instead of guns.”

Nonetheless, according to two Israeli intelligence officers cited by the Times, the chatbot has significantly sped up the military’s research and analysis.

The Times cited three officers as saying the technology allowed the military to gauge whether there was public pressure in the Arab world for a counterstrike on Israel after it assassinated Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah in September.

GAZA HOSTAGES WERE HELD IN TUNNELS FOR MONTHS, ISRAELI MEDICAL OFFICER SAYS

[REUTERS](#) [MAAYAN LUBELL](#), January 27 2025



Displaced Palestinians make their way past rubble as they attempt to return to their homes, following a delay in the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas over the hostage list, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, January 19, 2025. REUTERS/Hatem Khaled/File Photo [Purchase Licensing Rights, opens new tab](#)

JERUSALEM, Jan 27 (Reuters) - Some of the hostages released from [Gaza](#) so far during the [ceasefire](#) had been held in Hamas tunnels for up to eight months straight, deprived of daylight and with little to no human contact, an Israeli general said on Monday.

Three Israeli civilians and four soldiers - all women - have been released so far in the ceasefire, which began on Jan. 19. In return, Israel has released 290 Palestinian convicts and detainees.

In Bardala, at the northern end of the occupied West Bank, Israel's army has been bulldozing a dirt road and ditch between the community and grazing land on the hills behind it.00:0403:26

"Some of them told us that they've been in the past few months, that they've been through the entire time, in tunnels, underground," deputy chief of the Israeli military's medical corps, Colonel Dr. Avi Banov, told journalists online.

"Some of them were alone through the entire time they were there," he said. "Those who said they were together were in better shape."

The Israeli military oversees the first health checks that the hostages receive upon their arrival in Israeli territory. Reuters was unable to reach Hamas' armed wing for comment but it said on Saturday that it maintains hostages' wellbeing.

The hostages said their treatment improved in the days leading up to their release, Banov said, when they were allowed to shower, change their clothes and received better food. They appeared to be in good condition and smiling in videos on the days of their release.

Citing the hostages' privacy, Banov would not say whether any of the seven bore signs of torture or abuse.

Some had not received proper treatment for wounds sustained when they were captured during the Hamas-led attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, and some showed signs of "mild starvation", Banov said.

The three civilians, released on the first day of the ceasefire, were discharged from hospital on Sunday. The four soldiers, freed in the ceasefire's second swap on Saturday, were still being treated in another medical centre.

Eitan Gonen, father of 24-year-old [Romi Gonen](#) who was released on Jan. 19, told Israel's public broadcaster Kan: "Romi is amazing. We met a mature, amazing woman who stunned us all."

Gonen would not elaborate on her medical condition or details of her ordeal. But he said that while in captivity she had heard some of the radio interviews he had given.

"Even if only 10% of the interviews reach the hostages' ears, it is enough to give them strength," he said. "It gave her a lot of strength, energy and great hope."

More than 250 hostages were abducted in the Hamas attack in October 2023. Around half were released the following month during the war's only previous truce, and others have been recovered dead or alive during the fighting. Israel still lists 90 captives in Gaza, with around 30 declared dead in absentia.

Twenty-six women, children, elderly, ill or injured hostages are still meant to be released in the six-week first phase of the ceasefire. Hamas provided a list late on Sunday detailing their condition.

Israeli authorities have said that they believe most due to be released in the first phase are alive and they fear for the lives of the rest. They have given no new details since receiving the list.

Banov said he expected that some of next hostages "will be more ill and also people who have died during their time in Gaza".

AN 'ESTIMATED 40% OF HAMAS TUNNELS' STILL REMAINING, ISRAELI EXPERT TELLS TML

[THEMEDIALINE](#) KEREN SETTON 01/05/2025



Israel intensifies its war on Hamas in Gaza, targeting terrorists while negotiating a ceasefire and hostage releases. With heavy losses on both sides, the conflict remains unresolved, and Gaza's future hangs in uncertainty

Israel continued to pound Gaza over the weekend, as Palestinians reported tens of people killed in the ongoing war between the Hamas terrorist organization and the Jewish state.

The Israeli military announced it had carried out airstrikes against over 100 targets, including Hamas terrorists and rocket launching sites.

For over a year, Israel has staged a massive military operation against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Its stated goals are to remove Hamas as a governing power in the territory and release all the hostages. In what appears to be an intensification of the fighting and amid the war, Hamas and Israel are engaged in indirect talks aimed at reaching a ceasefire and releasing at least some of the 100 Israeli hostages still being held by Hamas since the beginning of the war.

Thousands of Israelis rallied on Saturday evening to protest the government and pressure it to reach a deal with Hamas.

Several weeks ago, there was initial optimism that a deal was imminent. Now, the talks mediated by the US, Egypt, and Qatar seem to be at yet another impasse.

Israel's continued military presence in the Gaza Strip and the refusal by the current government to withdraw from the territory, a pre-condition by Hamas for any deal, has so far blocked a ceasefire from being reached.

The army is not only present in Gaza, but it also continues to fight at varying levels of intensity. On Friday, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) issued evacuation warnings for areas in the center of the Gaza Strip ahead of an operation there. The IDF also continued to operate in the north of the territory.

The area consists of structures overlooking Israeli territory and serves as a central terror hub containing anti-tank firing positions, booby traps, shafts, numerous explosives, and launch sites for targeting Israeli territory.

"The area consists of structures overlooking Israeli territory and serves as a central terror hub containing anti-tank firing positions, booby traps, shafts, numerous explosives, and launch sites for targeting Israeli territory," read a statement by the army.

In addition, the army continues to control the Philadephi and Netzarim corridors in southern and central Gaza, respectively, aimed at blocking Hamas from being able to re-arm and re-position itself.

Adopting a policy of incursions rather than operating in the whole of Gaza continuously, the army has found itself often re-entering areas it has already operated in several times.

This policy of "mowing the grass," coined by Prof. Efraim Inbar and Dr. Eitan Shamir, has entangled Israel in its longest war ever. It refers to a strategy of pinpointed military operations limited in time to quell a temporary threat, barring a more permanent political solution.

But, according to Shamir, director of the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies at Bar Ilan University, Hamas' military abilities cannot be defeated as quickly as critics of the IDF strategy would like to believe.

Hamas had over twenty years to accumulate a massive amount of firepower, dispersing it in many areas, including in its widespread underground tunnel network. Combined with other terrorist organizations, such as the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. it had approximately 30,000 fighters. This could take two to three years to get rid of."

Israeli forces are continuing to find weapons depots to encounter Hamas terrorists and tunnels, in a testament to the continuance of Hamas' presence in the territory.

There is an estimated 40% of the tunnels still remaining, hundreds of kilometers of tunnels the Israeli intelligence was not aware of. There are still very long tunnels that Israel has yet to have located, some of them with hostages inside. This requires a very big operation and a massive amount of explosives that Israel currently does not possess.

"There is an estimated 40% of the tunnels still remaining, hundreds of kilometers of tunnels the Israeli intelligence was not aware of," said Yoni Ben Menachem, an expert of Middle Eastern affairs from Jerusalem Center for Security and Foreign Affairs, told The Media Line. "There are still very long tunnels

that Israel has yet to have located, some of them with hostages inside. This requires a very big operation and a massive amount of explosives that Israel currently does not possess.”

Hamas stunned Israel on October 7th, 2023, when it attacked the south of the country in a rampage that killed approximately 1200 Israelis and wounded thousands more. It also took approximately 250 people hostage, 100 still in captivity. In response, Israel launched a massive war against Hamas. According to the Hamas-run Gaza health ministry, over 45,000 Palestinians have been killed since and over 107000 wounded. 390 Israeli soldiers have been killed in the ground invasion of Gaza.

The war quickly developed into a regional, multi-front confrontation. The Lebanese Hezbollah organization and the Houthi rebels in Yemen began launching attacks against Israel, forcing it to respond and divert critical resources to other fronts. A fragile and temporary ceasefire with Hezbollah has been in place for a month now. Should it last, Israeli troops are expected to withdraw from southern Lebanon at the end of January.

Israel does not have enough forces at this point to subdue Hamas both militarily and in its ability to govern Gaza. In order to do that, Israel needs to occupy the entire Gaza Strip and announce it is enforcing temporary military administration.

“Israel does not have enough forces at this point to subdue Hamas both militarily and in its ability to govern Gaza,” Ben Menachem said. “In order to do that, Israel needs to occupy the entire Gaza Strip and announce it is enforcing temporary military administration.”

According to Ben Menachem, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s government is waiting for major developments before progressing in that direction.

One is the fate of the ceasefire and hostage deal talks, and the other is the upcoming change in the US administration, with President Joe Biden’s departure and Donald Trump’s inauguration on January 20th. Netanyahu hopes Trump, who has favored his policies during his previous term, will pose less of an impediment.

The Israeli government has so far avoided discussing its plans for Gaza after the war because of the opposition from the Biden administration to an Israeli military rule there.

“The Israeli government has so far avoided discussing its plans for Gaza after the war because of the opposition from the Biden administration to an Israeli military rule there,” Ben Menachem said.

Netanyahu has not ruled out a military rule in Gaza, although he has shot down calls from within his coalition to re-settle Gaza with Jewish settlements. In addition to setting Hamas’ removal from power as one of the war goals, the Israeli premier has also voiced opposition to the return of the Palestinian Authority to rule Gaza, deeming it a supporter of terrorism.

The alternative to incursions is military rule, which will enable complete control of Gaza. It will prevent, not completely, Hamas' ability to rise up. But it will require a lot of resources because it is essentially occupying Gaza.

NOT ONE AIR RAID SHELTER IN GAZA. WHY?

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) Claudia Reed Dec 14, 2023

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This map, produced by a Red Alert system app, uses real-time data from Israel's Home Front Command to pinpoint the trajectories of rockets headed for a given area within Israel on a given day (12-2-23 in this case.) Regardless of whether the rockets hit their targets or are blown up by Israel's Iron Dome system, the arrows indicate where air raid sirens went off. Targets show here include Israel's primary airport, and Tel Aviv, Israel's heavily populated cultural and commercial center.

Not One Air Raid Shelter in Gaza. Why?

About that "disproportionate" death toll

The international community is beside itself with sorrow and rage. Israel continues to attack locations in Gaza and the civilians have no safe place to go. Or do they?

Hamas has built a tunnel system extending an estimated 300 miles under the Gaza Strip. Photos and reports indicate that much of it is lined with concrete, fitted with electric lights, and tall and wide enough for troops to march through. If every civilian running from rocket attacks was allotted eight feet of tunnel space, about 198,000 of them could find shelter there. That's 11 times the number of civilian deaths Hamas insists have taken place. Why is Hamas reserving the entire tunnel system for military purposes and keeping it off limits to desperate Gazan civilians?

If the tunnels are off limits, why in 17 years of ruling the Gaza Strip, hasn't Hamas built a single air raid shelter? Hamas has not even installed air raid sirens. Compare that with conditions in Israel where the

building code requires new homes and apartment buildings to have safe rooms and nearly every neighborhood has at least one shelter. And, yes, there is an air raid system. When the sirens sound, Israeli's run for their lives and wait for the wail to wind down before coming out to see whether or not they still have a place to live. They may be traumatized, they may be trembling from a panic attack, they may have heart or breathing problems, but they're alive. Does the fact that people in the path of relentless Hamas rocket attacks are not dead mean Hamas has a kinder and gentler military?

What if the international community asked how many attempts were made to kill civilians, rather than how many of them were actually killed? Hamas has been firing rockets into Israeli population centers from bases in Gaza at least as far back as 2001, hitting apartment buildings and kindergartens in small cities like Sderot, which has no military importance but is conveniently located within rocket range. By November 2007, Hamas had launched 6,311 Qassam rockets into Sderot, killing one two-year old and two four-year olds. But because of the placement and amount of Sderot's air raid shelters, the total number of casualties – not one of them reported in US news media – was only 13. What would the toll have been without the shelters?

Shelters didn't help when Hamas suicide bombers and gunmen, sometimes in tandem with Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, managed to enter Israel and shoot or blow up 386 people between 1994 and 2004. Their targets, none of them military, included such places as buses, bus stops, train stations, restaurants, markets, hotels, discos, pool halls, and a soccer field.

What about attacks from the other side? I've read article after article insisting that Israel's real objective in the current war is killing civilians. Some Americans, possibly well-intentioned but uninformed, are yelling Genocide! But if Israel's intention is killing civilians – not eliminating Hamas and its military infrastructure – why send ground troop into a dangerous situation? Wouldn't it be much safer and more effective to stay home and fire rockets into population centers, as Hamas has been doing for decades?

Is it possible that Hamas, which teaches school children to desire the honor of martyrdom and recruits and trains suicide bombers, welcomes the deaths of Gazan civilians? Consider what's happening now. Because of the loudly proclaimed disproportionality of the death toll, much of the international community has upgraded Hamas' identity from terrorist to resistance fighter. And many, including increasing numbers of university students, faculty members, and administrators, are condemning Israel, some to the point of concluding that she has no right to exist. For Yahya Sinwar, a quadruple murderer released in the 2011 hostage swap, and the head of Hamas in Gaza, that's just the way things should be.

'SOMEHOW, WE ADAPT': GAZANS DESPERATELY WAITING FOR SHELTERS DESCRIBE LIVING WITHOUT POWER, WATER OR WALLS

Hundreds of thousands of homeless Palestinians struggle while aid is held up at the border

[MENA](#) Nagham Mohanna February 21, 2025



Live updates: Follow the latest on [Israel-Gaza](#)

Homeless [Gazan](#) man Sabir Noufal has been living in a burnt-out school alongside 16 relatives, with no walls, no bathroom, no running water and no power, waiting desperately for aid deliveries into the devastated enclave.

He is just one of 100 people sheltering in the decrepit structure in [Jabalia](#), hoping he will soon be able to take refuge in a caravan due to be sent by humanitarian organisations, who have been scaling up their work while the ceasefire holds between [Israel](#) and [Hamas](#).

“Everything around us is destruction, pulsing with pain and devastation,” said the 26-year-old, whose three-storey home was destroyed by Israeli bombing. “In winter, water leaks from everywhere, flooding our space, and our children constantly get sick from the cold.”

Widespread destruction has forced hundreds of thousands of displaced Gazans to live in apocalyptic conditions with no basic amenities or a clear timeline for relief. About 280,000 Palestinian families have seen their homes destroyed by Israeli forces in the 15-month Gaza war, according to the territory's Governmental Media Office.

“We need 280,000 caravans or mobile homes to shelter these people,” Ismael Thawabta, the office's director, told *The National*.

But no such assistance has crossed into Gaza so far, he said. Hamas has accused Israel of blocking the entry of tens of thousands of tents and other materials for temporary shelters, an accusation that Israel has rejected.

Delivering enough shelters to Gaza has been difficult because aid workers have prioritised food, while Israeli inspections and restrictions on what can enter complicate the process.

The [ceasefire](#) agreement between Israel and Hamas says Israel must allow at least 60,000 temporary homes and 200,000 tents into Gaza during the first 42-day phase of the truce. Israel must also allow entry of equipment for rubble removal. Dozens of bulldozers, construction vehicles and lorries carrying caravans are lined up at Gaza's border with [Egypt](#) at Rafah.



“The Gaza Strip requires 500 heavy machines, including bulldozers, excavators and cranes, to clear the massive destruction,” Mr Thawabta said. “Yet the occupation has only allowed six machines to enter, some of which are small, while others are broken and require spare parts and maintenance. This behaviour reflects a blatant disregard for the suffering and humanitarian crisis.”

Mr Noufal said he had heard talk that a caravan would arrive to shelter his family, but “the promise had so far turned out to be empty”. Daily survival is a battle. “Our suffering isn’t just about living in a burnt-down place – it’s present in every aspect of life. Nothing is easy,” he added.

The school was meant to be a temporary refuge but many inside fear they may be stuck there indefinitely. Musab Abu Sultan, a 38-year-old father of six, sought shelter there after exhausting all other options.

“Our home, like so many others, was completely destroyed. We searched everywhere for a place to stay until tents or caravans arrived, but we found nothing. Eventually, we had no choice but to take shelter in the nearby school, even though it had been burnt and destroyed by the Israeli army,” he said.

“Along with some neighbours, we cleaned the burnt area, put up tarpaulin as makeshift walls, and tried to make the space somewhat liveable, at least temporarily.”

But the temporary is turning into permanent, he lamented. “So far, we haven’t seen any relief efforts reaching us – no new camps, no rubble removal, no caravans. We are starting to feel that this destroyed, crumbling place – where people wonder how we even manage to survive – will be our reality,” he said.

“Somehow, we are adapting to it.”

GAZA STRIP IN MAPS: HOW 15 MONTHS OF WAR HAVE DRASTICALLY CHANGED LIFE IN THE TERRITORY

BBC NEWS 16 January 2025



By the Visual Journalism Team BBC News

A Gaza ceasefire deal has been reached, but 15 months of fighting have had a devastating impact on the coastal Palestinian territory.

Israel's bombing campaign and ground invasion came in response to Hamas's unprecedented cross-border attack on 7 October 2023, in which about 1,200 people were killed and 251 others were taken hostage.

Israel said it was trying to destroy the military and governing capabilities of the Islamist group, which is committed to the destruction of Israel and has been in control of Gaza since 2007, but more than 46,600 Palestinians have also been killed, according to the Hamas-run health ministry.

Gazans hope the latest ceasefire could finally bring peace, but the United Nations is warning it could take years or even decades for the territory to recover. This visual guide shows some of the drastic ways life has changed during the war.

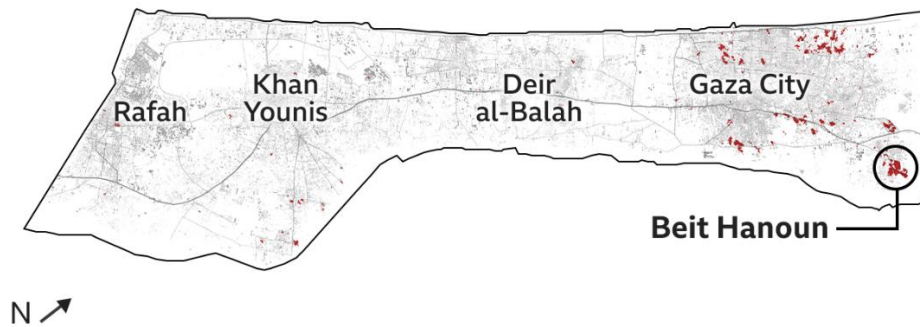
HOW THE DESTRUCTION SPREAD

Israel's campaign initially focused on northern Gaza - where it said Hamas fighters were hiding among the civilian population.

The northern town of Beit Hanoun, only 2km (1.2 miles) from the border, was one of the first areas hit by Israeli strikes. It sustained heavy damage.

■ Damaged areas

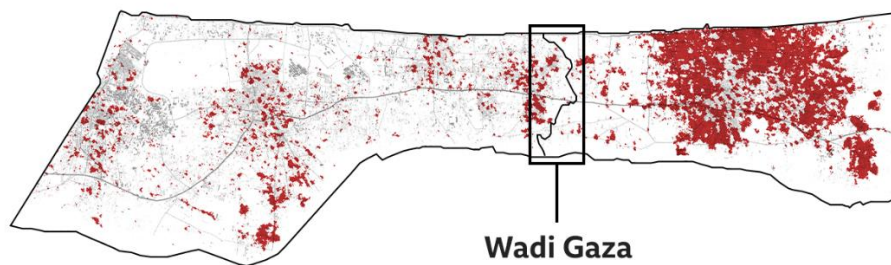
12 October 2023



Israel continued to bomb Gaza City and other urban centres in the north and ordered civilians to move south of the Wadi Gaza river for "safety and protection" before it began its ground invasion at the end of October.

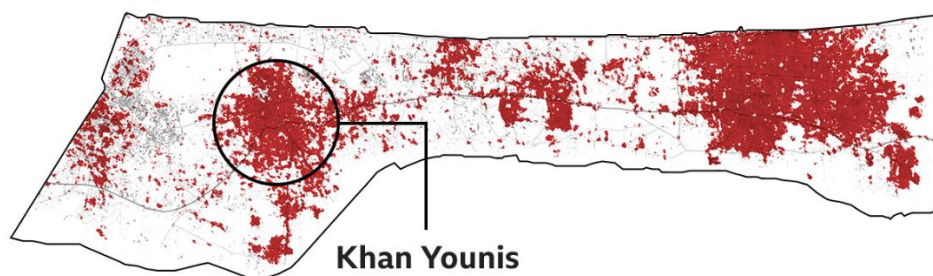
But Israel was also launching air strikes on the southern cities which hundreds of thousands of Gazans from the north were fleeing towards. By the end of November, parts of the south of the territory lay in ruins, as did much of the north.

29 November 2023



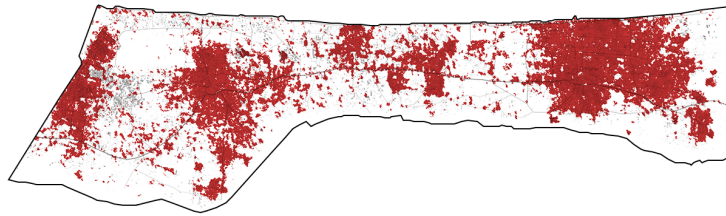
Israel intensified its bombing of southern and central Gaza at the start of December, before launching a ground offensive on Khan Younis, and by January more than half of Gaza's buildings had been damaged or destroyed.

29 January 2024



Fifteen months of conflict have probably damaged almost 60% of buildings across the Gaza Strip, with Gaza City suffering the heaviest destruction, according to experts from CUNY Graduate Center and Oregon State University who have been analysing satellite data.

11 January 2025



Source: Damage analysis of Copernicus Sentinel-1 satellite data by Corey Scher of CUNY Graduate Center and Jamon Van Den Hoek of Oregon State University, UN Ocha, OpenStreetMap, European Commission GHSL

B B C

The UN estimates the damaged buildings include more than 90% of the housing units in Gaza, with 160,000 destroyed and a further 276,000 severely or partially damaged.

Throughout the war, Hamas - which is designated as a terrorist organisation by Israel, the UK and many other countries - and its allies have been engaged in intense battles against Israeli forces on the ground. They have also been firing thousands of rockets into Israel.

VAST TENT CITY CREATED

Life before the war was tough in Gaza - for years it had been the subject of an Israeli-Egyptian blockade severely limiting who and what could enter and leave, which both countries said was needed for security.

- [LIVE: Latest updates](#)
- [Palestinians and Israelis dare to hope](#)
- [What we know about the ceasefire deal](#)
- [Why is there a war in Gaza?](#)
- [Bowen: Overdue ceasefire may stop the killing but won't end the conflict](#)

Although nearly two-thirds of the population were in poverty, according to the World Bank, and thousands lived in UN-run refugee camps, it also had hospitals, schools and shops.

But Gaza - only 41km (25 miles) long and 10km wide and bounded by the Mediterranean Sea and closed borders with Israel and Egypt - is now in large parts uninhabitable.

Entire districts have been razed to the ground. Agricultural land where greenhouses once stood have been reduced to sand and rubble by heavy vehicles and tanks used in clearing operations by Israeli troops.

Before the war, most of Gaza's 2.2 million people lived in its four main cities - Rafah and Khan Younis in the south, Deir al-Balah, in the centre, and Gaza City, which was home to 775,000 people - but almost the whole population have now been displaced.

90% of Gaza's population are displaced

Within 10 days of 7 October, more than one million of Gaza's 2.2 million people had been forced to leave their homes



Source: UNRWA

BBC

Families have been displaced multiple times as Israel changed the focus of its operation, initially telling people in the north to move south of Wadi Gaza river, which cuts the Strip roughly in half, and later declaring a series of evacuation zones in the south.

Satellite imagery shows a vast proliferation of tents erected by displaced people in al-Mawasi, a thin strip of mainly agricultural land along the Mediterranean coast, close to the Egyptian border, that Israel designated as a "humanitarian zone" in October 2023.



Source: Planet Labs PBC

BBC

Israel expanded the zone in May, to include parts of Khan Younis and Deir al-Balah, after launching its ground offensive in Rafah, where more than a million people were sheltering.

But it has been repeatedly reduced in size since then, as Israel has targeted areas where they say Hamas is operating and launching attacks while embedded among displaced civilians.

In August the UN estimated more than 1.2 million people were sheltering in al-Mawasi, which lacks critical infrastructure and basic services and has varied in size from about 7 km sq (2.7 sq miles) when it was first introduced to 72 km sq (27.8 sq miles).

Overcrowding has become a major concern in UN emergency shelters in central and southern Gaza, with some far exceeding their capacity. Other families are living in tents or makeshift shelters in compounds or on open areas of land and beaches.

THE STRUGGLE FOR FOOD

About 1.8 million people are experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity, including nearly 133,000 people facing catastrophic food insecurity, according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), the global body responsible for declaring famine.

Its analysis for September 2024 to August 2025 warned levels of acute malnutrition were 10 times higher than before the war started.

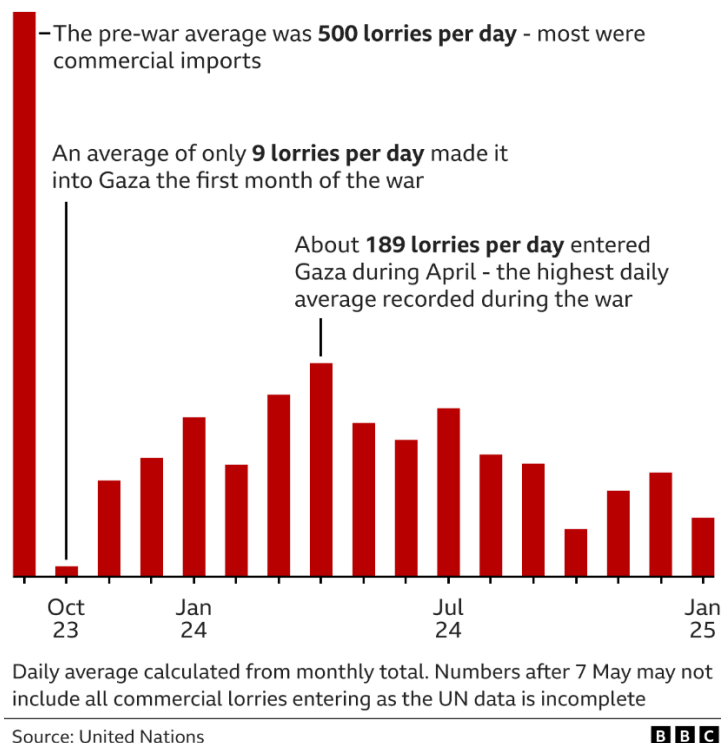
Even before the current conflict, about 80% of the population of Gaza was in need of humanitarian aid.

Aid deliveries stopped completely for about 10 days when Israel and Egypt closed their crossings after 7 October and they have resumed at much lower levels - about 50 aid lorries currently entering Gaza each day in January so far, according to the UN.

Israel disputes the UN figures but even its [data shows just 140 lorries a day have entered in January, external](#) so far, with the highest number of 226 a day entering in April.

In March, the World Food Programme said that addressing simple food needs would require at least 300 lorries a day to enter Gaza and distribute food - a figure that has not been reached since the conflict started.

Fewer lorries are entering Gaza



UN officials have blamed the situation on Israeli military restrictions on aid deliveries, the ongoing hostilities and the breakdown of law and order.









Israel insists there are no limits to the amount of aid that can be delivered into and across Gaza and blames UN agencies for failing to distribute supplies. It also accuses Hamas of stealing aid, which the group denies.

POVERTY IS SOARING

The conflict has also had a devastating impact on Gaza's economy, which the World Bank said had contracted by 86% in the first quarter of 2024, the "largest economic contraction on record".

It notes that almost 100% of the population are now living in poverty compared with 64% before the war and the cost of basic supplies has risen by almost 250%.

Prices soar as Gaza economy crashes

 Onions (kg) £8.63, up from £0.21 4,010% ↑	 Eggs (6 pack) £4.32, up from £0.86 402% ↑
 Sugar (kg) £17.27, up from £0.64 2,598% ↑	 Frozen chicken £15.11 up from £3.19 374% ↑
 Green beans (kg) £9.71, up from £0.64 1,417% ↑	 Bottled water (1.5l) £0.65, up from £0.32 103% ↑
 Nappies (64 pack) £38.86, up from £5.32 630% ↑	 Flour (kg) (South Gaza) £10.79, up from £7.45 45% ↑

Calculated from lowest reported prices based on currency conversion rates on 6 Oct 2023 and 12 Mar 2024

Source: Christian Aid, Getty

BBC

The UN's trade and development arm UNCTAD says the cost of the damage caused by the war is an estimated \$18.5bn - about seven times Gaza's entire gross domestic product (GDP) in 2022.

It warned in October that, even once a ceasefire was reached, it would take 350 years to rebuild Gaza's economy to its 2022 level - unless it was able to grow more quickly than it had been able to under the economic and movement restrictions that had been in place since 2007.

Many healthcare facilities have been left unable to function as a result of damage or lack of supplies and fuel.

Many hospitals have also been raided by Israeli forces, with the military alleging that they have been used for military purposes by Hamas. Hamas and hospital officials have denied that claim.

Gaza City's al-Shifa hospital - once the largest medical facility in Gaza - was left in ruins although it has now reopened its emergency department. The IDF says it killed or captured hundreds of "terrorists" and found weapons and intelligence "throughout the hospital" in its two major operations there.

The UN's World Health Organization (WHO) says only 18 of Gaza's 36 hospitals are still partially functioning, with a further 11 field hospitals described as fully or partially functioning.

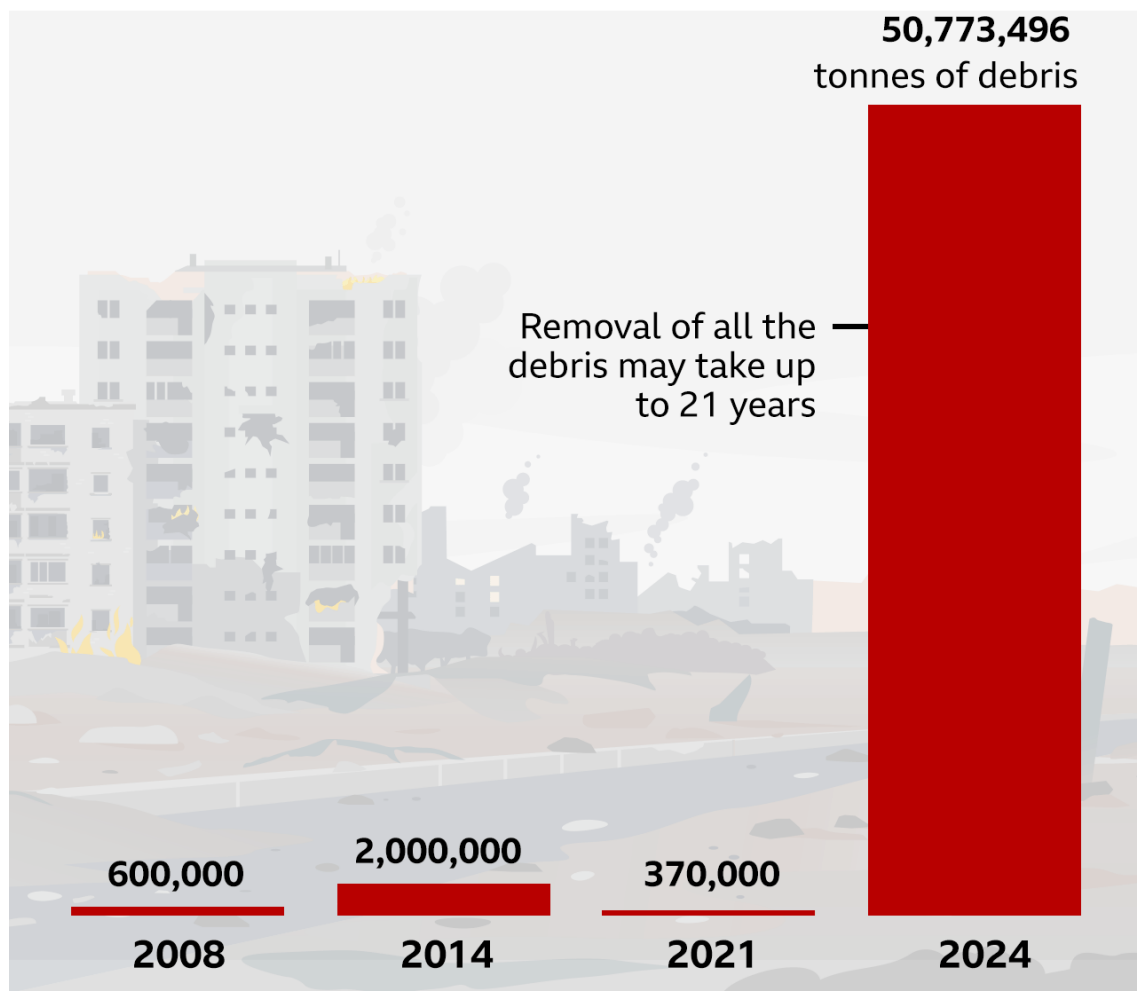
A LONG RECOVERY

Aside from the human toll, the UN Environmental Programme (UNEP) has warned it will take a long time to repair the damage in Gaza.

It describes the water and sanitation systems as "almost entirely defunct", warns of mounting rubbish around camps and shelters and of the risk that chemicals from destroyed solar panels and the munitions being used will contaminate soil and water supplies.

And it estimates more than 50 million tonnes of debris has accumulated from the destruction.

The debris produced is 17 times the total from all Israel-Gaza conflicts since 2008



Source: UNEP and UNOSAT, data up to 1 December 2024

B B C

UNEP says it could take 21 years just to clear the debris and explosive remnants of war.

"The significant and growing environmental damage in Gaza risks locking its people into a painful, long recovery," executive director Inger Andersen said.

A CITY OF BOOBY TRAPS, TUNNELS: TOI IN KHAN YOUNIS HOURS AFTER BODIES OF 2 HOSTAGES RETRIEVED

**Troops advance slowly in southern Gaza city, day after bodies of slain hostages
Gadi Haggai and Judih Weinstein were recovered and brought home for burial**

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Stav Levaton](#) 5 June 2025



Footage from Khan Younis shows widespread destruction amid ongoing IDF operations across the Gaza Strip, June 5, 2025. (Stav Levaton/Times of Israel)

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip — After [recovering the bodies of slain hostages](#) Gadi Haggai and Judih Weinstein in Khan Younis on Wednesday night, Israeli forces continued to push deeper into the city in the southern Gaza Strip, intensifying operations aimed at reaching its center.

Now entering its 20th month, the war has left Khan Younis in ruins — a shattered landscape almost unrecognizable from what it once was. The Israel Defense Forces last operated deep in Khan Younis with ground troops in April 2024.

The devastation served as a stark reminder of the toll exacted by Israel's offensive in Gaza, launched in response to Hamas's brutal October 7, 2023, invasion, during which 1,200 people were killed and 251

Despite the widespread destruction already inflicted across the Strip, military officials told reporters during a Thursday tour of Khan Younis that there is still a long road ahead to reach full operational success.



An undated photo of Judih Weinstein and Gadi Haggai (Courtesy)

Commander of the Kfir Brigade's Shimshon Battalion, Lt. Col. Yud — identified only by his first Hebrew initial due to security concerns — reaffirmed the war's primary goals: the return of the hostages and the dismantling of Hamas. These objectives, he said, are what justify the IDF's continued presence in Gaza.

"That's all that interests us," he said.

The Kfir Brigade has been operating in southern Khan Younis for the past three weeks, working in close coordination with the Israeli Air Force, combat engineers from the elite Yahalom unit, and other forces. Their mission: to reach the city's center and establish operational control.

Progress, however, has been slow and grueling. The city is laced with terror infrastructure, including a sprawling tunnel network and buildings rigged with explosives, military officials said. Every step forward requires methodical clearing, turning each advance into a battle not only against Hamas gunmen, but

In one case, military officials spoke of a residential building flagged by troops as suspicious in recent days due to a surveillance camera at the entrance, a bolted door, and telltale signs of guerrilla tactics — including a hole in the wall designed to allow a gunman to fire from within.



Several Hamas rockets lie in a heap among the rubble of a residential building in Khan Younis, June 5, 2025. (Stav Levaton/Times of Israel)

Upon inspection, the structure was found to be booby-trapped and was subsequently demolished by Israeli forces.

Traces of terror activity remain scattered among the ruins. In the rubble of one demolished home, several unused rockets lay in a heap — a grim monument to the arsenal hidden in plain sight and the constant threat posed to Israeli communities just across the border.

Related: [IDF recovers bodies of slain hostages Gadi Haggai, Judith Weinstein in Gaza operation](#)

Despite the intensity of the fighting, Yud said morale among his troops remains high.

“We can see the kibbutzim across the border — we know well why we’re here,” he said, referring to nearby communities like Nir Yitzhak and Sufa, where some residents have already returned after being evacuated in the wake of Hamas’s October 7 attack.



A building burns in Khan Younis as a result of IDF operations in the area, to eradicate terrorist infrastructure, June 5, 2025. (Stav Levaton/Times of Israel)

Also, just across the border lies Nir Oz, the kibbutz from which Haggai and Weinstein were abducted that fateful morning.

Yud said the recovery of their bodies the night before added “more drive to keep on fighting,” amid his unit’s third week of operations in the Strip.

The extended deployments in Gaza are not without strain. Troops typically serve two weeks inside Gaza, followed by four days out — a rotation that offers brief relief but continues to weigh heavily on soldiers and their families.

A bag once carrying humanitarian aid left behind among the rubble in Khan Younis, June 5, 2025. (Stav Levaton/Times of Israel)

In most standing army units, including the Shimshon Battalion, phones are not allowed inside the Strip, limiting communication to a single weekly call, typically on Fridays before Shabbat. To maintain a

semblance of connection, certain commanders run shared WhatsApp groups with families, offering sparse but critical updates — a digital lifeline for those waiting anxiously for their loved ones at home.

The duration of the IDF's presence in Gaza remains uncertain. Last Sunday, the military [announced plans](#) to establish control over 75% of the territory within two months — a move that signals the intention to maintain a long-term presence aimed at dismantling Hamas's capabilities.

"I know that there are still hostages, I know well what [Hamas] did on October 7 — therefore we don't know how much longer we'll stay [in Gaza]," Yud added.

HERE, BENEATH AN EU-FUNDED GAZA HOSPITAL, HAMAS MILITARY CHIEF MOHAMMED SINWAR MET HIS END

As the IDF confirms top terrorist was killed in May strike, reporters are taken to the tunnel under

[Lazar Berman](#) and [Emanuel Fabian](#)

Main video: The 36th Division takes The Times of Israel into the tunnel where Hamas military chief Mohammed Sinwar was killed last month, beneath the European Hospital in Khan Younis, June 8, 2025. (Lazar Berman/The Times of Israel)

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza Strip — The army and Shin Bet confirmed on Sunday that a body extracted by Israeli forces in a tunnel in southern Gaza over the weekend is that of Hamas leader Mohammed Sinwar.

The announcement came hours after The Times of Israel toured the tunnel in which the terror commander was killed, on a media tour organized by the Israel Defense Forces.

Sinwar, brother of October 7 mastermind Yahya Sinwar, was killed in a May 13 airstrike as he hid in a tunnel under the European Hospital in Khan Younis, according to the army.

Four other Hamas operatives were killed along with Muhammad Sinwar, including Hamas's Rafah Brigade commander Muhammad Shabana, and South Khan Younis Battalion commander Mahdi Quara, said the IDF. The two other bodies are still undergoing identification by the military.

The 8-meter-deep tunnel where they were hiding was part of a massive subterranean network that connected Hamas's Rafah and Khan Younis brigades. Israel's strikes, which sent massive plumes of smoke and debris into the air when they took place, targeted two sections of the tunnel in order to trap the commanders in between, according to the army.

The airstrikes hit areas of the tunnel outside of the hospital complex, according to the IDF, and the hospital continued to operate after the strikes.



Troops from the IDF Golani Brigade guard the entrance to a tunnel underneath the European Hospital in Khan Younis, June 8, 2025. (AP Photo/Ohad Zwigenberg)

The Hamas operatives suffocated to death in the rubble, said the army.

The hospital continued to operate after the strikes.

The Hamas operatives suffocated to death in the rubble

Israel had reported that Sinwar was likely killed in the attack, but was only able to publicly confirm his death on Sunday, after troops moved into the area and recovered the bodies from the tunnels.

The hospital is in a part of Khan Younis that troops had not entered until last week, when soldiers from the Golani Brigade reconnaissance unit, the IAF's elite Shaldag unit, and the Yahalom combat engineering unit took over the medical complex. Staff and patients fled the area before their arrival.



"We understood that those bodies were very important from the first footage when we went in," said a company commander in the Golani reconnaissance unit, who can only be identified by his rank of major and the Hebrew initial "Nun".

"It was very serious people in the organization."



A screenshot of an undated video released by the Israel Defense Forces on December 17, 2023, shows Hamas commander Muhammad Sinwar, right, riding in a car traveling through a tunnel under the Gaza Strip. (Screenshot: Israel Defense Forces)

“The terrorists we took out are important,” he continued, “but not as much as the weapons and intelligence that we took out from here.” He was speaking to reporters outside the hospital, which remains largely intact.

“We found a military base under a hospital, period. There’s no other way to say it,” he said.



Maj. “Nun.” speaks to The Times of Israel at the European Hospital in Khan Younis,
June 8, 2025 (Lazar Berman/The Times of Israel)

The intelligence they found, said Nun., had a direct impact on ongoing combat operations two kilometers away.

“We also found intelligence on hostages,” he continued. “That’s the biggest. That’s why we’re all here.”

Undermining Hamas rule

Unlike in most other parts of Gaza, many structures still stand in the Khan Younis neighborhoods around the European Hospital, undoubtedly because they were spared from major ground combat until last month.

Starting on May 20, the 36th Division, made up of troops from the Golani, Kfir, and 188th brigades, attacked northward from the Morag Corridor, an IDF-controlled belt between Khan Younis and Rafah in southern Gaza. The maneuver easily overwhelmed Hamas defenses that had anticipated an attack from the east.



IDF troops operate in southern Gaza’s Khan Younis, in a handout photo issued by the military
on June 5, 2025. (Israel Defense Forces)

The move came days after Israel launched Operation Gideon's Chariots, a broad ground operation aimed at taking control of most of the Strip while displacing most of Gaza's civilians.

The purpose of the ongoing ground operation "is bringing back the hostages and bringing down Hamas's rule," IDF spokesman Brig. Gen. Effie Defrin said Sunday.

He spoke as the IDF brought Israeli military reporters — followed by members of the international press — to the hospital, which was built with European Union funds, to show them the tunnel in which Sinwar was killed.

'Hamas uses hospitals in a cynical fashion; you can see where European funds went'

"This was one of the command and control centers that Hamas used to carry out the October 7 attacks on the Gaza border communities, the slaughter and the murder," said Defrin above an entrance to the tunnel, meters from the European Hospital's emergency ward.



IDF spokesman Brig. Gen. Effie Defrin speaks in Khan Younis,
June 8, 2025. (Screenshot/IDF Spokesperson)

"Hamas uses hospitals in a cynical fashion," he continued, adding that "you can see where European funds went."

The hospital grounds showed signs of significant damage from the fighting, which included combat between Israeli forces and small groups of terrorists in and around the complex.



Troops from the IDF's Golani Brigade at the European Hospital in Khan Younis,
June 8, 2025 (Lazar Berman/The Times of Israel)

Windows were blown out, some roofs were damaged, and the streets were littered with concrete, rebar, and glass.

Golani forces had waged a firefight on the hospital grounds with 7 terrorists who were trying to fire rockets at Israeli border communities, said a company commander.

But the buildings were largely intact, and the IDF believes they can return to use once the campaign ends.

Into Sinwar's grave

Nearby, Israeli excavators had carved out a steep descent through loose sand into the tunnel. A plastic stretcher that the army used to pull the bodies out lay near the now-exposed passage.



Troops from the IDF Golani Brigade guard the entrance to a tunnel underneath the European Hospital in Khan Younis, June 8, 2025 (Lazar Berman/The Times of Israel)

The sticky, pungent smell of death was overpowering. The bodies of the five terrorists had remained in the tunnel for three weeks after the May airstrike

A Golani reconnaissance officer led the way into the narrow tunnel, a red light on his helmet casting a ghostly gleam on the concrete supports.

Reporters made their way carefully down into the pit, using a rope to control their descent, lowering themselves into the head-high tunnel.



An officer in the IDF Golani Brigade's reconnaissance company in the tunnel under a Khan Younis hospital in which Hamas military leader Mohammed Sinwar was killed, June 8, 2025. (Lazar Berman/The Times of Israel)

The sticky, pungent smell of death was overpowering. The bodies of the five terrorists had remained in the tunnel for three weeks after the May airstrike.

The room where they met their end still had mattresses on the floor, covered with clothes and bottles.



An IDF Golani Brigade officer walks through a tunnel underneath the European Hospital in Khan Younis, June 8, 2025 (Lazar Berman/The Times of Israel)

Israeli hostages were likely held in the tunnel as well at some point, said Nun.

Troops found two IDF-issued guns, explosives, maps, operational plans, and ID cards inside the underground room where the terrorists died.

A long, complex war

The Times of Israel's entrance into the tunnel under the European Hospital came as four soldiers killed in Friday's building explosion in the southern Gaza Strip were being buried throughout the country.



Clockwise from top left: IDF soldiers Staff Sgt. Yoav Raver, Staff Sgt. Uri Yhonatan Cohen, Sgt. First Class Tom Rotstein, and Sgt. Maj. (res.) Chen Gross, who were killed in Gaza on June 6, 2025.

(Israel Defense Forces)

“We are destroying booby-trapped homes,” explained Defrin. “Every other home has tunnels or weapons.” Israeli troops don’t go into homes if it isn’t necessary, he insisted.



Soldiers carry the flag-draped coffin of IDF Staff Sgt. Yoav Raver, who was killed in action in the Gaza Strip, during his funeral at the Sde Warburg cemetery in central Israel, on June 8, 2025. (Menahem Kahana / AFP)

According to the Golani major, there is a set procedure that must be followed before any soldier enters a building, including approval from a battalion commander

“And when we do go into the house, because it has enemy infrastructure, it has terrorists, there is intelligence,” he said.

Hamas fighters in Khan Younis are carrying out sniping attacks, booby-trapping buildings, and trying to ambush IDF forces before fleeing, said officers at the hospital.



IDF troops from the 36th Division drive toward Israel from the European Hospital in Khan Younis, June 8, 2025 (Lazar Berman/The Times of Israel)

Force protection was being given precedence over speed in the current operation, Defrin noted.

“Therefore, it’s not a quick action, but a secure one,” he said. “It’s a long war. It’s complex. You see the challenges.”

‘We will act to shorten the war, since we understand the implications of such a long war. But we have missions to accomplish and we will accomplish them’

He spoke as Israel marked 611 days since Hamas’s invasion of southern Israel on October 7, 2023, which sparked the war.

That assault killed some 1,200 people and saw another 251 taken hostage. Terror groups in Gaza continue to hold 55 hostages, including the bodies of at least 33 confirmed dead by the IDF, and 20 who are believed to be alive. There are grave concerns for the well-being of two others, Israeli officials have said.

“We will act to shorten the war, since we understand the implications of such a long war,” Defrin promised.

“But we have missions to accomplish and we will accomplish them.”



Protesters rally in support of the hostages in Central Park, New York City,
June 8, 2025. (Luke Tress/Times of Israel)

With the four deaths, Israel’s toll in the ground offensive against Hamas in Gaza and in military operations along the border with the Strip stands at 429.

“It’s long, yes,” said Nun. “It wears you down. But it’s important.”

read more:

[Israel & the Region](#)

[2023-2025 Israel-Hamas war](#)

[Khan Younis](#)

[Muhammad Sinwar](#)

[Hamas tunnels](#)

[Hamas hostages](#)

PART 10 – MISTAKEN IDEAS ABOUT THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

IDF'S OCT. 7 PROBES SHOW IT MISREAD HAMAS FOR YEARS, LEFT SOUTHERN ISRAEL UTTERLY VULNERABLE

Investigations detail military's decade-long 'misperception' of Hamas, its refusal to recognize the imminent invasion even in the last few hours, and the chaos that catastrophically slowed the fightback on the day



Israeli soldiers carry bodies of Israelis in Kibbutz Kfar Aza on Oct. 10, 2023. (AP Photo/Ohad Zwigenberg, File)

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL [Emanuel Fabian](#) 27 February 2025

The Israel Defense Forces on Thursday presented its top-level investigations into the military's failures during the lead-up to the Hamas terror group's October 7, 2023, onslaught, and on the day itself.

Some 5,000 Hamas-led terrorists from the Gaza Strip burst into southern Israel on October 7, 2023, carrying out a murderous rampage of unprecedented intensity and breadth. The IDF struggled to mount a response, its own probes now specify, with bases closest to the border overrun and the chain of command broken amid the chaos.

The attack claimed the lives of some 1,200 people in Israel, with another 251 people kidnapped and much of the area devastated. Most victims were civilians.

The material released by the IDF underlines the colossal failure for years ahead of Hamas's invasion, in the final hours before it, and in the course of the terror group's slaughter and abductions. It was only recognized months after the invasion and slaughter that the military's Gaza Division, the regional unit responsible for the Strip and for protecting southern Israel, was "defeated" for several hours. The chaos and confusion catastrophically slowed the fightback on the day.

The IDF details intelligence material that was insistently misinterpreted over the years; the military's overreliance on having an early warning to prepare its defenses; the degree to which troops were massively outnumbered by the invading terrorists; and the failure to understand what Hamas was doing during the attack.

The probes at the General Staff level are focused on four main topics:

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE IDF'S PERCEPTION OF GAZA OVER THE PAST DECADE

The “perception” probe found that the IDF believed, prior to the October 7 onslaught, that the Hamas terror group in Gaza did not pose a significant threat to Israel, that it was uninterested in a large-scale war, that its tunnel networks had been significantly degraded, and that any cross-border threat would be thwarted by Israel’s high-tech border fence.

The investigation highlighted a widening gap between the IDF’s perceptions of Hamas, and what the terror group was doing in reality.

Tol’s full article on this aspect of the investigation is here: Before Oct. 7, Hamas duped Israel into thinking it did not pose a major threat



IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi (center) holds an assessment with the head of the Southern Command, Maj. Gen. Yaron Finkelman (left), and head of the IDF Operations Directorate, Maj. Gen. Oded Basiuk, at the Southern Command in Beersheba, November 26, 2023. (Israel Defense Forces)

THE IDF'S INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS OF HAMAS FROM 2014 UNTIL THE OUTBREAK OF THE WAR

The “intelligence assessments” investigation found that the Military Intelligence Directorate received information and plans outlining Hamas’s intent to launch a wide-scale attack against Israel over a period of several years, but dismissed the plans as unrealistic and unfeasible.

Instead, the Military Intelligence Directorate falsely assumed that Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar was a pragmatist who was not seeking a major escalation with Israel, and that the terror group viewed its 2021 war with Israel as a failure and was focusing its capabilities on rocket fire, and not a ground invasion.

As part of its investigations into its failures during the lead-up to the Hamas terror group’s October 7, 2023, onslaught, the IDF has now determined that Hamas had decided in April 2022 to launch such an attack. By September 2022, the terror group was at 85 percent readiness. And it decided in May 2023 to launch the assault on October 7.

Tol’s full article on this aspect of the investigation is here: [The intel on Hamas attack plan was there, but IDF simply refused to believe it](#)



Hamas leader in the Gaza Strip Yahya Sinwar speaks during a rally marking Al-Quds (Jerusalem) Day, in Gaza City, April 14, 2023. (Mohammed Abed/AFP)

THE INTELLIGENCE AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS ON THE EVE OF OCTOBER 7

The investigation into the decision-making process made by top officials on the eve of the attack found that the IDF identified five signs of unusual Hamas activity the night before the terror group’s October 7 onslaught, but believed they did not indicate an imminent attack.

This investigation also found that the IDF’s conduct, decision-making, and intelligence assessments on the night between October 6 and 7 were based on the result of years of false assessments about Hamas.

As a result, intelligence officials on all levels failed to provide a warning for what would come.

Tol's full article on this aspect of the investigation is here:

[IDF identified but ignored 5 warning signs of Hamas attack on eve of Oct. 7](#)

THE COMMAND AND CONTROL AND ORDERS GIVEN DURING BATTLES BETWEEN OCTOBER 7 AND 10

Finally, the last investigation topic, focusing on the battles on October 7 and the following days, found out only in hindsight the IDF's Gaza Division was defeated for several hours that day.

As a result of not realizing in real-time that the Gaza Division had fallen, the General Staff did not understand the severity of the attack and failed to put together an accurate picture of the operational situation, which became a major challenge during the efforts to block the attack.

The battles investigation found that the IDF failed to protect Israeli civilians and was not ready for a wide-scale surprise attack.

Tol's full article on this aspect of the investigation is here:

[Entire Gaza Division was overrun for hours, and IDF didn't know it; 767 troops faced 5,000 terrorists](#)



A car destroyed in an attack by Palestinian terrorists is seen in Sderot, Israel, on October 7, 2023.

(Ohad Zwigenberg/AP)

INVESTIGATIONS DO NOT DEAL WITH POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

The probes were aimed at drawing operational conclusions for the IDF and did not look into the policies of the political leadership, thereby avoiding a fight with government leaders, who have insisted that investigations must wait until after the end of the war against Hamas.

The investigations — conducted by units seen as having had a role in the failure to notice Hamas preparations or adequately ready themselves for the terror group's onslaught — were carried out concurrently amid the war.

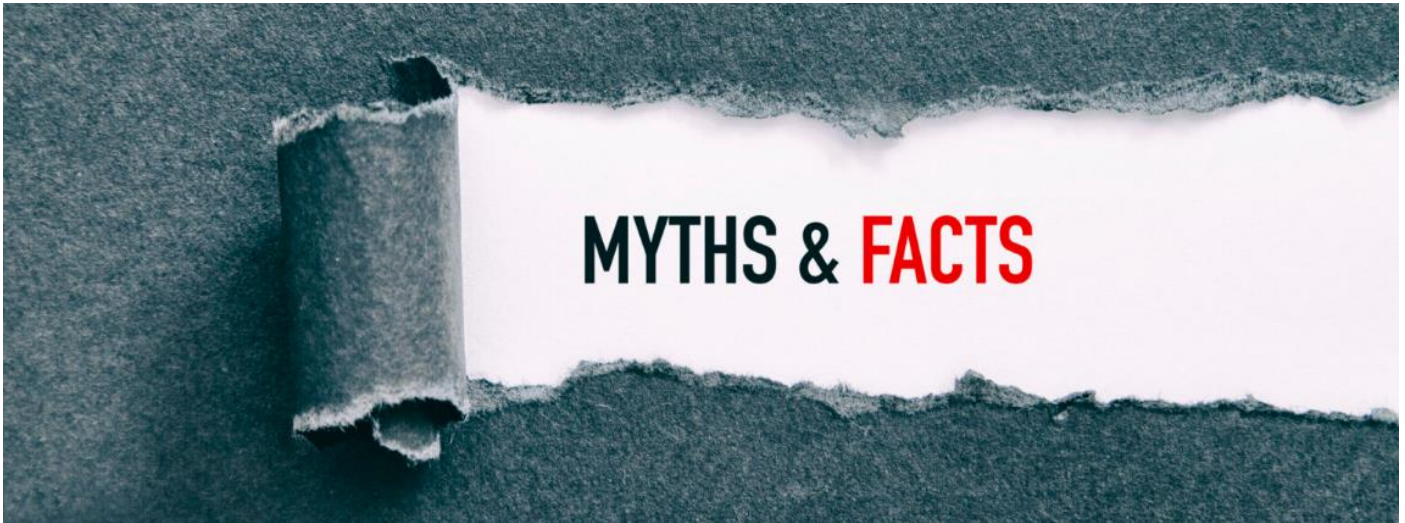
Thousands of hours were spent by officers on the investigations — collecting material, conducting interviews, and compiling the information.

In addition to the four main topics, the IDF investigated 41 separate battles and major incidents that took place during the October 7 attack.

The IDF has also set up a [website](#) (Hebrew link) where the findings will be publicly available after they are presented.

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT THE ISRAEL AND PALESTINE CONFLICT

SUMMIT MINISTRIES



Do conversations about Israel and Palestine leave your head spinning? Few issues seem to have as much misinformation surrounding them as the conflict in Gaza. When I go into an interview or Q&A on the topic, I prepare by reminding myself of the facts. Below, I share what I have found to be the most common myths and how to respond to these incorrect assumptions. By reading the arguments, you can prepare yourself with the facts so that you can have informed conversations centered on the truth.

- [Myth: “The modern state of Israel wasn’t formed until 1948. It’s not legitimate.”](#)
- [Myth: “Jews shouldn’t have their own nation.”](#)
- [Myth: “The Jews want to commit genocide against Muslims.”](#)
- [Myth: “The Jews have no history in the land.”](#)
- [Myth: “Israel is a white colonialist settler state.”](#)
- [Myth: “Palestine is the original name of the land and it belongs to those who identify as Palestinian.”](#)
- [Myth: “Palestinians have never been given an opportunity to form a nation.”](#)
- [Myth: “Palestine is ‘occupied’ by Israel.”](#)
- [Myth: “The charge of ‘anti-semitism’ is a bogeyman used by conservatives to demonize their opponents.”](#)
- [Myth: “The student movement against Israel is a spontaneous movement of social justice.”](#)
- [Myth: “ Hamas had nothing to do with protests in America.”](#)
- [Myth: “The experts all agree that the Palestinian cause is just.”](#)
- [Myth: “Israel is a theocracy and theocracies are bad.”](#)

- [Myth: “Jews are no longer relevant to God’s plan for the world.”](#)
- [Myth: “Now that we have the New Testament, we don’t need the Jewish scriptures anymore.”](#)
- [Myth: “The biblical references to Israel are just spiritual metaphors, not about a physical nation.”](#)
- [Myth: “Israel is a secular state, not a Jewish nation.”](#)
- [Myth: “Why should Christians support Israel when it is the most non-religious nation in the world?”](#)
- [Myth: “Christians are not to be involved in war.”](#)
- [Myth: “Christians are supposed to turn the other cheek, which means that it is wrong for them to support war.”](#)
- [Myth: “Israel is intentionally killing civilians in Gaza.”](#)
- [Myth: “Israel is intentionally starving Gazans.”](#)
- [Myth: “Israel’s attack is disproportionate.”](#)
- [Myth: “Israel is deliberately committing genocide.”](#)
- [Myth: “It is wrong for the Israelis to respond militarily.”](#)
- [Myth: “ Hamas is trying to protect the Gazans from the Israelis.”](#)
- [Myth: “ Hamas has the support of Muslims around the world.”](#)
- [Myth: “ Hamas is a poor victim of Western aggression.”](#)
- [Myth: “ Hamas is a legitimate government that has been unfairly targeted by the U.S.”](#)
- [Myth: “ Hamas maintains its rule in Gaza by popular consent.”](#)
- [Myth: “ Hamas is telling the truth about what is really happening in Gaza.”](#)
- [Myth: “ Hamas is being unfairly accused of things it doesn’t believe.”](#)
- [Myth: “ Hamas doesn’t attack innocent civilians.”](#)
- [Myth: “ Hamas upholds Muslim values and doesn’t specifically target Jews.”](#)
- [Myth: “ Hamas doesn’t use its population as human shields.”](#)
- [Myth: “ Hamas is trying to live peacefully; it is Israel that is the aggressor.”](#)
- [Myth: “ Iran is not a supporter of terrorism.”](#)

HISTORICAL ARGUMENTS

Myth: “The modern state of Israel wasn’t formed until 1948. It’s not legitimate.” Irrelevant. None of the modern states in the region existed in their present form until well after the breakup of the Ottoman Empire in the early 1900s. Lebanon, Israel’s neighbor to the north, was formed in 1943. Syria, Israel’s neighbor to

the northeast, was formed in 1944. Jordan, Israel's neighbor to the east, was formed in 1946. Egypt, Israel's neighbor to the south, became an independent nation in 1947. Why wasn't a Palestinian state formed at that same time? The Palestinian Arabs involved in the negotiations refused to form one—then or ever since. Israel is the world's only Jewish state.

Myth: “Jews shouldn't have their own nation.” Why shouldn't Jews have their own nation? There are fifty-seven member states of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. There is only one Jewish state. About 1.8 billion people in the world are Muslim. The total number of Jews in the world is just over fifteen million. For every Jew in the world, there are 120 Muslims.

Myth: “The Jews want to commit genocide against Muslims.” If the displacement of a people group counts as genocide, then Hamas's stated aim of killing Jews unquestionably meets the definition. Also, they point to the Islamic genocide against Jews that has continued unabated since 1948. In 1948, Egypt was home to seventy-five thousand Jews. Now fewer than one hundred are there. There are no Jews left in Libya and Algeria, both of which had populations of tens of thousands in 1948. At that time, there were 850,000 Jews in the Middle East and North Africa, outside of Israel. Fewer than ten thousand remain. Most of these Jews presumably emigrated to Israel. But according to the World Organization of Jews from Arab Countries, they had to leave behind land and assets worth more than \$300 billion, wealth that was confiscated by the various governments from which they fled. These same Arab countries, not coincidentally, have also ensured that Palestinians remain stateless. None, except Israel, are offering any kind of citizenship to Palestinians.

Myth: “The Jews have no history in the land.” The Jews are the only people group to have ever established a nation state in the now disputed land, and they did so more than three thousand years ago. Since the overthrow of Jerusalem by Rome in AD 70, though, the land has been ruled by foreign capitals as an administrative district. This was true until the 1940s when Israel and its surrounding nations came into existence in their present form.

Myth: “Israel is a white colonialist settler state.” In Israel, there are migrants from 103 countries, speaking 82 different languages. This defies the “white settler colonialist” label with which Israel's citizens—and Jews everywhere—are smeared.

Myth: “Palestine is the original name of the land and it belongs to those who identify as Palestinian.” “The land was not called “Palestine” because it was owned by Palestinian Muslims. It was named Palestine in AD 70 by the Roman general Hadrian after he destroyed Jerusalem. Until the 1930s, the term “Palestinian” referred to Jews, Muslims, and Christians living in the historic land of Israel. In 1964, Yassar Arafat formed the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). It was Arafat who insisted that the term “Palestinian” be used to refer only to Arabs. The world has largely gone along with this distinction.

Myth: “Palestinians have never been given an opportunity to form a nation.” In 1947, the United Nations developed a partition plan for the region designating two separate states, one Arab and one Jewish. The leaders of the Arab faction rejected this plan, as well as subsequent two-state solution plans in 1967, 2000, and 2008. The situation is complicated further by the fact that the PLO in the West Bank and

Hamas in Gaza, while both Muslim, are essentially at war with one another. According to the Israeli Arab journalist Khaled Abu Toameh, they hate each other more than they hate Israel. A “two state solution” in which Palestine becomes its own country like Israel has been consistently rejected by the PLO. The rise of Hamas makes this rejection more likely to remain permanent because Hamas will settle for nothing short of Israel’s annihilation, and the PLO appears to fear the rise of Hamas more than it despises the presence of the Israeli army in the West Bank.

Myth: “Palestine is ‘occupied’ by Israel.” The West Bank is semi-autonomous, having gained this status through negotiations in which Israel gave back territory it had acquired when it fought back against Palestinian attacks in 1967. The West Bank is divided into three sections with overlapping governance by the Palestinian Authority (the governing body established by Arafat’s PLO) and the Israeli military. The term “Israeli occupation” mainly refers to the application of Israeli military law in these three sections in various ways, including policing and checkpoints. The IDF does not reveal how many soldiers it has inside the West Bank, but it is probably about six thousand. An American city with a similar population (three million) would typically have a police force of nine thousand. Why is this called an “occupation” rather than “policing”? There may be many reasons, but one of them surely is that Palestinians resent the Jewish presence and the term “occupation” offers them a rhetorical advantage in denying Israel’s legitimacy.

ANTI-SEMITISM ARGUMENTS

Myth: “The charge of ‘anti-semitism’ is a bogeyman used by conservatives to demonize their opponents.” Obviously, being against Israel’s policies doesn’t mean that one is by default pro-terrorism. But it is naïve to think that groups like Hamas are not the greatest beneficiaries of the oppressor/oppressed mindset. It is also naïve to think that this will somehow not translate into attacks against the United States, as Hamas has called for. In 2021, three respected researchers conducted an eye-opening study of where this new kind of anti-Semitism—the double-standard that denies the fundamental legitimacy of Judaism and of Israel—draws its energy. They found that not only does higher education not protect against anti-Semitism, but it also licenses it in a sophisticated, socially acceptable way. Those with advanced degrees were between 15 percent and 36 percent more unfavorable toward Jews and Israel when examples of certain social behaviors were about Jews rather than Black Lives Matter (BLM) advocates or Muslims, and about Israel rather than other nations, such as Mexico.

Myth: “The student movement against Israel is a spontaneous movement of social justice.” The anti-Israel protests in the United States are part of a carefully orchestrated propaganda campaign by Hamas. Just two days after the October 7 massacre, 127 university-based chapters of a group called Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) released a statement saying that Hamas’s genocidal attacks were justified and blaming *Israel* for committing genocide. SJP released this statement almost a full week before Israel ramped up its counter-offensive in Gaza, while the IDF was still rooting out terrorists from the homes of their victims and Israelis were enduring Hezbollah missile attacks from the north. It is now clear that Hamas’s propaganda campaign had been planned alongside the military one. But Hamas lackeys on US campuses apparently didn’t get the memo about waiting until Israel responded militarily before condemning it for responding militarily.

Myth: “ Hamas had nothing to do with protests in America.” Hamas’s PR campaign surrounding its October 7 military campaign is a master class in propaganda. As we’ve already seen, the PR and the military campaigns were executed nearly simultaneously. Students for Justice in Palestine was so prepared for the campaign that it hosted a nationwide “Day of Resistance” just five days after Hamas’s brutal attack. Coordinators were alerted *on the day of the attack* to join for a planning call. The evidence that propaganda was at play became obvious when SJP’s PR messaging memo was leaked. It is a hodgepodge of Hamas talking points and Marxist mumbo jumbo, describing the October 7 attack as a “prison break” and claiming that the Israeli “settlers” were military assets, not civilians. It also claimed that Israel was fragile and on the point of breaking and that all means of resistance, including armed struggle, is “legitimate” and “necessary.” All of this is lifted concept for concept and, in many cases, word for word from Hamas’s charter. Even SJP’s chant “glory to our resistance” is a well-known Hamas war cry. Hamas’s PR campaigns after October 7 clearly fit the definition of propaganda. They manipulate symbols and slogans to play on prejudices and emotions, the goal of which is to leverage people’s natural sympathy for beleaguered Palestinians into support for a brutal terrorist regime.

Myth: “The experts all agree that the Palestinian cause is just.” According to Holocaust scholar Mark Roseman, half the Nazi leaders who planned the extermination of Europe’s eleven million Jews carried the title “doctor.” Why are educated people so often blind to the truth? One reason was explained by Joseph P. Overton from the Mackinac Center for Public Policy. Overton said that on any given issue, the range of “acceptable” ideas falls within a window. Picture a movie director framing a shot with her fingers. The audience doesn’t see everything the director sees but only what the director *wants* them to see. The Overton Window explains why so many bright people at prestigious institutions can look at a world of truth and see it falsely. G. K. Chesterton in his short story, “The Oracle of the Dog” wrote, “It’s the first effect of not believing in God that you lose your common sense and can’t see things as they are.”

FAITH-RELATED ARGUMENTS

Myth: “Israel is a theocracy and theocracies are bad.” Israel is not a theocracy. Israel is a democracy, the only one in the Middle East. It is structured in a similar way to the Hebrew republic of ancient Israel, with a president, prime minister, representative body, and supreme court. It is vibrant and diverse. Israel has 55 political parties. Fifteen of these hold seats in Israel’s governing body, the Knesset. As of this writing, the largest of these parties, Likud, only holds thirty-two seats out of the 120 available. It is the only nation in the region where women are equal to men and where people can live in freedom regardless of their religion, political beliefs, or sexual orientation.

Myth: “Jews are no longer relevant to God’s plan for the world.” The clearest writings in the New Testament about the Jews are from the Apostle Paul. Paul’s understanding of Scripture was based on the idea of covenant. The covenant was *from* God, *through* Israel, *for* the nations. Jews are not Jewish just because some of them have Middle Eastern blood. They are chosen by covenant with God. Even when they are disobedient to God, his covenant with them remains. Further, the Abrahamic covenant was about the people *in the land*. God promised to bring his people into the land (Exodus 6:7-8). God swore to give the land as an inheritance (Deuteronomy 30:20). Ezekiel 36:28 says, “You shall dwell in the land that I gave

to your fathers.” Deuteronomy 11:12 says, “The eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.” God is the One who decides whether this covenant still applies, whether it has been broken, how it can be renewed, or whether its obligations have been fulfilled.

Myth: “Now that we have the New Testament, we don’t need the Jewish scriptures anymore.” The New Testament has essentially no meaning without the context provided by the Old Testament. Even the prophetic language used by the apostle John in the book of Revelation draws on Old Testament prophecies, such as Isaiah 52, 54, and 60. John writes that at the end of all things, “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4). This ties back to Isaiah 25:8, which says, “He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.”

Myth: “The biblical references to Israel are just spiritual metaphors, not about a physical nation.” Before 1948, since Jews were dispersed throughout the world, the idea of “Israel” was sometimes seen by Christian theologians as more of a spiritual concept than a national identity. The gospel of Jesus is not somehow outside of or above physical reality, as the Gnostics taught. In the past, “Israel” may have been viewed as a non-physical, spiritual concept. I see the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 as changing that paradigm, both geopolitically and theopolitically. Jews have a physical presence in the land of their history. Whether you agree with how it happened or how they are stewarding it, this is the reality.

Myth: “Israel is a secular state, not a Jewish nation.” Israel is a Jewish state and a homeland for the Jewish people. Most of its citizens are Jews. Israel’s Basic Law (its constitution-like agreement) is based on the book of Deuteronomy. Its national holidays are Jewish holidays originating in Bible times. It incorporates Hebrew law into everything from marriages being performed by rabbis to the kosher food served at government installations. Israel’s flag is based on a Jewish prayer shawl.

Myth: “Why should Christians support Israel when it is the most non-religious nation in the world?” Many Jews don’t claim to be religious because one of the main arguments Palestinians make against them is that they are “just a religion.” But regardless of the personal spiritual state of any given Jewish person, the attacks on Jews have nothing to do with how religious they are. Every anti-God movement from Haman in the Old Testament to the Bolsheviks to the Nazis all sought to destroy the Jewish people *because they are a people*, regardless of their level of religious practice. Secular Jews are as likely as religious Jews to be targeted.

Myth: “Christians are not to be involved in war.” Yes, Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9). But saying “‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace” is to heal a wound lightly (Jeremiah 6:14). Evil must be opposed; peace dies when evil reigns. A shameful peace based on nonaction is not to be preferred to a just peace based on action. Evildoers must be stopped. War is a part of human life. It always has been. The historian Will Durant claimed that only 268 years in recorded human history have been completely at peace. It’s upsetting when our peace is disturbed; but war, not peace, is history’s norm. The question is not whether war is evil. It is. The question is, how might evil be minimized when war

becomes inevitable? Biblical scholars, such as Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas, took a more prudential approach. War is evil, they wrote; yet it is also sometimes the only way to limit the spread of evil. Therefore, we are best served not by avoiding it but by carrying it out as justly as possible. To summarize their writings, both believed that a war can be just if it is (1) declared by a legitimate government, (2) acting on a just cause, and (3) with right intention. The United States government believes that Israel meets all three of these criteria. Incidentally, Augustine and Aquinas did not believe that the greatest evil of war was that people die. We all die. The greatest evil was that greed, lust, and generational hatred might be allowed to rain down misery on the innocent, preventing them from living integral lives as God intended.

Myth: “Christians are supposed to turn the other cheek, which means that it is wrong for them to support war.” In Matthew 5:39 Jesus says that if someone slaps you on the cheek, you should “turn to him the other also.” The philosopher Arthur Holmes (1924-2011) maintained that the context of that verse refers to individuals, not to governments or churches. “It means that as an individual I do not take the law into my own hands,” he says. Justice matters. National defense and law enforcement are permitted. Personal vengeance is not.

WAR ARGUMENTS

Myth: “Israel is intentionally killing civilians in Gaza.” The Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry refuses to distinguish between combatant and noncombatant deaths. It maintains that *all* Gazans who die are “victims of Israel’s aggression.” There are no combatants, only martyrs. Those who died with weapons in their hands were innocent victims engaging in justifiable self-defense, as far as Hamas is concerned. Yes, many of those who have died were probably noncombatants. But Israel is taking great pains to protect civilians. Israel is not targeting civilians. Typically, in an urban warfare situation such as that in Gaza, civilians account for 90 percent of casualties. Using the Gaza Health Ministry numbers and Israel’s reporting about how many of the dead were combatants, one or two civilians have died for every combatant killed. This is far, far lower than the average and approximately the same civilian death rate as World War II and Vietnam, in a much more complex situation. Part of the reason civilian casualties have been much lower than historical norms is that the IDF operates by rules of engagement designed to limit civilian casualties. It uses precision weapons to focus on specific targets. It alerts residents through calls, texts, and pamphlets. It has evacuated 1.2 million Gazans to safe zones. John Spencer, a leading expert on urban warfare, says that “Israel has implemented more precautions to prevent civilian harm than any military in history—above and beyond what international law requires and more than the United States did in its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.”

Myth: “Israel is intentionally starving Gazans.” This charge is now known to be false. Columbia University business school professors Awi Fedengruen and Ran Kivetz analyzed the aid situation and reported that enough food was delivered to Gaza between October 2023 and April 2024—290,000 tons—to meet 50 percent of Gaza’s food needs, even as three-fourths of Gaza’s agricultural production ability remains intact. If people aren’t getting enough food, Hamas theft is the most likely culprit.

Myth: “Israel’s attack is disproportionate.” Proportionality is not based on the number of casualties but on the nature of the threat. Hamas’s threat to Israel has been going on for decades, and it continues even now. Hamas won’t release the hostages and continues shooting rockets at and conducting terrorist acts in Israel. It deploys a well-developed propaganda mechanism that is actively trying to inflame world opinion against Israel. It is backed by Iran, a nation whose escalating military aggression and sponsorship of the region’s most destabilizing forces represent Israel’s greatest existential threat. Ghazi Hamad, a Hamas political leader, has promised that Hamas will attack Israel “again and again” until it is destroyed. Every time Hamas has the opportunity to make good on this promise, it has done so. Israel has concluded—and the world has grudgingly agreed—that neither Israel nor the Palestinian people will ever be safe as long as Hamas remains powerful. In addition, we must consider the deterrent effect of Israel’s actions against Gaza. To Israel’s north, Hezbollah terrorists who control Lebanon make daily threats and back them up with rocket strikes. What keeps Hezbollah’s one hundred thousand fighters from storming into Israel? Armies won’t attack if they stand to lose more than they stand to gain. Hezbollah knows that Israel will defend itself aggressively if attacked. Iran, which controls Hezbollah, may not care whether Lebanon is destroyed; but it does care that its own infrastructure is not attacked by a nuclear capable Israel.

Myth: “Israel is deliberately committing genocide.” For genocide to occur, according to the deliberations of the International Court of Justice, “the intent must be to destroy at least a substantial part of the particular group.” To prove intent, the accuser must show something beyond cultural destruction, dispersion of people, or attacks on individuals from the group. It must be shown that there was an organized plan or policy designed to deliberately target the group itself. In its defense at the International Court of Justice, Israel said that not only did it not intentionally target Palestinian civilians in Gaza but that hostilities were decreasing as Israel achieved its stated war goals. It said that in addition to its strict rules of engagement, it had actively provided humanitarian assistance in Gaza through opening a dozen bakeries that produced two million loaves of bread a day, delivering its own water to Gaza through two pipelines as well as taking other measures to ensure water delivery, and facilitating six field hospitals and two floating hospitals with more being constructed. Israel says that it is evacuating the ill and wounded through the Rafah border crossing and has distributed tents, winter equipment, fuel, and cooking gas.

Myth: “It is wrong for the Israelis to respond militarily.” Dr. Eric Patterson, a leading expert on Just War Theory, offers the following analogy: “I grew up in San Diego. If a criminal group came across the border from Tijuana and killed 42,000 men, women, and children in cold blood, raping women, and posting videos to YouTube accompanied by a Braveheart soundtrack, wouldn’t we demand a reckoning?”

HAMAS ARGUMENTS

Myth: “Hamas is trying to protect the Gazans from the Israelis.” Hamas has also publicly displayed a willingness to sacrifice Gazans if it serves the larger aim of annihilating Israel. Mashaal publicly described the October 7 attack as a clever form of self-defense and resistance. He told the interviewer, “We know very well the consequences of our operation on October 7.” He pointed to the millions who died in Russia, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Algeria in pursuit of revolutionary aims and crowed, “Dear sister, the Palestinian nation is just like any other nation. No nation is liberated without sacrifices.”

Myth: “ Hamas has the support of Muslims around the world.” So far, most of the world’s Muslim nations have declined to join Hamas in their self-described campaign of “resistance.” These nations sympathize with the Palestinians, surely, but that doesn’t mean they want them arriving on their own shores. No Arab nations other than Jordan have ever offered citizenship to the Palestinians, and none are offering it now. Syria once offered Hamas refuge but kicked it out after it sparked a civil war. Not even the bad guys want to have anything to do with Hamas—except for Iran, which sees it as a handy tool to pry Israel out of the world community. For decades, Hamas maintained that it is the “central cause” of Ummah, the global community of Muslims. This is false. Hamas has become a pariah, even in strongly Islamic nations. UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt have all outlawed it. Saudi Arabia has jailed all the Hamas leaders it has found. None of the non-terrorist Middle Eastern states have condoned the October 7 attacks. The only nations supporting Hamas are Iran and Qatar. Iran has been designated a “state sponsor of terror” by the United States since 1984. The Council on Foreign Relations says that Qatar took in Hamas after Hamas lost its Syrian sponsorship because of a 2011 uprising of Palestinian refugees, which precipitated a civil war. Qatar sends Hamas hundreds of millions of dollars every year to help it become a “reasonable governing power.” Other Arab nations find this explanation suspicious. The Gulf Cooperation Council suspended Qatar over its ties to terrorism. In 2017, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt severed relations with the nation.

Myth: “ Hamas is a poor victim of Western aggression.” The Foundation for Defense of Democracies has reported that Qatar provides Hamas between \$120 million and \$480 million per year. Much of this money makes its way directly into the hands of Hamas’s top echelon of leadership, who have found sanctuary in Qatar’s villas and five-star hotels even while Qatar receives billions from America for a military base in the country. Hamas’s top three leaders have a reported net worth of \$11 billion. Khaled Mashaal, Hamas’s primary spokesperson, is estimated to have a net worth of \$5 billion. He owns banks and real estate projects throughout the Middle East. If you were a leader of Hamas, would you be living a billionaire lifestyle of private jets and five-star hotels while your people are mired in misery and poverty? Apparently, Hamas’s leadership has no problem with this. It’s not just top Hamas leaders, either. The MacKenzie Institute says even Hamas’s mid-level leaders have become millionaires due to a 20 to 25 percent “tax” on all goods brought into Gaza. Some six hundred Hamas leaders have become millionaires through this graft.

Myth: “ Hamas is a legitimate government that has been unfairly targeted by the U.S.” Hamas is an ecstatically revivalist cult that seeks to purify itself by defiling those it opposes. It desecrates victims not only to defeat them but also to deplete their lives of meaning. The last election in Gaza was in 2006. Hamas won. In 2007, they killed or banished members of the opposing party, Fatah. Since that time, Hamas has ruled as a dictatorship. Life in Gaza under Hamas has been a nightmare of torture, killing, fear, and suppression. According to Human Rights Watch, Hamas and its West Bank counterpart the Palestinian Authority have been “systematically mistreating and torturing Palestinians in detention, including critics and opponents.” This torture “may amount to crimes against humanity, given its systematic nature over many years.”

Myth: “ Hamas maintains its rule in Gaza by popular consent.” Hamas maintains its control through carefully cultivated indoctrination beginning in early childhood. Children in Gaza are indoctrinated by Hamas through curriculum in their schools, even United Nations-sponsored ones. Arnon Groiss, a former Arabic language broadcaster with a Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies from Princeton, read and translated two hundred Palestinian textbooks used by Hamas. He found that from a young age, Gazan children are being desensitized to human life and prepared for war. Even math classes are not exempt. One math problem asks students to calculate how many Jews were killed in the first and second intifada. A history textbook describes a massacre as a “barbeque” in which terrorists hijacked a bus and murdered thirty-eight Jews, burning them alive. A report by two independent researchers found that even teachers in UN-sponsored schools taught children to kill Jews. The report names and shares comments translated from UN teachers’ speeches and social media posts glorifying terrorism, praising suicide bombers for their “self-sacrifice,” and honoring those who have killed Jews as “heroes.” A related group called Islamic Jihad runs “Revenge of the Free” summer camps for Gazan children as young as six. The camps feature military activities, including the simulated kidnapping of an Israeli soldier. The camps are used to recruit students to join militant organizations. It has been said that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. Hamas intends to be that hand, and its education system displays exactly how it intends to rule.

Myth: “ Hamas is telling the truth about what is really happening in Gaza.” Even Amnesty International, a group that sympathizes with the Palestinian people and regularly criticizes Israel, admits that there is no independent media in Palestinian territories and that dissenting journalists are brutally repressed. To discern the truth, we must ask, “How did you come to know that?” and “What’s your source?” War reporting rarely includes firsthand observation. War zones are dangerous. Almost no media outlets want to assume the risk of their employees being present as armies clash. Instead, they purchase reports, pictures, and interviews gathered by freelancers, sometimes called stringers, who are willing to take the risk. If Western reporters do go to the war zone, they are escorted by facilitators who work for one of the warring parties. In Gaza, these stringers and facilitators report to or work closely with Hamas. This practice was exposed when American media outlets purchased pictures from stringers accompanying Hamas terrorists on their raids, which obviously means that the stringers had to know about the attacks in advance. One of the accused stringers, Hassan Eslaiha, was outed because of a selfie he posted on social media being kissed by Yahya Sinwar, the mastermind of Hamas’s October 7 attacks.¹⁷⁰ Complicating the situation, the Associated Press has also covered the proliferation of “deep fake” pictures generated by AI for propaganda purposes. The Israeli intelligence company Cyabra analyzed two million social media posts from early in the war and found that more than forty thousand profiles were fake. According to a source I trust but whose information I could not personally verify, the number of bots designed to promote anti-Israel propaganda could be in the millions.

Myth: “ Hamas is being unfairly accused of things it doesn’t believe.” In its short history, at its founding and again in 2017, Hamas released a charter outlining its vision and mission. The original document, quoting the Quran, explicitly called for the killing of Jews. The 2017 “Document of General Principles and Policies” removed some of the extreme language about killing Jews while retaining the same aims of

placing itself at the center of concern for the global Islamic community (Ummah) and eliminating the “Zionist project,” Israel. Here are some direct quotes from the 2017 charter that outline Hamas’s aims: “Hamas believes that no part of the land of Palestine shall be compromised or conceded, irrespective of the causes, the circumstances and the pressures and no matter how long the occupation lasts.” “Resistance and jihad for the liberation of Palestine will remain a legitimate right, a duty and an honour for all the sons and daughters of our people and our Ummah.” “Resisting the occupation with all means and methods is a legitimate right guaranteed by divine laws and by international norms and laws.”

Myth: “Hamas doesn’t attack innocent civilians.” Hamas attempted genocide against the Jews. They ruined entire communities and decimated as much of Israel’s infrastructure as they could, destroying up to 70 percent of Israel’s agricultural production. It will take years to recover. By contrast, Israel has not attacked Gaza’s agricultural production. 75% of it remains intact. Hamas cares little about Western concerns for just war. Hamas does not distinguish between combatants and noncombatants in Gaza, though it does consider all Israelis to be combatants. Nor does Hamas act in a way that is proportional to the threat. Murdering and raping innocents and desecrating their bodies violates the very essence of just war. If you meet anyone who thinks these actions are justified, you should probably question the basis upon which they make *any* claims about the war. Their moral compass is clearly broken.

Myth: “Hamas upholds Muslim values and doesn’t specifically target Jews.” Islamic history is complicated. As his life progressed, Mohammed became increasingly militant. He expressed violent sentiments toward many, including the Jews. This includes verses in the Quran calling for their deaths. Hamas takes these verses as clear-cut commands. To Hamas, killing Jews is a legitimate expression of “Islamic values.” In the Hamas charter, anything that advances the “resistance” is seen as legitimate self-defense. Doctors who examined Israeli victims of Hamas found evidence for Hamas’s brutality. They have said that the terrorists seemed “obsessed” with rape and with mutilating sexual organs. Terrorists who were killed were found with phrasebooks explaining how to say, in Hebrew, “Take your clothes off!” and “Spread your legs!” The evidence shows that the sadistic Hamas terrorists gang-raped women of all ages and cut off their breasts—often with their partners, parents, or children tied up and forced to watch—before killing them. Some of the women had been raped so violently that their pelvises were broken. These were not isolated incidents. They occurred across multiple attack sites.

Myth: “Hamas doesn’t use its population as human shields.” Hamas has displayed no regard for noncombatants caught in the war zone. Indeed, Hamas hides behind them as human shields, something that anti-Israel activists have cynically taken to calling “asymmetrical warfare,” to deflect from what it manifestly is: hiding behind civilians. In a Department of Defense publication, Air Force Brigadier General Pat Ryder said, “We know that Hamas is integrating its operations, whether it’s command and control, operational centers, combat forces, putting rockets in Gaza, to include this complex and sprawling tunnel network underneath infrastructure throughout Gaza, in effect...using civilians as human shields.” This is not a new situation. *NGO Monitor* says that for years, “Hamas has systematically exploited the civilian population of Gaza as ‘human shields,’ expecting that their presence will either deter Israeli attacks or

result in large numbers of civilian casualties providing a PR victory and generating international pressure, condemnations, and sanctions against Israel.”

Myth: “ Hamas is trying to live peacefully; it is Israel that is the aggressor.” If Hamas laid down its weapons, there would be no more war. If Israel laid down its weapons, there would be no more Israel. If Hamas retains the ability to reconstitute itself, it has publicly promised that its fighters will repeat the October 7 attacks as many times as they can and “from wherever they can.” Khaled Mashaal, the billionaire “external leader” of Hamas who is a godlike figure to Hamas’s leadership because he once survived an assassination attempt and imprisonment, said in a publicly available interview that any plans for peace for Israel would be to “establish common ground” with other Palestinian groups so they can unite together for Israel’s abolition. He bragged that Hamas’s control of Gaza has provided it “political and administrative cover” to manufacture weapons, dig tunnels, and train its members without being disturbed by Israel or by the Palestinian Authority.

IRAN ARGUMENT

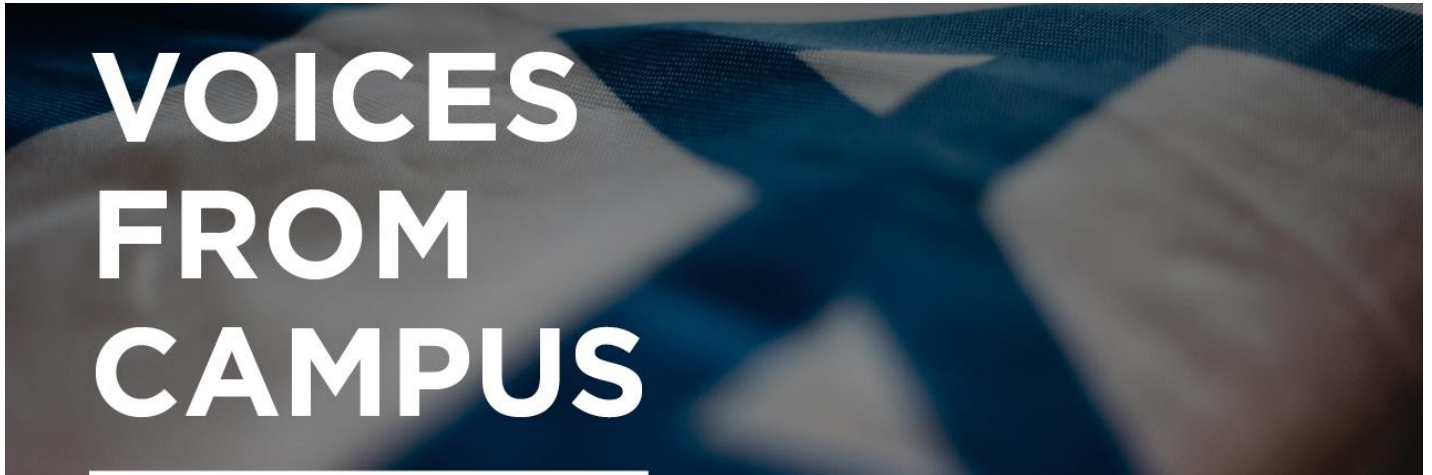
Myth: “Iran is not a supporter of terrorism.” The Council on Foreign Relations says that Iran annually gives \$100 million to Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups. Its foreign ministry spokesman Nassar Kanani praised Hamas’s October 7 slaughter and recently pledged Iran’s continuing support.⁹⁰ After October 7, Iranian television showed members of parliament chanting “Death to Israel” and “Palestine is victorious.” Hamas is well-armed and trained by Iran and lavishly funded by gullible nations and state sponsors of terror, such as Qatar. Iranian security officials admit that Iran provided rockets to Hamas and showed its fighters how to build their own. CNN reported that the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps “has been giving Hamas engineers weapons training for almost two decades.” Weapons from Iran are shipped to Somalia or Sudan and then smuggled overland through Egypt and into Gaza through tunnels. The weapons provided by Iran include Qassam rockets that have been launched by the tens of thousands toward Israel. Hamas also has acquired Norinco automatic rifles and rocket-propelled grenades such as RPG-7s as well as Chinese Type 69 RPGs that are designed to defeat tank armor.⁹⁷ Additional weapons include Russian-made mortars, Kornet laser-guided anti-tank missiles that can melt through two feet of steel, and “Shahab” suicide drones designed by Iran. A similar drone killed three American service members and wounded twenty-five more at a base in Jordan in January 2024.



This guide to myths and facts is based on the book Should Christians Support Israel? by Dr. Jeff Myers. Find out more about the book and get your free copy [here](#).

HOW TO RESPOND TO COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE ATTACK ON ISRAEL

AJC.ORG February 2025



Claim: *Gaza is an open air prison*

Response:

- Israel has a security fence/blockade on its border to prevent terrorists from entering from Gaza - not to keep Palestinian civilians locked in. Egypt has the same type of closed border with Gaza for the same reason.
- In 2005, Israel disengaged and withdrew from Gaza, dismantling all Jewish settlements and withdrawing all military forces. Since 2007, Gaza has been controlled by Hamas, an Iran-backed terror group, which came to power through elections.
- Since 2007, Hamas has posed a true security threat to Israel. It has launched thousands upon thousands of rockets into Israel, targeting civilian neighborhoods. There have been wars between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, including in 2008, 2012, 2014, and 2021. Hamas has built underground tunnels from Gaza into Israel through which they smuggle weapons and engage in terrorist incursions into Israeli territory.
- Hamas, with the funding it receives from international aid, could have built infrastructure, health care, and education systems for its population. Instead, it has created rockets and tunnels to attack Israel, turning Gaza into a wasteland and keeping the Palestinian population in poverty.
- Israel has issued over 15,000 work visas for civilians in Gaza to work in Israel, which provides an economic lifeline for tens of thousands of Gazans, and provides free electricity and consistent humanitarian aid to Gazans.
- It is important to also keep in mind that, as noted above, Gaza has a border with Egypt. Egypt and other Arab nations could take in Palestinian refugees who don't support Hamas and are essentially being held prisoners by a terrorist group. It has thus far refused to do so.

Claim: *Israel is equally at fault for killing as many or more Palestinian civilians*

Response:

- The Gazan people are tragic pawns of Hamas, which has prioritized terror against Israel over the wellbeing of its own people. Using civilians as human shields, Hamas stores missiles and military equipment in schools and hospitals, putting the lives of Palestinian civilians in danger when Israel must bomb military installations. Israel has a policy of warning civilians before attacking, making phone calls to residents and dropping lead on buildings to warn of impending missile strikes. In this conflict, Israel has warned Gazans to evacuate ahead of air strikes. The Israeli army has shared footage of Hamas
- Israel was attacked by Hamas, and 1,300 Israeli citizens were murdered. Israel has a moral obligation to protect its citizens and to recover the approximately 150 Israelis, among them babies, children, women, and the elderly (some of whom are American citizens), who are being held hostage by Hamas terrorists in Gaza.
- While Israel does its best to avoid civilian casualties through warnings before bombing military installations, Hamas uses its own citizens as human shields, which increases the death toll in Gaza exponentially. Unfortunately, Hamas' lack of humanity results in the tragic death of innocent civilians.

Claim: *Israelis are colonizers*

Response:

- There is no justification for terrorism. Period.
- The accusation that Israel is a colonial state is an attempt to delegitimize the existence of the State of Israel and deny its right to exist.
- As is documented through historical sources and archeological finds, Israel has been the homeland of the Jewish people for more than 3,000 years. The Roman Empire destroyed the Jewish state of Judea in 70 CE and expelled the Jews living there, but even in exile, the Jewish people always longed to return to their homeland. The Zionist movement of the late 19th century gave Jews the hope and ability to begin to return to live there.
- The term "colonizers" suggests a colonial empire which benefits from colonization. Far from colonizers, Jews who returned to Israel were fleeing persecution in their nations of previous residence to return to their ancestral homeland.
- Lastly, and importantly, Israel does not occupy the Gaza Strip and has had no presence in the coastal enclave for nearly two decades.

Claim: *Antizionism is not Antisemitism*

Response:

- Zionism is the movement for self-determination for Jews in the land of modern-day Israel. Antizionism is the opposition to Jews having a Jewish state in their ancestral homeland and the denying of the Jewish people's right to self-determination, calling for Israel's dissolution.
- While criticism of Israeli policies, like critiquing any other country, is valid and not antisemitic, the particular belief that Jews do not have the right to self-determination is discrimination against Jews and is antisemitism. [Natan Sharansky's 3D test and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism \(IHRA\)](#) are helpful frameworks to determine when criticism of Israel veers into antisemitism.
- While criticism of Israeli policy is valid and not antisemitic, attacks on "Zionists" are often thinly veiled attacks against Jews, especially since most Jews support Zionism and have a connection to Israel.

Claim: ***Israel is an apartheid state***

Response:

- This is one of the most commonly used canards against Israel, which seeks to cast Israel as uniquely evil and worthy of being dismantled. Apartheid is defined as “the implementation and maintenance of a system of legalized racial segregation in which one racial group is deprived of political and civil rights.” 21% of the Israeli population are Muslim Israeli Arabs who enjoy the same rights as all other citizens of Israel. There are two Arab parties in the Israeli Knesset, the legislature of Israel. There are also two Arab Supreme Court judges.
- People who claim Israel is an apartheid state point to the barrier wall between the West Bank and Israel proper as evidence for their claim, but the wall is a critical security measure put into place as a result of the Second Intifada during which terrorists crossing into Israel from the West Bank killed approximately 1000 Israelis. The wall has saved countless Israeli lives, including Arab Israeli lives. It is important to note that terrorists do not only harm Jews. Arabs are also protected from terrorist attacks by Israeli security measures.

Claim: ***Gaza lives in abject poverty because of Israeli oppression***

Response:

- Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005. Hamas gained control of the territory in 2007. Instead of investing in schools, civil infrastructure, and hospitals, Hamas invested in rockets to target Israeli civilians and they consistently place Palestinians who live in Gaza as human shields, hiding their terrorist cells in heavily populated neighborhoods where it becomes challenging to dislodge them without harming innocent civilians.
- Israel provides electricity, fuel, and humanitarian aid to Gaza. International organizations also provide millions of dollars in aid to Gaza. Hamas takes this aid and weaponizes it to build terror tunnels, fund missiles and weaponry, and pay off the families of suicide attackers instead of providing for the Palestinian people.

Claim: ***Israel has created the context and circumstances that led to this recent conflict.***

Response:

- Let's be very clear here: Nothing justifies the unprovoked murder and kidnapping of innocent civilians. Babies, children, young people, elderly, disabled individuals have been killed, injured, or kidnapped by brutal terrorists. What happened in Israel was a pogrom. The slaughter of innocent Israelis and the documentation by Hamas of these crimes against humanity must be denounced unequivocally.
- Any attempt to rationalize or justify Hamas' terrorist actions is utterly abhorrent. There can be no moral equivalency drawn between the horror of Hamas' attack on Israel beginning October 7th, 2023 and Israel's legitimate defense of its citizens from Hamas aggression.
- For decades, Israel has endorsed a two-state solution that would lead to a Palestinian state. The Palestinian leadership has repeatedly rejected proposals for two-state solutions. Since 2005, Israel has had no military or civilian presence in Gaza.

Claim: ***Rallies and organizations celebrating the “successes” of Hamas have a right to organize and express themselves.***

Response:

- When freedom of speech turns into hate speech, it is our collective responsibility as a society to condemn it and denounce it unequivocally.
- The horrors that we see perpetrated by Hamas are acts of terrorism, and supporting Hamas' actions in any kind of way equals defending terrorists.
- Organizations like Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), and other pro-Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement groups who back Hamas and their terrorist acts are supporting and praising the killing of Jews. They foment hatred against Jews and create an unsafe environment for Jewish students on campus.

PART 11 - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

ABOUT THE ICC

AND THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC) HAS ANNOUNCED THAT IT HAS ISSUED ARREST WARRANTS

UPDATE: Adding another dangerous twist to the Israel-Hamas War and its impact, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has announced that it has issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, as well as Mohammed Deif, a commander from the genocidal terror group Hamas.

Read AJC's Statement

AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

American Jewish Committee Appalled by ICC's Issuance of Arrest Warrants Against Israelis

The Court's Pre-Trial Chamber I [said that it had issued the warrants](#) for Netanyahu and Gallant for "crimes against humanity and war crimes committed from at least 8 October 2023 until at least 20 May 2024," which is the date that ICC Chief Prosecutor Karim Khan announced he would be seeking the arrest warrants.

The court said it had found reasonable grounds to believe that Netanyahu and Gallant "each bear criminal responsibility for the following crimes as co-perpetrators for committing the acts jointly with others: the war crime of starvation as a method of warfare; and the crimes against humanity of murder, persecution, and other inhumane acts."

In a separate statement, the ICC also issued an arrest warrant for Deif, who Israel says was killed in an airstrike on July 13. ICC Chief Prosecutor Khan had previously sought warrants for Hamas terror leaders [Yahya Sinwar](#), the mastermind of the October 7 massacre, and [Ismail Haniyeh](#) for the war crimes and crimes against humanity of extermination, murder, taking of hostages, rape and sexual violence, torture, and other inhumane acts following the October 7 terror attack on Israel. However, Khan dropped the legal proceedings against them after their deaths on July 21 and Oct. 16.

AJC CEO Ted Deutch [slammed](#) the ICC's decision to issue warrants from Netanyahu and Gallant.

"Equating the leaders of a democratic state exercising its right to self-defense with a terrorist organization responsible for the rape, murder and mutilation of over 1,200 innocent people, the kidnapping of 251, and the continued captivity of 101, is an intentional distortion of justice, morality, and international law founded on virulent anti-Israel animus."

Here's what you need to know about the ICC, its history and powers, and how this will affect the Israel-Hamas war.

WHY IS THIS A DANGEROUS DEVELOPMENT IN THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR?

The ICC's decision to issue arrest warrants for Israeli leaders is a distortion of international law that harms the Court's credibility, completely undermines its core mandate, and emboldens enemies of democracy around the world.

Rather than acknowledging the reality that Israel's military actions in Gaza are solely focused on defeating the internationally recognized terror organization Hamas, securing the safe return of the 101 hostages still held by the terror group, and protecting Israelis from further attack, the Court embraced the false claims that Israel is acting with malicious intent toward Palestinians, restricting humanitarian aid as a tool of punishment, and deliberately attacking and harming civilians. Perversely, the Court even cited Israel's efforts to increase humanitarian aid entering Gaza in the spring of 2024 as evidence of ill intent, suggesting that prior restrictions had not been dictated by military necessity but intended to cause Palestinian civilians harm.

[Click here to read AJC's full statement on the ICC's decision and why it is dangerous.](#)

WHAT IS THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT?

The International Criminal Court (ICC) is an independent international judicial tribunal based in The Hague. It was established in 2002 by the Rome Statute, a treaty that spells out what crimes the ICC should investigate and adjudicate and when it can do so. The ICC can prosecute individuals for four main categories of crimes: war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, and aggression. Importantly, the ICC can investigate and prosecute not only State actors but also non-state actors like the leaders of Hamas.

Considered a court of last resort, the ICC adjudicates when national legal systems fail to prosecute such crimes—a principle of complementarity that respects the role of independent judiciaries in sovereign states.

Belle Yoeli, AJC's Chief Advocacy Officer, explains why the ICC's charges are not only baseless but also undermine justice.

[*The ICC Issues Arrest Warrants: What You Need to Know*](#)

IS THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT PART OF THE UNITED NATIONS?

The ICC should not be confused with the International Criminal Court of Justice (ICJ), the judicial arm of the United Nations. The ICJ settles legal disputes between states and issues advisory opinions upon request by UN entities.

Like the ICC, the ICJ only has limited jurisdiction over certain situations. Israel has been compelled to participate in ICJ proceedings concerning a complaint against it brought by South Africa because both States are parties to the Genocide Convention, a treaty that gives the ICJ jurisdiction to settle disputes about its enforcement. "Palestine" has not signed the Genocide Convention, and Hamas cannot do so as a non-State actor, so neither can be a party to that ICJ case.

[*What You Need to Know About the Latest International Court of Justice Action in the Case Against Israel*](#)

IS ISRAEL A MEMBER OF THE ICC?

Israel is not a member, or what's called a "State party," of the ICC, though it did play an important role in negotiations during the drafting of the Rome Statute. But at the end of the day, Israel did not sign the Rome Statute and join the ICC. Why? The ICC was intended to focus on the most heinous crimes, including genocide and crimes against humanity. But, urged by a number of Arab countries, a majority of countries agreed to add the transfer of civilians *into* an occupied territory to the list of crimes the Court would have jurisdiction to prosecute. Israel's diplomats objected that States were distorting international law and not mirroring the language of the Geneva Convention in order to specifically prosecute Israelis for actions in the West Bank.

The U.S. also played a significant role in the Rome Statute negotiations but ultimately did not join the ICC, citing concerns that it would be politicized and used to target American officials for U.S. actions overseas, undermining U.S. national sovereignty.

CAN THE ICC PROSECUTE THE STATE OF ISRAEL?

No, the ICC only prosecutes individuals, not states.

CAN THE ICC PROSECUTE ISRAELIS?

In short, it is a question of jurisdiction.

Israeli officials have vigorously rejected the ICC's authority to investigate or try Israelis for actions in Gaza or the West Bank. Israel is not alone: countries, including the U.S. and the United Kingdom, have also insisted that the ICC does not have jurisdiction over Israelis in this case. AJC agrees with this position.

However, the Palestinians and the ICC see it differently.

One way the ICC can gain jurisdiction is if a State asks the ICC Prosecutor to investigate a situation *on its own territory*, thereby delegating to international authorities its own sovereign power to investigate.

Since 2009, Palestinians have been pursuing this route and asking the ICC to investigate the situation in the territory of "the State of Palestine." But at no point has the [UN Security Council accepted Palestine's requests for UN Member State status \(in fact, it has twice declined it\)](#), with States like the [U.S.](#) stressing the lack of essential State attributes like an effective government, given that Hamas controls Gaza. Nor has the UN Secretariat ever actually determined that "Palestine" has the legal capacity of a State.

Instead, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution in 2012 making the "State of Palestine" a "non-member observer State." This status upgrade enabled the Palestinian Authority (PA) to begin signing international treaties over which the United Nations is the custodian, including the Rome Statute.

[5 Key Takeaways from AJC's Advocacy During the United Nations General Assembly](#)

In February 2021, the pre-trial chamber of the Court determined that the ICC did have jurisdiction over Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank, based on the 2012 UNGA resolution and the UN's acceptance of Palestine's treaty signatures.

Meanwhile, it said it had no authority to assess whether Palestine was, in fact, a State that could turn to the ICC for adjudication, but allowed a full investigation to open anyway. It also suggested that the issue of jurisdiction could be revisited should the Prosecutor seek arrest warrants, laying the groundwork for the controversy that has erupted now.

In addition, there is no question that Hamas celebrates its leaders' international crimes against Israelis and has no intention of holding them accountable. But unlike the Palestinian Authority and Hamas, Israel has an independent judiciary capable of addressing any alleged illegal acts committed by members of its military force.

In fact, since the beginning of the conflict, Israel's Military Advocate General has opened 55 criminal investigations; its Fact Finding and Assessment Mechanism is simultaneously addressing hundreds of incidents; and Israel's law enforcement agencies are examining dozens of statements made and recently decided that some cases justify the promotion of criminal proceedings.

That factor alone should have led the Prosecutor to decline to seek warrants against Israelis.

CAN THE ICC PROSECUTE THE TERROR GROUP HAMAS?

Hamas is an internationally recognized terror group backed by Iran. The savage attack on Israeli civilians by Hamas terrorists on October 7 was an egregious violation of International Humanitarian Law that amounts to war crimes.

[A Spider Web of Terror: How Iran's Axis of Houthis, Hezbollah, and Hamas Threaten Israel and America](#)

However, the ICC does not have jurisdiction over the situation because Palestine is not a state, and no international body with the authority to do so has determined that it is one. Nor has any other mechanism in the Rome Statute been triggered that would allow the Court to consider this case. The consequences of the ICC's 2021 decision to defer conclusively answering this foundational question are now evident.

CAN THE ICC ARREST NETANYAHU AND GALLANT?

No. The warrant has no enforcement mechanism. Instead, the ICC relies on the cooperation of its more than 120 member states to enforce its decisions. While ICC member countries are required to act on the court's arrest warrants, political, diplomatic, and legal considerations can also play a factor in their respective decisions to arrest individuals.

Israel and the United States are not signatories to the Rome Statute.

WHAT IS ISRAEL'S RESPONSE TO THE ICC'S DECISION?

The Prime Minister's Office declared in a statement on Thursday that the ICC's "antisemitic decision" to issue arrest warrants against Netanyahu and Gallant "is equivalent to a modern Dreyfus trial."

Meanwhile, Israeli leaders from across the political spectrum condemned the ICC's decision.

Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar called the move "a loss of the ICC's legitimacy," accusing it of serving "radical forces" undermining Middle East stability. Opposition Leader Yair Lapid said that Israel is "defending its existence from terrorist groups that attacked, murdered and raped out citizens. These arrest warrants are a prize for terrorism."

Knesset Speaker Amir Ohana called the decision an assault on justice and democracy, while Education Minister Yoav Kisch vowed Israel would continue defending itself.

Benny Gantz, a former minister in Israel's war cabinet and current opposition figure, called the ICC's decision "moral blindness and a shameful stain of historic proportions that will never be forgotten."

Israel's defensive war, launched after [Hamas' brutal October 7 attack](#), during which more than 1,200 people were murdered, thousands injured, and more than 250 kidnapped, has been carried out utilizing a military code of conduct that strives to protect civilian life. That civilians have been harmed anyway is a deeply regrettable consequence of Hamas' lawless tactics, not evidence of Israel's criminal intent.

[7 Ways Hamas Exploits Palestinian Civilians in Gaza](#)

WHAT IS THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S RESPONSE?

There has been bipartisan outrage in the United States. The Biden Administration condemned the ICC's decision to issue arrest warrants for senior Israeli officials, with a White House spokesperson stating, "The United States fundamentally rejects the Court's decision to issue arrest warrants for senior Israeli officials. We remain deeply concerned by the Prosecutor's rush to seek arrest warrants and the troubling process errors that led to this decision. The United States has been clear that the ICC does not have jurisdiction over this matter. In coordination with partners, including Israel, we are discussing next steps."

U.S. Representative Mike Waltz, who is set to become National Security Advisor for President-elect Trump, posted on X, "The ICC has no credibility and these allegations have been refuted by the U.S. government. Israel has lawfully defended its people & borders from genocidal terrorists. You can expect a strong response to the antisemitic bias of the ICC & UN come January." Senator John Thune, the incoming Senate Majority Leader, called the ICC decision "outrageous and unlawful," adding, "The Senate should pass sanctions legislation targeting the ICC over its decision." Earlier this year, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bipartisan bill calling for sanctions on ICC officials for requesting arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant.

Globally, the reactions have been mixed. Argentina's President Javier Milei [expressed](#) his country's "profound disagreement" with the ICC's decision, stating, "It ignores Israel's legitimate right to defend itself

against constant attacks by terrorist organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah.” Similarly, Paraguay [strongly rejected the decision](#), saying that it compromises the legitimacy of the court, while weakening efforts for peace, security, and stability in the Middle East.

In Europe, several European Union countries, including [Austria](#), [Estonia](#), [Hungary](#), and the [Czech Republic](#), have expressed skepticism and condemnation for the ICC's decision. However, the EU's High Representative, Josep Borrell, [embraced the decision](#), underscoring the importance of accountability for alleged war crimes.

The United Kingdom offered a [mixed response](#), with a spokesperson saying, “While we respect the ICC’s independence, we also support Israel’s right to self-defense,” adding, “There is no moral equivalence between Israel, a democracy, and Hamas and Lebanese Hizbullah, which are terrorist organizations.”

WHY THE MAZE OF TUNNELS UNDER GAZA IS KEY TO THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

[The Wall Street Journal](#) | 26 October 2023 5min

Israel is gearing up for a possible ground offensive of Gaza. Underneath the Palestinian enclave sits a labyrinth of tunnels used by Hamas as a key military asset.

These tunnels were used by Hamas militants in Israel's seven-week war on Gaza in 2014 allowing for Hamas to hide weapons, equipment and troops.

WSJ's Rory Jones – who visited them in 2014 – explains how they pose a unique challenge to Israel and could make urban combat costly for both Israeli soldiers and Palestinian civilians.

WHO OWNS THE GAZA STRIP?

[Unpacked](#) | 7 Aug 2024 21min 15sec

Since October 7, 2023, Gaza has been at the heart of a brutal war between Israel and Hamas. But this tiny 25-mile strip's troubled history started long before the current hostilities. After Israel captured Gaza during the 1967 Six-Day War, its fate took a turbulent turn, eventually falling under Hamas' control. Now governed by Hamas, Gaza has witnessed immense suffering and resilience in the face of decades of conflict.

Who will control Gaza next? It's uncertain.

But understanding the deep, historical roots of this conflict is crucial to solving it.

ISRAEL-HAMAS HOSTAGE DEAL: A COMPLETE BREAKDOWN.

(**This is a neutral ChatGPT it analysis** ADDED ON THE 17 FEBRUARY

IT NEEDS REPLACING WITH AT LEAST THE ANSWER ON 1 MARCH)

The Israel-Hamas hostage crisis is one of the most pressing issues in the ongoing conflict between Israel and Gaza. The **current hostage deal** is a major diplomatic and humanitarian development that has had **significant political, military, and international implications**. Below is a **detailed and expanded** explanation of the situation, the agreements, and what the future may hold.

1. HOW DID THE HOSTAGE CRISIS BEGIN?

On **October 7, 2023**, Hamas launched an unprecedented and coordinated **attack on Israel**, marking one of the deadliest days in Israel's history. The attack resulted in:

- **Over 1,200 Israeli deaths**—most of them civilians, including children, women, and the elderly.
- **251 hostages taken** from towns, military bases, and the Nova music festival near the Gaza border.
- **Rocket barrages targeting major Israeli cities**, including **Tel Aviv and Jerusalem**.
- **Israeli military installations overrun** in southern Israel.

Why Did Hamas Take Hostages?

Hamas's decision to take hostages was **strategic**, aiming to:

1. **Use them as bargaining chips** to pressure Israel into releasing Palestinian prisoners.
2. **Deter further Israeli military actions** by creating a human shield.
3. **Gain leverage in future ceasefire negotiations**.

Following the attack, Israel launched **Operation Iron Swords**, which included **massive airstrikes, a full-scale ground invasion of Gaza, and targeted operations to locate hostages**.

2. THE CEASEFIRE AND HOSTAGE EXCHANGE DEAL

After months of **intense fighting**, **international pressure**, and **indirect negotiations**, a **temporary ceasefire agreement** was reached on **January 19, 2025**. This was mediated by **Qatar, Egypt, and the United States** and involved a **hostage-prisoner exchange** between Israel and Hamas.

What Are the Terms of the Deal?

1. Hamas Released 19 Hostages:

- **Mostly women, children, and elderly hostages.**
- Some hostages **had been held in underground tunnels for over four months.**
- Many were **malnourished, in poor health, and emotionally traumatized.**

2. Israel Released 550 Palestinian Prisoners:

- Majority were **women and minors.**
- Some had been **convicted of security offenses**, including stone-throwing, knife attacks, and affiliation with terrorist groups.

3. Humanitarian Aid Allowed into Gaza:

- **Food, water, and medical supplies** were permitted to enter through Egypt.
- **Fuel deliveries resumed** at a **limited capacity.**
- Aid groups described the humanitarian situation as **catastrophic**, with severe food and medical shortages.

4. Temporary Ceasefire Established:

- Fighting **halted for an initial 14-day period.**
- Both sides accused each other of **violating the truce in small skirmishes.**

3. LIFE UNDER HAMAS CAPTIVITY: WHAT HOSTAGES REVEALED

After the first **19 hostages were freed**, they provided **firsthand accounts** of their treatment. Their testimonies painted a **disturbing** picture:

- **Held in underground tunnels** beneath Gaza, in **total darkness.**
- **Severe food shortages**—many lost **significant weight** due to malnutrition.
- **Limited medical care**, with some captives falling **gravely ill.**
- **Psychological torture**, with hostages told that their government **had abandoned them.**

- **Some were moved frequently** to avoid Israeli rescue attempts.

Despite the **inhumane conditions**, many reported that **Gazan civilians occasionally showed sympathy**, offering them **water or food when possible**.

4. INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

Israel's Stance

Prime Minister **Benjamin Netanyahu** has made it clear that **Israel will not stop military operations** until all hostages are freed. In a joint statement with **U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio**, Netanyahu declared:

"If Hamas fails to release every last hostage, we will open the gates of hell on them."

- Netanyahu is under **immense pressure** from Israeli families who **demand that their loved ones be rescued at any cost**.
- Some **far-right Israeli politicians** oppose releasing **Palestinian prisoners**, arguing that it **rewards Hamas**.
- Israel's military leadership believes a **new ground offensive may be necessary** if negotiations fail.

Hamas's Position

Hamas claims that **they are willing to negotiate for further hostage releases** but:

- **Want Israel to release thousands more prisoners**.
- **Are demanding an end to Israeli airstrikes**.
- **Have threatened to execute hostages** if Israel does not comply.

U.S. and International Role

The **United States, Egypt, and Qatar** played a **key role in brokering the ceasefire**.

However, the situation remains tense:

- **The Biden administration** is pushing for a **long-term ceasefire**, but **Netanyahu has rejected the idea**.
 - **Arab nations** (including Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt) **fear the crisis will destabilize the region**.
 - **European leaders** have condemned Hamas's hostage-taking but also **criticized Israel's military actions in Gaza**.
-

5. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

1. *Remaining Hostages in Gaza*

While **19 hostages were freed**, **73 remain in Hamas captivity**.

Israeli intelligence believes:

- Some hostages have been **moved deeper into Hamas's underground tunnel system**.
- **A few have been transferred to other militant factions**, including **Palestinian Islamic Jihad**.
- Some **may have already died** due to lack of medical care or Israeli airstrikes.

2. *Fragile Ceasefire Could Collapse*

- The **current truce expires on March 1, 2025**.
- If no new deal is reached, Israel may **resume full-scale military operations** in Gaza.
- Hamas has **threatened to launch new rocket attacks** if Israel violates the truce.

3. *Israeli Military Response*

- Netanyahu has **ordered the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) to prepare for a renewed ground offensive**.
- The **IDF has been mapping Gaza's tunnel system**, planning **possible hostage rescue missions**.
- **Drone and intelligence operations have increased**, trying to track where hostages are being held.

6. KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ **Hamas released 19 hostages** in exchange for **550 Palestinian prisoners**.
 - ✓ **Israel and Hamas agreed to a ceasefire**, but **it remains fragile**.
 - ✓ **Humanitarian aid was allowed into Gaza**, but the situation is still dire.
 - ✓ **73 hostages remain in captivity**, and **their fate is uncertain**.
 - ✓ **Israel is preparing for renewed military action** if Hamas does not release more captives.
-

7. THE BIG QUESTION: WILL THIS DEAL LEAD TO A LONG-TERM RESOLUTION?

The Israel-Hamas conflict is **far from over**.

While this deal provided **a temporary pause in violence**, many challenges remain:

1. **Can more hostages be freed without military action?**
2. **Will Hamas demand more concessions in future negotiations?**
3. **Will Israel escalate the war to force a resolution?**
4. **Can international mediators push for a lasting peace deal?**

**As March 1, 2025, approaches,
the world is watching to see whether diplomacy will prevail—
or return to full-scale war.**

HAMAS, FATAH SIGN DECLARATION ON PLANS TO SEEK JOINT GOVERNMENT; ISRAEL SLAMS FATAH

**China upbeat on agreement made in Beijing, though previous efforts to end rift have failed;
Israel's Katz: 'Instead of rejecting terrorism, Abbas embraces the murderers and rapists'**

[TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) Agencies and TOI Staff 23 July 2024

The Hamas terror group and the Palestinian Authority's Fatah movement signed a declaration in Beijing on ending a years-long rift, Chinese state media said Tuesday, as the war in Gaza rages on.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who hosted senior Hamas official Moussa Abu Marzouk, Fatah envoy Mahmud al-Aloul and emissaries from 12 other Palestinian groups, said they had agreed to set up an "interim national reconciliation government" to govern postwar Gaza.

The declaration is the result of the latest in a series of talks meant to unite the sides. But previous declarations have failed, including a similar deal in 2011, casting doubt over whether the China-sponsored negotiations will actually lead to a resolution. It also comes as Israel and Hamas are weighing an internationally backed ceasefire proposal that would wind down the nine-month war and potentially free 120 Israeli hostages held by Hamas.

"Today we sign an agreement for national unity and we say that the path to completing this journey is national unity. We are committed to national unity and we call for it," Abu Marzouk said after meeting Wang and the other envoys.

Israel lambasted Fatah for agreeing to reconciliation with the terror group.

"Instead of rejecting terrorism, Mahmoud Abbas embraces the murderers and rapists of Hamas, revealing his true face," Foreign Minister Israel Katz wrote on X, referring to the PA president.

"In reality, this won't happen because Hamas's rule will be crushed, and Abbas will be watching Gaza from afar," he wrote in English. "Israel's security will remain solely in Israel's hands."

The declaration comes as negotiations continue between Israel and Hamas for a hostage-ceasefire deal to end the war in Gaza, which began on October 7 when thousands of Hamas-led terrorists invaded southern Israel from the Gaza Strip, killing some 1,200 people and taking 251 hostages.

It is believed that 120 hostages are currently held in Gaza, including the bodies of over 40 confirmed dead by the IDF. A framework endorsed by both sides would see Hamas release the remaining hostages in stages, in exchange for a permanent ceasefire and the release of hundreds of Palestinian security prisoners.

A previous Israel-Hamas deal in November saw 105 civilian hostages released in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian security prisoners, during a weeklong truce.

Since October 7, Hamas officials have said that the group does not want to return to ruling Gaza as it did before the conflict, and have called for the formation of a government of technocrats to be agreed upon by the various Palestinian factions, which would prepare the way for elections in both Gaza and the West Bank with the intention of forming a unified government.

The agreement underscored China's growing role in Middle East diplomacy, after success in the restoration of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Also present at Tuesday's meeting were envoys from Egypt, Algeria and Russia, according to Wang.

A joint statement issued after the most recent talks in Beijing gave no details on how or when a new Palestinian government might be formed, saying only that it would be done "by agreement among the factions."

According to the joint statement, the two groups are committed to the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, which Israel captured from Jordan and Egypt, respectively, in 1967, during the Six Day War.

Fatah and Hamas have been rivals since Hamas violently routed forces loyal to Abbas's Fatah in Gaza in 2007, taking over the coastal enclave.

The deadly internal fighting happened after Hamas won a Palestinian legislative election in 2006, following Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza the previous year.

The Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority, headed by Abbas, administers parts of the West Bank. It is widely viewed by the Palestinian public as corrupt and out of touch, and many resent its security coordination with Israel.

Repeated attempts at mending the rift between Fatah and Hamas have failed, wrecked by the factions' bitter rivalry over power.

US President Joe Biden's administration envisions a revamped Palestinian Authority to rule postwar Gaza and has sought a series of reforms that might make it a viable presence in the war-ravaged territory. Israel has rejected that idea, but has not put forward a credible alternative for who will govern Gaza.

Palestinian Islamic Jihad, a smaller terror group allied with Hamas, issued a statement Tuesday after the talks saying that it still "rejects any formula that includes recognition of Israel explicitly or implicitly" and that it had "demanded the withdrawal of the Palestine Liberation Organization's recognition of Israel."

US VETOES UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION CALLING FOR GAZA CEASEFIRE

14 other members back motion demanding release of hostages and unhindered aid; US envoy says will 'not support any measure that fails to condemn Hamas, call for it to disarm'

[REUTERS](#) and [Tol Staff](#) 5 June 2025



Dorothy Shea, acting US Ambassador to the United Nations, raises her hand to veto a draft resolution calling for an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza, the release of all the hostages and unhindered aid access across the enclave, at a UN Security Council meeting on June 4, 2025, at the UN headquarters in New York. (Kyodo / Reuters)

The United States on Wednesday vetoed a UN Security Council resolution calling for an “immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire” between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, the release of all the hostages and unhindered aid access across the enclave.

“The United States has been clear we would not support any measure that fails to condemn Hamas and does not call for Hamas to disarm and leave Gaza,” Acting US Ambassador to the UN Dorothy Shea told the council before the vote.

“This resolution would undermine diplomatic efforts to reach a ceasefire that reflects the realities on the ground, and embolden Hamas,” she said of the text that was put forward by 10 countries on the 15-member council.

The other 14 countries on the council voted in favor of the draft as a humanitarian crisis grips the enclave of more than 2 million people, where international organizations assert famine looms, and where aid has only trickled in since Israel lifted an 11-week blockade last month.

The Security Council vote came as Israel pushes ahead with an offensive in Gaza after ending a two-month truce in March. Gaza health authorities said Israeli strikes killed 45 people on Wednesday, while Israel said a soldier died in fighting.

Israel says it is targeting terror operatives in the Strip, accusing them of hiding behind the civilian population.



Israeli Ambassador Danny Danon attends a United Nations Security Council meeting at UN headquarters in New York City on June 4, 2025 (Leonardo Munoz / AFP)

Britain's UN Ambassador Barbara Woodward criticized the Israeli government's decisions to expand its military operations and severely restrict humanitarian aid as "unjustifiable, disproportionate and counterproductive."

Israel has rejected calls for an unconditional or permanent ceasefire, saying Hamas cannot stay in Gaza. Israel's UN Ambassador Danny Danon told the council members who voted in favor of the draft: "You chose appeasement and submission. You chose a road that does not lead to peace. Only to more terror."

Hamas condemned the US veto, describing it as showing "the US administration's blind bias" towards Israel. The draft Security Council resolution had also demanded the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held by Hamas and others.

The war in Gaza has raged since October 7, 2023, after Hamas terrorists invaded Israel, killed 1,200 and took 251 hostages back to the enclave.



Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine Riyad Mansour speaks during a United Nations Security Council meeting at UN headquarters in New York City on June 4, 2025 (Leonardo Munoz / AFP)

Israel responded with a military campaign that has killed over 54,000 Palestinians, according to Hamas health authorities in Gaza. The figures cannot be independently verified and do not distinguish between combatants and civilians.

Under global pressure, Israel allowed limited UN-led deliveries to resume on May 19. A week later a controversial new aid distribution system was launched by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, backed by the US and Israel.

Israel has long accused Hamas of stealing aid. Israel and the US are urging the UN to work through the GHF, which is using private US security and logistics companies to transport aid into Gaza for distribution at so-called secure distribution sites.

“No one wants to see Palestinian civilians in Gaza go hungry or thirsty,” Shea told the Security Council, adding that the draft resolution did not “acknowledge the disastrous shortcomings of the prior method of aid delivery.”

The UN and international aid groups have refused to work with the GHF because they say it is not neutral, militarizes aid, and forces the displacement of Palestinians.

Ahead of the UN Security Council vote, UN aid chief Tom Fletcher again appealed for the UN and aid groups to be allowed to assist people in Gaza, stressing that they have a plan, supplies and experience.



US Ambassador to the United Nations Dorothy Shea speaks during a United Nations Security Council meeting at UN headquarters in New York City on June 4, 2025 (Leonardo Munoz / AFP)

“Open the crossings – all of them. Let in lifesaving aid at scale, from all directions. Lift the restrictions on what and how much aid we can bring in. Ensure our convoys aren’t held up by delays and denials,” Fletcher said in a statement.

The UN has long blamed Israel and lawlessness in the enclave for hindering the delivery of aid into Gaza and its distribution throughout the war zone.

“Enough of suffering of civilians. Enough of food being used as a weapon. Enough is enough is enough,” Slovenia’s UN Ambassador Samuel Zbogar told the Security Council.

A similar humanitarian-focused draft resolution is now expected to be put to a vote in the 193-member UN General Assembly, where no countries have a veto power and it would likely pass, diplomats said.

Danon warned: "Don't waste more of your time, because no resolution, no vote, no moral failure, will stand in our way."

US HITS INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT JUDGES WITH SANCTIONS OVER INVESTIGATION INTO ISRAEL



Secretary of State Marco Rubio speaks at the American Compass's The New World Gala in Washington, Tuesday, June 3, 2025. (AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein)

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration is slapping sanctions on four judges at the International Criminal Court over the tribunal's investigation into alleged war crimes by Israel in its war against Hamas in Gaza and in the West Bank.

The State Department said Thursday that it would freeze any assets that the ICC judges, who come from Benin, Peru, Slovenia and Uganda, have in U.S. jurisdictions. The move is just the latest step that the administration has taken to punish the ICC and its officials for investigations undertaken against Israel and the United States.

"As ICC judges, these four individuals have actively engaged in the ICC's illegitimate and baseless actions targeting America or our close ally, Israel," Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in a statement.

"The ICC is politicized and falsely claims unfettered discretion to investigate, charge, and prosecute nationals of the United States and our allies," Rubio said. "This dangerous assertion and abuse of power infringes upon the sovereignty and national security of the United States and our allies, including Israel."

In February, The Hague-based court's [chief prosecutor, Karim Khan](#), was placed on Washington's list of "Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons," barring him from doing business with Americans and placing restrictions on his entry into the U.S. Khan [stepped aside last month](#) pending an investigation into alleged sexual misconduct.

Within minutes of the administration's announcement, the court condemned its actions. "These measures are a clear attempt to undermine the independence of an international judicial institution," ICC spokesperson Fadi El Abdallah said in a statement.

NEW SANCTIONS WIDEN THE TARGETS

The new sanctions target ICC Judge Reine Alapini-Gansou, who is from the West African country of Benin and was part of the pre-trial chamber of judges who issued the arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last year. She also served on the bench that [originally greenlit the investigation into alleged Israeli crimes in the Palestinian territories in 2021](#).

The 69-year-old was also part of the panel of judges [who issued the arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin](#) in 2023. Last year, a court in Moscow issued a warrant for her arrest.

From Slovenia, Beti Hohler was elected as a judge in 2023. She previously worked in the prosecutor's office at the court, leading Israel to object to her participation in the proceedings involving Israeli officials. Hohler said in a statement last year that she had never worked on the Palestinian territories investigation during her eight years as a prosecutor.

Bouth Luz del Carmen Ibáñez Carranza, from Peru, and Solomy Balungi Bossa, from Uganda, are appeals judges at the ICC. Each woman has worked on cases involving Israel.

Neither the U.S. nor Israel is a member of and neither recognizes the legitimacy of the court, which has issued an [arrest warrant for Netanyahu](#) for alleged war crimes over his [military response in Gaza](#) after the Hamas attack against Israel in October 2023. Israel strongly denies the allegations.

TRUMP HAS TARGETED THE ICC BEFORE

During his first term in office, Trump targeted the ICC with sanctions, voicing displeasure with probes into Israel and complaints about alleged war crimes said to have been committed by U.S. troops in Afghanistan. Those sanctions were rescinded by President Joe Biden's administration in early 2021.

Rubio said the U.S. would continue to take action to protect its and Israel's interests at the court. "The United States will take whatever actions we deem necessary to protect our sovereignty, that of Israel, and any other U.S. ally from illegitimate actions by the ICC," he said.

Liz Evenson, international justice director at Human Rights Watch, said the Trump administration's sanctions "aim to deter the ICC from seeking accountability amid grave crimes committed in Israel and Palestine, and as Israeli atrocities mount in Gaza, including with U.S. complicity."

"U.S. sanctions on ICC judges are a flagrant attack on the rule of law at the same time as President Trump is working to undercut it at home," Evenson said in a statement. "Sanctions are meant to put a stop to human rights violations, not to punish those seeking justice for the worst crimes."

PART 12 ISRAEL-HAMAS PHASE 1

CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT

UNDERSTANDING THE ISRAEL-HAMAS CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT

SIS professor Boaz Atzili explains how a ceasefire agreement hopes to bring a long-awaited albeit fragile peace to the region

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY Nicole Hassenstab January 29, 2025



After over a year of fighting, death, and destruction, a ceasefire deal agreed to by both Israel and Hamas began on January 19, 2025. This deal is comprised of three stages, the first of which is currently underway. Key demands from both sides are being met under this ceasefire, including the return of Israeli hostages, an increase in humanitarian aid for Gaza, and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the densely populated areas of Gaza. To explain the intricacies of this agreement and the fragile peace it may bring, we asked SIS professor Boaz Atzili some questions.

HOW DID THIS CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT COME INTO PLACE? WHAT MADE ISRAEL AND HAMAS BOTH AGREE?

The ceasefire agreement that is being implemented at the time of writing is almost the exact framework agreement that has been “on the table” at least since May. Hamas, in essence, agreed to the framework from the start and just demanded guarantees that it would lead to the end of the war and full Israeli withdrawal. Israel disagreed to commit to ending the war. The Biden administration tried but failed to press Israel into signing the ceasefire. The Trump administration, on the other hand, applied much heavier pressure and public threats, which resulted in Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel’s Prime minister, signing the deal. This is, however, a detailed agreement only for stage 1, and at this point, only a framework agreement for stages 2 and 3.

WHY DID THIS AGREEMENT STICK WHEN PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS HAVE FAILED?

We cannot yet say that this agreement will stick, as it is still a fragile agreement. It has begun to be implemented but has already faced hurdles and is vulnerable to provocations and manipulation because of the complex and lengthy nature of the agreement. We don't know yet if this attempt will succeed. Whether it will be fully implemented depends, in my opinion, predominantly on whether the mediators will continue to apply heavy pressure on both sides to continue to comply, and especially on Israel to agree to an end of the war or a long-term ceasefire.

THE CEASEFIRE WILL TAKE PLACE IN STAGES.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THOSE STAGES, AND WHAT IS THE TIMELINE FOR EACH ONE?

There are three stages, each of them lasting 42 days. In the first stage, being implemented now, 33 Israeli hostages comprised of women, children, elderly, and wounded, will be returned in return for the release of a large number of Palestinian prisoners. It is unknown whether the Israeli hostages returned in this stage will be alive or not. This stage also includes Israeli withdrawal from the large cities in Gaza, allowing residents of northern Gaza to return to their homes and will allow for a significant increase in the flow of humanitarian aid. In the second stage, younger Israeli male hostages will be released in return for more Palestinian prisoners. Israel will then agree to end the war. In the third phase, the war will end, the bodies of Israelis and Palestinians held by the other side will be exchanged, Israeli troops will withdraw completely from the Gaza Strip, and the reconstruction of Gaza will begin. As of right now, stages two and three are only agreed to in principle so far. /dd>

HOW WILL THE CEASEFIRE BE MANAGED?

ARE THERE ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS IN PLACE FOR BOTH PARTIES?

There is a verification mechanism for this agreement based in Cairo that includes representatives from Israel, Hamas, and the mediators—The US, Egypt, and Qatar. This mechanism has already been tested when a crisis broke out on January 25. Israel claimed that Hamas breached the deal by avoiding the release of the last living Israeli civilian hostage and in turn, did not allow Palestinians from northern Gaza to return to their homes. The mechanism, however, seems to have worked as intended and solved the issue within one day.

ONE OF THE KEY ASPECTS OF THE CEASEFIRE IS THE RELEASE OF THE REMAINING ISRAELI HOSTAGES. WHAT IS THE SENTIMENT FROM FAMILIES?

The families of the hostages are not of one ideology politically, but for all of them, the last 15 months have been a nightmare. Many feel that in addition to the need to fight against the Hamas terrorists who kidnapped or murdered their family members, they also need to fight Israel's government, which wants to continue the war for politically partisan reasons and does not, in fact, prioritize the release of hostages, which entails the end of the war. A significant majority of Israelis prioritize returning the hostages for any

price, but that view is not prevailing within the governing coalition. The families of the hostages, like many Gazans, are yearning to get their loved ones back and to start the journey of recovery.

**WHAT DOES THIS CEASEFIRE MEAN GOING FORWARD?
IS THIS THE BEGINNING OF A LONGER PEACE PROCESS?**

The ceasefire could lead to a larger movement towards peace, but that depends on two main factors: First, the Trump administration's vision for regional peace is one based on commercial interest. Second, Saudi Arabia, which is situated at the core of this vision, would not advance in that direction without Israel agreeing to at least a path toward a future Palestinian state. The current Israeli government is unlikely to agree to such a plan. The question, then, is whether President Trump will be willing to press the Israeli hard-right government, which is otherwise a very close ally, to allow that path for peace.

**WHAT DOES INTERNATIONAL AID LOOK LIKE DURING THE CEASEFIRE?
HOW ARE OTHER COUNTRIES SUPPORTING THE CEASEFIRE
AND A POTENTIAL FUTURE PEACE PROCESS?**

The international aid that has been allowed into Gaza since the start of the ceasefire is vastly greater than what Gaza received before the agreement. Yet, even if we assume that all three stages of the deal will be implemented and the war will come to an end, the future of Gaza is fragile. The entire economy of the region is ruined, and about 90 percent of the buildings and infrastructure are damaged or destroyed. Arab Gulf states and other international actors are willing to invest heavily in the reconstruction of Gaza, but not if Hamas returns to control it, which they rightfully perceive to bring no end to the cycle of violence.

DETAILS OF PRISONER EXCHANGE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND HAMAS

ChatGPT

During the **Phase 1 exchange**, Hamas released:

- **81 Israelis** (primarily women and children),
- **23 Thai nationals**, and
- **one Filipino hostage**.

In return, Israel released **240 Palestinian prisoners**, most of whom were women and minors detained for various offenses, ranging from stone-throwing to alleged terrorist activity.

The freed Israeli hostages described difficult conditions: they were often confined underground, faced food shortages, and lived under constant fear for their lives. Meanwhile, many Palestinian prisoners, especially the minors, had spent months or years in Israeli prisons without formal charges or trials, leading to accusations of human rights violations.

Significance of the Exchange

The Phase 1 prisoner exchange was deeply symbolic. For Israel, it represented a partial success in securing the safe return of its citizens and was a moment of rare national unity. For Hamas, the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, many portrayed as heroes by Palestinian society, bolstered its standing among Palestinians and allowed it to claim a major political win.

The exchange also revealed the asymmetry that often characterizes such negotiations: Israel, historically, has been willing to release far more prisoners per captive than its adversaries, reflecting the high societal value placed on every individual life.

Challenges and Controversies

Despite the successful implementation of the Phase 1 exchange, tensions simmered beneath the surface:

- Some Israeli politicians and military leaders expressed concern that the ceasefire and exchanges allowed Hamas to regroup militarily.
- On the Palestinian side, there was outrage over the conditions many prisoners had faced, even as their release was celebrated.
- Additionally, Hamas used the opportunity to exert control over the media narrative in Gaza, portraying the releases as a clear sign of Israeli weakness.

The ceasefire itself proved to be temporary. Once the planned releases concluded, negotiations for additional exchanges stalled, and full-scale fighting resumed.

Humanitarian Impact

The exchange brought momentary relief to many families on both sides of the conflict. The images of tearful reunions captured global attention, emphasizing the deeply personal tragedies behind political statistics. However, hundreds of hostages remained in Gaza, and thousands of Palestinians were still imprisoned in Israel, signaling that the humanitarian crisis was far from over.

Conclusion

The Phase 1 prisoner exchange during the 2023 Israel-Hamas war was a bittersweet episode of diplomacy amid a sea of violence. It demonstrated both the possibility of negotiation and the deep mistrust that continues to define Israeli-Palestinian relations. While it saved lives and offered a brief window of hope, it also underscored the profound challenges that any long-term resolution will inevitably face. In the end, the exchange was a powerful reminder: in every conflict, behind every political decision, there are human beings whose lives hang in the balance.

IN KIRYAT SHMONA, A CITY WITH NO RESIDENTS HOLDS ELECTIONS WITH NO VOTERS

**Mayoral race, delayed for 15 months due to the war,
takes place with almost 80% of northern border city's uprooted residents
scattered across Israel. Many of them won't return**

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Shalom Yerushalmi](#) 19 February 2025

KIRYAT SHMONA — The municipal elections held on Tuesday in Kiryat Shmona — delayed 15 months from their original date due to the war — were the strangest I have ever covered.

The three mayoral candidates roamed the streets of an empty city that once had 24,000 residents. All three tried to rally those who had not left or who had agreed to return during the war — or those who had just come back briefly to tend to their homes.

A day after the Hamas massacre on October 7, 2023, Hezbollah too began waging war on Israel in the north, leading to an unprecedented mass evacuation of some 70,000 residents of northern communities and cities close to the Lebanese border. The residents of Kiryat Shmona, just over a mile from the border, were among those evacuated.

Now, nearly 19,000 of Kiryat Shmona's residents — almost 80% — are scattered across the country. Many have no intention of returning. It is likely that many were not even aware that elections were taking place in their city on Tuesday. This was a city without residents, holding elections without voters.

Under these circumstances, the mayoral candidates had to campaign far from Kiryat Shmona. They traveled to many of the 500 communities and 400 hotels across Israel where the city's displaced residents are currently living, and where most of the polling stations were set up on election day.

"I felt like a candidate in a general election, running to find supporters everywhere in the country — just not in Kiryat Shmona," said Eli Zafrani at his campaign headquarters here.

Outside his offices, a van with a loudspeaker and flags stood ready to embark on a citywide get-out-the-vote drive. It looked somewhat absurd in this ghost town.

The chaos surrounding the election — held to choose both a mayor and the city council — has made it impossible to release final results quickly. Votes from polling stations outside the city will likely only be counted in the next few days.

At polling stations in Kiryat Shmona itself, close to 5,200 people voted. Incumbent mayor Avihai Stern received 39.2% of these votes; Zafrani 30.5%; and Ofir Yehezkeili 28.6%. For an outright win, a candidate must receive 40% of the vote. Based on these partial results, Kiryat Shmona will have to do it all over again in a runoff election.

Zafrani, 55, is the Likud candidate, and filmed a campaign clip with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. "He never stops drilling holes in my head on behalf of Kiryat Shmona," Netanyahu said by way of endorsement.

Netanyahu's endorsement of any candidate in Israel is contentious. In a city where almost all the residents fled in fear of a Hamas-like invasion by Hezbollah, where many homes were destroyed in rocket attacks during the war, and where many feel abandoned and neglected to this day, it's unclear whether the prime minister is the best person to vouch for a candidate.

But the situation is complex. In the last national elections, in November 2022, 50% of Kiryat Shmona residents voted for Netanyahu and Likud. People I spoke with on Tuesday said that voting for Netanyahu and Likud is still second nature for them. Even if they were furious with Netanyahu and his government after the October 7 disaster, several said, they have since changed their minds in light of Israel's wins against Hezbollah.

On Tuesday, the IDF ostensibly completed its withdrawal from southern Lebanon as part of the ceasefire agreement — though it remains in five outposts for now. Kiryat Shmona was quiet, with no tension in the air. "I'm angry at Netanyahu," said a young man wandering through town, "but I'm even angrier at those attacking him."

On the other hand, Mayor Stern, 39, built his campaign around attacks on Netanyahu. “He should have resigned as prime minister immediately after October 7,” Stern has repeated throughout the war. Election day found members of the mayor’s campaign still complaining about the government’s treatment of the city.

Based on those initial votes counted in Kiryat Shmona, it appears that the combative mayor was not harmed politically. As far as his residents are concerned, Stern ensured relatively comfortable conditions for the displaced residents.

The mayor also has enough resources and influence to mobilize voters — after all, he is the largest employer in a city where most factories have either shut down or relocated to safer areas. Unseating him may not prove easy.

The third candidate, Yehezkeli, served as Stern’s deputy before becoming an opposition figure and was now running against him at the head of a slate called “New Way.” Yehezkeli, 45, stood Tuesday outside the polling station at Metzudot School, claiming, “Kiryat Shmona has no father.” The residents milling around nodded in agreement.

“We’re stranded in Tiberias,” complained Yehuda Dahan, who came back to the city with his family to vote. “There’s so much uncertainty. We don’t know where to send our kids or when, whether there will be schools here or not. You can’t live like this.”

Conversations with local leaders and city residents reveal that many of those who left have settled well in their new locations, receive generous stipends from the government, and have built comfortable lives in central Israel. Many are not considering returning to their old lives in Kiryat Shmona after a year and a half away.

“The residents in hotels in Tel Aviv are enjoying themselves. In Eilat too. But they don’t like being in Tiberias,” said a senior municipal official. “Soon, the state will stop funding them, give them a one-time grant, and then they’ll take the money and return. The question is, how many will come back?”

On Tuesday, Kiryat Shmona looked like a city just waiting to wake up — a sleeping beauty in the Upper Galilee, with excellent weather, facing Mount Hermon, which is already snow-covered at its peak. Everyone understands that whoever wins the mayoral election will have to rebuild the city and boost employment, education, healthcare, and culture to entirely new standards to lure residents back.

Most importantly, they will have to ensure their residents’ security. The deadline of the IDF withdrawal from southern Lebanon passed without incident, despite the assassination of senior Hamas figure Muhammad Shahin in Lebanon on Monday.

The question is, what comes next? Kiryat Shmona still has homes in ruins from direct rocket hits — sights that continue to deter residents and serve as a stark reminder of the danger of living in a city located so close to the border.

ISRAEL-HAMAS CEASEFIRE: WHERE IT STANDS AND WHERE IT'S HEADED

The release of Israeli hostages and the return of Palestinians to their Gaza homes has largely obscured the question of whether the war will now resume.

US NEWS [Tovah Lazaroff](#) Feb. 20, 2025

JERUSALEM – A temporary truce in [Gaza](#) expires at the start of March, and formal negotiations to extend it have yet to take place.

The riveting release of long-held Israeli hostages and the return of Palestinians to their mostly destroyed Gaza homes has largely obscured the critical question of whether the war that began on Oct. 7, 2023, and which took a promising step toward resolution on Jan. 19, will now resume.

Here's a look at the fragile state of play in the Middle East conflict, including what's at stake and what's next in negotiations for what was slated to be a ceasefire implemented over several phases in coming months.

READ:

[What's Trump's Plan for Gaza?](#)

WHY IT MATTERS

At stake is a war that has reduced large swaths of Gaza to rubble and which has cost more than 48,000 Palestinian lives out of the over 2 million residents of the enclave, according to The Associated Press, citing Palestinian health officials whom, the news agency notes, do not distinguish between civilians and combatants.

The lives of [two dozen additional hostages](#) out of the roughly 59 that would still be held in Gaza after Phase 1 ends – including Israeli-U.S. citizen Edan Alexander, 21 – are also at risk. They are held in what are believed to be unsustainable conditions and might not survive another protracted negotiation process.

The resumption of the Gaza war raises the risk of reigniting associated battlefronts against Israel by Iran and its proxies, such as the Houthis in Yemen, who halted their missile and drone strikes against Israel once the ceasefire was in place.

WHY COULD THE CEASEFIRE EXPIRE?

Former President Joe Biden unveiled a broad framework for a three-phase Gaza ceasefire and hostage deal on May 31, which the United Nations Security Council endorsed in June. It took seven months, however, for mediator countries Qatar and Egypt with the help of the United States to secure an agreement on just Phase 1 of the deal, under the terms of which 33 Israeli hostages were to be released, leaving the return of the remaining captives for Phase 2. They are the last remaining captives out of the 251 seized during the Hamas-led Oct. 7 invasion of Israel that sparked the war. During that attack, some 1,200 people in southern Israel were killed.

Under the terms of the deal, negotiations for Phase 2 were slated to begin 16 days after the start of Phase 1, which fell around Feb. 4. Yet the date for the talks has not been set. Israel's security cabinet voted only

this week to engage. Israel's Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar and U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff have independently told journalists that Phase 2 talks would be held.

Negotiators now have less than two weeks to secure an agreement on Phase 2 or create a mechanism to extend the ceasefire without a Phase 2 agreement. If no action is taken, it is likely that the Israel Defense Forces will resume battling Hamas in Gaza.

[How Arab Israelis Are Rebuilding](#)

[One in every five Israelis is Arab. We're working together with our Jewish neighbors to heal from the trauma of war.](#)

[Saeed Diabat](#) Feb. 18, 2025

WHAT WAS IN PHASE 1 OF THE AGREEMENT?

In exchange for the staggered release of 33 Israeli hostages over six weeks, hostilities ceased. The IDF withdrew from large parts of Gaza, increased the entry of humanitarian aid, and Israel freed Palestinian security detainees in its jails or prisoners found guilty of terror attacks in which civilians were killed.

To date, 19 live Israeli captives have been freed, with six more live hostages expected to be returned to Israel on Saturday. An additional five Thai workers held by Hamas were also freed in this period.

Eight hostages included in the first phase of the deal are dead. The remains of four of them were slated to be returned to Israel on Thursday and the other four to be given back next week. (After Thursday's exchange, Israeli officials said the remains of hostage Shiri Bibas – a 32-year-old mother whom Hamas said it had returned along with the remains of her two young children – were not among the bodies given back by the group. Hamas said it would investigate the issue.)

Among the live captives to be returned Saturday are two Israeli men held by Palestinians in Gaza for the last decade.

WHAT IS IN PHASE 2 AND PHASE 3 OF THE CEASEFIRE?

Phase 2 is expected to include the release of all the remaining live hostages, of which it's believed there would be 24. The release is based on the formula that existed in Phase 1 but does not have to be staggered, and there is a growing pressure among the Israeli public for Phase 2 to allow for all the hostages to be freed at once with Hamas also indicating an interest in that as well. President Donald Trump has already spoken of wanting all the hostages freed in one shot, even giving an ultimatum to Hamas to do so during Phase 1, though he left enforcement of that up to Israel, which decided to hold to the original terms of the Phase 1 deal.

Most significantly, Phase 2 is also supposed to include a permanent end to the war and a complete IDF withdrawal from Gaza, a step that includes what has been an intractable sticking point between Israel and Hamas.

Israel has insisted that the war can only end once Hamas is completely destroyed, stressing that it can not be allowed to govern, control or remain in Gaza. It has warned against the adoption of any model in which Hamas could operate as a non-state actor in Gaza in a style akin to the way the non-state actor Hezbollah

coexists with the Lebanese government and army. Hamas, in turn, has insisted that it must be allowed to remain in control of Gaza and that Israel must leave.

Phase 3 would include a five-year plan for the reconstruction of Gaza, a step that a report by the World Bank, the European Union and the United Nations indicated this week could cost as much as \$53 billion. Such a massive reconstruction project, however, could only happen in a situation where it was certain that the war would not be resumed.

WAR IN ISRAEL AND GAZA

[View All 268 Images](#)

Trump Already Changed the Three-Phase Deal

Trump administration officials were involved in finalizing Phase 1, prior to Trump's inauguration, and have even taken credit for it. Biden had envisioned that the deal would eventually lead to Palestinian governance of Gaza without Hamas, with that territory earmarked for inclusion in the future boundaries of a Palestinian state. He had hoped to link a pathway for that statehood with a broader regional deal with Saudi Arabia. It was a vision that put him at odds with Israel, which has opposed the creation of a Palestinian state, particularly in Gaza.

Trump changed the entire debate about Phases 2 and 3 of the Gaza ceasefire and hostage deal the first week of February when he announced from the White House podium that the U.S. wants to control Gaza and relocate the 2 million Palestinians living there to other countries. It was a statement that placed Washington at the heart of the debate on Gaza's future. It clarified that the Trump administration does not envision a Palestinian state in Gaza, even without Hamas. His words were met with opposition from Palestinians, the Arab world and the international community, some of whom have gone so far as to liken the move to ethnic cleansing.

Since then, however, Egypt, Jordan and other Arab states such as Saudi Arabia have scrambled to come up with alternative plans for Gaza that would allow the Palestinians to remain. Trump is simultaneously seeking to include Israel in a normalization deal with Saudi Arabia, which would also impact the future of Gaza.

How Much Can Happen in Two Weeks?

Phase 2 talks would now happen within the context of Trump's vision for the Middle East, one that could provide Hamas with a ladder by which to extricate itself from Gaza or force it to harden its position. Even if there is a short extension of the ceasefire, the Trump administration has little time to come up with an interim or permanent plan to prevent the resumption of the war, after such a move eluded the Biden administration for 15 months.

HAMAS CALLS FOR TALKS ON NEXT PHASE OF CEASEFIRE AFTER HOSTAGE-PRISONER EXCHANGE

Militant group Hamas on Thursday said it was ready to begin talks on the second phase of the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip after hundreds of Palestinian prisoners were released from Israeli jails overnight in exchange for the bodies of four Israeli hostages. Hamas said the only way the dozens of remaining hostages in Gaza would be released is through negotiations and commitment to the ceasefire.

[FRANCE 24](#) 27/02/2025



Palestinian prisoners are greeted after being released from Israeli prison following a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas, in the West Bank city of Ramallah on Thursday, February 27.

© Nasser Nasser, AP

[Hamas](#) said on Thursday it was ready to negotiate the next phase of the [ceasefire](#) in the [Gaza Strip](#), after a swap in which it handed over the remains of four [hostages](#) in exchange for the release of more than 600 Palestinian prisoners held by [Israel](#).

It was the final such exchange the two sides agreed to as part of a fragile [truce](#) that is due to end this weekend. Negotiations over a second phase, in which Hamas would release dozens of remaining hostages in exchange for more prisoners and a lasting ceasefire, have not yet begun.



The remains were confirmed to be those of Ohad Yahalomi, Itzhak Elgarat, Shlomo Mantzur and Tsachi Idan, according to the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, which represents families of the captives. Mantzur, 85, was killed in the October 7, 2023, [attack](#) and his body was taken into Gaza. The other three were abducted alive and the circumstances surrounding their deaths were not known.

"Our hearts ache upon receiving the bitter news," Israeli President [Isaac Herzog](#) said. "In this painful moment, there is some solace in knowing that they will be laid to rest in dignity in Israel."

Israeli Prime Minister [Binyamin Netanyahu](#)'s office said three of the four hostages whose bodies were returned to Israel by Hamas on Thursday had been "murdered" while in captivity in Gaza.

"Pursuant to the intelligence and all of the information at our disposal, Ohad Yahalomi, (Tsachi) Idan and Itzik Elgarat were murdered while held hostage in Gaza," it said in a statement, adding Shlomo Mansour was "murdered in the 7 October 2023 massacre".

French President [Emmanuel Macron](#) said he shared the "immense pain" of the family and loved ones of Yahalomi, who had French citizenship.

Hamas said in a statement that the "only way" for Israel to secure the release of the remaining hostages was through negotiations and adhering to the agreement. It warned that any attempt to pull back from the truce "will only lead to more suffering" for the captives and their families.

Hamas confirmed that over 600 prisoners had been released overnight. Most were detainees returned to Gaza, where they had been rounded up after the October 7, 2023 attack that triggered the [war](#) and held without charge on security suspicions.

Some of the released prisoners fell to their knees in gratitude after disembarking from buses in the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis. In the [West Bank](#) town of Beitunia, dozens of prisoners were welcomed by crowds of relatives and well-wishers.

The released prisoners, some of whom had been serving life sentences over deadly attacks against Israelis, wore shirts issued by the Israeli prison service bearing a message in Arabic about pursuing one's enemies. Some of the prisoners threw the shirts on the ground or set them on fire.

Watch more ['We don't intend to stay' in Gaza, Israeli FM Sa'ar says](#)

Israel delayed the release of the prisoners on Saturday over Hamas's practice of parading hostages before crowds and cameras during their release. Israel, along with the [Red Cross](#) and UN officials, have called the ceremonies humiliating for the hostages.

Hamas released the four bodies to the Red Cross in Gaza overnight without a public ceremony.

The prisoners released Thursday included 445 men, 21 teenagers and one woman, according to lists shared by Palestinian officials that did not specify their ages. Only around 50 Palestinians were released into the occupied [West Bank](#) and east [Jerusalem](#) in this round, while dozens sentenced to life over deadly attacks against Israelis were exiled.

The latest handover was the final one planned under the ceasefire's first six-week phase, which expires this weekend. Hamas has returned 33 hostages, including eight bodies, in exchange for nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners.

US President [Donald Trump](#)'s [Middle East](#) envoy, Steve Witkoff, has said he wants the sides to move into negotiations on the second phase. Those talks were supposed to begin the first week of February.

Israeli Prime Minister [Binyamin Netanyahu](#) has vowed to return all the hostages and destroy the military and governing capabilities of Hamas, which remains in control of Gaza. The Trump administration has endorsed both goals.

But it's unclear how Israel would destroy Hamas without resuming the war, and Hamas is unlikely to release the remaining hostages – its main bargaining chips – without a lasting ceasefire.



01:20

Red Cross cars arrive to the site for the handover of Israeli hostages by Hamas in Nuseirat, central Gaza Strip, Saturday, Feb. 22, 2025. © Abdel Kareem Hana, AP

The ceasefire, brokered by the United States, [Egypt](#) and [Qatar](#), ended 15 months of war that erupted after Hamas's 2023 attack on southern Israel that killed about 1,200 people. About 250 people were taken hostage.

If the identities of the four bodies are confirmed, then 59 captives will remain in Gaza, 32 of whom are believed to be dead. Nearly 150 have been released in ceasefire agreements or other deals, while dozens of bodies have been recovered by Israeli forces and eight captives have been rescued alive.

Israel's military offensive has killed more than 48,000 Palestinians, according to Palestinian health officials, who don't differentiate between civilian and combatant deaths but say over half the dead have been women and children.

The fighting displaced an estimated 90% of Gaza's population and decimated the territory's infrastructure and health system.

FRIDAY FOCUS: NEGOTIATING WITH TERRORISTS, AGAIN

As Phase 1 of hostage release deal ends, diplomatic reporter Lazar Berman reviews the timeline of negotiations since Oct. 7, 2023, and weighs in on paying ransom as a Jewish value

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) Amanda Borschel-Dan Lazar Berman 28 Feb 2025

Welcome to The Times of Israel's newest podcast series, [Friday Focus](#). Each Friday, join diplomatic reporter Lazar Berman and host deputy editor Amanda Borschel-Dan for a deep dive into what's behind the news that spins the globe.

The official end of phase one of the current hostage release-ceasefire deal is set for March 1. We currently don't know if phase two will be implemented or whether, potentially, a lengthened phase one may be negotiated.

Since the start of the war in Gaza following Hamas's October 7, 2023, murderous onslaught on southern Israel, a range of efforts have been made to free the over 250 hostages in terrorists' hands.

More from [Friday Focus](#)

- [February 21, 2025](#)

[Friday Focus: After 3 years of Ukraine war, should anyone care?](#)

[February 14, 2025](#)

[Friday Focus: Decoding Trump's foreign policy](#)

As we hear in today's in-depth conversation, the most effective way to get out as many hostages as possible has been through a pair of negotiated hostage release-ceasefire deals.

Among the questions asked and answered are: Who are the major players behind these negotiations? What have been the obstacles? Is paying ransom a Jewish value?

Finally, we hear which of Israel's allies does not traditionally negotiate with terrorists.

US TALKS WITH HAMAS SAID TO HIT SNAG AFTER MEDIA LEAK; PM UNHAPPY THEY'RE TAKING PLACE

**Negotiations largely focused on securing release of American hostages,
but US has also reportedly proposed 60-day ceasefire in exchange
for release of 10 hostages**

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL [Jacob Magid](#) 6 March 2025

The direct talks between the US and Hamas have hit a snag since their existence was leaked to the media on Wednesday, a government official briefed on the talks told The Times of Israel.

The negotiations — unprecedented in nature — have largely been focused on securing the release of American-Israeli hostage Edan Alexander along with the bodies of American-Israelis Itay Chen, Omer Neutra, Gad Haggai and Judi Weinstein, the official said.

Israel was not fully briefed on the talks ahead of time, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is unhappy with their existence, the official said. The premier's office issued a terse statement following an Axios report revealing the existence of the first-ever direct talks between the US and Hamas, saying, "Israel has expressed to the United States its position regarding direct talks with Hamas."

The official denied reports that progress had been made in the negotiations and that they focused on phase two.

US President Donald Trump's hostage envoy Adam Boehler has been leading the talks with Hamas on behalf of Washington, and they have been taking place in Doha, the official confirmed.

The talks signaled a departure from a decades-long US policy of not negotiating with Hamas, which Washington and many Western countries list as a terrorist organization.

While not the main focus of the talks, the US has also proposed a 60-day ceasefire during which 10 of the Israeli hostages would be released, Sky News Arabic reported on Thursday.

Meanwhile, Hamas representatives charged on Thursday that [threats by US President Donald Trump](#) against the Palestinian terrorist organization were "encouraging" Israel to avoid negotiating the second phase of a ceasefire.

Trump's comments would "complicate matters regarding the ceasefire agreement," Hamas spokesperson Hazem Qassem told CNN, urging the president to pressure Jerusalem into agreeing to a second phase "as stipulated in the agreement."

Hamas spokesperson Abdel-Latif al-Qanua told Reuters that the US president's threats equal support for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's attempts to avoid entering another ceasefire agreement.



Illustrative: Hamas gunmen and Palestinians gather in Nuseirat in the central Gaza Strip, as preparations take place for the release of three Israeli hostages as part of the seventh hostage-prisoner swap on February 22, 2025. (Bashar Taleb / AFP)

“The best track to release the remaining Israeli [hostages] is by [Israel] going into the second phase and compelling it to adhere to the agreement signed under the sponsorship of mediators,” he said.

The comments by Hamas came in response to a new ultimatum issued on Wednesday by Trump, which demanded that the terror group immediately release all remaining hostages or be destroyed.

“‘Shalom Hamas’ means Hello and Goodbye – You can choose,” Trump wrote on his social media platform Truth Social. “Release all of the hostages now — not later — and immediately return all of the dead bodies of the people you murdered, or it is OVER for you.

“This is your last warning! For the leadership, now is the time to leave Gaza, while you still have a chance.” Trump’s post was uploaded shortly after he met with eight released hostages in the Oval Office, and amid an apparent impasse in negotiations between Israel and Hamas after the first phase of the fragile ceasefire ended Saturday.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio urged Hamas to take Trump’s threats seriously, telling Fox News: “People don’t realize the President meets with these people, he hears their stories; he’s outraged and rightfully so.

“He’s tired of watching these videos every weekend where hostages that are emaciated are released and bodies are turned over, and sometimes it’s the wrong bodies and there’s five here and three there and there’s games that are being played. And he’s lost his patience with it.”

“He doesn’t say these things and not mean it, as folks are finding out around the world. If he says he’s going to do something, he’ll do it. And so they’d better take that seriously.”

Trump has issued multiple ultimatums to Hamas over the past several months with limited success. Before his inauguration, he demanded Hamas release all of the hostages or there would be “all hell to pay.” The

terror group did not release all of them, but did agree to a multi-phase ceasefire deal with Israel that secured the release of 33 hostages, in multiple batches, during the first stage.

Last month, after Hamas threatened not to release one batch of those hostages as scheduled, citing Israeli violations of the agreement, Trump issued another similar ultimatum demanding that all of them be released at noon the following Saturday. Hamas did not agree to release all of the hostages, but it did free the three it was scheduled to let go.

“I am sending Israel everything it needs to finish the job; not a single Hamas member will be safe if you don’t do as I say,” Trump warned in his fresh threat on Wednesday.



Israeli hostage Eli Sharabi, who has been held hostage by Hamas in Gaza since October 7, 2023, is paraded by Hamas gunmen before being handed over to the Red Cross in Deir al-Balah, central Gaza Strip, February 8, 2025. (AP Photo/Abdel Kareem Hana)

Trump has advanced over \$11 billion in weapons sales to Israel since taking office, including a shipment of 2,000-pound bombs that the Biden administration withheld due to concerns they’d lead to civilian deaths in Gaza.

He noted in his post that he had just met with the former hostages, “whose lives you have destroyed... Only sick and twisted people keep bodies, and you are sick and twisted!”

“Also, to the People of Gaza: A beautiful future awaits, but not if you hold hostages. If you do, you are DEAD! Make a SMART decision. RELEASE THE HOSTAGES NOW, OR THERE WILL BE HELL TO PAY LATER,” Trump added.

‘They will get the job done’

Trump’s ultimatum came after several roller-coaster days for the hostage families.

As phase one of the deal ended on Saturday, Netanyahu’s office issued a statement announcing that it had accepted what it described as a proposal from Trump’s Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff to extend the ceasefire under terms that the sides had agreed to in January.

While Israel signed onto these terms, including a stipulation that the two sides would hold negotiations regarding the terms of phase two, Netanyahu has long insisted that he would not end the war before

Hamas's military and governing capabilities have been dismantled. Accordingly, he largely refused to hold negotiations regarding phase two.

The "Witkoff proposal" he unveiled on Saturday evening envisions the extension of the ceasefire through Ramadan and Passover, which ends on April 19. During this period, the remaining hostages would be released in two batches — one on the first day of the extension and the other at the end, pending agreements on a permanent ceasefire.

Hamas quickly rejected the proposal, insisting it was only prepared to release hostages under the original framework that the sides reached in January. Israel, in turn, has threatened to resume fighting and on Sunday announced that it was blocking all humanitarian aid from entering Gaza moving forward. While an Arab diplomat told *The Times of Israel* that the proposal was actually "more of an Israeli offer," the Trump administration quickly got behind it and issued a statement backing Israel's stance in the hostage negotiations.

Terror groups in the Gaza Strip are holding 59 hostages, including 58 of the 251 abducted by Hamas-led terrorists on October 7, 2023.

They include the bodies of at least 35 confirmed dead by the IDF. Hamas has so far released 30 living hostages — 20 Israeli civilians, five soldiers, and five Thai nationals — and the bodies of eight slain Israeli captives during the ceasefire that began in January.

Eight hostages have been rescued from captivity by troops alive, and the bodies of 41 have also been recovered, including three mistakenly killed by the Israeli military as they tried to escape their captors, and the body of a soldier who was killed in 2014.

The body of another soldier killed in 2014, Lt. Hadar Goldin, is still being held by Hamas, and is counted among the 59 hostages.

Lazar Berman contributed to this report.

ISRAEL CONSIDERS MASSIVE NEW GROUND OFFENSIVE IN GAZA

CNN WORLD [Jeremy Diamond](#) and [Mick Krever](#), March 24, 2025

[Israel](#) is making plans for a potential major ground offensive in Gaza that would involve sending tens of thousands of troops into combat to clear and occupy large swaths of the enclave, an Israeli official and a second source familiar with the matter said.

The potential large-scale offensive is one of several possible scenarios the Israeli government is contemplating as it escalates its attacks on Gaza and seeks to pressure Hamas to release more hostages without negotiating an end to the war.

[Related article](#) [Israel approves controversial proposal to facilitate emigration of Palestinians from Gaza](#)

Efforts by Egypt and Qatar to revive the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas have intensified in recent days and one source said leaks about a major ground offensive are part of an Israeli effort to apply more pressure on Hamas at the negotiating table. Israeli officials have previously indicated that Israel would stop its attacks if Hamas agrees to free more hostages.

Still, the Israeli military, led by its new and more aggressive chief of staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir, has been crafting plans for a large-scale operation in Gaza for weeks now.

“If there are not renewed hostage negotiations then the only alternative left is to resume the fighting,” Eyal Hulata, former head of Israel’s National Security Council, told CNN. “And there are serious plans.”

While the Israeli military has launched numerous ground offensives in Gaza over the course of the war, its forces often withdrew within days or weeks of routing Hamas fighters in the targeted area. Without an Israeli troop presence or an alternative governing or military force, Hamas would often re-emerge in those areas, prompting Israeli forces to return.

Under one potential scenario now being considered, Israeli forces would clear Hamas from large swaths of Gaza and then occupy that territory to prevent Hamas’s resurgence, the sources said. Such a decision could see the Israeli military occupying the territory and fighting insurgencies for years.

A large-scale offensive could involve five Israeli divisions — or some 50,000 troops — the sources said.

The government is escalating the pressure “to bring Hamas back to the table on Israel’s terms,” Israel Ziv — a retired general who served 35 years in the Israeli military, including as chief of operations in the joint chiefs of staff — told CNN.

“But of course the problem is that once you escalate you can find yourself at the end of the road, in the depth of swamp. And this is the risk that no one knows if it will work or not.”

“Once you threaten something you should be prepared to do it,” he said.

The Israeli military has already begun laying the groundwork for larger-scale ground maneuvers, recapturing half of the Israeli-demarcated Netzarim corridor, which splits northern Gaza from the rest of the strip, and pushing troops into strategic locations in northern and southern Gaza.

Israel's cabinet on Sunday [set up an agency](#) to facilitate any Palestinians in Gaza who wished to participate in a "voluntary transfer" to third countries – though none have agreed to take in emigres.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has made eliminating Hamas's military and governance capabilities in Gaza a central war goal as he vows to achieve "absolute victory."

But a larger-scale and longer-term Israeli military offensive in Gaza could also draw stiff resistance from the Israeli public, of which a majority has been clamoring for a deal to free the 59 hostages still held in Gaza over a return to war.

"What we will see is a permanent presence of the IDF fighting the counter-insurgency on the ground," Hulata said. "And there will be no other option than for the IDF to assume responsibility for the humanitarian aid."

Israel has since the beginning of March blocked all humanitarian aid from entering Gaza, amplifying the humanitarian catastrophe in the strip.

Further occupation of Gaza "is, at least right now, not in the interest of Israel," Ziv said. "For some of the extremists in the government like (Bezael) Smotrich" – the far-right finance minister – "maybe it's the purpose. But it's definitely not the best of the Israeli policy at this time."

Before Israel ended the ceasefire last week, a March 9 poll from the Israel Democracy Institute found that nearly three-quarters of Israelis supported reaching a deal to end the war with Hamas in exchange for the release of all the hostages.

And recently released hostages and the families of current hostages have warned that resuming the war in Gaza will only serve to endanger the lives of the 24 hostages estimated to still be alive.

Netanyahu's political priorities may lie elsewhere, however. Key members of his right-wing governing coalition have been clamoring for a return to full-scale war over a negotiated settlement to free the hostages.

And Netanyahu's aides believe US President Donald Trump will be more supportive of large-scale Israeli military action than former President Joe Biden, who suspended the transfer of certain weapons in order to forestall a major Israeli offensive into the heavily populated southern part of Gaza.

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz has hinted at the possibility of large-scale expansion of military ground operations, saying last week he had "instructed the IDF to seize additional territories, while evacuating the population."

"The more Hamas continues its refusal, the more territory it will lose to Israel," he said Friday in a statement.

US VETOES UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION CALLING FOR GAZA CEASEFIRE

**14 other members back motion demanding release of hostages and unhindered aid;
US envoy says will 'not support any measure that fails to condemn Hamas,
call for it to disarm'**

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL [Reuters](#) and [Tol Staff](#) 5 June 2025,



Dorothy Shea, acting US Ambassador to the United Nations, raises her hand to veto a draft resolution calling for an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza, the release of all the hostages and unhindered aid access across the enclave, at a UN Security Council meeting on June 4, 2025, at the UN headquarters in New York. (Kyodo / Reuters)

The United States on Wednesday vetoed a UN Security Council resolution calling for an “immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire” between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, the release of all the hostages and unhindered aid access across the enclave.

“The United States has been clear we would not support any measure that fails to condemn Hamas and does not call for Hamas to disarm and leave Gaza,” Acting US Ambassador to the UN Dorothy Shea told the council before the vote.

“This resolution would undermine diplomatic efforts to reach a ceasefire that reflects the realities on the ground, and embolden Hamas,” she said of the text that was put forward by 10 countries on the 15-member council.

The other 14 countries on the council voted in favor of the draft as a humanitarian crisis grips the enclave of more than 2 million people, where international organizations assert famine looms, and where aid has only trickled in since Israel lifted an 11-week blockade last month.

The Security Council vote came as Israel pushes ahead with an offensive in Gaza after ending a two-month truce in March. Gaza health authorities said Israeli strikes killed 45 people on Wednesday, while Israel said a soldier died in fighting.

Israel says it is targeting terror operatives in the Strip, accusing them of hiding behind the civilian population.



Israeli Ambassador Danny Danon attends a United Nations Security Council meeting at UN headquarters in New York City on June 4, 2025 (Leonardo Munoz / AFP)

Britain's UN Ambassador Barbara Woodward criticized the Israeli government's decisions to expand its military operations and severely restrict humanitarian aid as "unjustifiable, disproportionate and counterproductive."

Israel has rejected calls for an unconditional or permanent ceasefire, saying Hamas cannot stay in Gaza. Israel's UN Ambassador Danny Danon told the council members who voted in favor of the draft: "You chose appeasement and submission. You chose a road that does not lead to peace. Only to more terror."

Hamas condemned the US veto, describing it as showing "the US administration's blind bias" towards Israel. The draft Security Council resolution had also demanded the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages held by Hamas and others.

The war in Gaza has raged since October 7, 2023, after Hamas terrorists invaded Israel, killed 1,200 and took 251 hostages back to the enclave.



Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine Riyad Mansour speaks during a United Nations Security Council meeting at UN headquarters in New York City on June 4, 2025 (Leonardo Munoz / AFP)

Israel responded with a military campaign that has killed over 54,000 Palestinians, according to Hamas health authorities in Gaza. The figures cannot be independently verified and do not distinguish between combatants and civilians.

Under global pressure, Israel allowed limited UN-led deliveries to resume on May 19. A week later a controversial new aid distribution system was launched by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, backed by the US and Israel.

Israel has long accused Hamas of stealing aid. Israel and the US are urging the UN to work through the GHF, which is using private US security and logistics companies to transport aid into Gaza for distribution at so-called secure distribution sites.

“No one wants to see Palestinian civilians in Gaza go hungry or thirsty,” Shea told the Security Council, adding that the draft resolution did not “acknowledge the disastrous shortcomings of the prior method of aid delivery.”

The UN and international aid groups have refused to work with the GHF because they say it is not neutral, militarizes aid, and forces the displacement of Palestinians.

Ahead of the UN Security Council vote, UN aid chief Tom Fletcher again appealed for the UN and aid groups to be allowed to assist people in Gaza, stressing that they have a plan, supplies and experience.

“Open the crossings – all of them. Let in lifesaving aid at scale, from all directions. Lift the restrictions on what and how much aid we can bring in. Ensure our convoys aren’t held up by delays and denials,” Fletcher said in a statement.

The UN has long blamed Israel and lawlessness in the enclave for hindering the delivery of aid into Gaza and its distribution throughout the war zone.

“Enough of suffering of civilians. Enough of food being used as a weapon. Enough is enough is enough,” Slovenia’s UN Ambassador Samuel Zbogar told the Security Council.

A similar humanitarian-focused draft resolution is now expected to be put to a vote in the 193-member UN General Assembly, where no countries have a veto power and it would likely pass, diplomats said.

Danon warned: “Don’t waste more of your time, because no resolution, no vote, no moral failure, will stand in our way.”

PART 13 GAZA AND FOOD

AVAILABILITY OF FOOD AND WATER IN GAZA

ChatGPT – 26th April 2025

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza during the 2023–2025 Israel-Hamas war became one of the most catastrophic in recent history. While international attention initially focused on the violence and the hostage crisis, a deeper and equally devastating emergency unfolded daily: the struggle for food and water. Gaza's fragile infrastructure collapsed under military pressure, international aid efforts faced political manipulation, and civilians bore the brunt of scarcity. Control over food and water supplies became a major battleground — not only between Israel and Hamas but also among the international community, humanitarian organizations, and even different Palestinian factions.

This essay explores who paid for food and water in Gaza during the war, the severe shortages, the political arguments surrounding distribution, and the stark contrast in access between Gaza's civilian population and Hamas fighters.

Pre-War Situation: A Fragile System

Before the war erupted, Gaza was already heavily dependent on outside aid. According to the United Nations and humanitarian organizations like UNRWA:

- Around **80%** of Gaza's population relied on **international food assistance** even during peacetime.
- Water infrastructure was fragile; over **90% of Gaza's water** was **undrinkable** due to salinity and pollution, forcing residents to rely on bottled water or expensive desalination efforts.
- Israel controlled the flow of goods into Gaza through checkpoints (primarily Kerem Shalom), allowing some essentials while blocking materials it deemed "dual-use" — meaning they could have military applications.

Thus, Gaza's civilian population entered the war **already vulnerable** to supply disruptions.

The War: Blockade and Total Collapse

After Hamas's October 7 attack, Israel imposed an immediate and total **siege** on Gaza. Prime Minister Netanyahu declared that "**no food, no fuel, no electricity, no water**" would be allowed into the strip until the hostages were returned.

- **Electricity grids** collapsed within days, crippling water desalination plants and sewage treatment.
- **Water shortages** became extreme, forcing many civilians to rely on polluted wells, leading to the spread of diseases.

- **Food stocks** quickly ran out, and supermarkets were looted or closed.
- **Hospitals** could not sterilize equipment due to water shortages, exacerbating the humanitarian disaster.

Israel allowed only **limited aid convoys** through, mainly under U.S. and Egyptian pressure, but inspections often delayed shipments for days, and airstrikes repeatedly disrupted distribution.

Who Paid for Food and Water?

During the war, food and water reaching Gaza came from a mix of sources:

- **International donors** — particularly Qatar, the U.S., the EU, and UN agencies like WFP and UNRWA — paid for most humanitarian shipments.
- **Egypt** facilitated some deliveries via the Rafah crossing.
- **Private Palestinian businesses** also tried importing goods when possible, but supply chains were broken.
- **Israel** itself rarely paid directly for humanitarian supplies but maintained control over border crossings and had veto power over what entered.

Notably, humanitarian aid was often paid for **twice** — once by international donors purchasing goods, and again in the form of "**handling fees**" to Israeli companies that controlled logistics and border inspections. This angered aid groups and some foreign governments, who accused Israel of "profiteering" from a crisis it partly caused.

Shortages and the Struggle for Survival

By early 2024, Gaza's humanitarian situation was described by the UN as approaching "**full-blown famine**":

- In northern Gaza, **malnutrition rates among children** soared to over **30%**.
- Families reported surviving on **one meal every two days**, often consisting only of bread, salt, and untreated water.
- Infant mortality began rising sharply due to dehydration and disease.

Aid convoys faced enormous obstacles:

- Israel insisted on detailed inspections, slowing deliveries.
- Some convoys were attacked by desperate civilians before reaching distribution points.

- In some cases, Hamas fighters seized aid shipments for their own use, sparking outrage both within Gaza and abroad.
-

Political Arguments Over Food and Water

The issue of food and water supply became a fierce political battlefield:

1. Israel's Position:

Israel argued that Hamas routinely diverted humanitarian supplies to its fighters and that any aid entering Gaza indirectly strengthened Hamas's military effort. Israeli leaders insisted on stringent control and often conditioned aid on hostage release negotiations.

2. Palestinian Authority and International Critics:

The Palestinian Authority, the UN, and human rights organizations accused Israel of using **starvation as a weapon of war**, a violation of international humanitarian law. They demanded unimpeded aid flows, arguing that punishing 2.3 million civilians for Hamas's actions was collective punishment.

3. The Hamas Factor:

Evidence emerged that Hamas **controlled food distribution** in parts of Gaza, ensuring that fighters and loyalists received better supplies while ordinary civilians went hungry. Reports suggested Hamas taxed or redirected food shipments, selling some on the black market or reserving it for underground bunkers housing militants and commanders.

4. Western Dilemma:

The U.S. and EU governments faced pressure: supporting aid to Gaza risked helping Hamas, but withholding aid meant condemning civilians to death. This tension led to awkward compromises, including the establishment of **"safe corridors"** and **floating docks** for offshore aid delivery — efforts that often failed to reach those in greatest need.

Civilian Access vs. Hamas Access

Perhaps the most tragic aspect of the food and water crisis was the **stark divide** between Gaza's ordinary people and Hamas fighters:

- Civilians in northern Gaza, particularly in refugee camps and devastated urban areas, faced **extreme hunger**, lacked clean drinking water, and lived amid sewage and rubble.
- Hamas fighters, according to multiple intelligence reports and defectors, had **stockpiled supplies** in underground tunnels prior to the war.
 - Fighters had better access to clean water, food rations, fuel for generators, and even medical supplies.

- Key Hamas leadership figures were reported to be living in fortified tunnels ("Metro Gaza") with consistent food and air filtration while civilians suffocated above ground.

This unequal access deepened resentment among Gaza's population, although fear of Hamas's repression often prevented open dissent.

Conclusion

Food and water in Gaza became more than basic necessities — they became tools of war, bargaining chips in political negotiations, and symbols of suffering for an entire population.

The civilians of Gaza, already among the most vulnerable people in the world, were caught between an Israeli military campaign determined to dismantle Hamas and a militant organization willing to prioritize its survival over the lives of its own people.

Who pays for Gaza's food and water? Mostly the international community.

Who controls it? Both Israel and Hamas — and neither fully for the benefit of civilians.

The tragedy is that, as with many modern conflicts, **the weakest and most innocent pay the highest price.**

Until humanitarian access is guaranteed without political manipulation, and until Hamas's exploitation of resources ends, the people of Gaza will continue to suffer — trapped between external siege and internal tyranny.

GAZA MARCH - CEASEFIRE COLLAPSES AS ISRAEL INTENSIFIES PRESSURE ON HAMAS (ACLED)

ACLED On 18 March, Israel resumed widespread airstrikes across Gaza after nearly two months of ceasefire, with ACLED recording over 300 airstrike events in March — nearly 10 times the airstrikes in February. The ceasefire collapsed after Hamas rejected a US proposal to extend the truce in exchange for 15 Israeli hostages, arguing it undermined the second phase of the agreement aimed at a permanent ceasefire.¹

As part of the renewed offensive, Israeli troops expanded the buffer zone, retaking the eastern section of the Netzarim corridor and partially disconnecting northern and southern Gaza. Troops advanced into Bait Lahiya and moved from the Philadelphi corridor toward Rafah camp and al-Mawasi, encircling the Tal al-Sultan area west of Rafah. Hamas and other armed groups avoided direct clashes but fired several rockets toward Israel, causing no casualties or property damage. Overall, Israeli operations resulted in around 950 deaths among Palestinians in March, including civilians, militants, and top officials and commanders — more than six times the fatalities recorded in February. Notably, among those killed were four members of Hamas' political bureau, including Ismail Barhoum, the head of Hamas' civil and financial administration in Gaza.²

The Israeli government has asserted that negotiations will proceed “under fire” until Hamas is disarmed and its leaders depart Gaza.³ While Hamas continues to view disarmament as a “red line,” it has shown flexibility in releasing five living hostages in exchange for an extended ceasefire and increased humanitarian aid into Gaza.⁴ Limited anti-Hamas protests surfaced during March in Gaza, the first since February 2024, intensifying pressure on the group amid rising public discontent. The launch of a new Israeli ground operation on 2 April will likely increase pressure on Hamas by further preventing humanitarian aid and targeting new areas.⁵

For more information, see [ACLED's Gaza Monitor](#).

[Back to map](#)

AS AID EMBARGO ON STRIP ENTERS THIRD MONTH, HUNGER IS STALKING GAZANS AGAIN

After a ceasefire shrank malnutrition figures, stores of assistance are now dwindling and food for sale — which may come from Hamas's stolen hoards — is priced exorbitantly

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Nurit Yohanan](#) 5 May 2025



Palestinians queue for a hot meal at a charity kitchen run by the United Nation's World Food Programme (WFP) at the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip on April 26, 2025 (Eyad BABA / AFP)

More than 60 days have passed since Israel [imposed a full ban](#) on the entry of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip, including food, water, medical supplies, fuel, and material for shelters.

The period marks the longest time in which no aid has entered the Palestinian territory since war broke out with Hamas's October 7, 2023, attack on Israel.

Israeli officials say enough aid entered the Strip during a two-month ceasefire at the beginning to allow Gazans to survive the months-long halt as it seeks to ramp up pressure on Hamas for the return of 59 hostages remaining captive in the enclave.

But data and testimony from inside the Strip point to a worsening hunger crisis and rising rates of malnutrition, as Israel explores ways to resume aid deliveries without allowing the goods to wind up in the hands of Hamas or allied terror groups, who may be exploiting the crisis to fund the ongoing war.

In late April, the World Food Programme [announced](#) that it had completed its final delivery of supplies to kitchens distributing hot meals from the organization's warehouses.

Weeks earlier, the WFP declared the closure of the last functioning bakeries in Gaza and halted food distributions to individuals to prioritize supplies for communal kitchens.

In recent days, footage shared online has shown heavy crowding and long lines at kitchens distributing hot meals.

“Hunger is extreme, it’s reached unnatural levels,” a resident of Gaza told The Times of Israel via text message, speaking on condition of anonymity due to fears for his safety.

Even before Israel halted aid deliveries on March 2, many in Gaza were failing to receive humanitarian assistance.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, a survey of 256 displacement sites within Gaza carried out from March 2 to March 20 found that representatives in 68 percent of the camps reported that families living there had not received aid in the 30 days prior. The 256 camps are thought to house upwards of 40,000 Palestinian families.

The Gazan man noted that he had been forced to buy food at inflated market prices due to the lack of aid, which is provided free of charge.

“I had to sell personal belongings to afford food,” he said.



Women queue with pots to receive charity meals from a kitchen in Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip on April 24, 2025 (Bashar TALEB / AFP)

According to a WFP market [survey](#), food prices in April were on average 50% higher than in March, and up to 740% higher than during the ceasefire in February.

Several staple food items, including dairy products, eggs, fruits, and meat, were unavailable altogether.

The price hikes have rendered much of the food unaffordable for the majority of Gazans, who have been without a steady income since the start of the war.

“There are vegetables and canned goods in the markets, but at very high prices,” a resident of Gaza City told The Times of Israel via a messaging app, speaking on condition of anonymity for safety reasons. “A kilogram of sugar costs 70 shekels, a kilogram of tomatoes 25 shekels, and a kilogram of cucumbers 20 shekels.”

“Yesterday, I cooked a meal of just okra, without any meat,” they added.

[Videos](#) on social media, including from recent days, have shown Gazans preparing lavish meals or eating out at the few restaurants that remain open in the Strip, and can be seen as belying the reports of food shortages.

But those videos could also reflect the direness of the situation in Gaza: What aid is in the Strip is not being distributed evenly, with some able to keep their bellies full — whether through political connections or

SEIZED AID

It remains unclear where the food offered on the market is being sourced from, but it is plausible that goods are coming from aid stockpiles commandeered by Hamas after entering Gaza. Under renewed assault, the terror group, which has previously been accused of diverting humanitarian aid for its own use, may be price-gauging Gazans to pay fighters and fund its operations.



Hamas operatives seen as aid trucks arrive in Rafah, Gaza Strip, January 21, 2025. (Jehad Alshrafi/AP)

Throughout the war, there have been dozens of documented cases showing armed figures associated with terrorist organizations in Gaza taking control of aid trucks. In September 2024, Israel's Channel 12 [published](#) recordings of Hamas operatives discussing the transportation of humanitarian aid from warehouses stocked with supplies to the group's leaders in Khan Younis.

On March 30, Israel's High Court of Justice [ruled](#) that humanitarian organizations petitioning for the resumption of aid deliveries to Gaza "had not proven that Israel was starving the population of the Strip," though the judges noted that the decision did not cover the period following Israel's complete halt of aid into Gaza.

In its verdict, the court noted that Israel, as a rule, does not itself supply humanitarian goods to Gaza, but had allowed their entry into the territory during the relevant period as per instructions from the political leadership.

In his decision, Chief Justice Isaac Amit wrote that terrorist organizations were embedded within the civilian population and seizing humanitarian aid. Israel's obligations to assist Gaza's civilian population must be balanced against operational needs, including preventing assistance from reaching terror groups, he said.

Israel is expected to resume aid deliveries in the coming weeks, but how that happens has become a point of contention within the political leadership and between the government and the Israel Defense Forces.

Seeking to get assistance to Gazan civilians while preventing it from falling into the hands of Hamas, a plan has taken shape that would do away with wholesale distribution and warehousing of aid.

Instead, international organizations and private security contractors will hand out boxes of food to individual Gazan families from within an IDF secured zone inside Gaza, an Israeli and Arab official familiar with the matter told The Times of Israel last week.

At a recent cabinet meeting, Defense Minister Israel Katz pressed the issue, suggesting that aid distribution be managed by civilian American companies under military supervision, or directly by the IDF.

IDF Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir rejected the prospect of the IDF being directly involved in handing out assistance, echoing the position of his predecessor Herzi Halevi.



Palestinian children suffering from malnutrition wait at Nasser hospital in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip on June 24, 2024, after they reportedly were given permission by the Israeli army to leave Gaza (Photo by Bashar TALEB / AFP)

According to reports, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich snapped at Zamir, telling him, “We have instructed you to prepare for this. We tell you what [to do] and you will figure out how. If you can’t, we’ll find someone who can.”

In the meantime, Hamas’s stockpiles of hoarded food are shrinking, and estimates of how long its supplies may last vary from two months to half a year. With its stores dissipating, [according to the Wall Street Journal](#), the terror group’s difficulties in raising money and recruiting new fighters and support are only expected to compound.

CHILD MALNUTRITION RISING AGAIN

Experts worry that the hunger woes will be felt most acutely by Gaza’s most vulnerable. In the first two weeks of April, 64 children in the Strip were diagnosed with severe acute malnutrition, or SAM. Another 641

were found to have moderate acute malnutrition, according to OCHA, the UN humanitarian affairs agency, citing data from aid organizations that screened 21,000 children.

At one hospital in the relatively well-off Rimal neighborhood of Gaza City, 3-5 children were diagnosed with SAM and related medical complications weekly over the past month, more than double the average rate in February.

Just over 2,000 children were diagnosed with acute malnutrition in February, the lowest number since reliable data began being collected eight months earlier, likely thanks to the ceasefire and aid flooding into the Strip.

By March, the number had risen to over 3,700, according to the UN, relying on data collected by a number of humanitarian organizations in Gaza, including UN agencies and non-governmental organizations. (Screenings also rose from 84,000 in February to 92,000 in March.)



Palestinians wait in front of a free food distribution point to receive a hot meal, at the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip on April 19, 2025. (Eyad BABA / AFP)

Dr. Iyas al-Bursh, a physician at Shifa Hospital in the Gaza Strip, said he had seen the number of children arriving at the hospital with nutrition-related health issues rise over the previous two months, including malnutrition and physical weakness.

“There is currently no food in the hospital, such as dairy products or fruits, which wounded patients need to regain strength and replenish their blood supply,” he told The Times of Israel by phone. “This delays recovery and weakens patients’ ability to fight infections.”

THE FAMINE THAT WASN'T

When Israel halted aid into Gaza on March 2, it marked the end of what had been nearly 15 consecutive months of aid being let into the Strip. On October 21, 2023, deliveries of food and other types of assistance began entering the enclave via the Rafah crossing with Egypt, following a two-week total siege on the Strip sparked by the October 7 Hamas attack, in which some 1,200 people were slaughtered across southern Israel and 251 kidnapped into Gaza.

Despite the deliveries, Israel has been hounded by accusations throughout the war that it has not allowed enough assistance into the Strip, quickly leading to a deluge of reports of rising hunger and rocketing food prices in the enclave, which were later echoed by humanitarian organizations and the UN.

The claims seemed to climax in March 2024, when the Famine Review Committee of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification system, a committee composed of international famine experts operating under the auspices of the UN, warned that famine was “projected and imminent,” particularly in northern Gaza. Some 677,000 people were already under a food insecurity “catastrophe,” it alleged.

But that predicted famine — as defined by the expert committee — evidently did not materialize; by June the same committee published an updated report stating that “available evidence does not indicate that famine is currently occurring.”

The effects of the alarm, however, have continued to ripple outward.

The data used by the famine review boards served as evidence by the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court prosecutor in legal proceedings initiated against Israel. Today, war crimes charges hang over the head of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former defense minister Yoav Gallant, who are accused of using starvation as a method of war.

On the other side, doubts raised over the veracity of the famine claim may have resulted in some being less willing to take seriously claims of hunger in Gaza, even as food shortages appear to take hold in the Strip again.



Palestinian children eat as they sit near the doorway of a damaged house in Gaza City on May 1, 2025.
(Photo by Omar AL-QATTAA / AFP)

In mid-February, the organization UK Lawyers for Israel [published a review](#) finding that not only had no famine occurred, but one may not have been imminent at that time, with even levels of acute malnutrition only marginally higher than prewar figures.

The group alleged that there had been severe problems with warnings regarding food availability issued by organizations that underpinned the famine warning, due to what it said was their use of “incomplete or

inaccurate data,” inconsistent application of methodological standards, failure to take into account new data, and “potential bias.”

Two weeks after the report was issued, the trucks ferrying aid into Gaza went idle for 63 days and counting.

HEAD OF CONTROVERSIAL ISRAEL-BACKED GAZA AID GROUP SAYS 'PLAN ISN'T PERFECT, BUT FEEDS PEOPLE'

Jake Wood of Gaza Humanitarian Foundation tells CNN other aid organizations 'face a choice. This is the mechanism by which aid can be distributed.

Are you willing to participate?'

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Toi Staff](#) 17 May 2025



Palestinians struggle to get donated food at a community kitchen in Khan Younis, Gaza Strip, May 16, 2025. (AP/Abdel Kareem Hana)

The executive director of the newly established Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), Jake Wood, told CNN on Saturday that conditions in Gaza are “clearly urgent,” but that he expected positive updates on bringing in aid in the coming days. Wood couldn’t confirm when or how many aid trucks Israel would allow into Gaza.

The US- and Israel-backed aid organization, established to manage a new model for distributing humanitarian assistance in Gaza, announced on Wednesday that it would begin operating in the enclave by the end of the month and that Israel would lift its more than two-month blockade in the interim.

There was no Israeli confirmation of the announcement, but an Israeli official told The Times of Israel that one would be made in the coming days.

GHF is an organization that will oversee the distribution of humanitarian aid in Gaza in a manner that does not allow its diversion by Hamas. It was established in close coordination with Israel amid mounting mistrust between Jerusalem and UN-backed aid groups that have been operating in the Strip to date.

GHF is backed by the Trump administration, but the rollout has been rocky, with many international organizations refusing to cooperate with it due to the strict conditions Israel is placing on its operations.

Among those restrictions was a limit on aid distribution sites to just four, all located in southern Gaza. Even GHF acknowledged in a memo earlier in May that the sites would only be enough to, at best, feed 60% of Gaza's population.

Accordingly, GHF said in its inaugural Wednesday statement that it had asked and received Israeli approval for additional "Safe Distribution Sites" (SDSs) to be established throughout Gaza. The statement didn't say how many SDSs Israel agreed to build. As of last week, only one SDS was in the process of construction by the Israel Defense Forces.

Wood agreed that the current number of distribution sites was "not sufficient" but added that it was "hard to say" if the foundation could do more without support from UN agencies.



Palestinians line up to get a ration of hot food from a charity kitchen set up at the Islamic University campus in Gaza City on May 12, 2025. (Omar al-Qattaa/AFP)

"This plan is not perfect, but this plan will be feeding people by the end of the month, in a scenario where no one has allowed aid in over the course of the last 10 weeks," Wood, former CEO of the Team Rubicon disaster relief group, said in his first interview since starting the foundation.

"Ultimately, the community is going to face a choice. This is going to be the mechanism by which aid can be distributed in Gaza. Are you willing to participate? The answer is going to be, you know, pretty critical to whether or not this ramps up to sufficiently feed 2.2 million people in a very desperate situation."

Wood said he thinks the humanitarian community's opposition to the foundation is due to "misinformation" about an Israeli role or involvement in the distribution, or claims that data would be shared with Jerusalem.

"I would not have participated in a plan that did those same things. However, that is not the plan," Wood said, adding that he "unequivocally ... will not be a part of anything that forcibly dislocates or displaces the Palestinian population."

GHF said it would launch operations by the end of May, but acknowledged that it would take time before it would be fully operational. Accordingly, the foundation said Israel has agreed "to allow the flow of transitional aid into Gaza under existing mechanisms" until the construction of "Safe Distribution Sites" is complete.

GHF said it secured the concession from Israel after Wood sent a letter to the Israeli government that outlined the organization's requirements for operation.

The organization said this week it was in the "final stages" of securing enough food from aid organizations already operating in Gaza to box 300 million meals within the first 90 days of operation.

Meanwhile, Trump officials have been meeting in recent days with representatives from UN agencies and other international aid organizations, pressuring them to cooperate with the plan and, in at least one case, threatening to cut funding from groups that refuse.

Two organizations that have agreed to join the effort are American security firms UG Solutions and Safe Reach Solutions, who will be tasked with running logistics and security at the SDSs so that the IDF does not need to be directly involved, the Israeli official told The Times of Israel, adding that the military will only secure the perimeter of a still-being-built humanitarian zone where the SDSs will be located.

Israel has blocked aid from entering Gaza since March 2, arguing that enough assistance entered Gaza during a six-week ceasefire and that Hamas was diverting aid from civilians. Nonetheless, the IDF has warned the political echelon that the Strip is on the brink of starvation, the Israeli official told The Times of Israel.

In his letter to the Israeli government, Wood sought to address some of the concerns. He said the foundation would not share any personally identifiable information of aid recipients with Israel.

Wood also asked in the letter to the IDF to "identify and deconflict sufficient locations in northern Gaza capable of hosting GHF-operated secure distribution sites that can be made operational within thirty days."

The GHF statement did not address all of the criticism and unanswered questions that the international community has about the group, including who would fund the work and how much involvement the US, Israel, or any other government or military would have in controlling life-saving aid for Palestinian civilians

ISRAEL PLANS TO OCCUPY AND FLATTEN ALL OF GAZA IF NO DEAL BY TRUMP'S TRIP

[XIOS](#) [Barak Ravid](#) May 5 2025

Israel has set President [Trump's visit](#) to the Middle East next week as a deadline for a new hostage and ceasefire deal, with a massive ground operation to commence if no deal is reached, Israeli officials say.

Why it matters: Israel's Security Cabinet approved a plan Sunday night to gradually reoccupy all of Gaza and hold it indefinitely if no deal is reached by May 15. Plans for the operation call for the [Israel](#) Defense Forces (IDF) to flatten any buildings that remain standing and displace virtually the entire population of 2 million people to a single "humanitarian area."

- The alternative to remaining in the humanitarian zone is for Palestinians to leave the enclave "voluntarily" for other countries "in line with President [Trump's vision for Gaza](#)," an Israeli official said.
- Such departures could hardly be considered voluntary, and no country has agreed thus far to accept displaced Palestinians. Israeli officials claim there are ongoing negotiations with several countries on that front.

Between the lines: Many Israeli officials see this operation as a nuclear option and would much prefer a deal in the next two weeks.

- Trump is not currently playing an active role in efforts to reach a ceasefire and has effectively given Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu a green light to do as he sees fit, Israeli officials say.

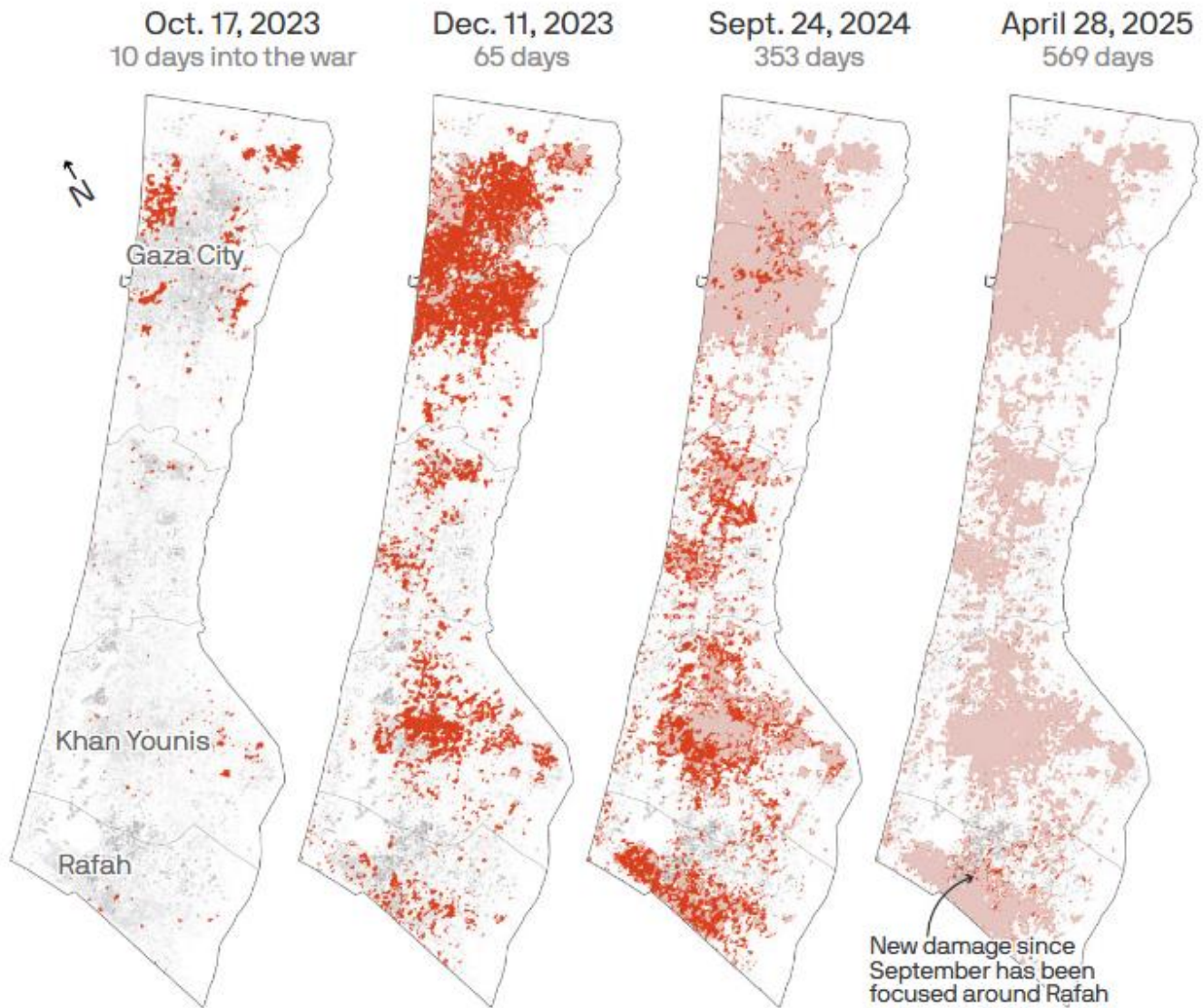
The big picture: The return to full-fledged war would come after [Israel already cut off all supplies](#) of food, water and medicine for civilians in Gaza after the ceasefire broke down two months ago.

- Israel's military operations in Gaza have killed 52,000 Palestinians, most of them civilians, according to the health ministry in Hamas-led Gaza.
- Netanyahu has rejected any proposal that ends the war entirely, pressing Hamas instead to sign a shorter-term agreement.
- Israeli officials hope the threat of a large-scale invasion will press Hamas to accept a deal on Israel's terms.

Buildings damaged or destroyed in Gaza

Since Oct. 7, 2023

■ New damage ■ Existing damage



Data: Analysis of Copernicus Sentinel-1 satellite data by [Corey Scher](#) and [Jamon Van Den Hoek](#) of Oregon State University's [Conflict Ecology lab](#); Map: Erin Davis/Axios Visuals

Split screen: Trump will travel to the Middle East starting Monday for a three-day visit to Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

- Trump is not currently expected to visit Israel. U.S. and Israeli officials say the ongoing war in Gaza is the primary reason. "Nothing good can come out of a visit to Israel at the moment," one U.S. official told Axios.

Between the lines: U.S. and Arab officials involved in the preparations for the trip said Gaza is not a top priority for Trump, and he's expected to focus on bilateral issues and investments.

- "The optics around President Trump's visit to the region in the context of the war in Gaza are very bad. He made a big splash pushing for a ceasefire before his inauguration and got it done, but three months later the situation in Gaza is worse," an Arab official said.

State of play: Israeli and U.S. officials admit that the negotiations over the Gaza ceasefire and hostage deal [are stuck](#).

- While Israel wants a partial deal that involves the release of eight to 10 hostages in return for a 45 to 60-day ceasefire. Hamas demands a comprehensive deal to end the war and release all 59 remaining hostages.
- All efforts to span that gap have failed. The White House focus has shifted to the [Russia-Ukraine war](#) and [nuclear talks with Iran](#), with little to no bandwidth for Gaza, Israeli and U.S. officials say.
- The officials said the Trump administration isn't pressing Israel at all and made clear to the Egyptian and Qatari mediators that a temporary deal along the lines White House envoy Steve Witkoff laid out two months ago, backed by Israel, is the only game in town.

Zoom in: The plan Israel approved Sunday, codenamed "Gideon's Chariots," is aimed at "completely defeating Hamas," Israeli officials said.

- According to the plan, the IDF would invade Gaza with four or five armored and infantry divisions and gradually occupy and hold most of the strip.
- Israel's ultranationalist finance minister Betzalel Smotrich said Monday that the occupation would be permanent and the IDF wouldn't pull back even in return for the release of the hostages. An Israeli defense official said permanent occupation is only an "aspiration."

The tactic will be massive destruction.

- As the IDF occupies parts of Gaza, it will flatten all buildings and work on destroying tunnel networks, as it did previously in Rafah and in the northern Gaza Strip.
- The IDF is planning to displace close to 2 million Palestinians to the Rafah area, where compounds for the delivery of humanitarian aid are being built.
- According to the plan, all Palestinians who enter the humanitarian area will be screened to make sure they're not armed and not members of Hamas.
- The compounds are to be managed by [a new international foundation](#) and private U.S. companies, though it's unclear how the plan will function after the UN and all aid organizations [announced](#) they won't take part.

The latest: On Monday, Trump told reporters in the Oval Office that he would help get food to people in Gaza. "They are starving. Hamas is making it impossible because they are getting everything brought in. We are going to help the people of Gaza because they have been treated very badly by Hamas," he said.

The Israeli Cabinet decision is highly controversial domestically, especially because it entails the mobilization of 70,000 reservists, most of whom have served for more than 300 days since the Oct. 7 attacks.

- The IDF is concerned that 30-50% of the reservists won't show up, officials say.
- Most of the families of Israeli hostages vehemently oppose the operation, which they say will endanger their loved ones.
- Recent polls showed 60-70% of Israelis oppose a major operation to occupy Gaza and support a deal to end the war and free the hostages. The polls showed a majority of Israelis think Netanyahu is continuing the war for political reasons.

What's next: "The preparations for the operation allow a window of opportunity until the end of President Trump's trip to the region to reach a hostage and ceasefire deal. If no deal is reached, the operation will go forward," an Israeli official said.

US REPORTEDLY DEVELOPING PLAN TO RESETTLE 1 MILLION GAZANS IN LIBYA

**NBC News says proposal is serious enough to have been discussed with Libyan leaders;
unclear where in the North African country the Palestinians would live,
or how they'd get there**

[TIMES OF ISRAEL Agencies](#) and [Tol Staff](#) 17 May 2025



Palestinians transport their belongings as they flee Gaza City on May 16, 2025. (Bashar Taleb/AFP)

The Trump administration is working on a plan to permanently relocate as much as one million Palestinians from the Gaza Strip to Libya, NBC News [reported Friday](#), citing five people with knowledge of the matter.

The plan is under serious enough consideration that the US has discussed it with Libya's leadership, the report said, while stressing a final agreement has yet to be reached.

In exchange for resettling the Palestinians, the administration would release to Libya billions of dollars of funds the US froze more than a decade ago, NBC added.

According to three of the sources quoted in the report, Israel has been kept in the loop about the administration's talks on the matter.

"These reports are untrue," an administration spokesperson told NBC in response. "The situation on the ground is untenable for such a plan. Such a plan was not discussed and makes no sense."

There was no response from Israel or either of Libya's two rival governments to the report, which also said administration officials have discussed offering incentives such as free housing and possibly a financial stipend to encourage Palestinians to leave Gaza for the North African country.

An official told the US network that it remains unclear where one million Palestinians from Gaza could be settled in the largely lawless Libya, which has been plunged into chaos and division since the 2011 civil war in which longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi was overthrown and killed.

The NBC report also noted the logistical challenges involved in transporting one million people from Gaza to Libya, particularly with no airport in the Strip.



People gather at a beach in the Libyan capital Tripoli on May 15, 2025. (Mahmud Turkia/AFP)

US President Donald Trump triggered global perplexity in early February by suggesting the US “take over” Gaza and turn it into a “Middle East Riviera” while forcing its Palestinian inhabitants to relocate to Egypt, Jordan, or other countries. He has since said, however, that no Gazans would be expelled.

Visiting the Middle East this week, Trump said he wanted the United States to “take” Gaza and turn it into a “freedom zone”: “I have concepts for Gaza that I think are very good. Make it a freedom zone. Let the United States get involved and make it just a freedom zone,” he said. “I’d be proud to have the United States have it, take it, make it a freedom zone.”

While far-right ministers in Israel who have urged using the ongoing war with Hamas as an opportunity to reestablish Israeli settlements in the Strip lauded the plan, the Palestinian Authority and Arab nations rejected it outright.

Despite public opposition among the region’s leaders, the government has moved forward with plans to encourage Palestinians to relocate, though The Times of Israel [found](#) no meaningful change in Israel’s exit policy for Gaza residents in recent months.

RUBIO 'OPTIMISTIC' GAZA WAR COULD END SOON, BUT ADMITS HAVING FELT SAME WAY BEFORE

**US secretary of state predicts more countries will join Abraham Accords by end of the year,
while acknowledging Saudi Arabia has 'certain conditions that are impediments'**

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL [Jacob Magid](#) 22 May 2025

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Wednesday that he is somewhat optimistic that a deal between Israel and Hamas will soon be reached that would see the release of all the hostages and end the war in Gaza, but he subsequently acknowledged that he has felt this way before.

"I have some level of optimism that we may have breakthrough achievements here pretty quickly, hopefully on an end to this and the release of all the hostages," Rubio told a congressional hearing.

"I have felt that way now at least four separate times in the last couple of months, and for one reason or another at the last minute, it didn't happen," he added.

A source involved in the hostage negotiations was much less optimistic, telling The Times of Israel that talks remain at an impasse over Israel's insistence on only agreeing to a temporary ceasefire, while Hamas is demanding a permanent end to the war.

US special envoy to the Mideast Steve Witkoff is pushing a temporary ceasefire framework that would see the release of as many as half of the remaining living hostages during a ceasefire of up to two months. During that time, the sides would hold negotiations on the terms of a permanent ceasefire and the release of the remaining hostages, the source said, adding that the Trump administration would provide assurances that it will keep Israel at the negotiation table.

Hamas is seeking more ironclad guarantees, given that negotiations on a permanent ceasefire were supposed to have been held during the previous hostage deal reached in January. But Netanyahu largely refused to engage in those talks, and Israel resumed its military campaign in the Gaza Strip in March. Israel is now demanding more vague language that allows it to resume fighting in Gaza if the negotiations on a permanent ceasefire do not materialize, the source said.



Palestinians line up to receive a hot meal at a food distribution point in the Al-Rimal neighborhood in Gaza City, in the Gaza Strip on May 21, 2025. (Omar AL-QATTAA / AFP)

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated his backing for a temporary agreement during a Wednesday press conference, while adding that he was also prepared to end the war permanently if a growing set of conditions is met. Those included Hamas releasing all of the hostages, its members putting down their weapons and leaving Gaza, demilitarizing the entire Strip, Israel maintaining security control over the entire Strip and the implementation of US President Donald Trump's plan to relocate interested Palestinians out of the enclave.

Wednesday was Rubio's second day of appearances before a series of Congressional committees. During each of them, lawmakers pressed him on what the US is doing to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Israel blocked aid from entering the Strip for 78 days, arguing that enough assistance had gone in during a six-week ceasefire earlier this year and that Hamas has been diverting much of that aid.

Earlier this week, though, Netanyahu ordered the resumption of humanitarian aid entries, acknowledging international pressure over looming starvation of civilians in Gaza. Around 200 aid trucks have entered since Monday, according to Israeli authorities, who have yet to respond to claims from the UN that the assistance has not actually been delivered to civilians due to lack of coordination from the IDF.

While being careful not to overtly criticize Israel, Rubio told lawmakers that Netanyahu's decision to lift its blockade was the result of quiet US diplomacy.

He said the US was backing the new Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, which was established in close coordination with Israel in order to deliver aid through a new mechanism that prevents its diversion by Hamas.

GHF says it plans to begin operations in the coming days and that Israel agreed to allow aid in through existing mechanisms in the interim. The foundation has faced significant criticism from international humanitarian groups, who have pointed to GHF's acknowledgement that it will only be initially able to feed about 60 percent of Gazans.



Jewish and Arab Israelis protest against the war in Gaza at Habima Square in Tel Aviv, April 24, 2025.

(Tomer Neuberg/Flash90)

“I don’t want to be disappointed on it again, but I want you to know there are efforts ongoing to both provide more humanitarian assistance and bring about the end of this conflict,” Rubio said Wednesday.

Later on in his testimony, Rubio predicted that additional countries will join the Abraham Accords normalization agreements between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

“We have an Abraham Accords office that is actively working to identify a number of countries who have lined up and already I think we may have good news, certainly before the end of this year, of a number of more countries that are willing to join that alliance,” Rubio told the House Foreign Affairs Committee, adding that the administration was working to select an ambassador to head the office.

He said there was “still a willingness” in Saudi Arabia to normalize ties with Israel, but “certain conditions are impediments,” including the ongoing war in Gaza. Riyadh has also made clear that it will not normalize relations with Israel absent Jerusalem agreeing to allow for the establishment of an irreversible, time-bound pathway to a future Palestinian state, which Netanyahu has vowed to oppose.



Palestinians collect water at a camp for displaced people in Gaza City,
on May 20, 2025 (Bashar TALEB / AFP)

Rubio added that Syria’s new leaders “have said that they have no interest in a war with Israel.”

“They have no interest in becoming a playground to export revolution. What they want is to build a country... and that’s what we’re willing to help them do,” Rubio told the House Foreign Affairs Committee, explaining the US decision to remove sanctions on Syria.

A subsequent hearing included a heated exchange with Democratic Representative Pramila Jayapal of Washington, who blasted the Trump administration’s efforts to deport anti-Israel foreign student activists.

She raised the case of Tufts University students Rümeyssa Öztürk, who according to her lawyers was detained over an op-ed she wrote for the school newspaper calling to divest from companies with ties to Israel and accusing it of “genocide.” Rubio defended the detention, but did not provide any legal justification for it.

ISRAEL SAYS GAZA AID STARTING DISTRIBUTION THROUGH CONTROVERSIAL NEW MECHANISM

**Gaza Humanitarian Foundation confirms it will hand out supplies Monday
despite resignation of CEO;**

dozens said killed as IDF reports hitting school being used by terror groups

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL [Nava Freiberg](#), [Emanuel Fabian](#), [Jacob Magid](#) [Agencies](#)
and [Tol Staff](#)



People watch as smoke billows following an Israeli strike in Jabalia, in the northern Gaza Strip on May 25, 2025. (Bashar TALEB / AFP)

A controversial aid mechanism backed by Israel and the US and meant to help alleviate rampant hunger in the Gaza Strip began operating Monday, Israel said, as warplanes pounding the enclave killed dozens of people, according to Palestinians.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office confirmed Monday morning that the distribution of assistance under the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation had begun, launching a system that Israel says is meant to keep aid from being diverted to the Hamas terror group.

Meanwhile, Israel's air force said it had launched hundreds of strikes throughout the enclave over the past two days, including hitting a Gaza City school-turned-shelter that it said had been used by Palestinian terror groups. Authorities in the Hamas-controlled enclave reported at least 46 deaths from the Israeli strikes.

With pressure building over humanitarian conditions in the Strip, GHF said in a statement Monday that it would be opening the first of a number of planned distribution points within hours, and aid would reach at least a million Palestinians — about a half of the enclave's population — by the end of the week.

The announcement came hours after foundation CEO Jake Wood abruptly resigned, saying it would be impossible to implement the plan while "strictly adhering to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence."

While technically an American company, GHF was established in close coordination with Israeli authorities. Aid groups and the UN have refused to cooperate with the new initiative, saying it would create even more displacement of the Palestinian population, fail to meet local needs and violate humanitarian principles that prohibit a warring party from controlling humanitarian assistance.

Under the plan, preselected family representatives would be able to pick up boxes of food for their families from a small number of distribution sites in southern Gaza. The zones are secured and operated by private American security contractors, who arrived in the region earlier this month.



Smoke in the Gaza Strip as seen from southern Israel, May 26, 2025. (AP Photo/Ariel Schalit)

There was no immediate comment from the Defense Ministry's Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories, which manages the supply of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

Israel began allowing aid to trickle into the Strip last week, after cutting off deliveries of assistance since early March, when it abandoned a two-month ceasefire that saw an influx of food and other supplies into the Strip.

In recent weeks, experts have warned of a high risk of famine, and even the United States, a staunch ally, has voiced concerns over the hunger crisis.

GHF said Monday morning it was "disappointed" by Wood's departure but would push ahead with the plan, accusing critics of being "afraid that new, creative solutions to intractable problems might actually succeed."

"We will not be deterred. Our trucks are loaded and ready to go. Beginning Monday, May 26, GHF will begin direct aid delivery in Gaza, reaching over one million Palestinians by the end of the week. We plan to scale rapidly to serve the full population in the weeks ahead," GHF said.

GHF was created earlier this year as Israel tried to advance a new mechanism for distributing humanitarian aid in Gaza that would prevent its diversion by Hamas, which Israel accuses of siphoning off aid, hoarding supplies, and selling them to pay its operatives.

Wood, a former Marine and social entrepreneur, before his resignation tried to dispel concerns about the mechanism when he announced that Israel had agreed to GHF's demands to allow for the establishment of

additional distribution sites throughout Gaza and to restart the distribution of aid through existing mechanisms last week until GHF is operational on the ground.



Palestinians gather to fill their containers with water in the Nuseirat camp in the central Gaza Strip on May 24, 2025 (Eyad BABA / AFP)

The decision to allow aid to start flowing again coincided with the start of the IDF's new, major offensive in the Strip dubbed "Gideon's Chariots," the goal of which is to defeat Hamas, pressure the group to release 58 remaining hostages it is holding and retake security control of the Strip.

The military said on Sunday that it aims to occupy 75 percent of the Gaza Strip's territory within two months in the new offensive.

As part of the offensive's opening stages, the military has significantly stepped up its airstrikes across the war-torn enclave, deployed five divisions — or tens of thousands of troops — to the Strip, and is poised to launch a wide-scale ground maneuver.

The Israel Defense Forces said Monday morning that the Air Force had carried out over 200 strikes in the Gaza Strip since Saturday, targeting terror operatives, weapon depots, anti-tank and sniper positions, tunnel shafts, and other infrastructure.



IDF troops operate in the Gaza Strip, in a handout photo published on May 26, 2025.
(Israel Defense Forces)

In southern Gaza, the military said troops struck a building used by Hamas as a weapons depot, an observation post, and another structure used by the terror group. Troops also directed drone strikes on several operatives spotted in buildings near the forces, the IDF says.

In northern Gaza, the IDF said a strike carried out by a fighter jet destroyed a building where members of Hamas's elite Nukhba force were operating.

The army also confirmed hitting "key terrorists" embedded within the Al-Jarjawi School in Gaza City's Daraj neighborhood, which had been converted into a shelter.

Local health officials said at least 31 people were killed in the strike, without specifying if they were civilians or combatants.



An Israeli strike in the Gaza Strip is seen from southern Israel, May 26, 2025. (AP Photo/Ariel Schalit)

The military said the location had been used by Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad as a command center "to plan and gather intelligence in order to carry out terror attacks against Israeli civilians and IDF troops in the area."

The army added that it had taken "many steps" to mitigate civilian harm, including by using a precision munition, aerial surveillance, and other intelligence. Israel blames Hamas for fighting within civilians areas.

Fahmy Awad, head of the Hamas-run Gazan health ministry's emergency service, said the school was hit three times while people slept, setting their belongings ablaze.

Footage circulating online showed rescuers struggling to extinguish fires and recovering charred remains.

Shifa Hospital in Gaza City also reported 15 members of a single family killed in a strike on their home. There was no confirmation of either death toll

Meanwhile, three projectiles were fired from Gaza at southern Israel, the army said Monday morning. Two of the projectiles fell short in Gaza, and the third was intercepted by air defenses before crossing the border.

Sirens did not sound in any border communities amid the attack.

This week will mark 600 days since war was sparked by Hamas's invasion of southern Israel on October 7, 2023, during which some 1,200 people, most of them civilians, were killed and 251 kidnapped into the Strip. Israel says 58 hostages remain in Gaza, at least 38 of whom are believed to be dead.

For more on this topic, please see:



Welcome to The Times of Israel's Daily Briefing, your 20-minute audio update on what's happening in Israel, the Middle East and the Jewish world.

Military reporter Emanuel Fabian joins host Amanda Borschel-Dan for today's episode.

Currently, the IDF holds about 40% of the Gaza Strip. In a briefing yesterday, Fabian learned that the new plan is to almost double those holdings within two months. As of yet, the groundwork is still being laid ahead of a massive ground operation with over 200 airstrikes carried out in the past 48 hours. Fabian explains the procedure the IDF uses to order civilian evacuations ahead of the planned influx of IDF soldiers on the ground.

The first distribution point operated by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation begins operations in the Strip today. This comes as its CEO Jake Wood resigned suddenly last night, saying it was “clear that it is not possible to implement this plan while also strictly adhering to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence.” We hear how the mechanism is being implemented.

Israeli troops stationed at an army post near the Gaza border community of Kissufim on the morning of October 7, 2023, rushed to defend the kibbutz as Hamas terrorists began their terror onslaught. The forces, along with the kibbutz's civil defense squad, managed to fight back against many of the terrorists, preventing them from rampaging throughout the entire community. Fabian takes us through the timeline of the battles from October 7-12, when the final terrorist was eliminated at the kibbutz.

NEW GAZA AID BODY STARTS OPERATING, FACES HAMAS THREATS TOWARD THOSE COOPERATING WITH IT

GHF doesn't reveal how much aid so far delivered, but says amount will increase each day; group names new CEO after previous one resigns due to concerns over Israeli restrictions

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL [Jacob Magid](#) 27 May 2025



Palestinians pick up boxes of humanitarian aid at a distribution site managed by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation on May 26, 2025. (GHF)

The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) said it commenced operations in the Gaza Strip on Monday, delivering truckloads of food to newly established distribution sites, from which the supplies were then distributed to a number of Palestinians.

The announcement followed Hebrew media reports claiming that the US- and Israel-backed GHF did not manage to begin operating in Gaza on Monday as initially planned.

The GHF statement did not specify how much aid was distributed, but it did include photos of a number of Gazans picking up boxes of aid from a distribution site. It said more trucks will be delivered on Tuesday and that the flow of aid will increase each day.

The foundation made a point to condemn what it said have been Hamas death threats against aid groups who have agreed to cooperate with GHF, as well as efforts to block Palestinians from reaching distribution sites.

"It is clear that Hamas is threatened by this new operating model, and will do everything in its power to see it fail," GHF said.

GHF also announced that John Acree has been named its interim executive director, after its previous chief resigned on Sunday and indicated that Israeli restrictions were preventing the initiative from being able to adhere to humanitarian principles.



Palestinians pick up boxes of humanitarian aid at a distribution site managed by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation on May 26, 2025. (GHF)

Acree is a “senior humanitarian practitioner with more than two decades of global field experience in disaster response, stabilization programming, and civil-military coordination,” GHF said.

While technically an American company, GHF was established earlier this year in close coordination with Israeli authorities who felt existing aid distribution mechanisms led by the UN and other international organizations were insufficient in preventing the diversion of aid by Hamas.

Israel wanted to create a small number of distribution sites where pre-selected familial representatives would be able to pick up a heavy box full of food for their families in a zone secured and operated by American private contractors.

GHF still needs support and cooperation from existing humanitarian organizations, as it seeks to gain credibility on the ground. That backing has yet to come, though, with the UN and many other international organizations in Gaza vowing not to cooperate with the GHF, arguing that its aid initiative violates humanitarian principles by requiring Gazans to walk long distances in order to retrieve aid and limiting distribution to southern Gaza, in what would forcibly displace the Palestinian population.

UN officials have also raised concerns that the organization could be used to “weaponize” aid by restricting who is eligible to receive it.

A small number of lesser-known organizations have agreed to cooperate with the GHF thus far, including the US-based aid group Rahma Worldwide, whose logo was seen in the photos of boxes being distributed to Gazans on Monday.



Palestinians transport their belongings as they flee the northern Gaza Strip toward the south, along the coastal al-Rashid road on May 25, 2025. (Omar AL-QATTAA / AFP)

GHF says it is made up of former humanitarian, government and military officials. It has said its distribution points — three in southern Gaza and one in central Gaza — will be guarded by private security firms and that its aid will reach a million Palestinians — around half of Gaza's population — by the end of the week.

Under pressure from allies, Israel began allowing a trickle of humanitarian aid into Gaza last week after blocking all food, medicine, fuel or other goods from entering since March 2. Aid groups have warned of famine and say the aid that has come in is nowhere near enough to meet mounting needs.

Hamas warned Palestinians on Monday not to cooperate with the new aid system, saying it is aimed at furthering those objectives.

Earlier Monday, Hamas executed four men it claimed had looted some of the aid trucks that have begun entering Gaza, according to sources familiar with the incident.

One source said the four were involved in an incident last week in which six security officials were allegedly killed by an Israeli airstrike as they were working to prevent gang members from hijacking aid trucks.

Aid groups have said that deliveries have been hampered by looting, claiming Israel is to blame for creating a situation in which hundreds of thousands of people have been driven to desperation by aid blockade.

Israel has accused Hamas of stealing aid, and says aid needs to be tightly controlled to prevent it from helping the terror group.

Gaza's health ministry said Monday that at least 3,822 people had been killed in the territory since the latest ceasefire collapsed on March 18, taking the war's overall toll to 53,977 — a figure that cannot be verified and does not differentiate between civilians and fighters.

The war broke out on October 7, 2023, when Hamas-led terrorists invaded Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and kidnapping 251. Terror groups in the Gaza Strip are still holding 58 hostages, including 57 of the 251 abducted on October 7.

Agencies contributed to this report.

CROWDS OVERRUN US-BACKED GROUP'S NEW AID DISTRIBUTION SITE IN GAZA



Thousands of Gazans stampede towards a food distribution centre

BBC David Gritten 28 May 2025

Thousands of Palestinians have overrun an aid distribution site in Gaza set up by a controversial US and Israeli-backed group, a day after it began working there.

Videos showed crowds walking over torn-down fences and earth berms at the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation's (GHF) compound in the southern city of Rafah.

The group said that at one point its team fell back because the numbers seeking aid were so great. The Israeli military said troops nearby fired warning shots.

The GHF, which uses armed American security contractors, aims to bypass the UN as the main supplier of aid in Gaza, where experts have warned of a looming famine after an 11-week Israeli blockade that was recently eased.

The UN said the videos from Rafah were "heartbreaking" and that it had a detailed plan ready to get enough aid to the "desperate population" of 2.1 million.

The UN and many aid groups have refused to co-operate with GHF's plans, which they say contradict humanitarian principles and appear to "weaponise aid".

They have warned that the system will practically exclude those with mobility issues, force further displacement, expose thousands of people to harm, make aid conditional on political and military aims, and set an unacceptable precedent for aid delivery around the world.

Israel has said an alternative to the current aid system is needed to stop Hamas stealing aid, which the group denies doing.

The GHF said it had given out the equivalent of 462,000 meals through a partnership with local non-governmental organisations.

However, it added Palestinians had experienced several hours of delays in accessing one site "due to blockades imposed by Hamas", without providing evidence.

US President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio support "bold" and "out-of-the-box efforts" to make life better for the people of Gaza, said a senior Trump administration official.

On Tuesday afternoon, Israeli and Palestinian media shared videos showing thousands of men, women and children streaming into one of the distribution sites. In one clip, some people are seen running and ducking as what appear to be gunshots ring out.

Witnesses described a scene of chaos as people seized food parcels and other aid. They also said Israeli troops stationed nearby had opened fire.

"The situation was extremely difficult. They only allowed 50 people to cross at a time," one man told BBC Arabic's Middle East daily radio programme. "In the end, chaos broke out - people climbed over the gates, attacked others, and took all the [aid]."

"It was a humiliating experience," he added.

A woman said "people are exhausted - willing to do anything, even risk their lives - just to find food and feed their children."

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said its troops had fired "warning shots in the area outside the compound".

"Control over the situation was established, food distribution operations are expected to continue as planned, and the safety of IDF troops was not compromised," it stated.

Gaza's Hamas-run Government Media Office said Israel's efforts to distribute aid had "failed miserably". It also denied that Hamas had tried to stop civilians reaching the GHF's sites.

At a news conference in New York, UN spokesman Stéphane Dujarric called the footage "heartbreaking".

"We and our partners have a detailed, principled, operationally sound plan supported by member states to get aid to a desperate population. We continue to stress that a meaningful scale-up of humanitarian operations is essential to stave off famine and meet the needs of all civilians wherever they are," he added.

The US state department's spokeswoman called the UN's criticism "the height of hypocrisy".

"It is unfortunate, because the issue here is giving aid to Gaza, and then suddenly it moves into complaints about style or the nature of who's doing it," Tammy Bruce told reporters.

Challenged by the BBC about the independence and neutrality of the GHF, Bruce acknowledged there are "some disagreements" about how the distribution of food and aid into the region is "being implemented".

But she added: "I think that most of us would agree that this is good news... the real story here is that there's food aid going in."



The GHF aims to feed a million people, just under half the population of Gaza, by the end of this week
Reuters

The GHF sites are meant to be secured by American contractors, with Israeli troops patrolling the perimeters. To access them, Palestinians are expected to have to undergo identity checks and screening for involvement with Hamas.

UN and other aid agencies have insisted they will not co-operate with any scheme that fails to respect fundamental humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality.

On Sunday night, **Jake Wood resigned as the GHF's executive director**, saying the group's system could not work in a way that would be able to fulfil those principles.

The GHF's board rejected the criticism and accused "those who benefit from the status quo" of being more focused on "tearing this apart than on getting aid in".

The group also alleged on Monday that Hamas had made death threats to NGOs supporting its distribution sites and attempted to block civilians from accessing the aid.

Hamas has publicly warned Palestinians not to co-operate with GHF's system.

Israel imposed a total blockade on humanitarian aid and commercial supplies to Gaza on 2 March and resumed its military offensive two weeks later, ending a two-month ceasefire with Hamas. It said the steps were meant to put pressure on the armed group to release the 58 hostages still held in Gaza, up to 23 of whom are believed to be alive.

On 19 May, the Israeli military launched an expanded offensive that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said would see troops "take control of all areas" of Gaza. The plan reportedly includes completely clearing the north of civilians and forcibly displacing them to the south.

Netanyahu also said Israel would temporarily ease the blockade and allow a "basic" amount of food into Gaza to prevent a famine, following pressure from allies in the US.

Since then, Israeli authorities say they have allowed at least 665 lorry loads of humanitarian aid, including flour, baby food and medical supplies, into Gaza.

However, more than 400 loads were on the Gazan side of the Kerem Shalom crossing awaiting distribution by the UN as of Tuesday evening, according to the Israeli military body in charge of aid co-ordination, Cogat. It called on the UN to "do its job".

There was no immediate comment from the UN, but it said last week that its teams faced significant challenges in collecting supplies due to insecurity, the risk of looting and co-ordination issues with Israeli forces.

Half a million people face starvation in the coming months, according to an assessment by the UN-backed Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC).

Israel launched a military campaign in Gaza in response Hamas' cross-border attack on 7 October 2023, in which about 1,200 people were killed and 251 others were taken hostage.

At least 54,056 people have been killed in Gaza since then, including 3,901 over the past 10 weeks, according to the territory's Hamas-run health ministry.

WHO'S SHOOTING WHOM NEAR RAFAH'S AID CENTER, AND WHO'S EXPLOITING THE BLOODSHED

Trying to pierce the fog of war has been spectacularly difficult ever since Hamas triggered almost 20 months of conflict. Israeli defeatism on the second battlefield isn't helping

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [David Horovitz](#) 4 June 2025



Palestinians return from a food distribution center in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on June 1, 2025.

(Photo by AFP)

This Editor's Note was sent out earlier Wednesday in Tol's weekly update email to members of the Times of Israel Community. To receive these Editor's Notes as they're released, join the Tol Community [here](#).

On three successive days this week, Hamas alleged that Israeli troops opened fire at and near the newly established US- and Israel-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation's aid distribution center in Rafah.

On Sunday, the terror group charged that 31 Gazans were killed by Israel, on Monday that the death toll was 3, and on Tuesday that 27 were killed. The way Hamas depicted it, and much of the world reported it, Israel was brutally gunning down Gaza civilians who were desperately seeking access to vital food supplies.

The International Committee of the Red Cross, a relatively credible source of medical information, said its field hospital in Rafah handled a mass casualty influx of 179 cases on [Sunday](#), most of whom had gunshot

and shrapnel wounds, and 21 were declared dead on arrival. All patients, it noted, said they had been trying to reach the aid site. On [Tuesday](#), the ICRC reported another mass casualty incident, of 184 patients, 19 of whom were dead on arrival and another eight of whom died soon after. It does not appear to have issued a separate announcement on Monday, but its Tuesday statement referred to four mass casualty incidents in the previous 96 hours. Unlike Hamas, the Red Cross statements did not issue allegations of responsibility for the deaths and injuries.

The Israel Defense Forces has said it fired what it described as warning shots in the area of the aid center — about a kilometer away on Sunday and Monday, it said, and 500 meters away on Tuesday. It has acknowledged that its fire hit an unspecified number of people, but has not acknowledged killing anybody.

At a Tuesday evening televised press conference, IDF Spokesman Effie Defrin said [Hamas's figures were "exaggerated."](#) Relating to Tuesday's incident, Defrin said "warning shots were fired" at suspects "who posed a threat to our forces, far from where they were supposed to be." The shots were aimed so as "not to hit anyone," he said.

ASSIDUOUS MISREPRESENTATION MEETS INSISTENT INCOMPETENCE

Trying to pierce the fog of war and make sense of conflicting unverifiable claims has been spectacularly difficult ever since Hamas triggered almost 20 months of conflict with its unprovoked invasion of Israel, from territory it fully controlled, slaughtered 1,200 people for the crime of living in Israel, and abducted 251, of whom it still holds 57 captive.

For more on this theme, see this podcast conversation:

Hamas had spent years turning Gaza into a terror state, its war machine deliberately constructed to utilize Gaza's civilians as cover — their homes booby-trapped, mosques used as missile and arms depots, schools repurposed as command centers and tunnel access points, hospitals abused as hideouts with Hamas chiefs seeking to evade capture in warrens beneath them. For 20 months, Hamas has worked assiduously to misrepresent Israel as a capricious aggressor viciously targeting the Gazans that the terror chiefs have carefully ensured would find themselves in harm's way.

Its depiction of Israeli forces cynically killing Gazans desperately seeking food this week has been one of its many tragic successes on this second battlefield — the war for global public, diplomatic and legal legitimacy and support. It's a battlefield on which official Israel has for decades simply declined to deploy — refusing to allocate resources, to hire and train skilled personnel, to formulate a strategic approach — but never with such dire and abiding consequences as since October 7, 2023.

It is not definitively clear who killed the 61 Gazans Hamas alleges were shot this week at and near the Rafah aid center. It is not definitively clear that 61 Gazans were killed at all. It is not definitively clear who they were. Noncombatant men, women and children? Hamas and other gunmen killed in that area or elsewhere? Victims of Hamas gunfire? (It has been reported that Hamas has set up checkpoints and tried to stop Gazans from reaching aid centers. And the IDF on [Sunday published footage](#) it said showed gunmen opening fire at Gazans seeking to collect looted humanitarian aid in Khan Younis.)



Screenshot from IDF-published footage it says shows gunmen opening fire at Gazans seeking to collect looted humanitarian aid in Khan Younis, June 1, 2025 (IDF)

It should be manifestly clear, however, that Israel has no interest in deliberately gunning down Gaza noncombatants approaching an aid center set up with Israel and American backing. Hamas, by contrast, has every interest in seeking to doom the aid project, which threatens its hold on Gaza aid, and constitutes an alternative to the trucks of supplies it has routinely commandeered, and either used for its forces or sold off to helpless Gazans to finance its efforts to recruit and revive. The trouble is that Israel does not maintain the mechanisms necessary to make very much at all manifestly clear.

Defrin, new to the post from which his broadly effective predecessor Daniel Hagari was essentially removed, defended the IDF's failure to respond in anything close to real time to the daily global-headline-making Hamas-led allegations of Israeli mass murder by stressing that the IDF needs to investigate extensively before issuing specific responses to immensely sensitive accusations. The IDF has indeed lost credibility with hurried responses it was subsequently forced to correct regarding incidents such as the [March killing of medics](#) in a convoy in southern Gaza.

An effective civilian public diplomacy mechanism, however, would at least be capable of immediately explaining the context in which allegation and counter-allegation are hurled. Except that Israel refuses to properly task and staff such a hierarchy. According to the former head of the Public Diplomacy Directorate at the Prime Minister's Office, Gadi Ezra, who left the post when the current government took office, the cabinet has not held a single meeting to discuss its public diplomacy strategy. Hundreds of millions of shekels were recently allocated to the Foreign Ministry for some kind of media room; it does not provide any kind of real-time response to unfolding events.

Official Israeli defeatism — and that's what it is, defeatism — in the battle for world opinion is unforgivable. Competent public diplomacy would not shift the needle from one side to the other. It would nudge it a little, however, and give those who are minded to delve into the cause and effect of this conflict a basis for doing so.

POLITICAL EXTREMISM

Global judgments of right and wrong, aggressor and victim, however, are also affected by the declared policy governing the conduct of the war.

The IDF has stated that it is seeking to raise its hold on Gaza to 75% in the next few weeks, and push Gazans into limited largely coastal areas in the south, center and north of the Strip. But the IDF's Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir has also said that it seeks to keep the war as short as possible in attaining victory — which he defined last week as returning the hostages, defeating Hamas and dismantling its rule. This is “[not an endless war](#),” he insisted.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, however, says the war will not end until US President Donald Trump's vision for the relocation of all Gazans is carried out. And far-right ministers Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben Gvir are avowedly bent on Israel permanently reoccupying and resettling a Gaza emptied of its Palestinian populace.

An [initial IDF probe](#) into Tuesday's shootings reportedly has found that Palestinians heading to the aid center “got lost” en route to the distribution point, approached IDF soldiers, and were fired on when they failed to retreat. Other indications, some of which have been confirmed in military briefings, are that troops fired this week at what the IDF has called “suspects” who headed to the center before it was open and/or approached it from outside the designated safe route. Gaza, of course, is a war zone, and the IDF is charged with the highly complex task of protecting the aid distribution centers from deadly Hamas attack, protecting the intended aid recipients from Hamas, and ensuring the safety of its own troops — four of whom have been killed by Hamas elsewhere in the strip this week.

The fog of this particular juncture of the war would be cleared a little were the IDF to enable access for independent reporters to the new aid operation. But, as throughout this conflict, the IDF thinks it has more to lose via the risk of local or international war reporters getting killed or injured in Gaza than it has to gain from enabling independent reporting there.

Declining to provide access, failing to provide detailed real-time information and context on fast-changing and deadly events, and with its inadequate responses undermined by its own ministers' radical policy goals for Gaza, Israel is failing itself and its would-be supporters on the second battlefield even as it continues to struggle to eliminate the Hamas threat on the first.

On Wednesday, the Gaza Humanitarian Federation [suspended its operations](#) for the day, to enable a logistical overhaul that aims to ensure it can handle the larger-than-expected crowds and coordinate more effective security procedures with the IDF — essentially to prevent the recurrence of whatever exactly has been happening this week. Hopefully, the one-day pause will enable an effective reset.

It will take a lot more than a day to resuscitate Israel's public diplomacy, however, and there remains absolutely no sign that the government intends to embark on any such effort.

And worst of all, in this terrible, Hamas-sparked war, Israel's cause and legitimacy are continually and deeply harmed by the empty-and-occupy Gaza goals of two coalition parties whose agenda dominates government policy.

6

PART 14

EDUCATION

AS GAZANS RETURN TO SCHOOL, STUDY FINDS THEIR PA TEXTBOOKS STILL RIFE WITH INCITEMENT

Despite pledge by Ramallah to revise curriculum, materials provided to Gazans continue to glorify martyrdom, feature antisemitic rhetoric in subjects from history to math, watchdog says

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Nurit Yohanan](#) 27 March 2025,



A teacher in Al-Nasr Elementary School in Gaza City stands next to a chalkboard with text that reads, "You are the Toufan" (the flood), a reference to the al-Aqsa Flood, Hamas's name for the October 7, 2023, massacre in Israel, February 23, 2025. (Omar AL-QATTAA / AFP)

For nearly a year after war broke out in Gaza, following Hamas's October 7, 2023, invasion and slaughter in southern Israel, the Strip's approximately 625,000 school-aged children were left with almost no formal education.

To address the lack of schooling, the Palestinian Authority's Education Ministry rolled out a series of online textbooks tailored to Gazan students on September 15, 2024, largely made up of condensed versions of educational material previously distributed in the Strip.

According to the PA, whose textbooks are used by most Gaza schools, including many run by UNRWA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine), the materials focus on "essential subjects and fundamental concepts."

But a new [report](#) by an Israeli- and UK-based watchdog group that monitors educational content for extremist content found that the books also include antisemitic rhetoric, promote jihad and martyrdom, and have materials that dehumanize Israelis, incorporated into everything from literature to math.

"Palestinian classrooms remain a breeding ground for extremism, with new educational materials reinforcing the same old dangerous narratives," said Marcus Sheff, who heads the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education, known by the acronym IMPACT-se.

In February, the PA said that 290,000 Gazan students had logged into the remote education system over the previous months using a unique ID.



Palestinian children sit and wait next to water cans at a school-turned-shelter in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip on February 4, 2025. (Omar AL-QATTAA / AFP)

That same month, amid a ceasefire between Israel and the Hamas terror group, some in-person schooling returned, largely in facilities that survived the war or in displacement camps or schools established with money from Arab countries. The schools were instructed by the PA Education Ministry to continue using the materials in printed form.

The continued use of texts deemed problematic raises questions about the PA's promises to reform its educational curriculum in the face of repeated complaints from European donor countries over the content of textbooks and other teaching materials, many of which have been flagged by IMPACT-se in the past.

In July, the European Union announced that it would provide the PA with €400 million in grants and loans to help cover fiscal shortfalls, “subject to progress in the implementation of the reform agenda of the Palestinian Authority.”

Among the reforms listed [in a letter of intent](#) signed by EU and PA representatives is “modernization of the curriculum.” But no such reforms have taken place, according to the IMPACT-se report.



أطفال فلسطين

إبراهيم الفاني

أنا شبلٌ أنا زهرة
وَهَبْنَا الرُّوحَ لِلثَّوْرَةِ
بَنَى أَجْدَادُنَا دَوْرًا
لَنَا فِي أَرْضِنَا الْحُرَّةِ

A poem in a textbook for Grade 2 praising children who “carry the flame of the revolution” to Haifa, Jaffa and Jerusalem. (courtesy IMPACT-se)

“This moment was the acid test for the Palestinian Authority. It signed an agreement with the European Union committing to reform its curriculum. Instead, we see once again that the PA continues to embed hatred and violence in its curriculum,” said Sheff.

In September, Abdul Hakim Abu Jamous, a senior PA education official told the Palestinian Al-Quds newspaper that Ramallah had never agreed to the EU’s demands for the curriculum. “The PA Ministry of Education is fully committed to preserving the independence of the Palestinian curriculum, and works according to standards that ensure that students’ needs are met, without any external pressures,” he said.

The EU said in November that €389 million of the package had been disbursed. The European Commissioner for the Mediterranean, Dubravka Šuica, recently announced that a high-level EU–PA dialogue on “reform achievements” is scheduled for Brussels in April.

An official source in the European Union told the Times of Israel this week: “The Palestinian Authority has committed to undertaking substantial and credible reforms, inter alia, reforming the education curriculum. The issue of the reform of the education curricula is covered in the action plan developed by the PA and consequently will be addressed also as part of the EU multi-year program. The PA is committed to carrying out a comprehensive curriculum reform to ensure full compliance of all education material with UNESCO standards of peace, tolerance, coexistence and non-violence.”

EDUCATION TO MARTYRDOM IN MATH CLASSES

Among the passages flagged by IMPACT-se is an 11th-grade history text that claims Zionists “used false claims” to justify their connection to the land while establishing a “Zionist settlement in Palestine.”

These “false claims” include “first, that Jews, despite belonging to various countries and societies, represent a single national group characterized by Semitic ethnic traits... and that there is no solution to the Jewish problem other than the establishment of a Jewish state in the Promised Land (Palestine).”

It also refers to the Jewish settlement of the land as “Zionist colonialism... in Palestine.”



A map of the Arab world in a Grade 11 Geography textbook. (courtesy IMPACT-SE)

Educational material for 12th graders on Islam includes a religious text interpreting the Quran that portrays Jews as liars and deceivers. A discussion question asks whether a warning about resisting “the temptation of enemies” refers only to Jews.

According to IMPACT-se, the textbooks glorify martyrdom and violence, including a first-grade reading exercise that uses the word “shahid,” or martyr, to teach an Arabic letter. In a second-grade Arabic textbook, a poem tells of a boy and girl pledging to “carry the flame of the revolution,” as they go from Haifa to Jaffa to Jerusalem’s Al-Aqsa mosque.

An 11th-grade reading exercise includes “Martyrs of the Intifada” by Palestinian poet Fadwa Tuqan, which praises stone-throwers during the First Intifada. An 11th-grade history textbook describes the high Palestinian death toll in the First Intifada as “fuel that powered the uprising.”

“The blood of every martyr gave the Intifada the strength to continue,” the text reads.



Archive: Clashes in Ramallah during the first intifada (Nati Shohat/Flash90)

The glorification of jihad and martyrdom extends even into arithmetic, IMPACT-se found. Fourth and ninth-grade math textbooks include problems requiring students to calculate the number of martyrs killed over a given period.

Meanwhile, at least three maps found in the textbooks omit Israel, instead terming the area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River as Palestine. An 11th-grade map also refers to 1988 as the year that Palestine was founded, referring to the Palestine Liberation Organization’s largely nugatory declaration of independence that year.

GLORIFICATION OF THE WAR ON THE CLASS CHALKBOARD

Beyond the online textbooks, the IMPACT-se report claimed to find images and videos from schools that opened since February in which students are exposed to materials and other content inciting violence against Jews or Israel.

According to Mahmoud Matar, the PA Education Ministry’s representative in Gaza, 93% of all schools in the Strip were destroyed in the fighting that was sparked on October 7, 2023, with Hamas’s deadly invasion of southern Israel.

But in February, as a ceasefire took hold, the PA announced that it was opening 680 learning centers across the Strip. To cope with demand, students must attend in shifts, going for a limited number of hours a few days a week.

In Khan Younis, students celebrated a school's opening shortly after the start of a ceasefire by staging a dance to a song glorifying Palestinian resistance, with moves mimicking throats being slit and rocks being thrown, [according to video](#) shared online.



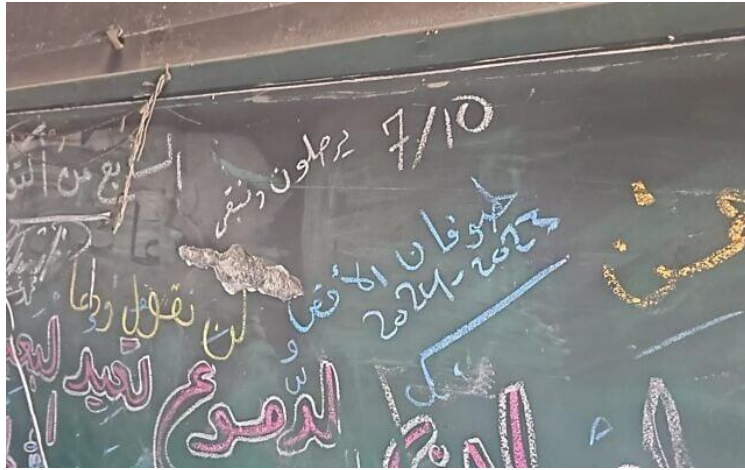
Students dancing in Al-Safa wal-Marwa School in Khan Younis, crossing their hands – a common symbol of resistance (left) and slitting the throat (right image) with their hands, December 2024, Instagram
(Used in Accordance with Clause 27a of the Copyright Law)

In Gaza City's al-Nasr Elementary, a photo shows a poem written on a blackboard with text glorifying Palestinian perseverance amid the war. "You are the flood," it reads, in direct reference to the al-Aqsa Flood, Hamas's name for the October 7 massacre, during which thousands of terrorists stormed into southern communities, killing 1,200 people — mostly civilians — and kidnapping 251 more, while carrying out brutal atrocities like rape and torture.

Footage examined by IMPACT-se also showed that many schools were continuing to use older textbooks, which also contain incitement to violence and terrorism. The books are also used in 130 temporary learning centers for approximately 50,000 students opened by UNRWA in early March.

In one video, 12th graders are seen learning from a textbook featuring a passage in which a father instructs his son to return to Haifa, even through violence.

Students in an 11th-grade classroom are seen in a photo holding a history textbook that describes the September 11, 2001 attacks as "an excuse for the United States to avoid its commitments and impose its priorities on the world, turning it into a global policeman."



A chalkboard with statements written by terrorists praising the October 7, 2023 massacre by Hamas, in a school in Jabaliya, northern Gaza, in an image released on October 17, 2024. (Israel Defense Forces)

UNRWA, which has long used the PA's textbooks and educated around half of Gaza's students before the war, did not respond to a request for a comment.

"Palestinian classrooms remain a breeding ground for extremism, with new educational materials reinforcing the same old dangerous narratives," Sheff said.

THE ROOTS OF HAMAS' TERROR ATTACK CAN BE FOUND IN GAZA'S SCHOOLS

A generation of children have been taught to hate from antisemitic textbooks

FORWARD **Steve Israel** **October 25 2023**

At the core of the tragedy unfolding in Gaza is a question: When Israel withdrew from the coastal Palestinian enclave in 2005, why did the romantic vision of it as a place that would function as a fit home for its citizens turn into the hellish reality of a failed state run by a terrorist organization? The easy and popular theories — a military blockade by Israel, a civil war between Palestinian political factions — miss a fundamental point. The roots of this generation of Hamas terrorism resides in ideas fomented in Gaza's education system for decades.

While serving in Congress between 2001 and 2017, I studied what goes on in Palestinian schools. I reviewed their textbooks, met with educators and diplomats, and introduced legislation and amendments compelling the Department of State to monitor antisemitism in foreign classrooms. I saw firsthand that a generation of Palestinian children were being taught at an early age to reject living peacefully with Israel. They read about it in their schoolbooks and heard about it from their teachers. They were raised on a steady curriculum of violent rejectionism. My colleagues and I in Congress were unable to change that reality.

Now, as the world reels from the devastation of Hamas' terrorism, understanding how Palestinian children are taught is essential to any discussion of the future in the region.

A startling [47%](#) of the population in Gaza is under 18. A European human rights group recently reported that [91%](#) of these children “suffer from some form of conflict-related trauma,” having grown up in impoverished, unsafe conditions and lived through multiple devastating rounds of warfare with Israel. This is a recipe for radicalization, supercharged by the fact that Hamas has sought to directly cultivate antisemitic attitudes in its education system.

The children of Gaza have [three](#) education options: Those classified as refugees attend schools run by the United Nations Reliefs and Works Agency. Most others attend schools run by Hamas, the de-facto governors of Gaza. And there are a handful of private schools.

A 2013 [New York Times article](#) said that Gaza schools run by Hamas and the U.N. both use the Palestinian Authority curriculum that is also taught throughout the West Bank, but that “Hamas has added programs, like a military training elective” and other teachings to “infuse the next generation with its militant ideology.”

This curriculum “includes references to the Jewish Torah and Talmud as ‘fabricated,’” the *Times* reported, and a description of Zionism as a racist movement whose goals include driving Arabs out of the entire area between the Nile in Africa and the Euphrates in Iraq, Syria and Turkey.”

This is a curriculum designed to indoctrinate and radicalize its students in support of Hamas' terrorist aims.

Even the comparatively moderate Palestinian Authority textbooks are problematic. In 2020, the European Union's Parliament [adopted three resolutions](#) condemning the authority “for continuing to teach hate and violence in its school textbooks,” following a [study](#) confirming incitement in the curriculum. To teach physics, a textbook showed students “a picture of Palestinians hitting Israeli soldiers with slingshots,” the study found, while another “promotes a conspiracy theory that Israel removed the original stones of ancient sites in Jerusalem and replaced them with ones bearing Zionist drawings and shapes.”

[UNRWA schools](#) in Gaza, too, are replete with antisemitism. A 2018 [article in *The Times of Israel*](#) cited examples including the lionization of Dalal al-Mughrabi, who led a 1978 attack on a bus in Tel Aviv that killed more than 30 people, as a “heroine and martyr of Palestine,” and the description of the victims of an attack in Psagot, a settlement in the occupied West Bank, as “a barbecue party.”

When I hear Israeli survivors of the massacre describe the sheer hate and absence of humanity in the eyes of their attackers, I'm unsurprised. Those eyes were forced open to a false, hate-filled view of Jews for years.

Now, the children of Gaza — who have grown up in poverty, lost family members due to the ongoing violence, and been taught to hate the Jewish people — will be tasked with rising from the ashes of a brutal war triggered by Hamas' indiscriminate murder of innocent Israeli civilians. Hamas has failed all of Gaza, yet those who have suffered most are the children.

Israel, the United States and other regional partners must work to build a better future for these children. That means an education system that abolishes hate from its curriculum. That means a government that teaches children how to build, not blow up. That means free and fair elections.

That means an end to Hamas' reign of terror, and schools that do not teach students to hate their neighbors.

Related

- [Opinion:An Israeli airstrike just destroyed my family home in Gaza. I refuse to be consumed by hate and revenge](#)
- [Opinion:Hamas is guilty of inhuman violence. What about the Palestinians who cheered them on?](#)

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CHILDREN IN GAZA DEFY TRAUMA TO RETURN TO SCHOOL

CONTEXT [Nazih Osseiran](#) March 17, 2025



Palestinian children queue at a damaged school, amid a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, in Gaza City, February 25, 2025. REUTERS/Dawoud Abu Alkas

WHAT'S THE CONTEXT?

Some Palestinian children have returned to class in Gaza, but the fragile ceasefire and destruction of schools threaten education.

- More than 150,000 students in Gaza return to classrooms
- Israel blockade stymies efforts to reopen schools
- Around 95% of schools damaged and rebuilding stalled

BEIRUT - Children have returned to school in Gaza, taking classes in tents or in the rubble of schools where families sheltered during the war, but trauma, aid blockades and the threat of more fighting could derail their drive to learn.

At least 14,500 children were [killed](#) in the war and thousands wounded, according to UNICEF. More than [400 teachers](#) were also killed, the U.N. says, and now most of Gaza's children need mental health [support for trauma](#), aid agencies say.

Children are not necessarily just picking up from where they left off when the war began on Oct. 7, 2023, "because of all the learning loss and the deep psychological impact of the war," said Kate McLennan, Middle East regional advisor on education at rights group War Child.

"There is also trauma attached to schools, which are generally understood as places of learning and safety and where you go to play with your friends (but have) been used as shelters," she said.

"So, there is that alternative use of a school which has a psychological impact on children."

A fragile truce was declared between militant group Hamas and Israel in January and as of March 3, more than 150,000 students had [enrolled in 165 government schools](#), with over 7,000 teachers mobilised, the U.N. said, citing the Education Ministry in Gaza.

But the challenges are huge.

More than 658,000 school-aged children [do not have access](#) to formal education and almost 95% of school buildings have been damaged by Israeli strikes and fighting with 88% of them needing major reconstruction, said a report by the Occupied Palestinian Territory Education Cluster, which includes U.N. agencies and other international aid groups.

Desks and chairs have been pulverised and [teaching materials destroyed](#) while reconstruction has been delayed by aid blockades by Israel.

The blockades have impeded efforts to establish more learning spaces and rebuild damaged schools, said Alun McDonald, head of media and external relations at Islamic Relief, a British-based charity.

"Hundreds of large tents that were meant to be used for temporary learning spaces have been blocked from entering (Gaza), even during the ceasefire period," McDonald said.

The head of the Palestinian relief agency (UNRWA) has warned there could be another hunger crisis if the [blockades continue](#). Israel says the blockades are designed to pressure Hamas in ceasefire talks.

"Children can't learn when they are being starved and bombed," McDonald said. "Getting children back into school is an urgent priority, but the challenges are absolutely massive."

LEARNING IMPEDED BY TRAUMA

The war was triggered when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, triggering an Israeli offensive into the Gaza Strip that has killed more than 48,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza health officials.

Hamas militants [killed 1,200](#) people and took 251 hostages, according to Israeli tallies.

This month Israel stopped deliveries of food, medicine and fuel into Gaza and cut electricity supply in a bid to [pressure Hamas](#). Aid agencies said the power cut could threaten clean water supplies.

Around 32,000 students have registered to take their final high school exams, according to the U.N., but there is a lack of tablets, internet access and charging stations to facilitate the process.

There is also a shortage of large tents and recreational and psycho-social kits to help students learn because of restrictions on aid, including the blocking of 10 pre-approved trucks carrying basic [education supplies](#) in February, U.N. agencies said.

But it is not just the physical damage and shortages that are holding children back.

"One of the things that we know from our work in all conflict and post-conflict and development contexts is that the psychological trauma and the psychosocial support needs of children are so high that it's related to brain development as well," said McLennan.

"The academic content is not going to stick if the conditions of the brain are not ready to ... deal with that," she said.

A study by academics and UNRWA last year said the war could set the education of children in Gaza back by [up to five years](#).

"The lost education will affect an entire generation of children in Gaza for the rest of their lives," McDonald said.

(Reporting by Nazih Osseiran; Editing by Jon Hemming)

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EDUCATION FOR TERRORISM IN PALESTINIAN SCHOOLS: 2023 ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

IMPACT-se NOVEMBER 2023

INTRODUCTION

The Palestinian Authority (PA) curriculum is the core curriculum taught in Palestinian schools throughout the Gaza Strip, West Bank and East Jerusalem. The curriculum was published in 2016, and marked the first full restructuring of the Palestinian curriculum since 2000, following the Oslo Accords. Previously, schoolchildren in the West Bank and East Jerusalem were taught the Jordanian curriculum, while students in Gaza used Egyptian textbooks. There were expectations that the new PA curriculum would be more moderate as compared to previous curricula taught between 2000 and 2016. IMPACT-se research into the new curriculum, which has examined the entire corpus of over 1000 textbooks published since September 2016, has demonstrated that the reformed curriculum has moved further away from meeting UNESCO standards on educating for peace and tolerance. The newly published textbooks were found to be more radical than those previously published. They incorporate a systematic insertion of violence, martyrdom, and jihad across all grades and subjects. Extreme nationalism and Islamist ideologies are widespread throughout the curriculum, including in science and math textbooks. The possibility of peace with Israel is rejected. Any historical Jewish presence in the modern-day territories of Israel and the PA is entirely omitted from the textbooks. The overall and unmistakable message which permeates the current PA curriculum is a future filled with hatred, conflict and violence. This stands in stark contrast with the hopes of the international community for a future of peace and coexistence. This report highlights the dissonance between these two visions. While the civilized world has reacted with horror to the atrocities committed by terrorists on 7 October, who massacred around 1,400 Israelis – mainly civilians – as documented in this report, at least 11 schools in the West Bank which are operated by the PA have openly and publicly celebrated the massacre. The aim of this report is to provide a cursory look into attitudes in Palestinian schools in the immediate aftermath of the October 7 Hamas attacks on Israel. As the war is ongoing and areas of the Palestinian Territories are in turmoil, the examination of social media accounts remains one of the most instructive methods to obtain an up-to-date picture of how Palestinian schools are responding, in the face of what is one of the worst atrocities in the hundred-year history of the conflict. For this purpose, official Facebook accounts of Palestinian schools have been monitored for inflammatory content posted during or after October 7, 2023. The following is a representative sample of the official Facebook accounts of 11 Palestinian schools. Schools were selected to cover as diverse a sample as possible, and include 8 schools run by the Palestinian Authority (PA) in six different governorates (districts) of the West Bank – one private West Bank school, one UNRWA-run West Bank school, and one Hamas-run Gaza 2 Strip school. The report includes elementary, middle and high schools; it also incorporates schools for each gender, as well as mixed-gender schools. The sample is by no means exhaustive, although it should be noted that most Gaza Strip schools have halted their social media activity following the October 7 attack. For each

school, at least one example of inflammatory or hateful content uploaded to social media is provided, as well as details of the school and a link to its official account. Some schools, which have exhibited unusually inflammatory activity prior to October 7, are also noted. The resulting picture is disturbing. It appears that many schools across the Palestinian Territories have seized the opportunity of the October 7 attacks to celebrate the massacre, glorifying Hamas terrorists and lauding their bravery and sacrifice. The imagery of gliders, used by Hamas militants to carry out the atrocity, is specifically invoked in some instances, including a social media post from one school showing second-grade students coloring in drawings which depicted Hamas terrorists on gliders, made by their art teacher, featuring the words “Glorious Gaza.” Many schools also took this opportunity to disseminate expressly antisemitic messages in the days after the Hamas attack, wishing for God to “punish the Jews” or calling the Jews “prophet killers” in the tradition of antisemitic deicide accusations, and asking fourth-graders to sing lyrics to the song “Our al-Aqsa” which included the words “place a dagger on your waist,” and “water us with martyrdom.” In addition, many schools chose to escalate and inflame the school environment in wartime, by having students express graphic imagery in speech, drawing or theatrical play, encouraging them to depict blood, gore and death, and generally exposing them to decidedly age-inappropriate material, all with no other purpose than to maximize hate for Jews and Israelis, and possibly incite Palestinian society to action. These findings indicate that the next generation of Palestinians are being desensitized to violence and death, to see Jews and Israelis as inhuman creatures, and to perceive their own death in battle as an utmost goal. In light of this, one cannot escape the conclusion that should the status quo of Palestinian education continue, the next atrocity is all but assured.

Click on link below

[Official Social Media Accounts of Palestinian Schools since October 7](#) SELECTION OF TARGETS BY ISRAELI LAND AND AIRFORCE

PART 15

ANTISEMITISM

WHAT IS ANTISEMITISM?

CAMPAIGN AGAINST ANTISEMITISM

WHAT IS ANTISEMITISM?

In 2005, the EU Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), now the [EU Agency for Fundamental Rights](#) (FRA), adopted a “working definition of antisemitism” which has become the standard definition used around the world, including by the [European Parliament](#), the [UK College of Policing](#), the [US Department of State](#), the [US Senate](#), and the 31 countries comprising the [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance](#). In 2016, the powerful [House of Commons Home Affairs Committee](#) joined Campaign Against Antisemitism’s longstanding call for the British government and its agencies, as well as all political parties, to formally adopt the International Definition of Antisemitism, following which the [British Government](#) formally adopted the definition. Campaign Against Antisemitism also uses the International Definition of Antisemitism.

INTERNATIONAL DEFINITION OF ANTISEMITISM

Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

Manifestations might include the targeting of the State of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that levelled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic. Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for “why things go wrong.” It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits.

Contemporary examples of antisemitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere could, taking into account the overall context, include, but are not limited to:

- Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.
- Making mendacious, dehumanising, demonising, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective — such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions.
- Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.
- Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g. gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust).

- Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.
- Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.
- Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination (e.g. by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour).
- Applying double standards by requiring of Israel a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.
- Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g. claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterise Israel or Israelis.
- Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.
- Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the State of Israel.

EXPERT LEGAL OPINION ON ADOPTING THE DEFINITION

In July 2017, Campaign Against Antisemitism published the opinion of expert counsel on the adoption of the International Definition of Antisemitism. David Wolfson QC and Jeremy Brier, who acted for Campaign Against Antisemitism *pro bono*, drew up the nine-page opinion. The opinion includes a detailed assessment of the definition itself, considers the application of the definition in difficult cases, and contains useful advice for politicians and public bodies (such as universities) which are considering using the definition.

The opinion states that: “The Definition is a clear, meaningful and workable definition. The Definition is an important development in terms of identifying and preventing antisemitism, in particular in its modern and non-traditional forms, which often reach beyond simple expressions of hatred for Jews and instead refer to Jewish people and Jewish associations in highly derogatory, veiled terms (e.g. ‘Zio’ or ‘Rothschilds’). Public bodies in the United Kingdom are not ‘at risk’ in using this Definition. Indeed, this Definition should be used by public bodies on the basis that it will ensure that the identification of antisemitism is clear, fair and accurate. Criticism of Israel, even in robust terms, cannot be regarded as antisemitic *per se* and such criticism is not captured by the Definition. However, criticisms of Israel in terms which are channels of expression for hatred towards Jewish people (such as by particular invocations of the Holocaust or Nazism) will in all likelihood be antisemitic.”

[READ THE FULL OPINION](#)

**THE ADOPTION OF THE IHRA DEFINITION OF ANTISEMITISM
BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM**

OPINION

A. INTRODUCTION

1. We are instructed by the Campaign Against Antisemitism to provide an Opinion on the decision of the Government of the United Kingdom to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance ("IHRA") definition of antisemitism ("the Definition"). In particular, we are asked to consider the meaning of the Definition, its usefulness and potential application in public life.
2. For the avoidance of doubt, we have produced this Opinion independently. We have no direct involvement with the Campaign Against Antisemitism.

B. SUMMARY OF OPINION

3. By way of a summary, our opinion is as follows:
 - (1) The Definition is a clear, meaningful and workable definition.
 - (2) The Definition is an important development in terms of identifying and preventing antisemitism, in particular in its modern and non-traditional forms, which often reach beyond simple expressions of hatred for Jews and instead refer to Jewish people and Jewish associations in highly derogatory, veiled terms (e.g. "Zio" or "Rothschilds").
 - (3) Public bodies in the United Kingdom are not "at risk" in using this

Page 1 of 9

SELECTED ORGANISATIONS WHICH HAVE ADOPTED THE DEFINITION

International

- [United States Senate](#)
- [United States Department of State](#)
- [European Parliament](#)
- [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance](#)
- [Government of Albania](#)

- [Government of Argentina](#)
- [Government of Austria](#)
- [Government of Bulgaria](#)
- [Government of Cyprus](#)
- [Government of the Czech Republic](#)
- [Government of France](#)
- [Government of Germany](#)
- [Government of Greece](#)
- [Government of Israel](#)
- [Government of Italy](#)
- [Government of Kosovo](#)
- [Government of Latvia](#)
- [Government of Lithuania](#)
- [Government of North Macedonia](#)
- [Government of Panama](#)
- [Government of Romania](#)
- [Government of Serbia](#)
- [Government of Slovakia](#)
- [Government of Sweden](#)
- [Government of Switzerland](#)
- [Government of Uruguay](#)

United Kingdom

- [Her Majesty's Government](#)
- [House of Commons Home Affairs Committee](#)
- [London Assembly](#)
- [College of Policing](#)
- [Judicial College](#)
- [National Union of Students](#)

- [AJC](#)



#TRANSLATE HATE

Take this quiz to test your knowledge of
antisemitism

◇ To stop antisemitism we first have to recognize and understand it.

◇ Antisemitism isn't always easy to see, making it easier to spread. As it moves quietly through each of our lives—in a tweet, or a joke, or a conspiracy theory—it doesn't just impact Jews. It impacts us all.

Start

press Enter ↵

⌚ Takes 3 minutes

Go to [TRANSLATE HATE](#) to take your test

December 19, 2023

Amid the terrifying increase of antisemitic harassment, intimidation, and violence around the world in the wake of the October 7 Hamas terror attack against Israelis, many antisemitic phrases and terminology have been used at protests, on social media accounts, by celebrities, and even government officials, when criticizing Israel.

Addressing this rise in Jew-hatred unseen, American Jewish Committee [added over a dozen entries](#) to [Translate Hate](#), AJC's glossary that concisely explains when, why, and how certain terms, tropes, themes, and memes are antisemitic.

[Since Hamas terrorists viciously attacked Israel](#), we are seeing in real-time new antisemitic terms emerging and old tropes morphing, all to cast blame on the Jewish people and the Jewish state for society's problems.

Here are the top five antisemitic terms and tropes from AJC's *Translate Hate* that have been trending since the October 7 attack.

1. [“From the River to the Sea”](#)

Definition: The catch-all phrase symbolizing Palestinian control over the entire territory of Israel's borders, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

How it's antisemitic: “From the River to the Sea, Palestine Will Be Free” is a rallying cry for terrorist groups and their sympathizers, from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) to Hamas, which called for Israel's destruction in its original governing charter in 1988 and was responsible for the October 7, 2023 terror attack on Israeli civilians, murdering over 1,200 people in the single deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust.

How it's being used: The hateful slogan has frequently appeared on [protest signs nationwide during rallies in support of Palestinians](#), often used on social media by Palestinian supporters including [government officials](#) and [members of Congress](#), and even on [T-shirts for sale on Amazon](#). It has also become popular among far too common call-to-arms for anti-Israel activists on campuses across the country, including on the [East Campus bridge at Duke University](#), [on lecture slides at the Society for Ethnomusicology's annual meeting](#), and scores of other academic spaces.

[Learn more from AJC's Translate Hate](#)

2. [“Globalize the Intifada”](#)

Definition: A phrase using the Arabic word for “uprising” or “shaking off,” whose message encourages resistance, most prominently in the form of violence, against Israel. Calls to “globalize” contribute to the targeting of Jews, Israelis, and institutions that support Israel around the world.

How it's antisemitic: The most prominent expressions of intifada have been through violence so this phrase is often understood by those saying and hearing it as encouraging violence against Israelis, Jews, and

institutions supporting Israel. While the intent of the person saying this phrase may be different, the impact on the Jewish community remains the same.

How it's being used: "Globalize the Intifada" is a phrase used by pro-Palestinian activists that calls for aggressive resistance against Israel and those who support Israel.

There are numerous examples such as at a demonstration in [Times Square](#), in front of the [Consulate General of Israel](#) in Manhattan, [in central London](#), at [Harvard University](#), and even on [Eastern Parkway](#) in Brooklyn, not far from Crown Heights, a neighborhood with a very large Hasidic Jewish population that is the home of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement.

[Learn more from AJC's *Translate Hate*](#)

3. ["Settler Colonialist"](#)

Definition: An occupying force that exploits and displaces native populations from their home to settle and form a permanent society.

When it's antisemitic: When those who oppose the State of Israel claim that Jews (or Zionists) have no historical connection to the land and instead barged in to take the land from the Palestinian population that lives there. It denies the Jewish people self-determination and ignores the United Nations partition resolution of 1947 that created states for both Jewish and Arab populations living there.

How it's being used: On social media, in protests, and on [college campuses](#), there has been an effort to undermine Israel's legitimacy by accusing it of being a settler-colonial state. Those spreading this lie argue that Jews have no historical connection to the land of Israel and that Zionists - those who support the right of Jewish self-determination and national homeland in the land of Israel - came to colonize the land, taking it from the Palestinians beginning in the late nineteenth century. However, this claim ignores the thousands of years of [deep connection between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel](#).

[Learn more from AJC's *Translate Hate*](#)

4. ["Nazi Symbols \(Swastika\)"](#)

Definition: Code words, phrases, and images from Nazi Germany used today by neo-Nazis and white supremacists.

Why it's antisemitic: Code words and phrases have been used for decades by different white supremacist hate groups to avoid censorship or censure. The Nazi swastika was the symbol of the Nazi party under Adolf Hitler. It is an inverted version of the swastika symbol that is revered in many Eastern religions and cultures. Neo-Nazis and white supremacists continue to use it today as a symbol of the "pure race."

How it's being used: Religious extremists, including Hamas and other terrorist groups, utilize the Nazi swastika to terrorize Jews and Israelis. [Anti-Israel protests](#) have also wielded the Nazi swastika to weaponize the Holocaust against the Jewish community. Some use the symbol to imply that another Shoah

is coming for the Jews. Others use the swastika to accuse Jews of hypocrisy and committing genocide of the Palestinian people.

To boot, neo-Nazis have brought their signature symbol to pro-Palestinian protests to show support and cheer on Hamas. In 2021, a Jewish group in Boca Raton expressing solidarity with Israel in the wake of indiscriminate rocket attacks was harassed by a van of [Holocaust deniers waving a Palestinian flag](#).

[Learn more from AJC's Translate Hate](#)

5. [“Zionism is Racism”](#)

Definition: Refers to United Nations Resolution 3379 in 1975, in which the General Assembly linked Zionism and the State of Israel, to racism and racial discrimination. This was overturned in 1991 making it one of only two resolutions ever revoked by the UN.

Why it's antisemitic: Criticizing specific Israeli government policies as discriminatory or racist is not antisemitic. However, saying “Zionism is racism,” a phrase which itself is a racist and religious distortion, conveys that the Jewish people—unlike all other people in the world—do not have a right to self-determination. The phrase also denigrates the Jewish State and belittles the diversity of Jewish life in Israel.

How it's being used: Amid the ongoing Israel-Hamas War Jews or “Zionists” are falsely characterized as [“Nazis”](#) and “racists.” One *New York Magazine* writer even [suggested that Zionists worked with the Nazis during World War II](#) and enabled some of the atrocities against Jews during the Holocaust. The allegation that Zionism is racism does a tremendous amount of damage by diminishing the egregious sin of racism and equating Jewish self-determination with prejudice and discrimination against others.

AJC (AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE)

AJC CONVENES ALLIES IN PARIS TO TACKLE ANTISEMITISM

**Antisemitism has reached a tipping point globally
—and American Jewish Committee (AJC) is confronting it head-on.**

[AJC](#) Anne-Sophie Sebban-Bechache. Vice President of AJC Europe
<advocaacy@ajcglobal.org>

AJC's experts are mobilizing to:

- Spur governments to adopt and enforce antisemitism action plans
- Strengthen protection for Jewish communities
- Train leaders at all levels of society to identify and prevent antisemitism
- Equip educators to ensure schools are safe for Jewish students

Below I've detailed the latest efforts from Paris, where we hosted leaders to counter antisemitism in the two largest Jewish Diaspora communities, America and France.

Yesterday we announced our newest initiative in the move to combat antisemitism on both sides of the Atlantic, [a Fulbright Specialist Program, dedicated to the fight against Jew-hatred](#).

A Groundbreaking Moment | At the [On the Frontlines: French-American Forum on Antisemitism in Paris](#), a first of its kind summit hosted by AJC Paris in partnership with the Conseil Représentatif des Institutions Juives de France (CRIF), we revealed a cutting-edge initiative to create a future where antisemitism is no longer normalized and where democratic ideals flourish. [Watch my announcement from the forum stage→](#)



This program will create a lasting transatlantic framework to combat antisemitism that empowers the next generation, strengthens institutions, and supports long-term civil society efforts.

Bringing World Leaders and Allies to the Table | [Thursday's summit](#)—a dynamic day of youth engagement and shared experiences, education, and transatlantic cooperation—highlighted how the challenges facing Jews around the world are not isolated and require coordinated global action. The forum's speakers included leaders throughout society from [Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt](#), Immediate Past U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism and Distinguished Professor at Emory University to [Nuseir Yassin \(@nasdaily\)](#) and [Aija Mayrock](#), social media influencers and creators, **Eric Ward**, Executive Vice President of Race Forward to **Chancellor Andrew Martin**, Washington University in St. Louis.

AJC CEO Ted Deutch: “We Are All Connected” | In his address at the summit, Ted detailed how American and French Jews are “vividly woven” together and how we can counter rising antisemitic hate together in a powerful way. Speaking to the young and emerging leaders at the forum, Ted also urged them to help lead the fight against anti-Jewish hate. [Watch and share Ted's remarks→](#)

What's Next | The Fulbright Specialist will build on the outcomes of the forum, diving deeper into the best French and American practices to combat antisemitism and create key recommendations. AJC and CRIF will present the recommendations to French and American policymakers as their contribution to the France-U.S. bilateral dialogue on antisemitism, which was launched last year by former U.S. President Joe Biden and French President Emmanuel Macron at the 80th anniversary of D-Day.

The rise of antisemitic violence in America and Europe over the last month—the savage murders of Sarah Milgrim and Yaron Lischinsky in Washington, D.C.; the brutal attack on Jews in Boulder who were raising awareness of the hostages held by Hamas in Gaza; the vandalism targeting Jewish sites in Paris and the violent assault on a rabbi in Deauville and Neuilly-sur-Seine—has reinforced what we at AJC have long known: **antisemitism is a global crisis, and it demands a global response.**

With more than 75 offices, institutes, and partnerships with Jewish communities worldwide—including my office here in the French capital—AJC was created to respond to crises like the one we face right now.

As the global advocacy organization for the Jewish people, we will never stop working to shape a new future, one where Jews everywhere—from the U.S. to Paris and beyond—can live in peace and security.

Shabbat Shalom,

Anne-Sophie Sebban-Bécache

Vice President of AJC Europe



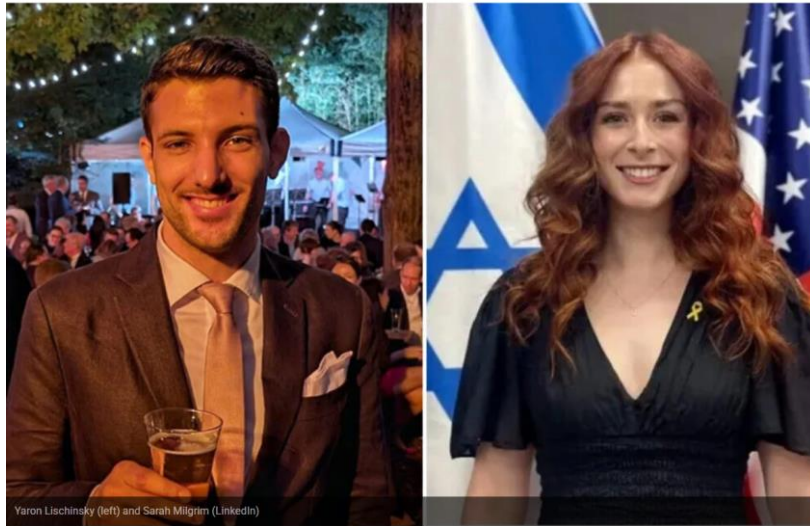
SUPPORT OUR WORK



JEWS IN WASHINGTON VOICE THEIR SORROW, FEAR AND ANGER AFTER DEADLY SHOOTING

Mourners seeking connection gather at the killing site at capital's Jewish museum,
sing and pray at vigil outside White House

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Luke Tress](#) 23 May 2025



Mourners outside the White House in Washington, DC, May 22, 2025.
(Luke Tress/Times of Israel)

WASHINGTON — Mourners trickled past the Capital Jewish Museum in Washington, DC, on Thursday, a day after an attacker shot dead two Israeli embassy staffers outside the building the night before. Some knelt at the scene with bouquets, others wrote notes to the victims in Hebrew and English, and a handful waved Israeli flags at an impromptu gathering across the street.

The mourners were Jews and Christians from the city and the surrounding area. Several had driven up to an hour to visit the scene and pay their respects to the dead. Others were seeking community and an outlet for a feeling of helplessness.

Jim Rose, from the nearby suburb of Great Falls, Virginia, said he had felt compelled to visit the scene because he is a part of the local Jewish community.

“There was a shock, but there was no surprise,” he said when he first heard about the killings.

He said his friends and family were overwhelmed by sadness, a feeling he shares, “but my number one emotion is anger,” an emotion, he said, that was “based on fear.”

“To me, it was just a matter of time before something like this happened in our community,” he said. “I’m just frustrated that more wasn’t done to prevent this.”

“You could just see it building, just with the rhetoric and what is allowed in protests,” he said. “The anger and the frustration is at those people in authority who either shrug this off or rationalize it, or

compartmentalize it. I would like to see each and every one of them do more or step down and let somebody else do the job.”



Yaron Lischinsky and Sarah Milgrim (Courtesy)

The victims of the shooting, Yaron Lischinsky and Sarah Milgrim, were gunned down outside an event for young Jewish diplomats, this year focusing on resolving humanitarian crises in the Middle East, at the Capital Jewish Museum on Wednesday night. Lischinsky and Milgrim were a couple and Lischinsky was planning to propose in Jerusalem next week.

The man charged with the shooting, Elias Rodriguez, shot the two in the back, then finished them off at close range, firing into Milgrim as she attempted to crawl away. After the killings, he told investigators, “I did it for Palestine, I did it for Gaza,” [according to court filings](#). Investigators recovered 21 empty bullet casings at the scene.

Sharon Separ, from Arlington, Virginia, said the violence and political climate reminded her of interwar Germany and had encouraged her to make a move to Israel for safety.

“I was really disturbed. I have the feeling, more often than ever, it’s a time to go. It’s a time to just see the writing on the wall,” she said.

“I see a lot of fear and anxiety in my community, but I don’t see people saying, ‘Well, let’s go to Israel,’ and that enrages me,” she said.



Notes left for the victims of a deadly shooting in Washington, DC, May 22, 2025
(Luke Tress/Times of Israel)

A row of flowers, left sodden by intermittent rain, was piled near the entrance to the museum, while other bouquets were arranged on a step around the corner, where the shooting took place. On a nearby planter were handwritten notes to the victims, kept in place against the wind by small stones and candles, the ink blurred by the downpour.

“Yaron and Sarah, we will work harder in your name,” one of the notes said. “LOVE, NOT HATE,” said another sheet, weighed down by a wreath of white roses. Tattered bits of yellow police tape, left from the night before, remained wrapped around railings at the museum entrance and the block’s end.

Government officials at the scene also voiced their grief and frustration. Israel’s ambassador to the US, Yechiel Leiter, recounted how he had received a knock on his door when his son was killed fighting in Gaza early in the war. On Wednesday, he said, he was the one informing parents that their children had been slain.

“Instead of gathering at a huppah, their families will be gathering at their graves,” said US Rep. Brad Schneider of Illinois, who is Jewish.

US Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz of Florida said that, as a Jewish mother, her first thought upon hearing the news of the killings was that the victims could have been her children or staffers.

“We are a community that has consistently stood with other communities when hate is directed at them, and we have been joined not as often as we’d like by other communities, and so I hope desperately that our communities can come together,” she said.



Pro-Israel Jewish and Christian demonstrators in Washington, DC, May 22, 2025.

(Luke Tress/Times of Israel)

In addition to Jews, a group of pro-Israel Christians from an organization called the Philos Project showed up to support the Jewish community.

Simone Rizkallah, a Catholic from an Egyptian-Armenian family, said her community was “devastated” by the killings.

“Our experience in the Middle East is that there is a common enemy that doesn’t like Jews or Christians. And so when I came to this country excited for religious freedom, for pluralism, and then to see that the same people, the same players, are against us here, too, on American soil, it’s painful,” she said.

“I can’t believe we’re here for this. I can’t believe this happened. What else needs to happen for the world to wake up?” she said.

Yale Williams heard on the radio on Wednesday night about a shooting in the city, but didn’t realize the attack was antisemitic until the morning when he checked his social media. He stood at the killing site wearing a Star of David over his t-shirt and an Israeli flag on his shoulders.

“I’m upset, frustrated, angry. It’s just another example of what words can do because this didn’t start yesterday, it didn’t even start on October 7. It started way before that because of all the rhetoric against Israel,” he said.



Mourners outside the White House in Washington, DC, May 22, 2025.

(Luke Tress/Times of Israel)

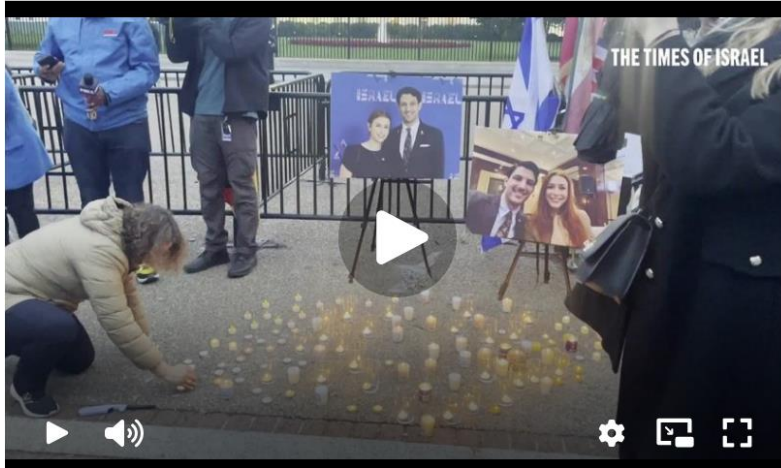
“I don’t even know exactly what I’m angry at. It’s anger at the people who have allowed this hate speech to continue under the guise of free speech. It’s anger at Hamas for even having us in this situation. It’s anger at almost everybody,” he said. “We’re such a minority in the world in general that when we don’t have anyone standing up for us, it’s difficult.”

Williams drove into the city after seeing messages in WhatsApp chats saying that people were coming to visit the site. He was driven by a feeling of helplessness and seeking a sense of community.

Other Jews at the scene were also looking for others to connect with. They traded phone numbers and discussed messages circulating about community gatherings. The number of mourners at the museum remained relatively small as the shock and chaos of the day made planning difficult.

The community came together later, though, at a vigil outside the White House as the sun set over the capital.

Organizers erected two posters showing Lischinsky and Milgrim shoulder to shoulder, with beaming smiles. A pool of candles flickered on the asphalt in front of the photos and in the background, the White House loomed, its white facade lit brightly and its flags at half mast. A group of tourists, oblivious to the sorrow, snapped pictures at the White House fence and a street performer played jazz on a saxophone in the distance.



An organizer encouraged attendees to hug each other and read out Psalm 23.

“Even when I walk in the valley of darkness, I will fear no evil,” he said.

Some in the crowd of hundreds embraced, huddled under umbrellas, with tears in their eyes and Israeli flags draped on their shoulders.

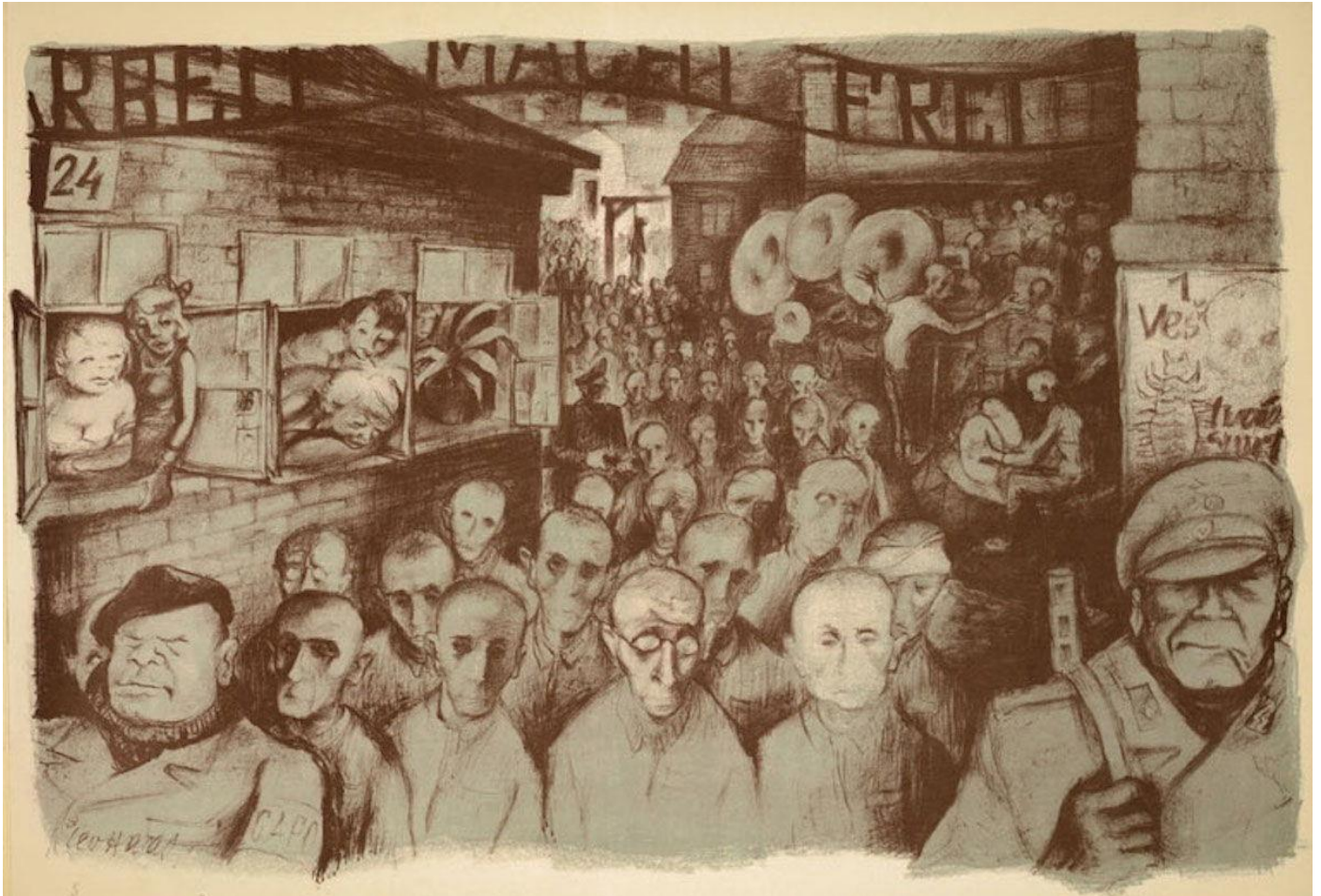
The crowd sang Hebrew songs together, including “Oseh Shalom,” “Acheinu,” and Israel’s anthem, “Hatikvah,” or “The Hope.”

“All the world’s a narrow bridge, and the essential thing is to have no fear at all,” they sang.

WHY WERE THE JEWS PERSECUTED

TIM BLACK SEEKS TO UNDERSTAND THE ORIGINS OF ANTISEMITISM,
LOOKING BEYOND THE HOLOCAUST
TO THE ANCIENT MIDDLE EAST AND MEDIEVAL EUROPE.

[HISTORY TODAY Tim Black](#) | Published in [History Review Issue 48 March 2004](#)



**A scene from Auschwitz by Holocaust survivor Leo Haas, c. 1947.
Center for Jewish History, New York. Public Domain.**

Throughout the history of mankind, no group has been more victimised than the Jewish people. Today they are remembered for being mass-murdered in Hitler's death camps, yet their persecution goes back thousands of years. Why? In order to understand how Hitler was to use the Jews as scapegoats, we must first understand the latent hatred that Hitler was able to tap into against the Jewish people, not just in Germany but all over Europe.

BIBLICAL TIMES

Much of the history of the Jewish people can be found in the Old Testament, in which we learn that the Jews are the 'chosen people'. By making a covenant with God, they would, in return for being chosen, obey his laws. After their exile in Egypt the Jewish people were led back by Moses into Israel, where, by force of arms, they were able to carve out a land of their own around 1100 BC.

In the century before the birth of Christ, the Middle East and Judea were conquered by the Romans under Pompey and became part of the Roman Empire. From the New Testament, Christians learn how the Romans governed Judea, and it is under Pilate's orders - and amid Jewish cries of 'Crucify him!' - that Jesus was executed. The Romans found the Jews with their one god to be a troublesome people. They would not allow Roman gods to be worshipped in their temples even though the Romans (although not always) respected the God of the Jews.

Unrest broke out and the Romans put down the disturbances ruthlessly. After the fall of Masada, Jewish resistance was broken and the Romans expelled the Jews from Judea in AD 135 (the Diaspora). At this point we would expect the Jews to leave history in the manner of the other ancient civilisations, such as the Babylonians and the Hittites; but no, the Jewish people survived even though they were dispersed throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. If we understand why, we also begin to understand the persecution that followed.

[Read Next: The Roman Destruction of Jerusalem](#)

KEEPING THE FAITH

The contract with God bound the Jewish people together: if they kept his rules, then, whatever else happened, they would remain his chosen people. This belief gave a sense of faith and identity which was to hold the Jewish people together but also to alienate them from other cultures. The strict rules that had to be followed did not always match with the rules of the different societies in which the Jews now lived. They had, as far as possible, to reduce their contact with the outside society so that it would be easier to keep their own laws. Keeping themselves apart was the main way in which the Jewish people would survive, yet it was also the main factor in their persecution. As visible outsiders, they were seen to be aloof, strange, exotic - and even evil.

If the Jewish faith had been one of conversion like the Christian or Muslim religions, then it would have been a direct threat to other societies and the Jewish faith would have either triumphed or been vanquished. Yet neither occurred. Being Jewish depended on being born into the religion, and the Jews would only take converts very reluctantly into their faith.

Being outsiders was bad enough, but having power as well represented a threat to the upper levels of the societies in which they were living. Unlike the Christian faith in its early days where the word of God was given to the people by their priests, who were often the only group of people who could read, all Jewish males were required to be literate in order to read the Torah and to debate its contents. Two factors are important: one, the ability to read, which in the Dark Ages and Middle Ages was rare; second, not to accept

blindly what was read but to interrupt and debate. This meant that the Jewish people were a literate society which encouraged the art of debate and the search for knowledge.

THE REWARDS

It was no wonder, then, that the Jewish people were to provide society's professional classes, including doctors, lawyers, advisers and bankers. In societies before the modern age, wealth was land and its ownership. Landowners did not 'work', since they ruled and also fought as soldiers. The Jews had no land and were often banned by the societies they were living in from owning land. Yet they had the skills which the landed classes wanted but were unwilling to acquire themselves: 'labourers' and 'cannon fodder' the ruling classes had in plenty, but of doctors there were few.

The Jews were paid for their services in cash but with this cash they often could not purchase land, and so they ended up with the capital required to run money-lending firms and banks. This factor, combined with the Christian ban on usury, meant that Jews were often forced to act as their adopted society's bankers.

From this we can see that the Jews were an independent people who lived all over the known world and who cut themselves off from the indigenous people of the area in which they lived; but at the same time they provided essential services for those same indigenous people. This gave the Jews power that could be abused or that could seem threatening to the local population. However, power was also a defence for the Jewish society against possible persecution.

The Jews, in addition to having money and power, also had knowledge. In a time when there was little movement of people or ideas, the Jews were unique. All over the known world there were Jewish settlements, and in all these societies the Jewish people learnt both the language of the local people and their knowledge and wisdom. This knowledge was then dispersed among the Jewish people through their travels and, of course, through books which the Jews could read. Ideas spread but stayed within the Jewish community. So a Jewish doctor might cure a patient in Scotland with knowledge gained from Syria. However, again there was a danger, for what was common sense in Syria might be perceived as 'Black Magic' in Scotland.

[Read Next: Jews and the Renaissance](#)

PERSECUTION

The first persecutions against the Jewish people were religious. They were 'killers of Christ' and 'black magic worshippers' who did not follow or believe in Jesus. We can see that hatred was felt by the local populations; but it was the leaders of the different societies which stirred up that hate, and their reasons for doing so could be mixed. Among the ring-leaders might be a zealot Christian church leader, a knight in debt to a Jewish money-lender, a jealous doctor or a usurped advisor to a king.

In the 19th century religious persecution gave way to racial persecution. The Jews were seen as parasites. This change in attitude came from a volatile brew of Social Darwinism and rising European nationalism.

The Jews were seen to be the outsiders who not only did not belong but needed to be removed as a threat to society. This is the sort of emotion Hitler experienced when living in old Imperial Vienna before 1914.

More sinister, in both cases, religious and racial persecution are a facade for the real reason that the Jews were seen as threatening, namely the fear and threat from an outside group who through history had a position of power that created jealousy which turned to violence in troubled times.

In the 20th century another factor for persecution can be added, and this is the Jewish connection to Communism. In 1897 in Basel, the first Zionist conference was held. Theodore Herzl, the father of Zionism, talked of sending Jews to Palestine to build a homeland. The Zionist thinkers talked of a society which was less class-driven - Socialism. In 1917 the Russian revolution took place and, among its leaders, Trotsky was Jewish. Trotsky believed in a world revolution, and his call was first answered in Germany, where many of the leaders in the 'Munich Soviet' of 1918-19 were Jewish. Thus the greatest radical idea of the 20th century was to be linked to Jewish thinkers. In Nazi Germany, Social Darwinism, Communism, Socialism and war-profiteering were to be mixed and brewed to become the hatred that Hitler stirred up from the 1920s to the 1940s.

Conclusion

Anti-Semitism was not a creation of Hitler. It has been part of European society for over 2000 years. The Jewish religion and the attempt to maintain it, when the Jews were expelled from their homeland by the Romans, was the key factor in their survival as a group; but by being a recognisable group who had power they seemed to threaten many of their adopted societies.

The fate of the Jews is the fate of all minorities the world over. They are accepted when they are not a danger to their adopted society, but turned on whenever they might appear threatening. The murder of the Jews in the Holocaust remains a 'beacon of remembrance' of what society can do when it turns on a group of its citizens.

Hitler tapped into the tendency that lies in all individuals to blame those who are 'not like us' in times of troubles. Though there may be elements of truth behind our blame and hatred, the issues are far more complex than the 'black-and-white' world Hitler and his like want people to believe in. We do not hate an individual for his racial affiliation or belief, but we are made to hate a stereotype which we often have never met.

Further Reading:

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- A. Farmer, *Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1998)
- N Faulkner, 'Apocalypse: The Great Jewish Revolt against Rome, 66-73CE', *History Today*, October 2002.

- R. Oventale, *The Origins of The Arab-Israeli Wars* (Longman, 1999)

Tim Black teaches History at International House, Zurich.

WHY DO PEOPLE HATE THE JEWS?

Simple to Remember



It has been said that the history of almost all of the Jewish holidays can be summed up succinctly: "They wanted to kill us; we won. Let's eat." Why has anti-Semitism been so pervasive in so many countries, in so many time periods and for so many reasons? (One begins to wonder. Perhaps there is something wrong with the Jews and Judaism? After all, there is an old Yiddish saying -- "If one person calls you a donkey, ignore him; if two people call you a donkey, buy a saddle.")

Between the years 250 CE and 1948 CE - a period of 1,700 years - Jews have experienced more than eighty expulsions from various countries in Europe - an average of nearly one expulsion every twenty-one years. Jews were expelled from England, France, Austria, Germany, Lithuania, Spain, Portugal, Bohemia, Moravia and seventy-one other countries.

Historians have classified six explanations as to why people hate the Jews:

1. **Economic** -- "We hate Jews because they possess too much wealth and power."
2. **Chosen People** -- "We hate Jews because they arrogantly claim that they are the chosen people."
3. **Scapegoat** -- "Jews are a convenient group to single out and blame for our troubles."
4. **Deicide** -- "We hate Jews because they killed Jesus."
5. **Outsiders**, -- "We hate Jews because they are different than us." (The dislike of the unlike.)

6. **Racial Theory** -- "We hate Jews because they are an inferior race."

As we examine the explanations, we must ask -- Are they the causes for anti-Semitism or excuses for Anti-Semitism? The difference? If one takes away the cause, then anti-Semitism should no longer exist. If one can show a contradiction to the explanation, it demonstrates that the "cause" is not a reason, it is just an excuse. Let's look at some contradictions:

1. **Economic** -- The Jews of 17th- 20th century Poland and Russia were dirt poor, had no influence and yet they were hated.
2. **Chosen People** -- a) In the late 19th century, the Jews of Germany denied "Choseness." And then they worked on assimilation. Yet, the holocaust started there. b) Christians and Moslems profess to being the "Chosen people," yet, the world and the anti-Semites tolerate them.
3. **Scapegoat** -- Any group must already be hated to be an effective scapegoat. The Scapegoat Theory does not then cause anti-Semitism. Rather, anti-Semitism is what makes the Jews a convenient scapegoat target. Hitler's ranting and ravings would not be taken seriously if he said, "It's the bicycle riders and the midgets who are destroying our society."
4. **Deicide** -- a) the Christian Bible says the Romans killed Jesus, though Jews are mentioned as accomplices (claims that Jews killed Jesus came several hundred years later). How come the accomplices are persecuted and there isn't an anti-Roman movement through history? b) Jesus himself said, "Forgive them [i.e., the Jews], for they know not what they do." The Second Vatican Council in 1963 officially exonerated the Jews as the killers of Jesus. Neither statement of Christian belief lessened anti-Semitism.
5. **Outsiders** -- With the Enlightenment in the late 18th century, many Jews rushed to assimilate. Anti-Semitism should have stopped. Instead, for example, with the Nazis came the cry, in essence: "We hate you, not because you're different, but because you're trying to become like us! We cannot allow you to infect the Aryan race with your inferior genes."
6. **Racial Theory** -- The overriding problem with this theory is that it is self-contradictory: Jews are not a race. Anyone can become a Jew - and members of every race, creed and color in the world have done so at one time or another.

Every other hated group is hated for a relatively defined reason. We Jews, however, are hated in paradoxes: Jews are hated for being a lazy and inferior race - but also for dominating the economy and taking over the world. We are hated for stubbornly maintaining our separateness - and, when we do assimilate - for posing a threat to racial purity through intermarriages. We are seen as pacifists and as

warmongers; as capitalist exploiters and as revolutionary communists; possessed of a Chosen-People mentality, as well as of an inferiority complex. It seems that we just can't win.

Now we know what are NOT the reasons for anti-Semitism.

FIND OUT WHY PEOPLE HATE THE JEWS:

- ▶ [The Reason for Anti-Semitism](#) (article)
- ▶ [The Reason for Anti-Semitism](#) (online seminar)

by: Rabbi Kalman Packouz

MORE:

- ▶ [The History of Jewish Persecution](#)
- ▶ [The Anti-Semitic Disease](#)
- ▶ [Why Do People Hate The Jews?](#) by Ken Spiro from [AishAudio.com](#)
- ▶ [Hitler Quotes](#)
- ▶ [Antisemitism.org.il](#)

QUOTES:

Of all the extreme fanaticism which plays havoc in many forms of nature, there is not one as irrational as anti-Semitism. If the Jews are rich [these fanatics] are victims of theft. If they are poor, they are victims of ridicule. If they take sides in a war, it is because they wish to take advantage from the spilling of non-Jewish blood. If they espouse peace, it is because they are scared by their natures or traitors. If the Jew dwells in a foreign land he is persecuted and expelled. If he wishes to return to his own land, he is prevented from doing so.

- Lloyd George stated in 1923

"The uniqueness of anti-Semitism lies in the fact that no other people in the world have ever been charged simultaneously with alienation from society and with cosmopolitanism, with being capitalistic exploiters and also revolutionary communist advocates. The Jews were accused of having an imperious mentality, at the same time they're a people of the book. They're accused of being militant aggressors, at the same time as being cowardly pacifists. With being a Chosen people, and also having an inferior human nature. With both arrogance and timidity. With both extreme individualism and community adherence. With being guilty of the crucifixion of Jesus and at the same time held to account for the invention of christianity."

- A speech about the irrationality of anti-Semitism
by professor Michael Curtis, of Rutgers University, 1987

SimpleToRemember.com - Judaism Online



A GUIDE TO RECOGNISING WHEN ANTI-ISRAEL ACTIONS BECOME ANTISEMITIC

AJC

Often, hostility toward Jews is easy to recognize. We know calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology is antisemitism. When Hamas, a U.S. and EU designated terrorist organization, calls for the killing of Jews, it is antisemitism. When Jews are attacked on American streets, it is antisemitism.

Sometimes antisemitism is not easy to recognize—especially when it involves Israel, when it's spoken softly, when it's peddled by celebrities, influencers, and those we trust.

Political protests are an essential part of our democracy, and criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country is perfectly acceptable. But when Jews are targeted and attacked and Jewish institutions are vandalized for Israeli policies and actions, it is unacceptable. It is antisemitism.

During and following the Hamas-incited flare-up in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in May 2021, antisemitic incidents surged in the United States and around the world. The following examples— all taken from May 2021—show when anti-Israel statements and actions can become antisemitic. They all evoke antisemitic themes that must be recognized and condemned.

GO TO [LINK](#) TO SEE EXAMPLES

GLOBAL ANTISEMITIC INCIDENTS IN THE WAKE OF HAMAS' WAR ON ISRAEL

[ADL](#) (ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE) 20 May 2024

Since the October 7 Hamas massacre of over 1,200 people in Israel, Hamas supporters and other antisemitic actors have threatened and targeted Jewish and Israeli individuals and institutions worldwide. Below is a select list of antisemitic incidents outside of Israel with an apparent connection to the events in Israel, as well as several country-specific statistics. You can also find a map of select incidents and data [here](#).

COUNTRY STATISTICS SINCE OCT. 7:

- [Argentina](#): In January 2024, there more than 100 reported antisemitic incidents, representing a 600% increase compared to January 2023.
- [Australia](#): According to the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, as of 12/15 there has been a 738% increase in antisemitic incidents.
- [Austria](#): From October 7 to December 31, antisemitic incidents were up 500%, compared to the same period in 2022. For all of 2023, the increase in antisemitic incidents was 60%, compared to 2022.
- **Brazil**: According to the CONIB, which tracks antisemitism in Brazil, there was a 961% increase during the month of October in comparison to the previous year.
- [Denmark](#): In 2023, there were 121 antisemitic incidents, an increase of 1244%.
- [France](#): According to the Minister of Interior, there were 1,242 antisemitic incidents from October 1 to December 31, 2023, a 1000% increase compared to prior months.
- [Germany](#): In 2023, police registered 5,154 antisemitic incidents, an increase of 95%.
- [Italy](#): According to Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi, authorities registered 135 incidents of antisemitism between October 7 and December 31.
- [Netherlands](#): In 2023, there were 379 antisemitic incidents, an increase of 245%
- [New Zealand](#): In a survey of Jewish parents of children aged 9-18, as of 12/14, 50% of those who completed the survey said their children were subjected to antisemitism in schools.
- [Poland](#): In 2023, there were 894 antisemitic incidents 894, an increase of 91%.
- **South Africa**: According to the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, there were 41 antisemitic incidents in the month of October, a significant increase compared to prior years.
- [Switzerland](#): Antisemitic incidents increased by 68 percent in French-speaking Switzerland last year, with almost half of all incidents occurring post-10/7.
- [UK](#): In 2023 CST recorded 4,103 anti-Jewish hate incidents across the UK, by far the largest-ever total recorded in this country.

AJC'S ROLE IN THE CREATION OF THE U.S. NATIONAL STRATEGY TO COUNTER ANTISEMITISM

In a Historic Moment in May 2023, the White House Released the First-Ever U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism—and American Jewish Committee (AJC) was Central to the Outcome.

AJC

AJC had long called for a national antisemitism strategy in America, stressing that a whole-of-government approach was key to the fight. The action plan laid out by the White House—which includes dozens of specific AJC recommendations—demonstrates that our leaders are committed to curbing the rise of antisemitism in this country.

As the timeline below illustrates, AJC has been there every step of the way, providing guidance to the White House as the National Strategy took shape.

It was AJC that first pioneered the concept of a national antisemitism strategy in Europe, where anti-Jewish hate began resurfacing more than two decades ago. It was AJC's teams across the Atlantic that worked closely with European governments to launch their national strategies, and we continue to help refine their plans today.

As antisemitism surged in America, it was AJC that first recommended the U.S. develop its own national strategy. And it was AJC's decades of experience addressing the problem in Europe and around the world that made us an invaluable partner for the U.S. government as they created this new plan.

A TIMELINE OF KEY DATES

November 2021

AJC provided the White House with recommendations for countering domestic antisemitism, including the creation of a national antisemitism strategy. We urged this step as part of our ongoing engagement with U.S. officials. AJC advocated this recommendation based on our experience in Europe. There, AJC advised the European Commission as it launched its first antisemitism strategy for the entire European Union, as well as advising individual EU member states.

September 2022

AJC issued its [Call to Action Against Antisemitism in America](#), our society-wide nonpartisan guide for combating anti-Jewish hate in the U.S. It detailed recommendations for various sectors of society, including the executive branch. A key recommendation was for the White House to form an interagency task force to develop a national antisemitism action plan.

December 2022

While at the White House for a [roundtable discussion](#) on domestic antisemitism hosted by Second Gentleman Douglas Emhoff, AJC was again asked to formally offer recommendations. AJC CEO Ted Deutch reinforced that a national antisemitism strategy that involves interagency coordination is essential to countering this scourge. One week later, the White House announced it would move forward with such a plan.

February 2023

AJC [convened a meeting at the White House](#) with the U.S. interagency task force and antisemitism envoys from Europe and Latin America. The envoys shared best practices from building their own national strategies. It was AJC that led the EU to establish the position of coordinator on combating antisemitism in 2015, and many countries have since appointed coordinators and special envoys in this role. Convening this meeting was just one of the ways AJC assisted the U.S. government in developing its strategy. It also demonstrated AJC's unique ability to leverage lessons learned from our global engagement for U.S.-based efforts at the national, state, and local level.

May 2023

The White House officially released the first-ever [U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism](#)—an important win for the Jewish community. It includes 100+ actions for the executive branch, and over 100 more for Congress, state and local government, and civil society to pursue. The plan mirrors AJC's Call to Action Against Antisemitism, and dozens of the action items detailed in the plan were specific AJC recommendations.

June 2023

Following the release of the National Strategy, AJC CEO Ted Deutch announced the launch of a new [AJC Task Force](#) to help implement the White House plan. AJC has activated our advocacy network to help ensure the actions detailed in the National Strategy are carried out within the stated timelines for the benefit of the Jewish community.

July 2023

AJC formally teamed up with the [U.S. Small Business Administration \(SBA\)](#)—a federal agency—to help small business owners recognize, respond to, and prevent antisemitism and other forms of hate. As part of the National Strategy, SBA will provide small business owners and their employees with antisemitism training and toolkits. AJC is collaborating with SBA to create these resources. This is just one example of how, through AJC's new Task Force, we are working with governmental and non-governmental partners to enact the National Strategy.

AJC is proud of the essential role we played in making the U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism a reality. But the fight is hardly over.

A U.S. National Strategy now exists. It's up to us to help ensure it gets implemented. [AJC is leading the charge, but we can't do it without you.](#)

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WHAT DOES “GLOBALIZE THE INTIFADA” MEAN AND HOW CAN IT LEAD TO TARGETING JEWS WITH VIOLENCE?

[AJC](#)



December 31, 2024

In anti-Israel demonstrations around the world, one frequently heard chant is “[globalize the intifada](#).”

What does “Globalize the Intifada” mean, how is it tied to past Palestinian activist violence against Israel, and how can it lead to targeting Jews today? Here are answers.

WHAT DOES “GLOBALIZE THE INTIFADA” MEAN?

“Globalize the Intifada” is a phrase used by pro-Palestinian activists that calls for aggressive resistance against Israel and those who support Israel. The most prominent expressions of intifada have been through violence so this phrase is often understood by those saying and hearing it as encouraging violence against Israelis, Jews, and institutions supporting Israel. While the intent of the person saying this phrase may be different, the impact on the Jewish community remains the same.

[Actress Ginnifer Goodwin explains how “Globalize the Intifada” is a Call for Violence](#)

WHAT IS AN INTIFADA?

The Arabic word “Intifada” translates to “uprising” or “shaking off.” It has been used to describe periods of intense Palestinian protest against Israel, mainly in the form of violent terrorism: The First Intifada from 1987-1990 and the Second Intifada from 2000-05.

The First Intifada was marked by a period of widespread Palestinian protests, civil disobedience, and acts of violence and terrorism against Israelis.

The Second Intifada, also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada, was a period of intense conflict and Palestinian uprising against Israeli rule that began in late September 2000 and continued until 2005. It was characterized by widespread protests, demonstrations, and suicide bombings, resulting in a high number of casualties on both sides, with close to 1,000 Israelis killed or injured by Palestinian terror attacks, including suicide bombings in civilian areas and passenger bus bombings.

[The phrase “Globalize the Intifada”](#) calls for people from around the globe to participate in rising up against Israel.

Since the phrase is most closely associated with the violence of the First and Second Intifadas, indiscriminate use encourages targeting institutions, and individuals around the world who show support for Israel, which includes the majority of Jews. Widespread violent actions against synagogues, Jewish homes, cultural centers and individuals taken in the name of resisting Israel demonstrates the need for increased vigilance by those advocating for Palestinian rights against using potentially inciting language.

Watch and find out.

[What Does the Inverted Red Triangle Mean?](#)

WHERE IS THE PHRASE BEING USED TODAY?

Calls to “Globalize the Intifada” contribute to the sense that people around the world need to take action against supporters of Israel around the world. Many protests have been peaceful, still some have taken violent action against Jews and their institutions.

The phrase has appeared in numerous high-profile demonstrations, including in New York City's [Times Square](#), outside the [Consulate General of Israel](#) in Manhattan, in [central London](#), and on [Eastern Parkway](#) in Brooklyn near Crown Heights, a neighborhood with a significant Hasidic Jewish population and home to the Chabad-Lubavitch movement. [November's violent "Jew hunt" on Israeli and Jewish soccer fans in Amsterdam](#) was another dangerous example of how “Globalize the Intifada” can lead to physical harm. Since the assaults, [AJC is advocating for European governments and its leaders to make combating anti-Jewish hate a priority](#).

On college campuses, the phrase has become a rallying cry at various protests, often in the context of broader anti-Israel activism. At [Harvard University](#), demonstrators chanted slogans such as "Long live the intifada" during a rally supporting Palestinian rights, drawing both support and backlash. Similar hate has surfaced at other universities, including [Columbia University](#), during its volatile and violent anti-Israel encampments in the spring of 2024. At [UC Berkeley](#), tensions escalated to the point where police had to intervene and evacuate Jewish students to ensure their safety amid chants of "Long live the Intifada."

HOW IS THE PHRASE BEING USED TO TARGET JEWISH INSTITUTIONS?

[Since Hamas' massacres against Israelis on October 7](#) and Israel's following attempts to free hostages and eliminate the threat posed by Hamas, Jewish individuals, synagogues, and cultural institutions have been the target of violence in the name of protests against Israel. These are in addition to anti-Israel protesters targeting corporations that do business with Israel.

A social media post from the anti-Israel group [Within Our Lifetime](#), a self-described Palestinian-led community organization, was [headlined with the phrase “Globalize the Intifada” and had examples](#) of Israeli and U.S. companies and transit hubs, the locations included *The New York Times*, Penn Station, Grand Central Station, the BlackRock investment firm, and the Israeli tech company Check Point.

“Each of the locations on this map reflects the location of an office of an enemy of both the Palestinian people and colonized people all over the world. Today and beyond, these locations will be sites for popular mobilization in defense of our people,” the group wrote.

“May this map serve as a call for every struggle to act in their own interest,” the group said in its call to action. “As we do so, we uplift one another’s struggles and free Palestine [from the river to the sea](#).”

Everything you need to know about this antisemitic term.

[*WATCH: From the River to the Sea - What Does it Mean?*](#)

[AJC CEO Ted Deutch said](#): “This is not promoting peace. This is an incitement to violence against Jews and it must be taken seriously.”

That map was one of several posted by the group, which has [supported](#) the October 7 Hamas massacre as “whatever means necessary it takes” to achieve Palestinian liberation and has held numerous street protests denouncing Israel.

Other posts displayed additional maps with pins showing the locations of several Jewish and Jewish-led organizations.

If the New York mapping strategy feels familiar, it should.

[*Did Israel Bomb a Hospital? No. What to Know About Hamas’ Lie About a Rocket Strike on a Gaza Hospital*](#)

In June 2022, an anti-Israel campaign dubbed [the “Boston Mapping Project.”](#) claiming to show the ties between various Massachusetts institutions and “support for the colonization of Palestine,” raised alarms over its dangerous targeting of the Jewish community. The map put a target on the backs of Jews who were already feeling highly concerned about their safety.

The Massachusetts map, published by anonymous supporters of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, was promoted by anti-Israel groups such as Boston BDS and Massachusetts Peace Action

PALESTINIAN HOLOCAUST DENIAL

BRIEF ANALYSIS

Hamas (the Islamic Resistance Movement) has recently published a denial of the Jewish Holocaust on its official website.

Although Hamas often uses anti-Jewish phrases, this was the first time the organization has officially denied the Holocaust.

[THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY](#) Reuven Paz Apr 21, 2000

BACKGROUND

In the 1940s in many parts of the Arab world, there was a great deal of sympathy toward Nazi Germany--but mostly on the grounds of strong anti-British hostility rather than support for Nazi racist doctrines. That said, the then-Palestinian national leader in exile, Haj Amin al-Husseini, sided openly with Nazi Germany and its doctrines, and assisted in recruiting a Muslim battalion of Bosnians for the Nazi war machine. Anti-Jewish riots occurred in Iraq under the pro-German regime of Rashid 'Ali al-Kailani, in Syria under the pro-German Vichy French government, and in Morocco and Tunisia under a combination of Vichy rule and partial German occupation.

During the 1950s and 1960s, anti-Jewish sentiments were heard less in the Arab world, partly under the influence of the good relations that some Arab countries enjoyed with the Soviet Union, where the victory over Nazi Germany played an important ideological role. An additional factor was the emigration of most of the Jewish populations in these countries. More prominent were anti-Israeli or anti-Zionist themes.

The Holocaust is still an unknown issue to most Arabs; it rarely appears in textbooks or educational programs in most Arab countries.

ARAB HOLOCAUST DENIERS

In the 1990s, many of the Islamic social and political movements in the Arab world joined the resurgent trend of Holocaust denial among European anti-Semites. This was mainly the result and influence of the persistent activity in this field by Roger Gauroudi, a French scholar and leading European anti-Semite. Gauroudi, a former Christian Marxist and French Communist Party member of the French parliament, converted to Islam following the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran. He soon became a prominent figure in promoting anti-Semitism among Islamic movements. But since he was known for his anti-Jewish writings as a Marxist too, he gained the support of many Arab circles beyond the Islamic movements. When he was put on trial and convicted in France for Holocaust denial several years ago, his popularity in Arab and Islamic countries increased. Even the Islamic official establishments in Saudi Arabia, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority (PA) supported him. For instance, in 1997, Al-Azhar, the official monthly of the highest Islamic religious authority in Egypt, published sympathetic articles supporting both Gauroudi and his ideas on Jews and Judaism.

PALESTINIAN ANTI-SEMITISM AND HOLOCAUST DENIAL

The Islamic establishment of the PA, headed by Shaykh 'Ikrimah Sabri, has taken a strong anti-Jewish tone, but it has so far not been accompanied by a denial of the Holocaust. Instead, the most common claims have been that Israel has used the same methods against the Palestinians as those used by the Nazi Germans against the Jews. Hamas, on the other hand, went much further in its 1988 charter, making a comparison between Jews and the Nazis. Many of Hamas's pamphlets have included severe anti-Semitic expressions not just against Israelis or Zionists, but against the Jews in general, with such phrases such as "sons of pigs and monkeys" being the most common. The official organ of the movement, the monthly London-based Filastin al-Muslimah, frequently presents anti-Jewish arguments, usually on a religious basis.

But until this recent press release, Hamas had not denied the Holocaust, except perhaps in the leaflets issued by some of its local groups. The statement was released on the Hamas website in Arabic; it was not translated in the English section of the site, probably due to the Western resentment of such ideas. Hamas issued the press release in reaction to the Stockholm conference on the Jewish Holocaust, held in late January 2000, in which several heads of state and officials from many countries participated. The conference emphasized the need to fight the phenomenon of total or partial Holocaust denial by political movements, historians, or anti-Semitic groups and individuals on an international level.

The Hamas press release represents an escalation in the organization's rhetoric and a hardening of its position toward Israel. But it is also important to view this statement in the context of the declining support by the Palestinian public for Hamas in general and the group's terrorist activity in particular.

An excerpt of this press release follows. It is taken from the official website of Hamas (www.palestine-info.org) and is translated from the original Arabic:

Following the special international conference in Stockholm concerning the alleged Jewish Holocaust during World War II, a senior leading member of The Islamic Resistance Movement-- Hamas--states the following:

This conference bears a clear Zionist goal, aimed at forging history by hiding the truth about the so-called Holocaust, which is an alleged and invented story with no basis. . . . The invention of these grand illusions of an alleged crime that never occurred, ignoring the millions of dead European victims of Nazism during the war, clearly reveals the racist Zionist face, which believes in the superiority of the Jewish race over the rest of the nations.

Not only does this attempt to focus on an alleged story ignore the suffering of our people and disregard the massacres committed by the Zionists against them, such as Dir Yasin, Kafr Qasem, Tanturah, Jerusalem, Hebron and Sabra and Shatila--not to mention the massacres committed by the enemy against the people of our nation, such as in Bahr al-Baqr and Qana, the killing of thousands of Egyptian captives, and so on--but the story itself has no proof. . . . The Zionist entity is using psychological and ideological terrorism through the Stockholm conference and the alleged Nazi Holocaust. . . .

We call the free scholars of the world and its vital forces to expose the crimes of global Zionism against our people, our nation, and against all human civilization, and to refute them and not to fear the hostility of the Jews and their ideological terrorism or their influence through which they shut mouths and prevent objective, unbiased scholars from revealing the Zionist claims as lies. By these methods, the Jews in the world flout scientific methods of research whenever that research contradicts their racist interests.

Reuven Paz is a visiting fellow at The Washington Institute and the academic director of the International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism at the Inter-Disciplinary Center in Herzliya, Israel.

Policy #255

THE NEW ANTISEMITISM

[The Official Website of Berlin](#)



Around 2000 people took part in a tour of West Berlin on Thursday to commemorate the Nazi pogrom night 85 years ago.

The number was given by the police. The so-called memorial route led from Winterfeldtplatz via Tauentzienstraße and Kurfürstendamm to the Jewish Community Centre in Fasanenstraße.

"Never again is now" at the Brandenburg Gate

At a commemoration ceremony organised by the community, the Governing Mayor Kai Wegner warned that such violence against Jews must never be allowed to happen again. "Never again is now", said the CDU politician. He also had this message projected onto the [Brandenburg Gate](#) in the evening. The pogroms of November 9 and 10, 1938 were "a sombre, very dark chapter in our history that we must never forget", said the CDU politician.

[TIME](#) [Noah Feldman](#) February 27, 2024

Feldman, the Felix Frankfurter Professor of Law at Harvard University, is the author of [To Be a Jew Today: A New Guide to God, Israel, and the Jewish People](#)

Why won't antisemitism die, or at least die down? In the months following Hamas' attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, antisemitic incidents increased substantially. The Anti-Defamation League, which keeps track, says

they [tripled in the U.S.](#) over the previous year, although its criteria also changed to include anti-Zionism. But from 2019 to 2022, the amount of people with highly antisemitic attitudes in the U.S. had nearly doubled, [the ADL found](#). In Europe, Human Rights Watch warned in 2019 of [an “alarming” rise](#) in antisemitism, prompting the European Union to adopt a strategic plan for fighting it two years later. No one can say definitively why the pre-Gaza War surge happened when it did. The salience of groups like the [neo-Nazis who marched](#) in Charlottesville, Va., in 2017 probably played a role, as did the influence of figures like the troubled [rapper turned designer](#) Kanye West. Historically, antisemitism has been a side effect of populism, which traffics in us-vs.-them stereotypes. Social media allows antisemitic influencers to recruit and communicate directly to followers, getting around the filtering bottleneck of the legacy media. The [murder of 11 worshipers](#) at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh in 2018, by a shooter enraged at Jewish groups providing aid to immigrants, was the painful lowlight of this era.

It can be hard to think clearly and reason calmly about antisemitism. For 15 million Jews around the world, its resilience engenders fear, pain, sadness, frustration, and intergenerational trauma going [back to the Holocaust](#) and beyond. The superficial sense of security that many Jews feel on a daily basis in the contemporary world turns out to be paper-thin. Jews know enough of their own familial stories to realize that in historical terms, such moments of safety have often been fleeting, followed by renewed persecution. Sitting in my office in leafy Cambridge, Mass., a proud citizen of the freest country in the world, in which Jews have been safer than in any other country in history, I am not free of emotion on the topic. Nor could I be.

For many non-Jews, antisemitism matters deeply too. People everywhere who believe that all humans are created equal know that the [presence of antisemitism](#) in a society has often been the forerunner of other visceral, irrational hatreds, from racism to homophobia to Islamophobia. Worse, the persistence of antisemitism stands as a stubborn counterargument to [Martin Luther King Jr.’s hopeful faith](#) that the arc of the moral universe bends toward justice.

In the past, antisemites, whether medieval Crusaders or [20th century Nazis](#), were often proud of their views. Today, thankfully, almost no one wants to be accused of antisemitism.

That’s a marker of human progress. It also means that the whole subject of antisemitism needs to be approached with charity and sensitivity. People who harbor no conscious negative ideas about Jews may unknowingly hold views that resonate with historical antisemitism.

Jews aren’t exempt from this, and so, neither am I. In a world roiled by polarizing debate, my aim is to encourage introspection—to get you to ask, as I ask myself, whether your feelings and beliefs would be the same if seen through the lens of the history and [context of antisemitism](#). I come not to accuse anyone of antisemitism, but to explore the topic in a way that deepens our understanding of where it comes from, and where it’s going.

The easiest way to explain why antisemitism is still with us is to blame religion. Scholars agree that what we call antisemitism today has its historical origins in [a strain of anti-Jewish thought](#) that grew out of early Christianity. The Gospels describe the Jews as complicit in the Roman crucifixion of Jesus. Paul’s theology was read to depict the Jews as having been replaced or superseded as God’s special favorites by the community of Christian believers. By failing to become Christians, Jews implicitly challenged the narrative

of inevitable Christian triumph. For well over a thousand years, Jews in Christian Europe were subject to systemic, institutionalized oppression. Historical antisemitism took the form of discrimination, expulsion, and massacre.

The problem with blaming religion is that antisemitism today is no longer driven primarily by Christianity. Although antisemitism can still be found among Christians, in the U.S. and around the world, most contemporary believing Christians are not antisemites. The old theological condemnation of the Jews for killing Christ has been repudiated by nearly every Christian denomination.

Nor does antisemitism among Muslims primarily reflect the classical Islamic claims made against the Jews, such as the accusation that the Jews (and Christians) distorted Scripture, resulting in discrepancies between the Bible and the Koran. Jews in Muslim lands mostly fared better than in Christian Europe. Until the 20th century, those Jews occupied a complex, second-class status, protected alongside Christians as “people of the book” and also simultaneously subject to special taxes and social subordination. The tropes of modern Europe’s antisemitism—of Jews’ power and avarice—mostly came to the Middle East late, through Nazi influence. Even the prevalence of antisemitism among Islamist groups like Hamas isn’t primarily driven by religion. Rather, it is part of their politically motivated effort to turn a struggle between two national groups for the same piece of land into a holy war.

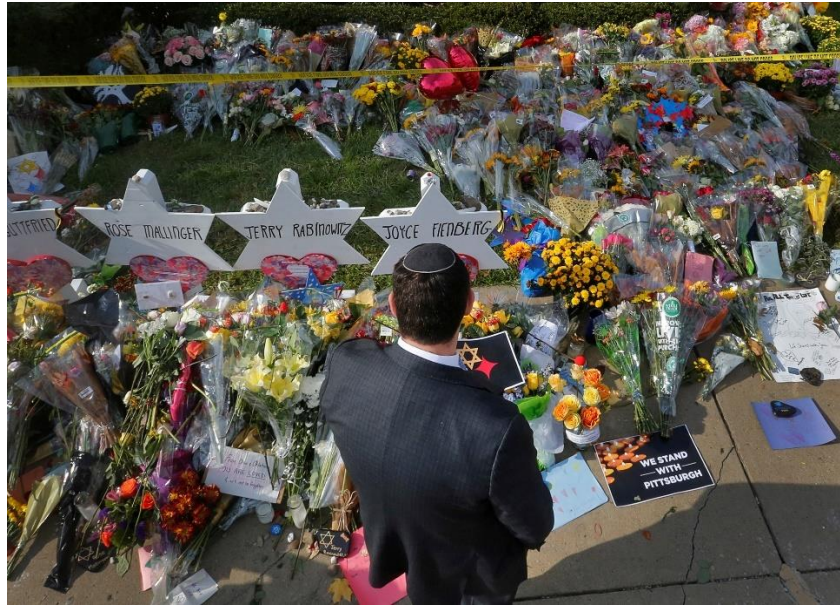
Read More: [When Jews are Threatened, Why Can’t Americans Condemn Antisemitism?](#)

It emerges that far from being an unchanging set of ideas derived from ancient faiths, antisemitism is actually a shape-shifting, protean, creative force. Antisemitism has managed to reinvent itself multiple times throughout history, each time keeping some of the old tropes around, while simultaneously creating new ones adapted to present circumstances.

In each iteration, antisemitism reflects the ideological preoccupations of the moment. In antisemitic discourse, Jews are always made to exemplify what a given group of people considers to be the worst feature of the social order in which they live.

A crucial reason why is surely that Jews were the most salient minority group living among Christians for the bulk of European history—and Europe was the heartland of historical antisemitism. The practice of projecting immediate social fears and hatreds onto Jews grew from the human need to treat some nearby group of people as the Other. (Muslims and Asians eventually also became subject to projection and fantasy, a practice dubbed Orientalism by the literary scholar Edward Said.) Once Jews had become the go-to targets for exemplifying societal ills, the habit stuck.

In this way, crucially, antisemitism is not and has never been about actual Jews so much as antisemites’ imagination of them. Because [antisemitic ideology](#) isn’t accountable to real-life facts, its content can be altered and changed as a society’s worries and moral judgments shift. Antisemitism’s capacity to keep its familiar character while also channeling new fears is what confers its stunning capacity to reinvent itself.



PITTSBURGH, 2018: A memorial outside the Tree of Life synagogue

Cathal McNaughton—Reuters

The first major reinvention of antisemitism took place as the Enlightenment gradually reduced the role of religion as the main source of Europeans' attitudes and beliefs. Nineteenth century antisemitism preserved the old belief that the Jews were unique, having once been God's chosen people and then uniquely punished for rejecting Christ. But it transformed this uniqueness to match the concerns of contemporary society.

Preoccupied with economic and social upheaval, antisemites depicted Jews as both uniquely capitalist and uniquely communist. Concerned about an unstable global power balance, antisemites claimed that Jews secretly controlled the world. Entranced by the pseudoscience of race that flourished after Darwin, antisemites declared that Jews were racially inferior. The obvious contradictions—that far from running the world, most Jews were impoverished, or that capitalism and communism were warring ideologies—did not deter antisemites. They ignored the illogic, or fell back on conspiracy theory, like the myth that Jewish capitalists and Jewish communists were secretly in cahoots. Ultimately, in different ways, both Nazism and Marxism identified Jews as an enemy deserving liquidation. The virulent antisemitism that fueled the Holocaust was thus partly a descendant of Christian antisemitism and also the product of modern conditions.

Today, racial pseudoscience is an embarrassment and the struggle between capitalism and communism has become passé. Antisemitist populism can still draw on old canards about Jewish power, and those still resonate with certain audiences, especially on the far right. But the most perniciously creative current in contemporary antisemitic thought is more likely to come from the left.

Instead of disappearing among people who would condemn neo-Nazis, antisemitism is morphing again, right now, before our very eyes.

The core of this new antisemitism lies in the idea that Jews are not a [historically oppressed people](#) seeking self-preservation but instead oppressors: imperialists, colonialists, and even white supremacists. This view preserves vestiges of the trope that Jews exercise vast power. It creatively updates that narrative to contemporary circumstances and current cultural preoccupations with the nature of power and injustice.

Concerns about power and justice are, in themselves, perfectly legitimate, much like past concerns about the effects of unfettered capitalism on working people—or for that matter, condemnations of elitism. So it is important to distinguish carefully between critiques of power that deserve serious consideration and the antisemitic ways in which those critiques may be deployed.

That caution is especially important because Israel, the first Jewish state to exist in two millennia, plays a central role in the narrative of the new antisemitism. Israel is not an imaginary conspiracy but a real country with real citizens, a real history, a real military, and real political and social problems that concern relations between Jews and Palestinians. It is not inherently antisemitic to criticize Israel. Its power, like any national power, may be subject to legitimate, fair criticism.

It is also essential not to tar all critics of Israel with the brush of antisemitism, especially in wartime, when Israel, like any other war-waging power, is properly subject to the strictures of international humanitarian law. To deploy the charge of antisemitism for political reasons is morally wrong, undermining the horror of antisemitism itself. It is also likely to backfire, convincing critics of Israel that they are being unfairly silenced.

At the same time, Israel's history and current situation confound categories that are so often used today to make moral judgments—categories like imperialism, colonialism, and white supremacy. And because people's ideas about Israel typically draw on older, pre-Israel ideas about Jews, criticism of Israel can borrow, often unconsciously, from older antisemitic myths.

To understand the complicated, subtle character of the new antisemitism, notice that the concept of imperialism was developed to describe European powers that conquered, controlled, and exploited vast territories in the Global South and East. The theory of settler-colonial white supremacy was developed as a critical account of countries like Australia and the U.S., in which, according to the theory, the colonialists' aim was to displace the local population, not to extract value from its labor. The application of these categories to Israel is a secondary development.

These borrowed categories do not fit Israel's specificity very well. Israel is a regional Middle Eastern power with a tiny footprint, not a global or continental empire designed to extract resources and labor. It was brought into existence by a [1947 United Nations resolution](#) that would have created two states side by side, one Jewish and one Palestinian. Its purpose, as conceived by the U.N.'s member countries, was to house displaced Jews after 6 million were killed in the Holocaust.

The [Palestinian catastrophe](#), or nakba, of 1948 was that when the Arab invasion of Israel failed to destroy the nascent Jewish state, many Palestinians who had fled or been forced out of their homes by Israeli troops were unable to return. Those Palestinians became permanent refugees in neighboring countries. Instead of ending up in an independent Palestine [as proposed by the U.N.](#), those who had stayed in their homes found themselves living either in Israel or under Egyptian and Jordanian rule. Then, [in the 1967 war](#), the West Bank and Gaza were conquered by Israel. Palestinians in those places came under what Israel itself defines as an occupation. They have lived in that precarious legal status ever since despite the 1993–2001 peace process.

Notwithstanding undeniable Jewish prejudice and discrimination against Arabs in Israel, the paradigm of white supremacy also does not correspond easily to the Jews. Around half of Israel's Jewish citizens

descend from European Jews, as do most [American Jews](#). But those Jews were not considered racially white in Europe, which is one reason they had to emigrate or be killed. Roughly half of Israel's Jews descend from Mizrahi, (literally, Eastern) origins. They are not ethnically European in any sense, much less racially "white." A meaningful number of Israeli Jews are of Ethiopian origin, and the small community of Black Hebrew Israelites in Israel are ethnically African American.



WARSAW, 1943: SS troops bring a group of captured Jewish people, including women and young children, to a railway-station collection point for deportation to the Nazi death camps; in the background, police and soldiers can be seen watching the Warsaw Ghetto burn. National Archives

Read More: [Europe's Jews Are Resisting a Rising Tide of Anti-Semitism](#)

Whether early Zionist settlers should be conceived as colonialists is a hotly disputed question. Were they stateless, oppressed people seeking refuge in their ancient homeland, where some Jews had always lived? That is certainly how they saw themselves. Or were early Zionists agents of the very European states they were seeking to flee, aiming to buy as much territory in Palestine as they could to create their own state? That is the view of critics, who emphasize the [1917 Balfour Declaration](#), in which Britain, still very much an empire, announced that it looked "with favor" on the creation of a national Jewish home in Palestine. The upshot is that while a well-meaning person, free of antisemitism, could describe Israel as colonialist, the narrative of Israel as a settler-colonial oppressor on par with or worse than the U.S., Canada, and Australia is fundamentally misleading. Those who advance it run the risk of perpetuating antisemitism by condemning the Jewish state despite its basic differences from these other global examples—most important, Israel's status as the only homeland for a historically oppressed people who have nowhere else to call their own.

To emphasize the narrative of Jews as oppressors, the new antisemitism must also somehow sidestep not only two millennia of Jewish oppression, but also the Holocaust, the largest organized, institutionalized murder of any ethnic group in human history. On the right, antisemites either [deny the Holocaust](#) ever happened or claim its scope has been overstated. On the left, one line is that Jews are weaponizing the Holocaust to legitimize the oppression of Palestinians.

During the Gaza War, some have argued that Israel, having suffered the trauma of the Holocaust, is now itself perpetrating a genocide against the Palestinian people. Like other criticisms of Israel, the accusation of genocide isn't inherently antisemitic. Yet the genocide charge is especially prone to veering into antisemitism because the Holocaust is the archetypal example of the crime of genocide. Genocide was recognized as a crime by the international community after the Holocaust. Accusing Israel of genocide can function, intentionally or otherwise, as a way of erasing the memory of the Holocaust and transforming Jews from victims into oppressors.

It is, of course, logically possible for an oppressed group to become oppressors over time. Allegations of genocide have been [brought against Israel by South Africa](#) in the International Court of Justice (ICJ), charges Israel has wisely chosen to contest rather than ignore. The charges are based on the numbers of civilians killed, the tactics that led to the deaths, and statements by Israeli officials. This evidence is supposed to prove Israel intends to destroy the Palestinian people, in whole or in part, which is the legal definition of genocide.

The number of Palestinian dead, [over 29,000](#) as of this writing, is heartbreaking. The rhetoric of some individual Israeli government officials cited by South Africa is particularly appalling, both in its dehumanizing character and in referring to Palestinians as Amalekites, a group whom the God of the Bible called on the ancient Israelites to "erase." Retired Israeli Chief Justice Aharon Barak, who serves on the ICJ panel considering the genocide charges, joined a part of the court's provisional measures that directed Israel to "take all measures within its power to prevent ... public incitement to commit genocide" in Gaza.

The U.S. government has itself condemned far-right members of Israel's Cabinet who called for Gazans to be pushed into Egypt. The repugnant policy of ethnic cleansing urged by the extremists would violate international law, even if it would arguably not count as genocide under the legal meaning of the term. Notwithstanding these serious concerns, Israel's efforts to defend itself against Hamas, even if found to involve killing disproportionate number of civilians, do not turn Israel into a genocidal actor comparable to the Nazis or the [Hutu regime in Rwanda](#). The genocide charge depends on intent. And Israel, as a state, is not fighting the Gaza War with the intent to destroy the Palestinian people.

Israel's stated war aims are to hold Hamas accountable for the Oct. 7 attack on Israel and to get back its citizens who are still being held captive. These aims are lawful in themselves.

The means Israel has used are subject to legitimate criticism for killing too many civilians as collateral damage. But Israel's military campaign has been conducted pursuant to Israel's interpretation of the international laws of war. There is no single, definitive international-law answer to the question of how much collateral damage renders a strike disproportionate to its concrete military objective. Israel's approach resembles campaigns fought by the U.S. and its coalition partners in Iraq in Afghanistan, and by the international coalition in the battle against ISIS for control of Mosul. Even if the numbers of civilian deaths from the air seem to be higher, it is important to recognize that Israel is also confronting miles of tunnels intentionally connected to civilian facilities by Hamas.

To be clear: as a matter of human worth, a child who dies at the hands of a genocidal murderer is no different from one who dies as collateral damage in a lawful attack. The child is equally innocent, and the parents' sorrow equally profound. As a matter of international law, however, the difference is decisive.

During the Hamas attack, terrorists intentionally murdered children and raped women. Its charter calls for the destruction of the Jewish state. Yet the accusation of genocide is being made against Israel.

These relevant facts matter for putting the genocide charge into the context of potential antisemitism.

Neither South Africa nor other states have brought a genocide case against China for its [conduct in Tibet or Xinjiang](#), or against Russia for its [invasion of Ukraine](#). There is something specifically noteworthy about leveling the charge at the Jewish state—something intertwined with the new narrative of the Jews as archetypal oppressors rather than archetypal victims. Call it the genocide sleight of hand: if the Jews are depicted as genocidal—if Israel becomes the very archetype of a genocidal state—then Jews are much less likely to be conceived as a historically oppressed people engaged in self-defense.

The new narrative of Jews as oppressors is, in the end, far too close for comfort to the antisemitic tradition of singling out Jews as uniquely deserving of condemnation and punishment, whether in its old religious form or its Nazi iteration. Like those earlier forms of antisemitism, the new kind is not ultimately about the Jews, but about the human impulse to point the finger at someone who can be made to carry the weight of our social ills. Oppression is real. Power can be exercised without justice. Israel should not be immune from criticism when it acts wrongfully. Yet the horrific history and undefeated resilience of antisemitism mean that modes of rhetorical attack on Israel and on Jews should be subject to careful scrutiny.

Just because antisemitism is a cyclical, recurring phenomenon does not mean that it is inevitable nor that it cannot be ameliorated. Like any form of irrational hate, antisemitism can in principle be overcome. The best way to start climbing out of the abyss of antisemitism is to self-examine our impulses, our stories about power and injustice, and our beliefs.

Feldman, a professor at Harvard Law School, is the author of the new book [To Be a Jew Today: A New Guide to God, Israel, and the Jewish People](#)

KEEPING POLITICAL ACTIVISM FREE FROM ANTISEMITISM: THE ETHICS OF PROTEST TO THE ISRAEL-HAMAS CONFLICT

[ABC](#) Uri Gal 25 Jun 2024

In the wake of the atrocities of 7 October 2023, and the Israel-Hamas war that ensued, the West has witnessed a surge of fervent protests. Marches have swept through major cities with protesters brandishing placards and chanting slogans that call for an end to Israeli actions in Gaza and the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

On college campuses, encampments have become hubs for student activism and discussions on colonialism, international law, and justice. In many cases, students have demanded that their universities divest from military industries and the Israel Defence Forces. In several instances, protests have devolved into aggressive standoffs requiring university security or the police to restore order and ensure free access to public areas and buildings.

In the midst of the heated debates about the war, an increasing concern has been the blurring of the lines between legitimate political criticism of the Israeli government and antisemitism. These concerns have been fuelled by the use of evocative rhetoric — such as “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” — as well as by a sharp rise in antisemitism [overseas](#) and [in Australia](#).

How can we, as citizens of liberal democracies, navigate the delicate balance between allowing free expression and curbing hate speech? More specifically, how can we discern when protests cross the line from valid expressions of political views to racism, and from legitimate criticism of Israel to antisemitism?

The conflation of Jewishness with Zionism

To be sure, it is certainly possible to criticise Israel without being antisemitic by focusing on policies and actions of the Israeli government rather than targeting Jewish people as a whole. For example, one can denounce the Israeli government’s treatment of Palestinians in Gaza or the settlement expansion in the West Bank. This approach highlights political concerns without resorting to stereotyping or discriminating against Jewish people at large.

How does the current wave of protests measure up against this principle? Several things are worth paying attention to. Much of the rhetoric in the last few months has focussed on Zionism and emphasised the immorality of Zionists rather than Israelis. For example, on university campuses in the United States, [activists target students](#) they [believe to be Zionists](#). Some university encampments have put up

signs stating [“Zionists not allowed”](#). A Google doc titled [“Is Your Fav Author a Zionist?”](#) recently went viral on social media. The document attempts to black-list authors believed to hold pro-Zionists views. This document is reminiscent of [“Zio600”](#), a spreadsheet containing the details of hundreds of Australian Jewish creatives, which was taken from a leaked so-called [“Zionist group chat”](#) and posted on social media by pro-Palestinian activists.

The shifting of the discourse to focus on Zionism is problematic because the overlap between Zionists and Jews is very high: a large majority of Jews worldwide identify as Zionists. Singling out an entire group of people based on their identity, rather than on their actions, risks conflating legitimate political criticism with antisemitism. It creates an environment in which individuals are judged, not on the basis of what they do, but according to their religious and cultural affiliations. This undermines the fundamental principle of democratic equality.

The erosion of this critical distinction can also lead to the suppression of free expression and debate, which are cornerstones of a healthy democracy. We have seen how this erosion plays out when students are targeted on American college campuses simply for being Jewish, when [Jews are harassed and physically attacked](#) in European capitals, and when [Jewish authors are punished](#) for failing to denounce Israel.

The detrimental effects of shifting the focus from Israel to Zionism have been compounded by the flattening and distortion of the concept of Zionism itself. Many activists claim that Zionism is an inherently immoral and racist movement. Such statements are tendentious at best. The central tenet of Zionism is that Jews have a right to national self-determination in their ancestral homeland. As [was recently pointed out by the historian Yuval Noah Harari](#), there is nothing in this idea that suggest that Jews are superior to others or that denies the existence of a Palestinian state.

Indeed, Israel’s first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, supported the UN’s 1947 partition plan to establish a Palestinian state alongside Israel. Moreover, [Israel’s 1948 declaration of independence](#), the country’s founding document, calls upon the Arab citizens of Israel to “play their part in the development of the state, with full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its bodies and institutions, provisional or permanent”. While it is true that some Zionists are racists, this is true for all other national movements.

A UNIVERSALITY THAT IS NOT-QUITE UNIVERSAL

Some of the [most vocal voices](#) in the debate on the war in Gaza have justified the student protests by couching them in a concern for the fundamental value of human life:

that sacred principle that every life is worthy and the murder of none shall pass in silence. As Abraham Lincoln famously quoted, “The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.” The right of the people of Gaza to live is an eternal truth.

Despite the apparent universality of this principle, it has been applied selectively. In comparison to the protests of the last few months, public reaction was all but non-existent after the Saudi-Yemen war, the Syrian Civil War, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the persecution of the Uyghurs in China, or the [expulsion](#)

[of over a million Afghans from Pakistan](#). This discerning application of criticism suggests that additional factors, other than a concern for human life, may be driving the current protests.

There have also been overt signs of antisemitism in the last few months. For instance, some have openly [supported Hamas](#) and others have [pledged to stand](#) with this terrorist organisation. In many cities around the world, [swastikas have been drawn](#) on posters of Israeli hostages — including some children — and in Melbourne a [Jewish school was graffitied](#) with the words “Jew die”, and a [Jewish MP’s office was recently vandalised](#).

The use by a number of activists of language that invokes violence — such as “By any means necessary” — suggests that their aim is not to promote a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but rather to dismantle the only Jewish state in the world. The same sentiment is echoed by those who yell at Jews to [“go back to Poland”](#). Hearing white Americans, or white Australians standing on land whose sovereignty was never ceded, call on Jews to return to Europe is not only a stark reminder of darker times, but also an astonishing display of lack of self-awareness.

HOW TO MAINTAIN THE INTEGRITY OF A MOVEMENT FOR JUSTICE

It is essential to acknowledge that not all protesters are driven by racist or antisemitic motives. Many individuals genuinely believe they are advocating for justice and human rights by supporting the Palestinian cause. These protesters are motivated by a desire to highlight and help the suffering of Palestinians and to call for an end to policies they view as unjust.

However, it is crucial to remain vigilant and distinguish between legitimate political activism and manifestations of racism or antisemitism. While it is entirely valid to criticise the policies and actions of any government, including those of the State of Israel, such criticism must not cross the line into hatred or discrimination against entire groups. Recognising and calling out antisemitic rhetoric and actions when they appear in protests can help maintain the integrity of the movement.

After 7 October, maintaining this balance is more important than ever. While it is crucial to protect the right to free speech in a democracy, we must also be willing to condemn any form of racism or antisemitism that may arise. Ensuring that public discourse remains free from incitement to hatred and violence is essential for upholding the principle of human dignity that is foundational to a democratic society.

[Uri Gal](#) is a Professor of Business Information Systems at the University of Sydney Business School. His research focuses on the organisational and ethical aspects of digital technologies.

RESOURCE PAGE:

UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR



[JEWISH COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL](#) November 27, 2024

JCRC is here to support the community during this horrific time. We are compiling resources here to support students, parents, employees, and others in communicating about and responding to the atrocities committed by Hamas and the resulting war. This is a dynamic situation; this page will be updated as events develop.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- [Understanding the basics](#)
- [How does the claim “Israel committing genocide in Gaza” invert both history and reality?](#)
- [Educator and workplace resources](#)
- [Sources for news and analysis](#)
- [Connect with us](#)

GLOBAL ACADEMICS CONVERGE IN LONDON 'SAFE SPACE' TO DISSECT POST-OCT. 7 ANTISEMITISM

Four-day conference this week sees scholars, artists and activists from India to Finland come together to share findings about widespread shunning amid Gaza war

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Lianne Kolirin](#) 1 April 2025,



Israeli artist Benzi Brofman poses with his mural 'The Process' at the Contemporary Antisemitism London 2025 conference in the city's JW3 Jewish cultural center, held from March 29 to April 1, 2025.

(Lakruwan Rajapaksha)

LONDON — Academics from around the world gathered in London this week for a landmark conference that promised to be a “safe space” to discuss antisemitism.

Delegates, who traveled from as far afield as India, Brazil and Finland, spent three days debating everything from antisemitism in the era of social media and AI to how the Muslim Brotherhood influences higher education at the Contemporary Antisemitism London 2025 conference in the city's JW3 Jewish cultural center. The conference ran from March 29 to April 1.

Hosted by the London Centre for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and the Comper Center for the Study of Antisemitism at the University of Haifa, the event was also open to activists, artists and the public.

Academics were invited to submit papers and subjects for panel discussions where they were promised “a serious and supportive community of scholarship” by organizers.

David Hirsh, academic director and CEO of the London Centre for Study of Contemporary Antisemitism, told The Times of Israel of the pressures academics in contemporary antisemitism studies have been experiencing — particularly since the Hamas invasion of southern Israel on October 7, 2023.

“It's really difficult to sustain a career in academia doing this work,” said Hirsh, who said the two centers are planning follow-up conferences for Haifa and Philadelphia in the next two years.

“People have not been able to publish, people were not able to do the things that you need to do in order to build a career in academia,” said Hirsh. Meanwhile “early career academics” are struggling to land gainful employment, which means some are “working hand to mouth,” he said.

Conference highlights included keynote lectures from acclaimed British historian Sir Simon Schama who spoke about Holocaust memory and the rise of contemporary antisemitism; Pamela Nadell, who served on the US Congress committee for combating antisemitism, and Jan Grabowski, a historian at the University of Ottawa who was threatened by the Polish government for writing about Polish collaboration during the Holocaust.

The current pressures are not restricted to those working in the field of contemporary antisemitism — or even academics — as a panel discussion entitled “The Experience of Being Boycotted” revealed.

Host Prof. Dibyesh Anand, deputy vice-chancellor at the University of Westminster, described how he was “boycotted for not taking part in a boycott” at his institution. He described the BDS movement as an “attack on the humanity of Jews,” as well as on democracy and liberal values.

Panelists included South African writer Ivor Chipkin who told of how a conference he organized in Johannesburg last September was “vigorously attacked” and driven out of its original venue. He said the experience, which rendered him “persona non grata in all sorts of places,” was a “profound assault” on the country’s “deepest democratic principles.”



An audience listens to a presentation at the Contemporary Antisemitism London 2025 conference in the city’s JW3 Jewish cultural center, held from March 29 to April 1, 2025
(Lakruwan Rajapaksha)

Joining him was Mercédesz Czimbalmos, a doctor of philosophy at Åbo Akademi University in Finland, who said her workplace and the University of Helsinki caved into a social media smear campaign about an antisemitism conference she was organizing. This led to the cancellation of a scheduled lecture by Izabella Tabarovsky, a scholar of Soviet anti-Zionism and contemporary left antisemitism, who also joined the panel. Tabarovsky said that as a former Soviet citizen she was “deeply familiar” with this kind of silencing.

Dr. David Barak-Gorodetsky, director of the Comper Center, said there's a "lack of research" into contemporary antisemitism.

"Many people are not encouraged to write about antisemitism — it's not necessarily the best career path to be focused on antisemitism," he said, adding that "it's very difficult to talk about antisemitism within academia."

The aim of the conference, he said, was to "enable" such conversations. "We want to be a safe space for that kind of research as many of the people that do that kind of research find it difficult to publish."

It was also important to create a network so "people can share their experiences," he said, particularly in the post-October 7 era. "Many of the scholars here have personal experience of being extremely surprised by the way their colleagues shunned them after October 8, by the way the discourse so quickly moved to an anti-Israel discourse."

"They feel very isolated and very lonely in their home universities, so we also offered them a space to be together," he said.

The shockwaves since October 7 have obviously not been restricted to academia, as opera singer Ilona Domnich described in the boycott session.

The British-Israeli singer, born to Russian and Ukrainian parents, said she has had no work for over a year as a result of the response to her social media activity since the fall of 2023. She said she is largely ignored, although she admitted that "a few honest people have said, 'If you stop posting that stuff we will employ you.'"

"I'm not going to stop because this is what I believe in," she said. "I believe that we as Jewish artists have the power to influence and to make a difference."

Maya Amrami, a British-Israeli artist and a doctoral student at UAL's Creative Computing Institute (CCI), no doubt agrees. During a presentation on antisemitism and the arts, she described how she transformed the hate directed towards her into creativity.

Amrami, whose "Hate Self Portraits" were on display at the conference alongside works by fellow Israeli artists Mina Kupfermann and Benzi Brofman, said: "Instead of solidarity or even basic compassion I was met with hostility and a wave of hateful myths about me and my identity, often expressed through comments."

"The silence from acquaintances and institutions was equally striking. What began as an absence quickly gave way to targeted harassment, particularly online," Amrami said.

When she published two posts about Hamas's sexual assaults against Israelis on and after October 7, she received more than 7,000 "violent and hateful" comments and messages "flooded my digital space."

"It was shocking, intrusive and profoundly traumatizing," she said.

GOOD NEWS IN THE BATTLE AGAINST CAMPUS ANTISEMITISM

[AJC CENTER FOR EDUCATION ADVOCACY](#)

Laura Shaw Frank, Director 6 May 2025

I'm writing to share good news about the impact of AJC's long-term efforts to combat widespread Jew-hatred on college campuses—a result of our sustained work with university leaders.

In collaboration with American Jewish Committee (AJC), organizations representing more than 1,600 colleges and universities have pledged reforms to fight campus antisemitism.

AJC CEO Ted Deutch called this “a major step forward in our efforts to create and foster the college experience that all students deserve: one that is free from hate, bigotry, and harassment, ensuring that all students — including Jewish, Israeli, and Zionist students — have the opportunity to grow and thrive.”

This breakthrough was announced today [in a joint statement](#) released by AJC, the Association of American Universities (AAU), and the American Council on Education (ACE), affirming the seriousness of antisemitism on campus and a pledge from these and other organizations, representing the full breadth of American higher educational institutions, to “continuing consequential reform and transparent action.”

While commending the administration for prioritizing the eradication of antisemitism on campus, the statement also notes that, “[i]n the name of combating antisemitism, the federal government has recently taken steps that endanger the research grants, academic freedom, and institutional autonomy of America's higher education sector,” reiterating AJC's concerns that overly-broad and arbitrary funding cuts could undermine such efforts.

What's at stake? [AJC's State of Antisemitism in America 2024 Report](#) found that roughly one-third (35%) of current American Jewish college students and recent graduates report having personally experienced antisemitism at least once during their time on campus.

Why does this matter? AAU, ACE, and the four other partner organizations represent more than 1,600 colleges and universities, related associations, and other organizations. The statement from these organizations is a clear commitment from leadership at colleges and universities across the country and across the spectrum of higher education institutions to prioritize combating campus antisemitism.

What comes next? Today's statement is a continuation and reaffirmation of the vital work of [AJC's Center for Education Advocacy \(CEA\)](#), the trusted resource for administrators and faculty at institutions of higher education and K-12 schools. Today's announcement signals an expansion of our long-term work to provide comprehensive action plans, impactful programming, and meaningful guidance to universities across the country, as we have recently done for Brown, MIT, UPenn,

Cornell, Michigan, and many others in the wake of October 7, 2023. Read and share [AJC's Action Plan for University Administrators here](#).

Our message to university leaders: Fighting antisemitism on campus requires a comprehensive approach that impacts all members of the campus community, including faculty, administrators, and students. A commitment to meaningful reform must involve better community-wide education about the unique manifestations of antisemitism, and a return to viewpoint diversity, fact-based inquiry, and courageous conversations in higher education. A pervasive atmosphere of Jew-hatred cannot become the new normal, and young Jews should not have to fear discrimination or harassment while getting an education.

[But without your support, we will not be able to reach every leader we need on college campuses throughout America. I hope you will join us in this critical work.](#)

AJC, the global advocacy organization for the Jewish people, creates trusted partnerships with influential leaders in education and throughout society in the United States and around the world to boldly advocate for Jews and Israel.

Sincerely,

Dr. Laura Shaw Frank

Director of AJC's Center for Education Advocacy

AJC IS LEADING THE CHARGE IN CONFRONTING JEW-HATRED AT HOME AND ABROAD

[AJC](#) Julie Rayman, AJC Managing Director of Policy and Political Affairs

advocacy@ajcglobal.org> 11May 2025



Welcome to American Jewish Committee's Action Against Antisemitism update – taking you to the front lines in the fight against antisemitism in America and around the world.

Know someone who cares about fighting antisemitism? Forward this to your friends and networks.

They can sign up at [AJC.org/AntisemitismUpdates](https://ajc.org/AntisemitismUpdates).

Spotlight: AJC CEO Ted Deutch Urges U.S. Senate to Take Bold Action on Surging Antisemitism



AJC CEO Ted Deutch recently testified at the Senate Special Committee on Aging hearing “Never Again: Addressing the Rise of Antisemitism and Supporting Older Americans.” Citing [AJC's State of Antisemitism in America 2024 Report](#), Ted stated that 73% of American Jews feel less secure than they did a year ago, and 56% have changed their behavior out of fear of antisemitism.

[Learn about how rising antisemitism is impacting Jewish American seniors and watch Ted's impactful testimony here→](#)

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

1. [AJC Drives Groundbreaking Campaign to Fight Jew-hatred on College Campuses](#)

In a major breakthrough, AJC forged a [historic collaboration to fight campus antisemitism with educational associations that collectively represent thousands of colleges, universities, and other institutions of higher education](#). With AJC, these associations pledged to “continuing consequential reform and transparent action” in addressing antisemitism. While recognizing the Trump administration’s significant efforts to stamp out campus antisemitism, the statement also reiterates AJC’s concern that overly-broad and arbitrary funding cuts could undermine such efforts. The pledge builds upon the long-term, trusted work of [AJC’s Center for Education Advocacy \(CEA\)](#), providing university leadership with [actionable strategies, transformative programs, and essential guidance](#) to make educational spaces safe and inclusive for Jewish students and faculty. [Read the full statement here→](#)

2. [New Collaboration Launched by AJC and USC Shoah Foundation on Modern-Day Global Antisemitism](#)

At AJC Global Forum 2025, AJC and the USC Shoah Foundation announced a new partnership to document and map modern-day antisemitism. This innovative collaboration connects AJC’s global reach with the USC Shoah Foundation’s expertise in testimony collection, where AJC will contribute to the USC Shoah Foundation’s goal of collecting 10,000 testimonies of incidents of antisemitism post-1945 to the present day, illustrating the rise of antisemitism and its many manifestations worldwide. [Watch here and learn more about this meaningful initiative→](#)

3. **AJC Presents Critical Data at International Antisemitism Conference**

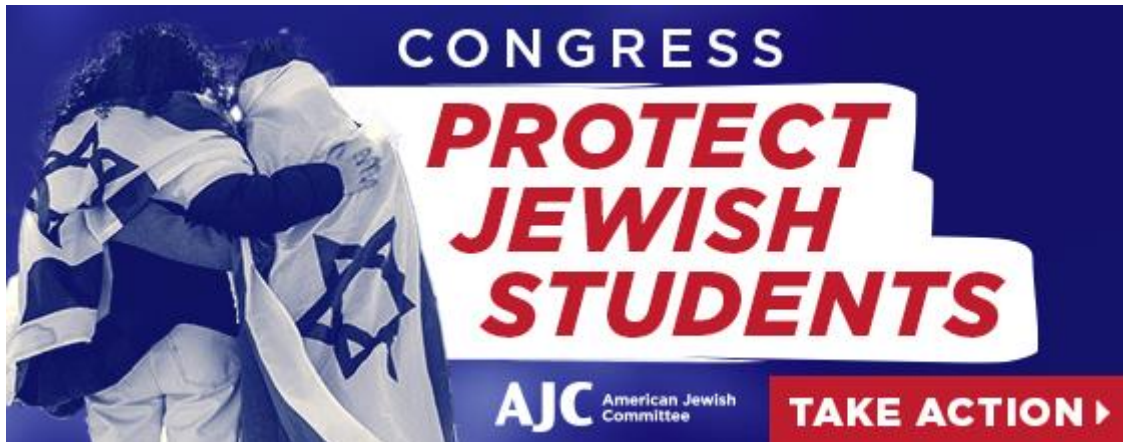
Holly Huffnagle, AJC U.S. Director for Combating Antisemitism, was a featured presenter last month at an academic conference on contemporary antisemitism in London, where experts gathered to discuss the latest challenges facing Jewish communities around the world. Holly shared eye-opening insights from [AJC’s State of Antisemitism in America 2024 Report](#) and demonstrated how visual data analysis is critical to spotting trends and developing better strategies to combat antisemitism. The conference included scholars and experts from the London Centre for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and the Comper Center for the Study of Antisemitism and Racism at the University of Haifa.

4. **AJC Plays Key Role in New French Law to Counter Antisemitism in Universities**

France’s National Assembly adopted a comprehensive law last week to counter antisemitism in higher education. Supported by findings from AJC Paris’ [Survey of Antisemitism in France 2024](#), the new law mandates that every French university appoint a dedicated official for combating racism and antisemitism, that any racist, antisemitic, or violent act may trigger disciplinary proceedings, and that university presidents remove any racist, antisemitic, or hate-inciting inscriptions on their campuses.

AJC will continue its impactful work in partnership with UEJF (Union of French Jewish Students) to ensure that French universities are in compliance with the new law.

[**Congress: Protect Jewish Students**](#)



Our leaders must take meaningful action to protect Jewish students
and our academic institutions from the threat of antisemitism.

[**Call on Congress to take proactive steps to counter Jew-hatred on campus.**](#)

TAKE ACTION

[Help Protect Israel and the Jewish People.](#)

[Support AJC's Critical Work.](#)

We are confronting a global crisis. AJC is leading the global response. With 25 U.S. regional offices; 15 overseas posts across Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East; and partnerships with dozens of Jewish communities worldwide, **AJC is *the* global advocacy organization for the Jewish people.** We are working around the world to strengthen support for Israel, counter antisemitism, and protect Jewish communities. Your support is essential to the fight. [Donate to AJC today.](#)

AJC is a strictly non-partisan 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. AJC neither supports nor opposes candidates for elective office



SUPPORT OUR WORK



GOVERNMENT REPORT ACCUSES WEST OF BOLSTERING ANTISEMITISM BY CRITICIZING ISRAEL

Diaspora Ministry dubs Canada ‘champion of antisemitism,’ tying Trudeau’s condemnation of military action in Gaza to 670% spike in anti-Jewish incidents

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Zev Stub](#) 5 May 2025



Protesters hold signs reading "Boycott Israel, It worked with South-Africa" as they gather during an anti-Israel demonstration, in front of the Foreign Affairs ministry in Madrid, on May 27, 2024.

(Thomas Coex/AFP)

Israel on Monday crowned Canada the “champion of antisemitism” and published a report blaming world leaders, universities, media outlets, and social networks for allowing or encouraging skyrocketing anti-Jewish sentiments around the world last year.

Relying on media accounts and data from international hate monitors, the Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism Ministry publication released Monday found that Jewish communities around the world were increasingly threatened due to a rising tide of anti-Israel criticism from friend and foe alike in the wake of Hamas’s October 7, 2023, attack and the war in Gaza.

Among those singled out in the 153-page English-language report were the governments of South Africa, Ireland and Spain, which were accused of leading the way in antisemitic rhetoric by voicing opposition to Israeli actions or policies. Political leaders speaking out against Israel were accused of bolstering anti-Jewish sentiments, as were the United Nations, the TikTok social network, and Columbia University.

Several organizations have documented a sharp rise in antisemitic rhetoric and actions after Hamas mounted its shock assault on Israel on October 7, 2023, killing more than 1,200 people and kidnapping 251. The Diaspora Ministry report, in contrast, devoted much of its focus to assigning blame to different entities for allowing hate speech and activity to persist and went further than others in linking anti-Israel sentiment to antisemitism.

“This shocking data highlights the ongoing failure of international institutions and many Western countries,” Diaspora Minister Amichai Chikli said in a press release. “The Israeli government will not hesitate to point out those who encourage antisemitism – be it governments, universities, or social networks.”

The report synthesized data from various sources, including watchdog organizations like the Anti-Defamation League and UN Watch, global research institutions, and Jewish umbrella organizations in different countries, the ministry said.

The publication comes just over a month after the ministry was lambasted for embracing far-right European politicians and disparaging left-wing organizations at an international [conference](#) on combating antisemitism it organized in Jerusalem.

Amichai Chikli, minister of Diaspora affairs and social equality, arrives for the weekly cabinet meeting at the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem on May 14, 2023. (Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)

While the ministry devoted a handful of pages to the Arab and Muslim world, where accusations of endemic antisemitism persist, the lion's share of the report focuses on the West; Iran, where some 8,000 Jews live under the regime's Islamist repression, is mentioned only in the context of Tehran's support for anti-Israel activities and terror.

In Canada, the report found a "significant increase in antisemitic incidents in intensity and forms not previously seen" in the country following October 7, 2023, counting a 670 percent jump in anti-Jewish incidents over the previous year.

"In 2024, Canada earned the dubious distinction as 'champion of antisemitism,'" a ministry press release accompanying the report read.

Former Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau's condemnation of Israel at the United Nations in December 2023, just two months after the October 7 massacre, helped fuel that country's rampant Jew-hatred, the report alleged.

Trudeau stepped down from his position in January 2025, and was replaced by Liberal Mark Carney in national elections last week.

Canada has made efforts to quell rising antisemitism within its borders, although Jewish groups say much more is needed.

In Australia, where a string of arson attacks and other vandalism at synagogues and elsewhere has shaken the Jewish community, the report recorded a 320% jump in antisemitic incidents compared to the months

In the United States, antisemitic incidents rose by 200%, the report said.

The report also quoted from surveys showing many European Jews fearing for their future in the Continent. A CRIF poll cited in the study found 64% of French citizens believe Jews have valid reasons to fear living there. In Germany, the ADL found that 80% of Jews reported feeling less safe, while in Britain, 90% of Jewish respondents told the Campaign Against Antisemitism that they avoid city centers during anti-Israel demonstrations.

The report largely tied countries' responses to antisemitism to the level of official criticism aimed at the Jewish state.

[South Africa](#), [Ireland](#) and [Spain](#) were all highlighted for unfriendly stances toward Israel, which the ministry alleged heightened uneasiness among Jews there.

“Their asymmetrical application of normative principles directly undermines Jewish communities’ senses of belonging and security within these societies, as documented through both quantitative and qualitative research,” the report said.

France, Britain, Canada and Australia were described as “morally ambiguous” for taking steps to fight antisemitism while simultaneously criticizing Israel to a “disproportionate” extent, endangering local Jewish communities.

The report accused French President Emmanuel Macron of helping legitimize antisemitic rhetoric from France’s far-left by making harmful [statements](#) about Israel’s military actions in Gaza.



Protesters hold placards which reads “Do not sacrifice French jews” and “LFI lights the match to antisemitic rapists” as they gather to condemn the alleged antisemitic gang rape of a 12 year-old girl, during a rally on Lyon Terreaux square in Lyon, central eastern France, on June 19, 2024. (Jean-Philippe Ksiazek/AFP)

In the UK, the Labour government was criticized for its [arms embargo](#) against Israel, and the state-owned broadcaster BBC was called out for [refusing](#) to call Hamas members “terrorists” and for covering up antisemitic complaints.

Only the United States and Germany were recognized as fully supporting the fight against antisemitism in the report.

International organizations were criticized for maintaining a double standard on Israel compared to the rest of the world. In 2024, the United Nations General Assembly passed [17 resolutions](#) condemning Israel, and only six against all other countries combined, the report said.

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, which the report urged governments worldwide to adopt, says criticism of Israel that places a double standard on the country is a form of anti-Jewish hate.



The report also backed South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, first row left, listens in Johannesburg on January 26, 2024, to the ruling from the top UN court that harshly criticized Israel's war against the Hamas terror group in Gaza. (AP Photo)

the government's contention that cases against Israel in the the Hague are antisemitic. Arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant for alleged war crimes in Gaza were listed in the report as "among the most severe antisemitic incidents of 2024."

ICC prosecutor Karim Khan has vociferously denied antisemitic motivations.

On social media, TikTok was singled out as a major source of antisemitic content, with the report quoting a former senior official at TikTok Israel who called the platform an "existential danger to Israel."

Many of the people responsible for TikTok's advertising policies support Hamas, the Houthis, and other terrorist organizations, while Israel's sponsored campaigns on the short-form video platform have all been

TikTok has said it works to block hate speech on its platform. The social network, which features short-form videos, has [initiated](#) several projects to promote Holocaust remembrance on its site, among other causes.

The report noted that all major social media networks, including TikTok, made efforts to curb antisemitic messaging after the October 7 attack.

However, these efforts have been insufficiently enforced. During the most recent US elections, Instagram removed 40% of antisemitic content from its platform, Facebook removed 24%, X removed 22%, and TikTok removed just 17%, the report claims.

According to the report, 2,087 antisemitic incidents were recorded on college campuses between June 2023 and May 2024, 477% more than a year earlier.

Columbia University in New York was labeled the most antisemitic campus in the US, with 127 antisemitic incidents in 2024, of which 90% were linked with far-left movements. UCLA earned a distant second with 63 incidents, followed by the University of Michigan (35) and Harvard University (32), according to data from the Amcha Initiative cited in the report.

PART 16

SEARCHING FOR HISTORY AND HOPE

5 FACTS ABOUT THE JEWISH PEOPLE'S ANCESTRAL CONNECTION TO THE LAND OF ISRAEL

[AJC](#) February 26, 2024

With the [October 7, 2023, Hamas massacre with now 1,200 Israelis and foreign nationals reported dead and 100 still held hostage](#), there have been renewed attempts to rewrite history and assert that Jews are “foreign occupiers” with no ties to the land of Israel.

Among the lies being spread is an effort to undermine Israel's legitimacy by accusing it of being a [settler-colonial state](#). Those spreading this lie argue that Jews have no historical connection to the land of Israel and that Zionists - those who support the right of Jewish self-determination and national homeland in the land of Israel - came to colonize the land, taking it from the Palestinians beginning in the late nineteenth century. However, this claim ignores the thousands of years of deep connection between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel.

Here are five facts about the long history of the Jewish people's ties to the [land of Israel](#).

1. Jews have had a continuous presence in the land of Israel.

While the Romans expelled the majority of Jews in 70 CE, the Jewish people have always been present in the land of Israel. A portion of the Jewish population remained in Israel throughout the years of Jewish exile while the rest settled around the world and became the Jewish diaspora. In particular, Jewish communities existed throughout much of this period in what is known as the Four Holy Cities: Jerusalem, Hebron, Safed (Tzfat), and Tiberias. Jerusalem is the most sacred, known for the Western Wall. Hebron is associated with the Cave of the Patriarchs, the traditional burial site of several important Biblical figures. Safed became the center of Jewish mysticism in the sixteenth century. Tiberias is notable for the Jerusalem Talmud during the Byzantine Period.

2. Israel was under Jewish leadership for hundreds of years in antiquity.

The ancient history of the land of Israel includes many centuries during which the land was governed by the Jewish people. Beginning in approximately 1000 BCE, which was the beginning of the Iron Age, under King Saul, David, and Solomon, the entire land of Israel was under a unified Jewish kingdom. The Unified Kingdom, as it is known, was divided in approximately 931 BCE into the Kingdom of Israel (Northern Kingdom) with its capital in Samaria, and the Kingdom of Judah (Southern Kingdom) with its capital in Jerusalem. Both kingdoms remained under Jewish rule. The Northern Kingdom was conquered by the Assyrian Empire in 722 BCE and most of its inhabitants were exiled, but the Southern Kingdom remained under Jewish rule until 586 BCE when the Babylonian Empire conquered it, exiling many Jews.

The Jews returned from exile under the Persian Empire and regained control over the land with the Hasmonean dynasty in the 2nd century BCE. Judea, as it was then called, became a client state of Rome

in 63 BCE, and the Herodian dynasty, a Jewish dynasty under the control of Rome took over. In 70 CE, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and exiled many of the Jewish inhabitants of Judea.

These kingdoms played crucial roles in shaping Jewish history, religious traditions, and cultural identity, with the city of Jerusalem and the two great Temples that once stood there holding special significance in biblical narratives and Jewish history.

Timeline: Key Events in the Israel-Arab and Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

3. Jerusalem is the holiest site in the Jewish faith.

Jerusalem has been the spiritual, religious, and national center of the Jewish people for thousands of years. Approximately 3,000 years ago, under the rulership of King David, Jerusalem became the capital of Israel. Jerusalem was the site of the two great Temples, the centers of Jewish worship for hundreds of years. The first Temple was built by King Solomon during the tenth century BCE and destroyed by the Babylonian Empire in 586 BCE, who laid siege to the city of Jerusalem, flattening the holy city and also forcibly exiled Judeans from the Kingdom of Judah.

The second Temple was built less than a century later, and destroyed in 70 CE by the Romans, who also destroyed the Jewish capital and forcibly exiled most of the Jewish inhabitants. The loss of the Temple had a profound impact on the Jewish faith.

Even after the destruction of the Second Temple and the exile of Jews from the land, Jerusalem remained central to Jewish life - and it is still central today. No matter where Jews pray, they always face the direction of Jerusalem. The Western Wall, the last remaining wall from the Second Temple structure, is the holiest site in the world for Jews. At Jewish weddings, the groom traditionally breaks a glass in memory of the destruction of the Temple. At the end of the Passover Seder, Jews recite "Next year in Jerusalem!"

4. While in exile Jews never stopped yearning to return to Israel.

Despite being scattered throughout the world during various points in history, the Jewish people maintained a strong connection to the land of Israel through religious practices, prayers, and an enduring hope of eventual return.

Diaspora Jews yearned to return to the Jewish homeland and the holy Jewish city of Jerusalem, both of which are mentioned multiple times in daily Jewish prayers.

Traditional Jewish religious thought stated that the Jews had been exiled from their homeland as a punishment from God. They could only return in Messianic times. This belief kept most Jews from thinking about a return to living in Israel.

But, in the nineteenth century, as European Jews suffered from growing antisemitism and violence against them, a new ideology was born - Zionism, a national liberation movement of the Jewish people. Zionists saw a return to the Jewish homeland as the path to Jewish redemption from thousands of years of

oppression. Small groups of Zionist pioneers began returning to their ancient homeland in the late nineteenth century, joining the community of Jews who had never left.

Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism

The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 realized the long-held dream of a Jewish homeland, and it has since become the center of Jewish identity and culture for millions of Jews worldwide. Israel is seen as a place of refuge, a cultural renaissance, and a symbol of Jewish self-determination.

5. Israel plays a central role in the Bible.

The land of Israel is central to the Jewish faith and is mentioned throughout the Bible. In the Book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible, God promises the land of Israel to Abraham, the first Jew, and then reaffirms the promise to Abraham's son Isaac and grandson Jacob. In fact, the name Israel is another name for Jacob.

In the Book of Exodus, Moses leads the Israelites out of slavery and oppression in Egypt with a promise to take them back to the land of Israel, the land of their forefathers. The books of Judges and Kings relate the stories of Jewish rulers over the land of Israel, and many accounts in these books have been proven historically accurate by archaeological finds and Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian sources.

CONFLICTS DOUBLE OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS

CONFLICT INDEX: DECEMBER 2024

AI Overview

[Learn more](#)

ACLED data is updated weekly, with each week's update including the most recent Friday's information. This means that the data is collected and released in near real-time, making it a valuable source for understanding the dynamic nature of political violence and protests worldwide.

ELABORATION:

- **Weekly Updates:**

[ACLED](#) releases updated data each week, covering events that have occurred up to the previous Friday. This ensures that the dataset remains current and reflects the latest developments in conflict and protest situations.

- **Near Real-Time Data:**

The weekly update schedule allows ACLED to provide near real-time insights into conflict and protest events, which is crucial for crisis mapping and analysis.

- **Data Collection and Review:**

ACLED's data is collected by trained researchers who monitor a variety of local, national, and international sources in multiple languages.

The data is then coded and reviewed through a multi-stage process to ensure accuracy and consistency.

- **Data Access:**

Users can access ACLED data through various channels, including the Data Export Tool, Curated Data Files, and the API.

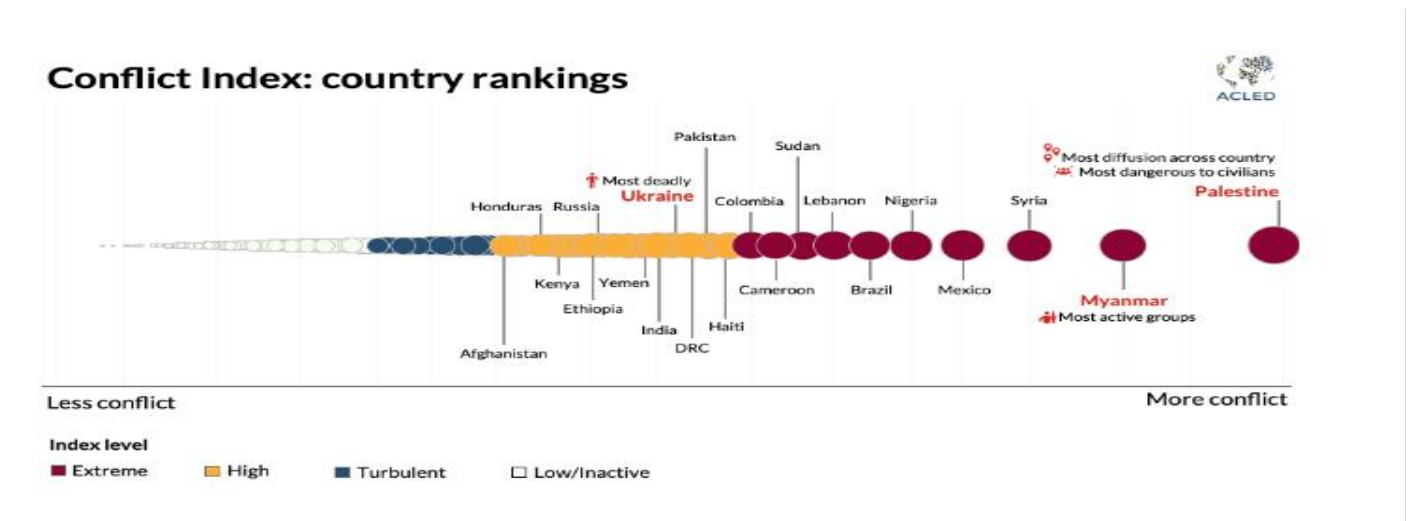
[ACLED](#)

PALESTINE IS THE MOST DANGEROUS AND VIOLENT PLACE IN THE WORLD IN 2024.

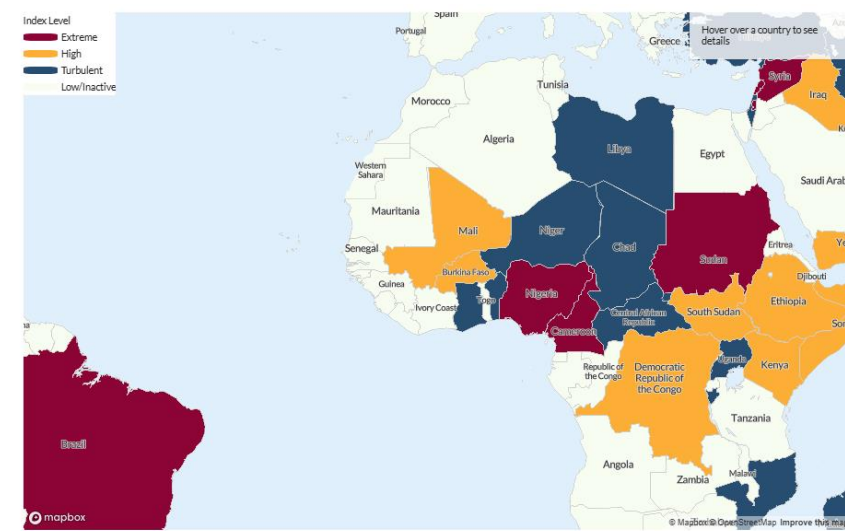
81% of Palestine's population is exposed to conflict, 35,000 fatalities are recorded in the past 12 months (over 50,000 since Hamas' attack on 7 October 2023), and civilians remain under daily assault from bombings and incursions. On average, 52 conflict incidents occur in Palestinian territories per day.

Because of Palestine's — and specifically Gaza's — level of violence compared to other conflicts and the lack of a ceasefire between combatants, it is very likely to continue being an intense conflict into 2025.

While Palestine had the most dangerous and diffuse conflict in 2024, in Myanmar, an average of 170 distinct non-state armed groups were active each week, and the groups changed quite frequently. Ukraine remained the deadliest conflict.



WHERE IS CONFLICT HAPPENING AS OF DECEMBER 2024?



NOTABLE TRENDS

HOW MUCH CONFLICT IS OCCURRING IN THE WORLD?

In the past five years, conflict levels have almost doubled. For 2020, we recorded 104,371 conflict events; this year, for the same period, nearly 200,000.

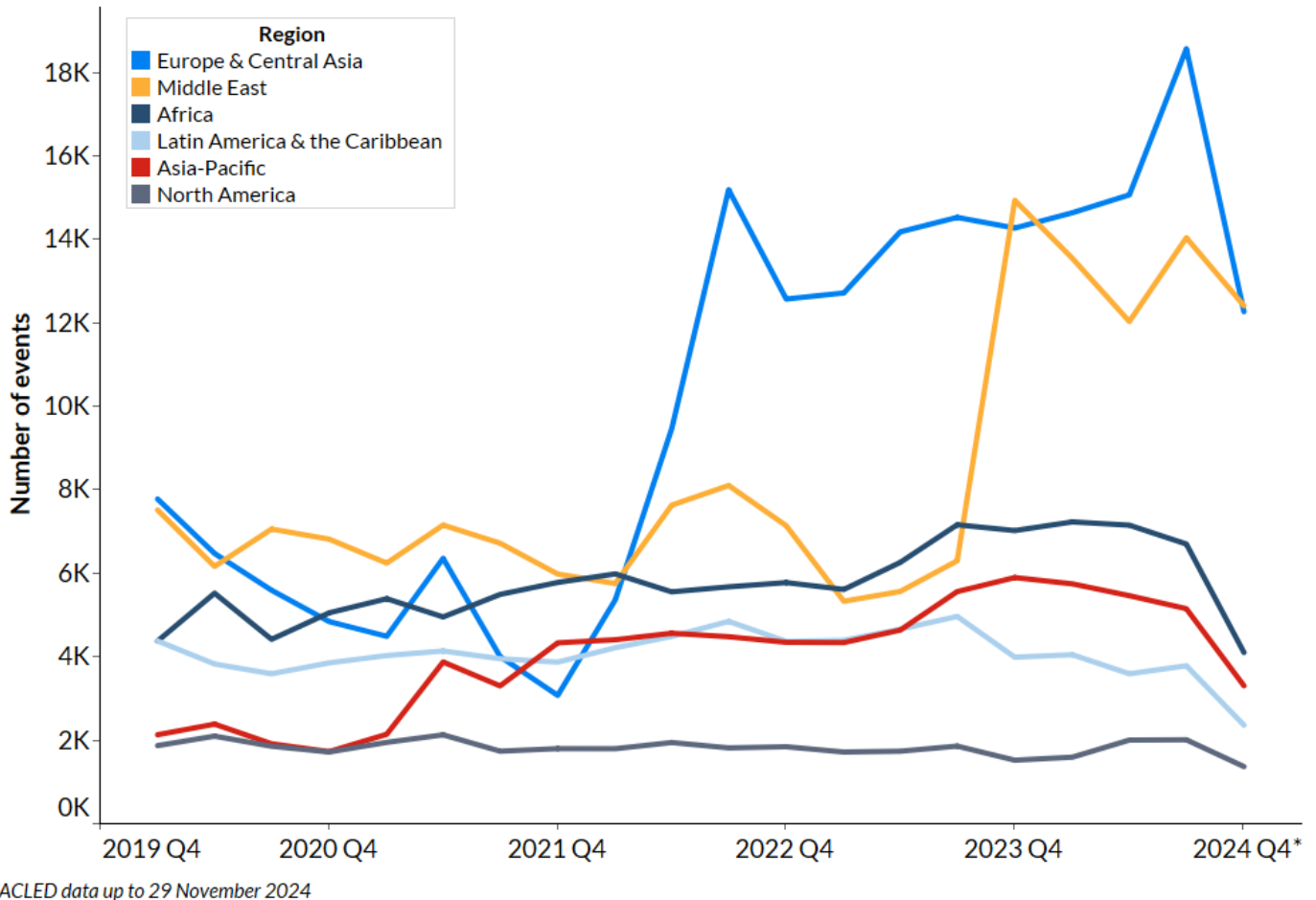
Over 233,000 deaths is a conservative estimate of reported fatalities resulting from these events in the past year.

This is largely due to three very large conflicts beginning or restarting during that time — Ukraine, Gaza, and Myanmar — coupled with continued violence in many other countries with high rates of conflict — including Sudan, Mexico, Yemen, and Sahel countries, and very few conflicts ending. Civilian exposure to violence, conflict incidents, and the number of armed groups involved in violence are proliferating.

2024 had a 25% increase in political violence events compared to 2023, similar to the average level of increase year-on-year since 2020.

Political violence by region

Q1 2020 - Q4 2024



ALL FORMS OF CONFLICT EVENTS HAVE INCREASED.

But bombings now represent over 90,000 events in 2024, are close to double the rate of battles, and triple the rate of direct violence against civilians. As states engage more with challengers domestically and internationally, warfare has become more sophisticated and widespread. Bombing and 'remote violence' nearly doubled as of 2022, growing by over 25% per annum since 2022.

Most protests are not included in the Index, but over 143,000 protests occurred in 2024, and major protest movements were linked to pro-Palestine agendas.

In 2024, over 3 billion people across 70 countries went to the polls to vote in national elections, with many more casting their ballots to elect local representatives. Over a third of the countries where a national election was held this year experienced at least one act of electoral violence, affecting authoritarian and unstable states as well as established democracies.

DID THE COUNTRIES WITH ELECTIONS EXPERIENCE A NOTABLE INCREASE IN CONFLICT RATES?

Generally, yes: Countries with elections in 2024 had — on average— a 63% increase in national political violence compared to over 21% increases across countries without elections. Increases in violence occur when governments or political opposition groups are willing to use violence to remain in power or seize it when they believe that the vote has been rigged. Political interests then arm militias and mobilize their supporters well before election day. Post-election, countries often return to their pre-election disorder rate.

Yet, electoral violence is not overly effective: Election results in countries like India and Senegal — where incumbent governments lost their absolute majority and presidency despite widespread violence — suggest that violence does not stop democratic choice and change.

But the patterns of conflict overall confirm that living in a democracy is not insurance against conflict. Most conflict is not occurring in ‘poor’ or ‘isolated’ autocratic states but in ‘partially free’ countries.

Most conflict is also now occurring in middle-income countries, and it is growing more strongly in middle- and high-income countries. In short, more development and democracy do not constrain violence. Conflict adapts to political circumstances, changing form and direction according to perpetrators’ agendas.

MOVEMENT AROUND THE INDEX

Over the course of 2024, Lebanon rose significantly in the Index, entering into the ‘extreme’ list, whereas it previously had hosted ‘high’ levels of conflict. Libya and Peru have also become worse, both because of increases in fatalities as a result of political violence. Levels of violence overall declined in Yemen despite remaining a site of very high conflict levels. Yemen has decreased consistently year-on-year — from more than 10,000 in 2020 to just over 2,000 in 2024 — but its violence is expanding into new areas and against new competitors in the Red Sea.

Haiti has approximately double the number of events in 2024 compared to 2020 but reported fewer fatalities in the past year.

Despite fears that the United States’ election year would result in a surge of violence, the US is no longer ‘turbulent.’ The US election was covered in great detail in our [Crisis Monitor](#), and while [pro-Palestinian protests](#) were very popular across the US, militant and violent movements were massively overpredicted by the media, and significant violence did not occur.

The most violent places are experiencing quite different conflict types: From bombing campaigns across the Middle East, mob violence in India, a cartel civil war in Mexico, internal jihadi competition coupled with (formerly Wagner) mercenaries in the Sahel, Red Sea antagonisms, an inter-state stalemate in Ukraine, to Sudan’s violence upon civilians.

Communities and governments can be equally and deeply challenged by multiple gangs that extort, build illicit economies, kill civilians, and destroy public space and politics, as they are by an established insurgent group with a hierarchical military structure and national political agenda. Each form of conflict is detrimental and widespread, resulting in a larger share of the global population being exposed to continued political violence.

The conflicts that proliferated in 2024 starkly demonstrate the differences between being in power and being in control. In the Sahel, governments in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger are in power but hardly in control of the local areas: Rather, jihadi groups, external mercenaries, and local arrangements create a chess board of control and competition. Governments in Myanmar, Mexico's new president, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition are all running into the abyss of 'control vs. power.' The results are drastic increases in violence rates and more violent groups, while influence over how violence evolves and ends is elusive.

2025: WHAT TO EXPECT

Recent levels of violence have been unprecedentedly high, with several 'record breaking' months in the past year. What can we expect in 2025? In the beginning of 2025, conflict event rates are expected to grow by 15% due to more bombings and battles, and result in approximately 20,000 reported fatalities per month.¹

Throughout the year, ACLED will assess whether conflict continues to increase, or whether armed groups will revert to a high, but stable, average rate of violence. This will largely be determined by how specific conflict actors engage in violence across multiple places. The recent activity in Syria is a test case of whether the involvement of external parties (e.g., Iran, Russia, Hezbollah, Turkey) reduces the conflicts these actors are involved in elsewhere.

Throughout 2025, levels of violence are expected to remain very high relative to the recent historical norm, and an annual increase of 20% is likely. However, the places, contenders, and forms of increased conflict in 2025 could be drastically different than the pattern in 2024. ACLED's CAST will continue to predict conflict patterns throughout the year.

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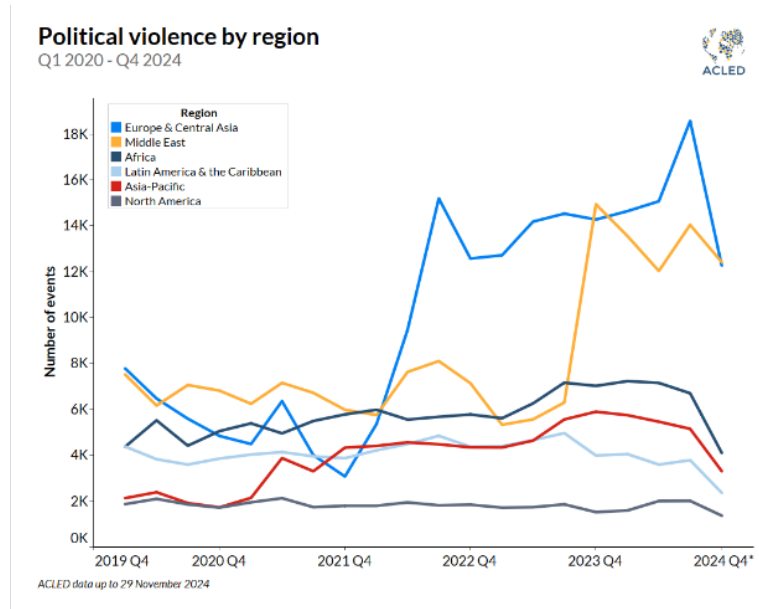
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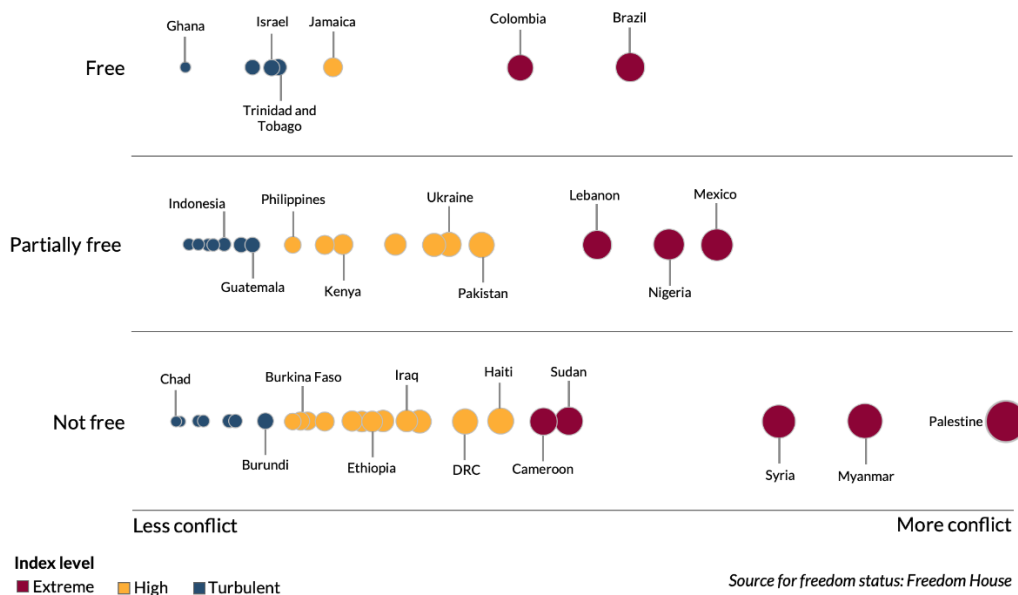
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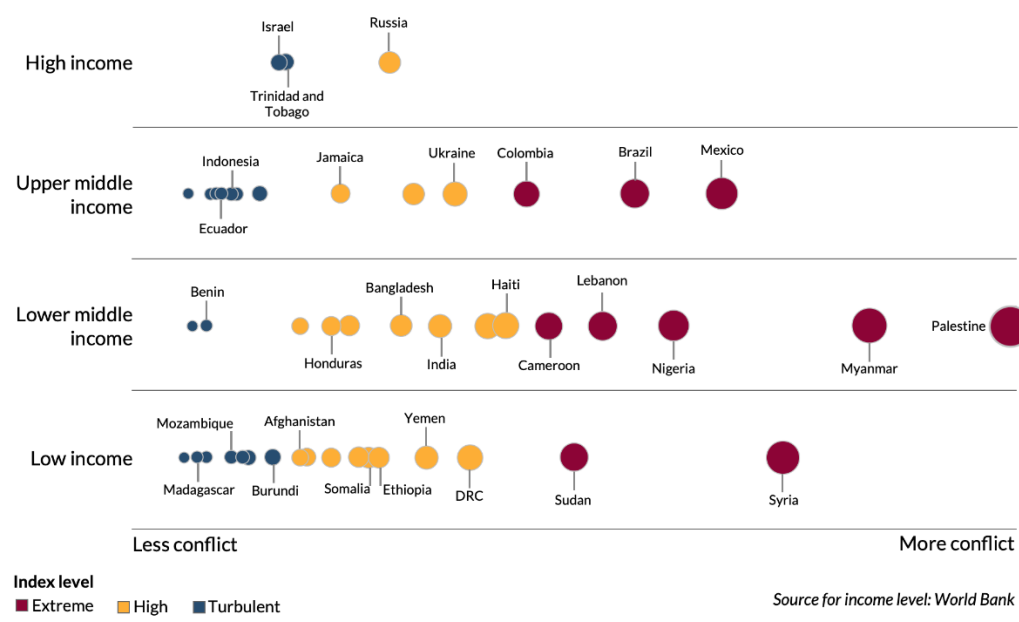
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Top 50 Conflict Index country rankings by freedom status



Top 50 Conflict Index country rankings by income level



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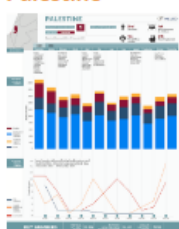
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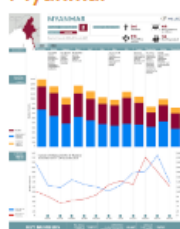
INFOGRAPHICS

Visit the [ACLED Conflict Index home page](#) for more information and previous reports.

Palestine



Myanmar



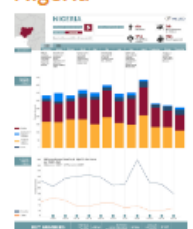
Syria



Mexico

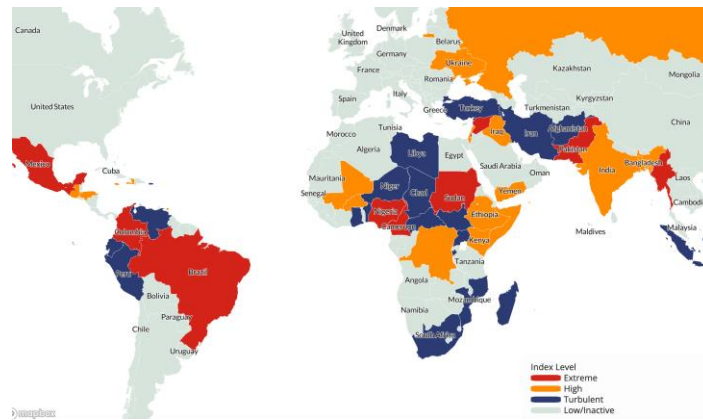


Nigeria



Downloads & Tools

Access a data file with ACLED Conflict Index results for all countries and territories, including Index level, overall Index ranking, and each individual Index indicator score. To access the underlying ACLED [conflict data](#), use our [data export tool](#) or [curated data files](#).



[Download Index Rankings](#)

INTERACTIVE CONFLICT INDEX DASHBOARD

For more information about past and present Index results, [use our interactive dashboard](#) to access additional tools, resources, and data downloads. *Use of the tool requires registration for a free account.*

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December 2024 Conflict Index Video:



Clionadh Raleigh

Prof. Clionadh Raleigh is the President and CEO of ACLED. She is also Senior Professor of Political Violence and Geography in the School of Global Studies at the University of Sussex. Her primary research interests are the dynamics of conflict and violence, African political environments and elite networks.



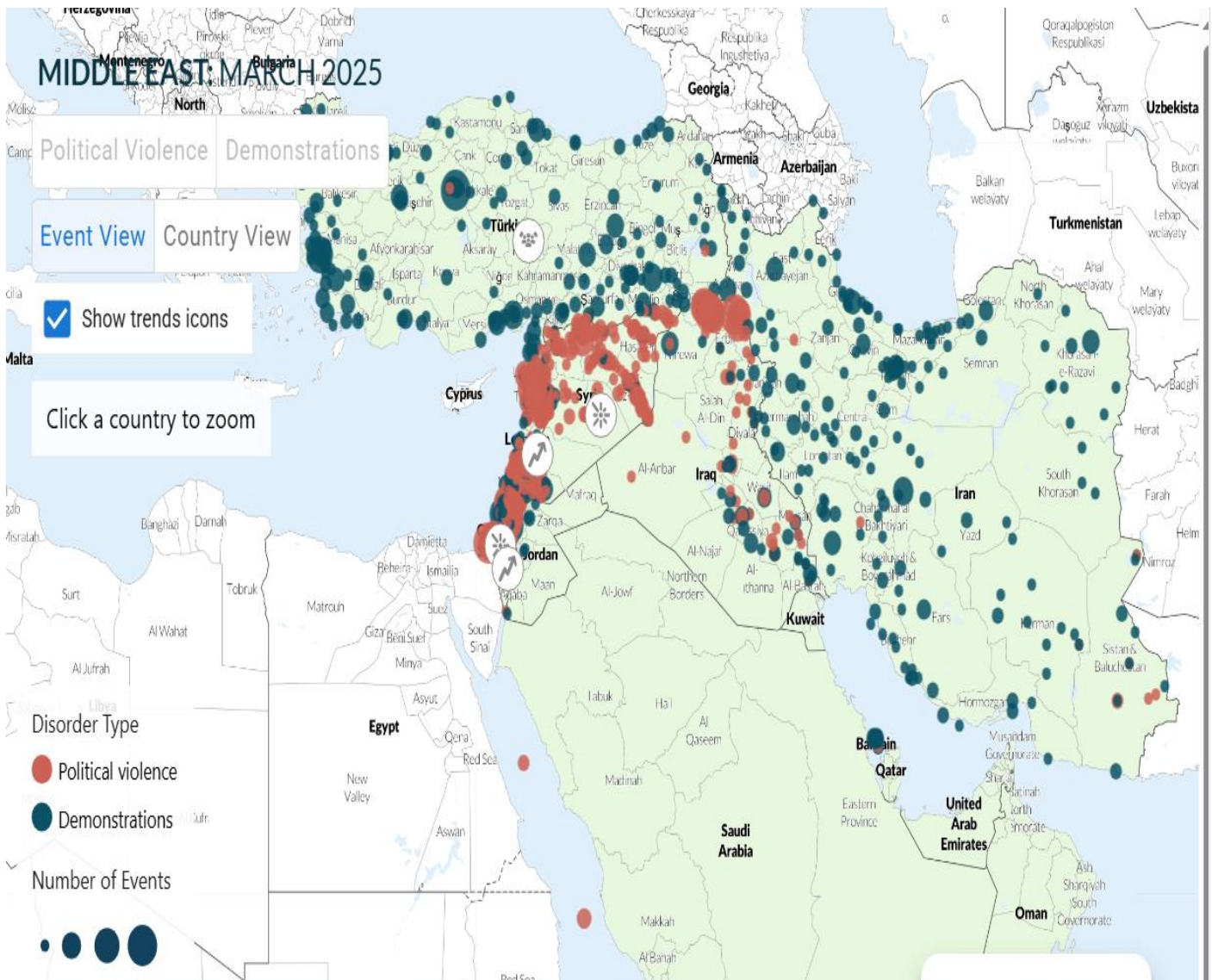
Katayoun Kishi

Katayoun Kishi is the Head of Data Science at ACLED. She oversees the management and publication of ACLED data, advises on new approaches to improving data collection and management, and leads ACLED's data science initiatives. Dr. Kishi holds a PhD in Government and Politics from the University of Maryland with a concentration in comparative politics and quantitative methodology. Her primary research interests are conflict forecasting and its use in humanitarian early warning systems.

THE ACLED MIDDLE EAST REVIEW, APRIL 2025

[ACLED](#) (Go tot site to view all graphics)

1. [GAZA: CEASEFIRE COLLAPSES AS ISRAEL INTENSIFIES PRESSURE ON HAMAS](#)
2. [LEBANON-ISRAEL: RENEWED TENSIONS THREATEN CEASEFIRE AMID REGIONAL UNREST](#)
3. [SYRIA: ISRAEL INTENSIFIES ITS AIRSTRIKES AND INCURSIONS IN SOUTHERN SYRIA](#)
4. [TURKEY: ISTANBUL MAYOR'S ARREST SPARKS NATIONWIDE PROTESTS](#)
5. [YEMEN: THE US LAUNCHES ITS MOST INTENSIVE AIRSTRIKES CAMPAIGN TO DATE](#)



KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Scroll to see all events

Violent & Military Events

Demonstrations & Strategic Developments



GAZA: CEASEFIRE COLLAPSES AS ISRAEL INTENSIFIES PRESSURE ON HAMAS

On 18 March, Israel resumed widespread airstrikes across Gaza after nearly two months of ceasefire, with ACLED recording over 300 airstrike events in March — nearly 10 times the airstrikes in February. The ceasefire collapsed after Hamas rejected a US proposal to extend the truce in exchange for 15 Israeli hostages, arguing it undermined the second phase of the agreement aimed at a permanent ceasefire.¹ As part of the renewed offensive, Israeli troops expanded the buffer zone, retaking the eastern section of the Netzarim corridor and partially disconnecting northern and southern Gaza. Troops advanced into Bait

Lahiya and moved from the Philadelphi corridor toward Rafah camp and al-Mawasi, encircling the Tal al-Sultan area west of Rafah. Hamas and other armed groups avoided direct clashes but fired several rockets toward Israel, causing no casualties or property damage. Overall, Israeli operations resulted in around 950 deaths among Palestinians in March, including civilians, militants, and top officials and commanders — more than six times the fatalities recorded in February. Notably, among those killed were four members of Hamas' political bureau, including Ismail Barhoum, the head of Hamas' civil and financial administration in Gaza.²

The Israeli government has asserted that negotiations will proceed “under fire” until Hamas is disarmed and its leaders depart Gaza.³ While Hamas continues to view disarmament as a “red line,” it has shown flexibility in releasing five living hostages in exchange for an extended ceasefire and increased humanitarian aid into Gaza.⁴ Limited anti-Hamas protests surfaced during March in Gaza, the first since February 2024, intensifying pressure on the group amid rising public discontent. The launch of a new Israeli ground operation on 2 April will likely increase pressure on Hamas by further preventing humanitarian aid and targeting new areas.⁵

For more information, see [ACLEED's Gaza Monitor](#).

[Back to map](#)

LEBANON-ISRAEL: RENEWED TENSIONS THREATEN CEASEFIRE AMID REGIONAL UNREST

March saw tensions between Hezbollah and Israel escalate to their highest level since the ceasefire took effect in November 2024, with ACLED recording a 100% increase in airstrikes and drone attacks by the Israeli military in Lebanon compared to February 2025, and the highest number of airstrike events in Lebanon since November 2024.

On 22 and 28 March, rockets were fired from Lebanon at Israel for the first time since the November 2024 ceasefire. Hezbollah denied responsibility, hinting at another faction within its sphere of influence.⁶ Regardless of Hezbollah's involvement, the attacks came amid rising regional tensions, including renewed fighting in Gaza, the commemoration of al-Quds Day on 28 March — an annual event in solidarity with the Palestinian cause — and Houthi attacks from Yemen. In response, Israel carried out an airstrike campaign against Hezbollah, holding the Lebanese government responsible for not reining Hezbollah in.⁷

In addition to their intensity, the airstrikes stood out for the high number of reported fatalities — over 30, the highest since December 2024 — and their expanded geographic scope. Notably, on 28 March, Israel struck Beirut for the first time since the ceasefire, marking a shift from previous attacks focused on southern Lebanon and the Bekaa, where the IDF claims it was targeting Hezbollah infrastructure and weapons depots. The ceasefire has so far remained in force despite these renewed flare-ups, but regional tensions, including the resumption of fighting in Gaza and the United States' strikes against the Houthis in Yemen, threaten the fragile truce in Lebanon.

For more information, see the [Israel-Hezbollah weekly situation update](#).

[Back to map](#)

SYRIA: ISRAEL INTENSIFIES ITS AIRSTRIKES AND INCURSIONS IN SOUTHERN SYRIA

In March, Israel escalated military operations in Syria's southern provinces with the aim of demilitarizing the region and establishing a new buffer zone.⁸ Operations mostly focused on the al-Qunaytira, Daraa, and Rural Damascus provinces, reinforcing the upward trend observed in [February](#), with violence doubling in March compared to the previous month.

Israeli airstrikes on Syrian territory increased by 140% in March compared to the month prior and saw a geographical expansion. Israeli warplanes conducted eight airstrikes on Syrian military positions in the province of Homs — targeting former Syrian army outposts reportedly being used by the forces of Syria's new authorities⁹ — and air bases.

Further, ground incursions increased by 30%, with around 35 recorded in March, up from 25 in February. These actions enabled an expansion of Israel's area of operations into al-Qunaytira and Daraa, leading to the destruction of several Syrian army positions and intensified attacks on civilian property. This escalation culminated in an attack on the village of Kuya in Daraa on 25 March, where local residents fired warning shots to deter Israeli forces from advancing into the village. In response, Israeli forces launched an airstrike and shelled the village, killing at least six civilians.¹⁰

[Back to map](#)

TURKEY: ISTANBUL MAYOR'S ARREST SPARKS NATIONWIDE PROTESTS

On 19 March, Ekrem İmamoğlu, the popular mayor of Istanbul and member of the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP), was detained on charges of corruption and aiding terrorism just ahead of his confirmation as the lead candidate for the 2028 presidential election. His arrest, along with 106 others¹¹ — including high-ranking municipal officials and district mayors also from CHP — triggered widespread outrage and was widely viewed as an attempt to eliminate the most serious opponent to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's rule.

Since İmamoğlu's detention, hundreds of thousands have taken to the streets in demonstrations demanding his release and judicial independence.¹² While CHP organized most events, demonstrators included students, activists, labor groups, and members of various opposition parties, making it the largest wave of anti-government demonstrations in Turkey since the 2013 Gezi protests. ACLED data show that between 19 and 28 March, nearly 220 demonstrations against İmamoğlu's arrest took place in Turkey across around 100 locations. While the majority were peaceful, 46 were met with police intervention, and four featured violence against police. These demonstrations drove Turkey to see its highest number of monthly demonstrations since June 2024.

The government dismissed claims of political persecution and accused protesters of inciting violence, imposing gathering bans in major cities like Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir, where demonstrations faced police intervention almost daily. At the same time, the total number of detainees in Turkey exceeded 1,900,¹³ among them journalists and opposition figures. The unrest highlights growing dissatisfaction with Erdoğan's administration as demonstrators rally for justice and democratic rights. The events have become a significant turning point in Turkish politics, reflecting deepening tensions and calls for change.

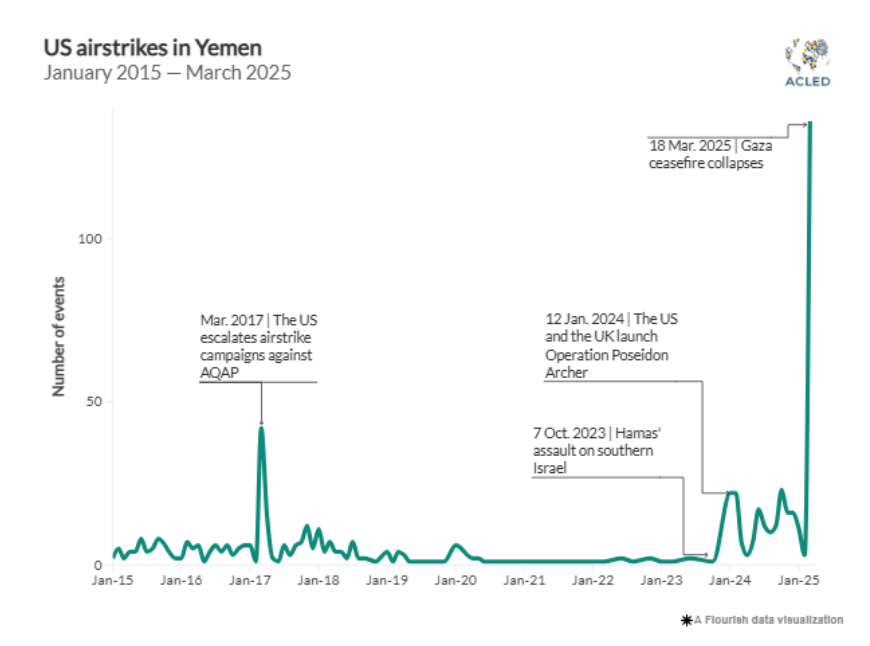
[Back to map](#)

YEMEN: THE US LAUNCHES ITS MOST INTENSIVE AIRSTRIKES CAMPAIGN TO DATE

In March, US forces resumed airstrikes on Houthi targets with unprecedented intensity, following a halt in operations since the Gaza ceasefire on 19 January. ACLED records 136 airstrike events since 15 March — the largest number of US airstrikes in Yemen in a single month since coverage began in 2015. This renewed campaign stemmed from two major developments: the US' listing of the Houthis as a foreign terrorist organization on 4 March¹⁴ and the collapse of the Hamas-Israel ceasefire, which led the Houthis to announce a ban on Israeli ships in the Red Sea a week later.¹⁵ Its unprecedented scale is also likely due to the Trump administration's desire to break with its predecessor's policies vis-a-vis the Red Sea crisis.¹⁶ Washington's declared objective is to restore deterrence by degrading Houthi capabilities to launch attacks in the Red Sea while also sending a message to Iran.¹⁷ US strikes targeted Houthi military camps, bunkers, weapons storage facilities, and civilian areas, with around 80% of the attacks concentrated on the capital, Sanaa, and the two governorates of Saada and Hudayda. The strikes reportedly killed at least 122 people, though estimates vary significantly. In particular, the ratio of Houthi officers to civilian fatalities is unclear.¹⁸ Yet, based on the Houthis' obituaries and reports by anti-Houthi sources,¹⁹ it is plausible that senior group members were among those targeted, including commanders responsible for Houthi operations in the Red Sea and relatives of the group's leader (*for more see this [expert comment](#)*). The Houthis responded to the strikes by launching at least 24 drone and missile attacks against US warships in the Red Sea and against Israel, but spared commercial shipping, resuming a pattern [observed since September 2024](#). Their attacks consistently failed to hit their intended targets or were intercepted by US or Israeli forces. Notably, the group did not follow through on its threat to target Israeli commercial ships.

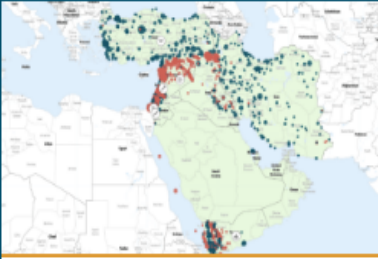
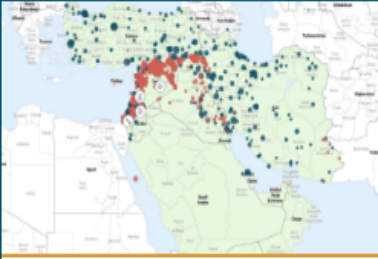
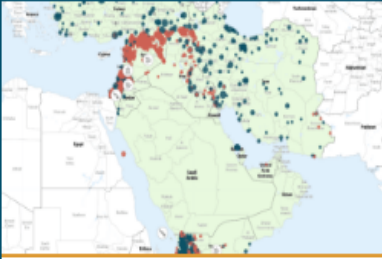
For more, see the [Red Sea attacks interactive map](#) created as part of the [Yemen Conflict Observatory](#).

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“ISRAEL” AND “PALESTINE”: WHERE SHOULD HISTORY BEGIN, AND SHOULD IT MATTER?

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS Dr Daniel Miller 06 Jan 2022



The geographic terms “Israel” and “Palestine” have a long history and specific connotations for Jews and Arabs with respect to their competing claims to the same land. The only way forward for Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Arabs is to cease looking backwards.

In her 14 [May “Looking Forward” newsletter](#), Jodi Rudoren, *New York Times* Jerusalem bureau chief during the last two Israel-Hamas wars in 2012 and 2014 (there have been four since 2008), wrote: “It does not, actually, help to examine what specifically started this conflagration, or the one before or the one before that, because it does, in so many ways, end up at ‘Abraham had two sons: there was Isaac, and there was Ishmael’”—a reference to the Genesis account that the Patriarch Abraham engendered one son said to be the ancestor of Arabs ([Ishmael](#)) and another considered to be the ancestor of Jews ([Isaac](#)).

Sadly, Rudoren is correct: investigating [the particular events](#) that culminated in the latest Israel-Hamas war can provide only an imperfect, fragmentary understanding of a conflict that began well over a century ago and is rooted in issues of territory that predate the Common Era. Still, given that one side claims fervently that the land is “Israel” and the other equally passionately that it’s “Palestine,” a potentially worthwhile avenue of enquiry for understanding the conflict, at least to some degree, is to look at what each of those terms has historically denoted with respect to geography.

“ISRAEL”

In the last decade of the 13th century BCE, Pharaoh Merneptah recorded that his military forces had decisively defeated [an entity called “Israel”](#) in the central highlands of what was then known as “Canaan.” A few centuries later, that region would be the location for two kingdoms: “Israel” and a weaker sister kingdom called “Judah,” the ultimate origin of the term [“Jew.”](#) to its south. The biblical tradition holds that there had previously been a united monarchy, apparently under the name “Israel.” The kingdom of [Israel was overthrown](#) in ca. 722 BCE by the Neo-Assyrian empire, centred in what is now Iraq (ancient Mesopotamia), and “Israel” ceased to be a geographic entity of the ancient Middle East.

“PALESTINA”

In the sixth century BCE, Judah and its capital Jerusalem were [conquered by the Neo-Babylonians](#), another Mesopotamian empire. Following [the Babylonian Exile](#), the territory of the former kingdom would serve as the geographic centre of Jewish existence until 135 CE when, following a [disastrous Jewish uprising](#), Roman emperor Hadrian expelled the Jews from Jerusalem and decreed that the territory surrounding the city be part of a larger entity called “Syria-Palestina.” Thenceforth, it would be primarily Jews in the [Diaspora](#) who would carry the traditions of Judaism forward. “[Palestina](#)” had as its ultimate referent the name and traditional territory of the Philistines, [mortal enemies of the Israelites](#) (forerunners of the Jews).

As part of the Islamic conquest of the Middle East in the seventh century, Arab peoples began to settle in significant numbers in the land. Apart from a relatively brief period of [Crusader](#) control, [Palestine](#) remained under Muslim control for just under 12 centuries, its population overwhelmingly Arab.

ZIONISM AND JEWISH RETURN

In the second half of the 19th century, Jews’ yearning to return to their ancestral land was given concrete expression in the form of the Jewish nationalistic movement [Zionism](#). Zionism arose in response to mounting virulent Jew hatred in Europe and czarist Russia. As Jews began to trickle back into the land, they encountered a sizeable Arab population that had been there for centuries.

Under the [Turkish Ottoman empire](#), the land comprised three administrative regions, none of which bore the name “Palestine”. World War I saw the collapse of the Ottomans, and in 1917 the land fell under British rule. “[Mandatory Palestine](#)”—comprising also the current state of Jordan—came into existence in 1923. Until that time, the Arabs living there saw themselves primarily not as “Palestinians” in the sense of a nationhood but as Arabs living in Palestine (or to be precise, [“Greater Syria”](#)).

THE FOUNDING OF THE MODERN STATE OF ISRAEL

During the era of Mandatory Palestine, the Zionist leadership in Palestine (the *Yishuv*) strove to increase Jewish numbers in the land to solidify Jewish claims to statehood, an initiative that was ultimately blocked by [British limits](#) placed upon Jewish immigration. It would be horrified world reaction to the [Holocaust](#) that would push the Zionist project over the finish line. In November 1947, the United Nations General Assembly

passed [Resolution 181](#), partitioning the territory into “Independent Arab and Jewish States.” The Resolution received immediate Arab rejection, and Palestinian militias attacked Jewish settlements. On 14 May, 1948, the *Yishuv* declared the founding of the state of Israel, immediately recognised by the United States.

On the morrow of Israel’s founding, the new Jewish state was invaded by a military force comprising multiple Arab armies plus Palestinian militia forces. By the time the fighting ended in 1949, the Palestinians had lost 78 percent of what the UN had allotted to them, and 700,000 Palestinians had been uprooted from their homes with no right of return to the present day. For Israelis, it was the [“War of Independence.”](#) For Palestinians, it’s [al-Nakba](#) — “the Catastrophe.”

Following decades of military and diplomatic setbacks, the Palestinian National Council issued a declaration of independence on 15 November, 1988, which was recognised a month later by the General Assembly as [Resolution 43/177](#). Currently, about three quarters of the UN’s membership [recognises](#) the statehood of Palestine, which has [“non-member observer status”](#) in the UN.

Since its founding and despite multiple wars with Arab states and non-state actors, Israel has flourished as a formidable Middle Eastern power. By contrast, the Palestinians have striven fruitlessly to establish a viable state and any real, sustained economic success.

The seizure by Israel of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza during its overwhelming victory in the [Six-Day War](#) of 1967—in which Israel faced a true existential threat to its existence from a combined Egyptian, Syrian, and Jordanian military force—has left the majority of Palestinians under various forms of Israeli occupation or control. Since the 1990s, there have been several unsuccessful attempts to achieve a [two-state solution](#). Under former prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, Jewish settlement in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, considered illegal by much of the world, increased dramatically. Those Arabs who do have Israeli citizenship, about a fifth of Israel’s population, are far too often treated as [second-class citizens within Israel](#). The 13 June ouster of Netanyahu from power could alleviate this somewhat—for the first time, an [Arab Israeli party is part of a government coalition](#).

Jewish Israelis, meanwhile, have experienced the violent fury of [two Palestinian Intifadas](#) (1987–1993; 2001–2005), the second of which featured a wave of Palestinian suicide bombings and ambushes that [killed over 1,000 Israelis and wounded about 3,000](#). This was the catalyst for [Israel’s Security Barrier](#), which has further exacerbated Palestinian distress.

WHERE SHOULD HISTORY BEGIN, AND SHOULD IT MATTER?

“Israel” and “Palestine.” One land, two names. Both Jews and Arabs have claimed it as theirs alone. From a purely historical perspective, “Israel” predates “Palestine” by more than a millennium. But, with the Jewish people then dispersed from their homeland, “Palestine” became home to a substantial Arab population, again for more than a millennium. From a perspective of justice and equity, both peoples have a legitimate claim to the land.

The wrongs and brutalities done by each side to the other have become too numerous to count. It does no good to try to assign blame for the latest war between Israel and Hamas. The war and the specific events

that led up to it are just more entries in a ledger written in blood and tears. The stark fact is that there is now no act of vengeance or retribution that Jews and Arabs could do to the other party in the conflict that would allow them to say that accounts had been settled on their side.

The ledger must, therefore, be discarded. As [Jodi Rudoren](#) has written: “[A]ny hope of ending the conflict...requires Palestinians and Israeli Jews to either acknowledge each other’s versions of history without trying to determine which is more legitimate, or to just ignore them. The only possible peace agreement is one that looks forward.” In a reversal of the transformation of the Nile in [Exodus 7](#), the rivers of blood spilled must, somehow, become water under the bridge.

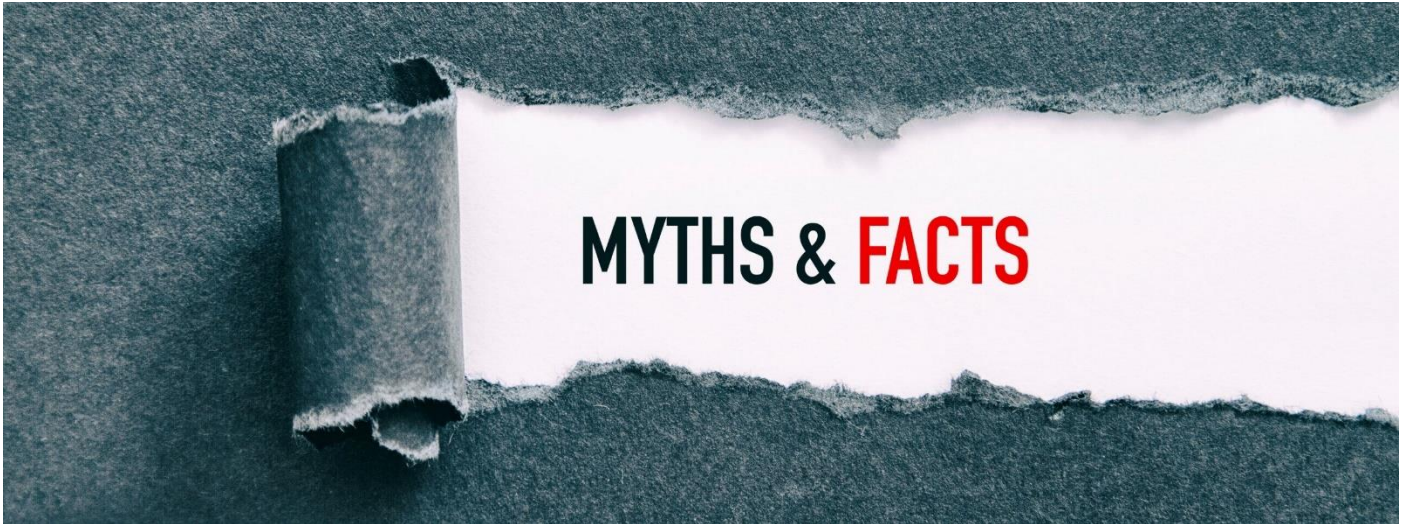
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MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT THE ISRAEL AND PALESTINE CONFLICT

SUMMIT June 14, 2024



Do conversations about Israel and Palestine leave your head spinning? Few issues seem to have as much misinformation surrounding them as the conflict in Gaza. When I go into an interview or Q&A on the topic, I prepare by reminding myself of the facts. Below, I share what I have found to be the most common myths and how to respond to these incorrect assumptions. By reading the arguments, you can prepare yourself with the facts so that you can have informed conversations centered on the truth.

- [Myth: “The modern state of Israel wasn’t formed until 1948. It’s not legitimate.”](#)
- [Myth: “Jews shouldn’t have their own nation.”](#)
- [Myth: “The Jews want to commit genocide against Muslims.”](#)
- [Myth: “The Jews have no history in the land.”](#)
- [Myth: “Israel is a white colonialist settler state.”](#)
- [Myth: “Palestine is the original name of the land and it belongs to those who identify as Palestinian.”](#)
- [Myth: “Palestinians have never been given an opportunity to form a nation.”](#)
- [Myth: “Palestine is ‘occupied’ by Israel.”](#)
- [Myth: “The charge of ‘anti-semitism’ is a bogeyman used by conservatives to demonize their opponents.”](#)
- [Myth: “The student movement against Israel is a spontaneous movement of social justice.”](#)
- [Myth: “Hamas had nothing to do with protests in America.”](#)
- [Myth: “The experts all agree that the Palestinian cause is just.”](#)
- [Myth: “Israel is a theocracy and theocracies are bad.”](#)

- [Myth: “Jews are no longer relevant to God’s plan for the world.”](#)
- [Myth: “Now that we have the New Testament, we don’t need the Jewish scriptures anymore.”](#)
- [Myth: “The biblical references to Israel are just spiritual metaphors, not about a physical nation.”](#)
- [Myth: “Israel is a secular state, not a Jewish nation.”](#)
- [Myth: “Why should Christians support Israel when it is the most non-religious nation in the world?”](#)
- [Myth: “Christians are not to be involved in war.”](#)
- [Myth: “Christians are supposed to turn the other cheek, which means that it is wrong for them to support war.”](#)
- [Myth: “Israel is intentionally killing civilians in Gaza.”](#)
- [Myth: “Israel is intentionally starving Gazans.”](#)
- [Myth: “Israel’s attack is disproportionate.”](#)
- [Myth: “Israel is deliberately committing genocide.”](#)
- [Myth: “It is wrong for the Israelis to respond militarily.”](#)
- [Myth: “ Hamas is trying to protect the Gazans from the Israelis.”](#)
- [Myth: “ Hamas has the support of Muslims around the world.”](#)
- [Myth: “ Hamas is a poor victim of Western aggression.”](#)
- [Myth: “ Hamas is a legitimate government that has been unfairly targeted by the U.S.”](#)
- [Myth: “ Hamas maintains its rule in Gaza by popular consent.”](#)
- [Myth: “ Hamas is telling the truth about what is really happening in Gaza.”](#)
- [Myth: “ Hamas is being unfairly accused of things it doesn’t believe.”](#)
- [Myth: “ Hamas doesn’t attack innocent civilians.”](#)
- [Myth: “ Hamas upholds Muslim values and doesn’t specifically target Jews.”](#)
- [Myth: “ Hamas doesn’t use its population as human shields.”](#)
- [Myth: “ Hamas is trying to live peacefully; it is Israel that is the aggressor.”](#)
- [Myth: “ Iran is not a supporter of terrorism.”](#)

HISTORICAL ARGUMENTS

Myth: “The modern state of Israel wasn’t formed until 1948. It’s not legitimate.” Irrelevant. None of the modern states in the region existed in their present form until well after the breakup of the Ottoman Empire in the early 1900s. Lebanon, Israel’s neighbor to the north, was formed in 1943. Syria, Israel’s neighbor to the northeast, was formed in 1944. Jordan, Israel’s neighbor to the east, was formed in 1946. Egypt, Israel’s neighbor to the south, became an independent nation in 1947. Why wasn’t a Palestinian state formed at that same time? The Palestinian Arabs involved in the negotiations refused to form one—then or ever since. Israel is the world’s only Jewish state.

Myth: “Jews shouldn’t have their own nation.” Why shouldn’t Jews have their own nation? There are fifty-seven member states of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. There is only one Jewish

state. About 1.8 billion people in the world are Muslim. The total number of Jews in the world is just over fifteen million. For every Jew in the world, there are 120 Muslims.

Myth: “The Jews want to commit genocide against Muslims.” If the displacement of a people group counts as genocide, then Hamas’s stated aim of killing Jews unquestionably meets the definition. Also, they point to the Islamic genocide against Jews that has continued unabated since 1948. In 1948, Egypt was home to seventy-five thousand Jews. Now fewer than one hundred are there. There are no Jews left in Libya and Algeria, both of which had populations of tens of thousands in 1948. At that time, there were 850,000 Jews in the Middle East and North Africa, outside of Israel. Fewer than ten thousand remain. Most of these Jews presumably emigrated to Israel. But according to the World Organization of Jews from Arab Countries, they had to leave behind land and assets worth more than \$300 billion, wealth that was confiscated by the various governments from which they fled. These same Arab countries, not coincidentally, have also ensured that Palestinians remain stateless. None, except Israel, are offering any kind of citizenship to Palestinians.

Myth: “The Jews have no history in the land.” The Jews are the only people group to have ever established a nation state in the now disputed land, and they did so more than three thousand years ago. Since the overthrow of Jerusalem by Rome in AD 70, though, the land has been ruled by foreign capitals as an administrative district. This was true until the 1940s when Israel and its surrounding nations came into existence in their present form.

Myth: “Israel is a white colonialist settler state.” In Israel, there are migrants from 103 countries, speaking 82 different languages. This defies the “white settler colonialist” label with which Israel’s citizens—and Jews everywhere—are smeared.

Myth: “Palestine is the original name of the land and it belongs to those who identify as Palestinian.” “The land was not called “Palestine” because it was owned by Palestinian Muslims. It was named Palestine in AD 70 by the Roman general Hadrian after he destroyed Jerusalem. Until the 1930s, the term “Palestinian” referred to Jews, Muslims, and Christians living in the historic land of Israel. In 1964, Yassar Arafat formed the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). It was Arafat who insisted that the term “Palestinian” be used to refer only to Arabs. The world has largely gone along with this distinction.

Myth: “Palestinians have never been given an opportunity to form a nation.” In 1947, the United Nations developed a partition plan for the region designating two separate states, one Arab and one Jewish. The leaders of the Arab faction rejected this plan, as well as subsequent two-state solution plans in 1967, 2000, and 2008. The situation is complicated further by the fact that the PLO in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza, while both Muslim, are essentially at war with one another. According to the Israeli Arab journalist Khaled Abu Toameh, they hate each other more than they hate Israel. A “two state solution” in which Palestine becomes its own country like Israel has been consistently rejected by the PLO. The rise of Hamas makes this rejection more likely to remain permanent because Hamas will settle for nothing short of Israel’s annihilation, and the PLO appears to fear the rise of Hamas more than it despises the presence of the Israeli army in the West Bank.

Myth: “Palestine is ‘occupied’ by Israel.” The West Bank is semi-autonomous, having gained this status through negotiations in which Israel gave back territory it had acquired when it fought back against Palestinian attacks in 1967. The West Bank is divided into three sections with overlapping governance by the Palestinian Authority (the governing body established by Arafat’s PLO) and the Israeli military. The term “Israeli occupation” mainly refers to the application of Israeli military law in these three sections in various ways, including policing and checkpoints. The IDF does not reveal how many soldiers it has inside the West Bank, but it is probably about six thousand. An American city with a similar population (three million) would typically have a police force of nine thousand. Why is this called an “occupation” rather than “policing”? There may be many reasons, but one of them surely is that Palestinians resent the Jewish presence and the term “occupation” offers them a rhetorical advantage in denying Israel’s legitimacy.

ANTI-SEMITISM ARGUMENTS

Myth: “The charge of ‘anti-semitism’ is a bogeyman used by conservatives to demonize their opponents.” Obviously, being against Israel’s policies doesn’t mean that one is by default pro-terrorism. But it is naïve to think that groups like Hamas are not the greatest beneficiaries of the oppressor/oppressed mindset. It is also naïve to think that this will somehow not translate into attacks against the United States, as Hamas has called for. In 2021, three respected researchers conducted an eye-opening study of where this new kind of anti-Semitism—the double-standard that denies the fundamental legitimacy of Judaism and of Israel—draws its energy. They found that not only does higher education not protect against anti-Semitism, but it also licenses it in a sophisticated, socially acceptable way. Those with advanced degrees were between 15 percent and 36 percent more unfavorable toward Jews and Israel when examples of certain social behaviors were about Jews rather than Black Lives Matter (BLM) advocates or Muslims, and about Israel rather than other nations, such as Mexico.

Myth: “The student movement against Israel is a spontaneous movement of social justice.” The anti-Israel protests in the United States are part of a carefully orchestrated propaganda campaign by Hamas. Just two days after the October 7 massacre, 127 university-based chapters of a group called Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) released a statement saying that Hamas’s genocidal attacks were justified and blaming Israel for committing genocide. SJP released this statement almost a full week before Israel ramped up its counter-offensive in Gaza, while the IDF was still rooting out terrorists from the homes of their victims and Israelis were enduring Hezbollah missile attacks from the north. It is now clear that Hamas’s propaganda campaign had been planned alongside the military one. But Hamas lackeys on US campuses apparently didn’t get the memo about waiting until Israel responded militarily before condemning it for responding militarily.

Myth: “Hamas had nothing to do with protests in America.” Hamas’s PR campaign surrounding its October 7 military campaign is a master class in propaganda. As we’ve already seen, the PR and the military campaigns were executed nearly simultaneously. Students for Justice in Palestine was so prepared for the campaign that it hosted a nationwide “Day of Resistance” just five days after Hamas’s brutal attack. Coordinators were alerted on the day of the attack to join for a planning call. The evidence that propaganda

was at play became obvious when SJP's PR messaging memo was leaked. It is a hodgepodge of Hamas talking points and Marxist mumbo jumbo, describing the October 7 attack as a "prison break" and claiming that the Israeli "settlers" were military assets, not civilians. It also claimed that Israel was fragile and on the point of breaking and that all means of resistance, including armed struggle, is "legitimate" and "necessary." All of this is lifted concept for concept and, in many cases, word for word from Hamas's charter. Even SJP's chant "glory to our resistance" is a well-known Hamas war cry. Hamas's PR campaigns after October 7 clearly fit the definition of propaganda. They manipulate symbols and slogans to play on prejudices and emotions, the goal of which is to leverage people's natural sympathy for beleaguered Palestinians into support for a brutal terrorist regime.

Myth: "The experts all agree that the Palestinian cause is just." According to Holocaust scholar Mark Roseman, half the Nazi leaders who planned the extermination of Europe's eleven million Jews carried the title "doctor." Why are educated people so often blind to the truth? One reason was explained by Joseph P. Overton from the Mackinac Center for Public Policy. Overton said that on any given issue, the range of "acceptable" ideas falls within a window. Picture a movie director framing a shot with her fingers. The audience doesn't see everything the director sees but only what the director wants them to see. The Overton Window explains why so many bright people at prestigious institutions can look at a world of truth and see it falsely. G. K. Chesterton in his short story, "The Oracle of the Dog" wrote, "It's the first effect of not believing in God that you lose your common sense and can't see things as they are."

FAITH-RELATED ARGUMENTS

Myth: "Israel is a theocracy and theocracies are bad." Israel is not a theocracy. Israel is a democracy, the only one in the Middle East. It is structured in a similar way to the Hebrew republic of ancient Israel, with a president, prime minister, representative body, and supreme court. It is vibrant and diverse. Israel has 55 political parties. Fifteen of these hold seats in Israel's governing body, the Knesset. As of this writing, the largest of these parties, Likud, only holds thirty-two seats out of the 120 available. It is the only nation in the region where women are equal to men and where people can live in freedom regardless of their religion, political beliefs, or sexual orientation.

Myth: "Jews are no longer relevant to God's plan for the world." The clearest writings in the New Testament about the Jews are from the Apostle Paul. Paul's understanding of Scripture was based on the idea of covenant. The covenant was from God, through Israel, for the nations. Jews are not Jewish just because some of them have Middle Eastern blood. They are chosen by covenant with God. Even when they are disobedient to God, his covenant with them remains. Further, the Abrahamic covenant was about the people in the land. God promised to bring his people into the land (Exodus 6:7-8). God swore to give the land as an inheritance (Deuteronomy 30:20). Ezekiel 36:28 says, "You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers." Deuteronomy 11:12 says, "The eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year." God is the One who decides whether this covenant still applies, whether it has been broken, how it can be renewed, or whether its obligations have been fulfilled.

Myth: “Now that we have the New Testament, we don’t need the Jewish scriptures anymore.” The New Testament has essentially no meaning without the context provided by the Old Testament. Even the prophetic language used by the apostle John in the book of Revelation draws on Old Testament prophecies, such as Isaiah 52, 54, and 60. John writes that at the end of all things, “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4). This ties back to Isaiah 25:8, which says, “He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.”

Myth: “The biblical references to Israel are just spiritual metaphors, not about a physical nation.” Before 1948, since Jews were dispersed throughout the world, the idea of “Israel” was sometimes seen by Christian theologians as more of a spiritual concept than a national identity. The gospel of Jesus is not somehow outside of or above physical reality, as the Gnostics taught. In the past, “Israel” may have been viewed as a non-physical, spiritual concept. I see the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 as changing that paradigm, both geopolitically and theopolitically. Jews have a physical presence in the land of their history. Whether you agree with how it happened or how they are stewarding it, this is the reality.

Myth: “Israel is a secular state, not a Jewish nation.” Israel is a Jewish state and a homeland for the Jewish people. Most of its citizens are Jews. Israel’s Basic Law (its constitution-like agreement) is based on the book of Deuteronomy. Its national holidays are Jewish holidays originating in Bible times. It incorporates Hebrew law into everything from marriages being performed by rabbis to the kosher food served at government installations. Israel’s flag is based on a Jewish prayer shawl.

Myth: “Why should Christians support Israel when it is the most non-religious nation in the world?” Many Jews don’t claim to be religious because one of the main arguments Palestinians make against them is that they are “just a religion.” But regardless of the personal spiritual state of any given Jewish person, the attacks on Jews have nothing to do with how religious they are. Every anti-God movement from Haman in the Old Testament to the Bolsheviks to the Nazis all sought to destroy the Jewish people because they are a people, regardless of their level of religious practice. Secular Jews are as likely as religious Jews to be targeted.

Myth: “Christians are not to be involved in war.” Yes, Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9). But saying “‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace” is to heal a wound lightly (Jeremiah 6:14). Evil must be opposed; peace dies when evil reigns. A shameful peace based on nonaction is not to be preferred to a just peace based on action. Evildoers must be stopped. War is a part of human life. It always has been. The historian Will Durant claimed that only 268 years in recorded human history have been completely at peace. It’s upsetting when our peace is disturbed; but war, not peace, is history’s norm. The question is not whether war is evil. It is. The question is, how might evil be minimized when war becomes inevitable? Biblical scholars, such as Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas, took a more prudential approach. War is evil, they wrote; yet it is also sometimes the only way to limit the spread of evil. Therefore, we are best served not by avoiding it but by carrying it out as justly as possible. To summarize

their writings, both believed that a war can be just if it is (1) declared by a legitimate government, (2) acting on a just cause, and (3) with right intention. The United States government believes that Israel meets all three of these criteria. Incidentally, Augustine and Aquinas did not believe that the greatest evil of war was that people die. We all die. The greatest evil was that greed, lust, and generational hatred might be allowed to rain down misery on the innocent, preventing them from living integral lives as God intended.

Myth: “Christians are supposed to turn the other cheek, which means that it is wrong for them to support war.” In Matthew 5:39 Jesus says that if someone slaps you on the cheek, you should “turn to him the other also.” The philosopher Arthur Holmes (1924-2011) maintained that the context of that verse refers to individuals, not to governments or churches. “It means that as an individual I do not take the law into my own hands,” he says. Justice matters. National defense and law enforcement are permitted. Personal vengeance is not.

WAR ARGUMENTS

Myth: “Israel is intentionally killing civilians in Gaza.” The Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry refuses to distinguish between combatant and noncombatant deaths. It maintains that all Gazans who die are “victims of Israel’s aggression.” There are no combatants, only martyrs. Those who died with weapons in their hands were innocent victims engaging in justifiable self-defense, as far as Hamas is concerned. Yes, many of those who have died were probably noncombatants. But Israel is taking great pains to protect civilians. Israel is not targeting civilians. Typically, in an urban warfare situation such as that in Gaza, civilians account for 90 percent of casualties. Using the Gaza Health Ministry numbers and Israel’s reporting about how many of the dead were combatants, one or two civilians have died for every combatant killed. This is far, far lower than the average and approximately the same civilian death rate as World War II and Vietnam, in a much more complex situation. Part of the reason civilian casualties have been much lower than historical norms is that the IDF operates by rules of engagement designed to limit civilian casualties. It uses precision weapons to focus on specific targets. It alerts residents through calls, texts, and pamphlets. It has evacuated 1.2 million Gazans to safe zones. John Spencer, a leading expert on urban warfare, says that “Israel has implemented more precautions to prevent civilian harm than any military in history—above and beyond what international law requires and more than the United States did in its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.”

Myth: “Israel is intentionally starving Gazans.” This charge is now known to be false. Columbia University business school professors Awi Fedengruen and Ran Kivetz analyzed the aid situation and reported that enough food was delivered to Gaza between October 2023 and April 2024—290,000 tons—to meet 50 percent of Gaza’s food needs, even as three-fourths of Gaza’s agricultural production ability remains intact. If people aren’t getting enough food, Hamas theft is the most likely culprit.

Myth: “Israel’s attack is disproportionate.” Proportionality is not based on the number of casualties but on the nature of the threat. Hamas’s threat to Israel has been going on for decades, and it continues even now. Hamas won’t release the hostages and continues shooting rockets at and conducting terrorist acts in Israel. It deploys a well-developed propaganda mechanism that is actively trying to inflame world opinion

against Israel. It is backed by Iran, a nation whose escalating military aggression and sponsorship of the region's most destabilizing forces represent Israel's greatest existential threat. Ghazi Hamad, a Hamas political leader, has promised that Hamas will attack Israel "again and again" until it is destroyed. Every time Hamas has the opportunity to make good on this promise, it has done so. Israel has concluded—and the world has grudgingly agreed—that neither Israel nor the Palestinian people will ever be safe as long as Hamas remains powerful. In addition, we must consider the deterrent effect of Israel's actions against Gaza. To Israel's north, Hezbollah terrorists who control Lebanon make daily threats and back them up with rocket strikes. What keeps Hezbollah's one hundred thousand fighters from storming into Israel? Armies won't attack if they stand to lose more than they stand to gain. Hezbollah knows that Israel will defend itself aggressively if attacked. Iran, which controls Hezbollah, may not care whether Lebanon is destroyed; but it does care that its own infrastructure is not attacked by a nuclear capable Israel.

Myth: "Israel is deliberately committing genocide." For genocide to occur, according to the deliberations of the International Court of Justice, "the intent must be to destroy at least a substantial part of the particular group." To prove intent, the accuser must show something beyond cultural destruction, dispersion of people, or attacks on individuals from the group. It must be shown that there was an organized plan or policy designed to deliberately target the group itself. In its defense at the International Court of Justice, Israel said that not only did it not intentionally target Palestinian civilians in Gaza but that hostilities were decreasing as Israel achieved its stated war goals. It said that in addition to its strict rules of engagement, it had actively provided humanitarian assistance in Gaza through opening a dozen bakeries that produced two million loaves of bread a day, delivering its own water to Gaza through two pipelines as well as taking other measures to ensure water delivery, and facilitating six field hospitals and two floating hospitals with more being constructed. Israel says that it is evacuating the ill and wounded through the Rafah border crossing and has distributed tents, winter equipment, fuel, and cooking gas.

Myth: "It is wrong for the Israelis to respond militarily." Dr. Eric Patterson, a leading expert on Just War Theory, offers the following analogy: "I grew up in San Diego. If a criminal group came across the border from Tijuana and killed 42,000 men, women, and children in cold blood, raping women, and posting videos to YouTube accompanied by a Braveheart soundtrack, wouldn't we demand a reckoning?"

HAMAS ARGUMENTS

Myth: "Hamas is trying to protect the Gazans from the Israelis." Hamas has also publicly displayed a willingness to sacrifice Gazans if it serves the larger aim of annihilating Israel. Mashaal publicly described the October 7 attack as a clever form of self-defense and resistance. He told the interviewer, "We know very well the consequences of our operation on October 7." He pointed to the millions who died in in Russia, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Algeria in pursuit of revolutionary aims and crowed, "Dear sister, the Palestinian nation is just like any other nation. No nation is liberated without sacrifices."

Myth: "Hamas has the support of Muslims around the world." So far, most of the world's Muslim nations have declined to join Hamas in their self-described campaign of "resistance." These nations sympathize with the Palestinians, surely, but that doesn't mean they want them arriving on their own

shores. No Arab nations other than Jordan have ever offered citizenship to the Palestinians, and none are offering it now. Syria once offered Hamas refuge but kicked it out after it sparked a civil war. Not even the bad guys want to have anything to do with Hamas—except for Iran, which sees it as a handy tool to pry Israel out of the world community. For decades, Hamas maintained that it is the “central cause” of Ummah, the global community of Muslims. This is false. Hamas has become a pariah, even in strongly Islamic nations. UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt have all outlawed it. Saudi Arabia has jailed all the Hamas leaders it has found. None of the non-terrorist Middle Eastern states have condoned the October 7 attacks. The only nations supporting Hamas are Iran and Qatar. Iran has been designated a “state sponsor of terror” by the United States since 1984. The Council on Foreign Relations says that Qatar took in Hamas after Hamas lost its Syrian sponsorship because of a 2011 uprising of Palestinian refugees, which precipitated a civil war. Qatar sends Hamas hundreds of millions of dollars every year to help it become a “reasonable governing power.” Other Arab nations find this explanation suspicious. The Gulf Cooperation Council suspended Qatar over its ties to terrorism. In 2017, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt severed relations with the nation.

Myth: “Hamas is a poor victim of Western aggression.” The Foundation for Defense of Democracies has reported that Qatar provides Hamas between \$120 million and \$480 million per year. Much of this money makes its way directly into the hands of Hamas’s top echelon of leadership, who have found sanctuary in Qatar’s villas and five-star hotels even while Qatar receives billions from America for a military base in the country. Hamas’s top three leaders have a reported net worth of \$11 billion. Khaled Mashaal, Hamas’s primary spokesperson, is estimated to have a net worth of \$5 billion. He owns banks and real estate projects throughout the Middle East. If you were a leader of Hamas, would you be living a billionaire lifestyle of private jets and five-star hotels while your people are mired in misery and poverty? Apparently, Hamas’s leadership has no problem with this. It’s not just top Hamas leaders, either. The MacKenzie Institute says even Hamas’s mid-level leaders have become millionaires due to a 20 to 25 percent “tax” on all goods brought into Gaza. Some six hundred Hamas leaders have become millionaires through this graft.

Myth: “Hamas is a legitimate government that has been unfairly targeted by the U.S.” Hamas is an ecstatically revivalist cult that seeks to purify itself by defiling those it opposes. It desecrates victims not only to defeat them but also to deplete their lives of meaning. The last election in Gaza was in 2006. Hamas won. In 2007, they killed or banished members of the opposing party, Fatah. Since that time, Hamas has ruled as a dictatorship. Life in Gaza under Hamas has been a nightmare of torture, killing, fear, and suppression. According to Human Rights Watch, Hamas and its West Bank counterpart the Palestinian Authority have been “systematically mistreating and torturing Palestinians in detention, including critics and opponents.” This torture “may amount to crimes against humanity, given its systematic nature over many years.”

Myth: “Hamas maintains its rule in Gaza by popular consent.” Hamas maintains its control through carefully cultivated indoctrination beginning in early childhood. Children in Gaza are indoctrinated by Hamas through curriculum in their schools, even United Nations-sponsored ones. Arnon Groiss, a former Arabic language broadcaster with a Ph.D. in Near Eastern Studies from Princeton, read and translated two

hundred Palestinian textbooks used by Hamas. He found that from a young age, Gazan children are being desensitized to human life and prepared for war. Even math classes are not exempt. One math problem asks students to calculate how many Jews were killed in the first and second intifada. A history textbook describes a massacre as a “barbeque” in which terrorists hijacked a bus and murdered thirty-eight Jews, burning them alive. A report by two independent researchers found that even teachers in UN-sponsored schools taught children to kill Jews. The report names and shares comments translated from UN teachers’ speeches and social media posts glorifying terrorism, praising suicide bombers for their “self-sacrifice,” and honoring those who have killed Jews as “heroes.” A related group called Islamic Jihad runs “Revenge of the Free” summer camps for Gazan children as young as six. The camps feature military activities, including the simulated kidnapping of an Israeli soldier. The camps are used to recruit students to join militant organizations. It has been said that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. Hamas intends to be that hand, and its education system displays exactly how it intends to rule.

Myth: “Hamas is telling the truth about what is really happening in Gaza.” Even Amnesty International, a group that sympathizes with the Palestinian people and regularly criticizes Israel, admits that there is no independent media in Palestinian territories and that dissenting journalists are brutally repressed. To discern the truth, we must ask, “How did you come to know that?” and “What’s your source?” War reporting rarely includes firsthand observation. War zones are dangerous. Almost no media outlets want to assume the risk of their employees being present as armies clash. Instead, they purchase reports, pictures, and interviews gathered by freelancers, sometimes called stringers, who are willing to take the risk. If Western reporters do go to the war zone, they are escorted by facilitators who work for one of the warring parties. In Gaza, these stringers and facilitators report to or work closely with Hamas. This practice was exposed when American media outlets purchased pictures from stringers accompanying Hamas terrorists on their raids, which obviously means that the stringers had to know about the attacks in advance. One of the accused stringers, Hassan Eslaih, was outed because of a selfie he posted on social media being kissed by Yahya Sinwar, the mastermind of Hamas’s October 7 attacks.¹⁷⁰ Complicating the situation, the Associated Press has also covered the proliferation of “deep fake” pictures generated by AI for propaganda purposes. The Israeli intelligence company Cyabra analyzed two million social media posts from early in the war and found that more than forty thousand profiles were fake. According to a source I trust but whose information I could not personally verify, the number of bots designed to promote anti-Israel propaganda could be in the millions.

Myth: “Hamas is being unfairly accused of things it doesn’t believe.” In its short history, at its founding and again in 2017, Hamas released a charter outlining its vision and mission. The original document, quoting the Quran, explicitly called for the killing of Jews. The 2017 “Document of General Principles and Policies” removed some of the extreme language about killing Jews while retaining the same aims of placing itself at the center of concern for the global Islamic community (Ummah) and eliminating the “Zionist project,” Israel. Here are some direct quotes from the 2017 charter that outline Hamas’s aims: “Hamas believes that no part of the land of Palestine shall be compromised or conceded, irrespective of the causes, the circumstances and the pressures and no matter how long the occupation lasts.” “Resistance and jihad

for the liberation of Palestine will remain a legitimate right, a duty and an honour for all the sons and daughters of our people and our Ummah.” “Resisting the occupation with all means and methods is a legitimate right guaranteed by divine laws and by international norms and laws.”

Myth: “ Hamas doesn’t attack innocent civilians.” Hamas attempted genocide against the Jews. They ruined entire communities and decimated as much of Israel’s infrastructure as they could, destroying up to 70 percent of Israel’s agricultural production. It will take years to recover. By contrast, Israel has not attacked Gaza’s agricultural production. 75% of it remains intact. Hamas cares little about Western concerns for just war. Hamas does not distinguish between combatants and noncombatants in Gaza, though it does consider all Israelis to be combatants. Nor does Hamas act in a way that is proportional to the threat. Murdering and raping innocents and desecrating their bodies violates the very essence of just war. If you meet anyone who thinks these actions are justified, you should probably question the basis upon which they make any claims about the war. Their moral compass is clearly broken.

Myth: “ Hamas upholds Muslim values and doesn’t specifically target Jews.” Islamic history is complicated. As his life progressed, Mohammed became increasingly militant. He expressed violent sentiments toward many, including the Jews. This includes verses in the Quaran calling for their deaths. Hamas takes these verses as clear-cut commands. To Hamas, killing Jews is a legitimate expression of “Islamic values.” In the Hamas charter, anything that advances the “resistance” is seen as legitimate self-defense. Doctors who examined Israeli victims of Hamas found evidence for Hamas’s brutality. They have said that the terrorists seemed “obsessed” with rape and with mutilating sexual organs. Terrorists who were killed were found with phrasebooks explaining how to say, in Hebrew, “Take your clothes off!” and “Spread your legs!” The evidence shows that the sadistic Hamas terrorists gang-raped women of all ages and cut off their breasts—often with their partners, parents, or children tied up and forced to watch—before killing them. Some of the women had been raped so violently that their pelvises were broken. These were not isolated incidents. They occurred across multiple attack sites.

Myth: “ Hamas doesn’t use its population as human shields.” Hamas has displayed no regard for noncombatants caught in the war zone. Indeed, Hamas hides behind them as human shields, something that anti-Israel activists have cynically taken to calling “asymmetrical warfare,” to deflect from what it manifestly is: hiding behind civilians. In a Department of Defense publication, Air Force Brigadier General Pat Ryder said, “We know that Hamas is integrating its operations, whether it’s command and control, operational centers, combat forces, putting rockets in Gaza, to include this complex and sprawling tunnel network underneath infrastructure throughout Gaza, in effect...using civilians as human shields.” This is not a new situation. NGO Monitor says that for years, “Hamas has systematically exploited the civilian population of Gaza as ‘human shields,’ expecting that their presence will either deter Israeli attacks or result in large numbers of civilian casualties providing a PR victory and generating international pressure, condemnations, and sanctions against Israel.”

Myth: “ Hamas is trying to live peacefully; it is Israel that is the aggressor.” If Hamas laid down its weapons, there would be no more war. If Israel laid down its weapons, there would be no more Israel. If

Hamas retains the ability to reconstitute itself, it has publicly promised that its fighters will repeat the October 7 attacks as many times as they can and “from wherever they can.” Khaled Mashaal, the billionaire “external leader” of Hamas who is a godlike figure to Hamas’s leadership because he once survived an assassination attempt and imprisonment, said in a publicly available interview that any plans for peace for Israel would be to “establish common ground” with other Palestinian groups so they can unite together for Israel’s abolition. He bragged that Hamas’s control of Gaza has provided it “political and administrative cover” to manufacture weapons, dig tunnels, and train its members without being disturbed by Israel or by the Palestinian Authority.

IRAN ARGUMENT

Myth: “Iran is not a supporter of terrorism.” The Council on Foreign Relations says that Iran annually gives \$100 million to Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups. Its foreign ministry spokesman Nassar Kanani praised Hamas’s October 7 slaughter and recently pledged Iran’s continuing support.⁹⁰ After October 7, Iranian television showed members of parliament chanting “Death to Israel” and “Palestine is victorious.” Hamas is well-armed and trained by Iran and lavishly funded by gullible nations and state sponsors of terror, such as Qatar. Iranian security officials admit that Iran provided rockets to Hamas and showed its fighters how to build their own. CNN reported that the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps “has been giving Hamas engineers weapons training for almost two decades.” Weapons from Iran are shipped to Somalia or Sudan and then smuggled overland through Egypt and into Gaza through tunnels. The weapons provided by Iran include Qassam rockets that have been launched by the tens of thousands toward Israel. Hamas also has acquired Norinco automatic rifles and rocket-propelled grenades such as RPG-7s as well as Chinese Type 69 RPGs that are designed to defeat tank armor.⁹⁷ Additional weapons include Russian-made mortars, Kornet laser-guided anti-tank missiles that can melt through two feet of steel, and “Shahab” suicide drones designed by Iran. A similar drone killed three American service members and wounded twenty-five more at a base in Jordan in January 2024.

This guide to myths and facts is based on the book *Should Christians Support Israel?* by Dr. Jeff Myers. Find out more about the book and get your free copy [here](#).

[Jeff Myers](#)

Jeff Myers, PhD, has become one of America’s most respected authorities on Christian worldview, apologetics, and leadership development. He is the author of several books, including [The Secret Battle of Ideas about God](#) and [Unquestioned Answers](#), and is president of Summit Ministries. Jeff and his family live in Colorado.

ISRAEL'S ENDURING QUEST FOR PEACE

[AJC](#)



FEBRUARY 26, 2024

Following the brutal Hamas massacre on October 7, which has left now 1,200 Israelis dead, thousands wounded, and currently 134 taken hostage, any discussion of peace between Israelis and Palestinians or a two-state solution is a distant reality.

Yet, over 75 years, Israeli leaders have tried time and time again to make the dream of peace a reality.

Throughout the peace process, the two-state solution has been a central concept in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and international diplomacy. Territorial disputes, security concerns, the status of Jerusalem, settlements, and the right of return for Palestinian refugees have remained significant obstacles - as has a weakness in Palestinian leadership needed to make the difficult steps toward ending the conflict.

1947 United Nations Partition Plan: Efforts towards peace began as early as 1947 before the modern state of Israel was founded when the UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) recommended a partition of the Mandate of Palestine into a Jewish and Arab state.

WHAT WAS THE UN PARTITION PLAN (RESOLUTION 181) **AND WHY DOES IT MATTER TODAY?**

What Happened? The UN General Assembly endorsed the proposal, which Jewish leaders accepted, but the Arabs rejected. After Israel declared independence on May 14, 1948, five Arab armies invaded the nascent state to eliminate it. Israel successfully repelled the invasions and eventually signed armistice agreements with Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt.

ISRAEL AT WAR: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Since 1947, several more attempts at peace have been attempted. Tragically, all have failed - and some with disastrous consequences:

Oslo Accords (1993 and 1995): The Oslo Accords were a pair of transitional agreements signed by Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) that were designed to establish a partnership for negotiating border disputes, create Palestinian self-governance through the creation of the Palestinian Authority, and over time, pave the path to peace. While the talks resulted in two successful agreements (Oslo I in 1993, and Oslo II in 1995) the accords unraveled and left the region in a continued state of hostility and distrust. Several key factors contributed to the failure of these accords.

What Happened? In 1995 Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by Yigal Amir, an Israeli extremist who opposed Oslo. This was followed by a string of terrorist attacks by the Palestinian terror group Hamas, which opposed Oslo and supported the destruction of the Jewish state, further undermining the peace camp in Israel. Yet, with U.S. mediation, Israel and the PLO signed the Hebron Protocol in 1997, which provided for the transfer of most of Hebron to Palestinian control, and the Wye River Memorandum in 1998 - infighting over the agreement eventually brought down Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing government in 1999, ushering the Labor Party, headed by Ehud Barak, back into power. Barak signed the Sharm al-Sheikh Memorandum with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, with both sides agreeing to begin permanent status negotiations, however, those eventually went nowhere with Palestinians suspending talks over Israeli settlement construction.

Camp David Summit (2000): Then-Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and U.S. President Bill Clinton hosted Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat for negotiations at Camp David in 2000. Barak offered significant territorial concessions to the Palestinians, including the establishment of a Palestinian state in most of the West Bank and Gaza Strip with East Jerusalem as its capital.

What Happened? The talks failed to produce a final agreement with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat rejecting the offer. Commenting later, President Bill Clinton said that Arafat [missed a historic opportunity for peace](#).

After the summit's failure, growing Palestinian riots over a visit by Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount spiraled into what became known as the Second Intifada, a violent escalation of anti-Israel and antisemitic terrorism that led to widespread terror attacks on Israeli civilians, including bus bombings and suicide attacks, and Israel re-occupying large swathes of the West Bank to quell the terrorist violence. Israeli leaders blamed Arafat for instigating and orchestrating the terrorism. With the Second Intifada, the Oslo process became seen as a failure, despite many legal aspects of it still being in place today, such as the Palestinian Authority's continued control over parts of the West Bank.

TOUGH QUESTIONS ABOUT GAZA ANSWERED

Gaza Disengagement (2005) In 2005, Israel, overcoming huge political pushback and the terror onslaught during the Second Intifada, withdrew from the Gaza Strip, dismantling its settlements and military installations in the name of [peace](#).

What Happened? After Israeli withdrawal in 2005, the coastal territory has been under the control of the Iran-backed Hamas terrorist group, which violently ousted the Fatah-controlled Palestinian Authority in 2007. Hamas has used Iranian support to launch several significant attacks against Israel from its base in Gaza, including in 2008, 2009, 2014, 2021, and most recently on October 7, 2023, when Hamas terrorists murdered over 1,400 Israelis, wounded over 5,400, taken over 243 hostages, and launched thousands of rockets.

Annapolis Conference (2007): In 2007, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, with the support of the U.S., launched the Annapolis Conference. The goal was to reach a peace agreement that would lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state. Hamas called for all parties to boycott the conference.

What Happened? Olmert said that he gave Abbas an “unprecedented offer” based on a return to the pre-1967 borders, including land swaps and a division of Jerusalem. But Olmert [never received a final response from the Palestinians on the offer](#). A Palestinian negotiator subsequently acknowledged in the media that the Israeli plan would have given his side the equivalent of 100 percent of the disputed lands under discussion.

Settlement Freeze (2009-2010): U.S. President Barack Obama attempted to revive Israeli-Palestinian peace talks shortly after taking office in 2009. At a speech at Cairo University that year, Obama reiterated his support for a two-state solution.

What Happened? As part of a good faith gesture, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu implemented a settlement freeze, a key Palestinian demand, that lasted 10 months. While talks briefly restarted, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas aborted the talks.

Peace to Prosperity Plan (2020): U.S. President Donald Trump unveiled the “Peace to Prosperity” plan in January 2020. The plan presented a vision for a two-state solution but with certain parameters, including Israeli sovereignty over some settlements in the West Bank and land swaps. The plan also included an economic component, which was unveiled in June 2019 at a conference in Bahrain, that promised \$50 billion in new investment for Palestinians.

What Happened? The plan was largely rejected by the international community, although serious attention was given to the new opportunities for regional cooperation and investment built into the proposal. The Palestinians did not participate in the drafting of the plan and outright rejected it when it was released. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas had boycotted the Trump administration following its decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital in 2017.

Where Are We Now?

Despite some criticism of Israel's political posture over the last few years, Israeli leaders have demonstrated time and again the Jewish state's commitment to peace. Just last year Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid used his address to the UN General Assembly to show support for the two-state solution. Indeed, history has shown that decades of Israeli leaders have gone to great lengths, including sacrificing their political careers, and in one case, their lives, in the pursuit of peace. Tragically, since its inception in 1987, Hamas has categorically rejected the notion of peace, the two-state solution, and Jewish peoplehood.

Today, led by the Abraham Accords and efforts to normalize relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia, we are at a rare moment in history where the Arab world can play a constructive role in bringing together Israelis and Palestinians in ways never imaginable. AJC stands firmly behind Israel's right to destroy Hamas' network of hate - but when the time is right, we also stand ready to help support a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which brings together the United States and new Arab partners. While Israel must defend itself, we also know that the only way to provide true security is to overcome the hate proliferated by Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas by bringing together Israeli and Arab leaders dedicated to the principles of peace, prosperity, and understanding.

ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

Netanyahu to Begin Four-Day Visit to Hungary Despite ICC Arrest Warrant

April 2, 2025

Hungarian President Victor Orbán stated that he will not detain Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu despite Hungary's membership in the International Criminal Court (ICC) and subsequent obligation to arrest anyone subjected to an ICC arrest warrant ([Reuters](#)). Meanwhile, Netanyahu stated that the Israeli military plans to seize larger territory in Gaza and create a new security corridor between Rafah and Khan Younis ([AP](#)). Netanyahu said Israel is "dividing up" the strip in order to pressure Hamas to release the remaining fifty-nine hostages, and Katz said a "large-scale" evacuation of the enclave's population was planned amid renewed fighting ([FT](#); [Reuters](#)). The top UN aid official for Gaza said that 64 percent of the territory "is under active forced displacement orders or falling within the so-called 'buffer zone'" ([OHCA](#)).

Israeli Military Says It Is "Returning to Intense Operations" in Rafah

March 31, 2025

The Israeli military told tens of thousands of the area's residents to evacuate to Al-Mawasi, a coastal area that has also been hit by Israeli strikes ([FT](#)).

Hamas and Israel Endorse Different Proposals for Return to Cease-Fire in Gaza

March 30, 2025

The reported gap between their stances remains significant after weeks of indirect negotiations and as aid organizations warn of food shortages in the enclave ([NYT](#); [AP](#)). Israel kicked off a return to fighting in Gaza earlier this month and has blocked the delivery of food, fuel, medicine, and other supplies ([NPR](#)). A top Hamas official said Saturday that the group had accepted a proposal endorsed by mediators Egypt and Qatar that would reportedly have Hamas release five hostages per week, unnamed security sources told Reuters ([AP](#); [Reuters](#)). The proposal would return to Israel and Hamas' original cease-fire framework, an unnamed Hamas source told CNN; that would entail the resumption of aid as well as talks on a second phase involving an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza ([CNN](#)). Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said that it responded with a counterproposal that had been coordinated with the United States, the third mediator ([Times of Israel](#)). Separately, Netanyahu said Sunday that Hamas must "lay down its arms," and that Israel planned to implement U.S. President Donald Trump's "voluntary migration plan" from Gaza ([France24](#)).

Gazans Protests Against War, Hamas

March 27, 2025

Demonstrations on Tuesday and Wednesday in Gaza criticized the continuation of the Israel-Hamas war and included rare open chants against Hamas itself; a video of a march in Beit Lahia in northern Gaza

pictured hundreds of people ([FT](#)). There were few immediate signs of Hamas forcefully repressing the demonstrations, as has occurred in the past ([NYT](#)).

Israeli Strikes Kill at Least Thirty-Eight in Gaza in Past Day

March 26, 2025

Israeli airstrikes ramp up in central areas of the Gaza Strip, including the densely populated Nuseirat refugee camp ([Al Jazeera](#)).

Palestinians in Gaza Stage Largest Protests Against Hamas and War Since October 2023

March 25, 2025

Thousands marched through northern Gaza, expressing their displeasure with Hamas and the Israel-Hamas conflict with chants such as “Hamas terrorists” and “we want an end to the war” ([CNN](#)).

Egypt Proposes Plan to Renew Israel-Hamas Ceasefire

March 24, 2025

Cairo announced that both Hamas and the United States reacted positively to their proposal for the second stage of the original ceasefire, which would require Hamas to release five living Israeli hostages a week in exchange for Israel’s full military withdrawal from Gaza ([Reuters](#)). An unnamed Israeli official told the Times of Israel that “we haven’t heard of any new proposal” ([Times of Israel](#)). Meanwhile, Israeli strikes on the Gaza Strip killed over sixty Palestinians on Monday, including two Palestinian journalists ([Al Jazeera](#)). The United Nations said it would reduce its personnel in Gaza after five aid workers were killed in the renewed fighting ([UN](#)).

Israeli Security Cabinet Authorizes Separation of Thirteen Jewish Settlements From West Bank

March 23, 2025

Israel announced that the settlements in the West Bank will be officially recognized as independent, facilitating the development and management of areas Israel claims as its own; approximately 700,000 Jewish settlers reside in the West Bank and east Jerusalem ([Reuters](#)).

Israeli Defense Minister Intensifies Pressure on Hamas

March 21, 2025

Israel Katz said if Hamas does not release the hostages it is still holding, “it will lose more and more land that will be added to Israel” ([NYT](#)).

Israeli Military Launches Limited Ground Operations in Central and Southern Gaza

March 20, 2025

Israel’s defense minister said the country would soon issue evacuation orders for some parts of the territory ([Times of Israel](#)). Meanwhile, a second day of Israeli strikes yesterday killed at least forty-eight

Palestinians, according to Gaza health workers ([Reuters](#)). Hamas said that Israeli operations in the Netzarim corridor violated the truce with Israel and called on mediators to “step in to renew the cease-fire” ([Haaretz](#)). Later in the day, Hamas fired rockets at Israel in its first attack since Israel broke a bilateral truce on Tuesday; the group’s military wing said it was retaliating for Israel’s strikes in recent days, which have killed more than five hundred people since Tuesday, according to the Gaza health ministry ([WaPo](#)). Israeli military forces said they intercepted one rocket and two others fell in open terrain ([NYT](#)).

Israel’s Defense Minister Says New Strikes on Gaza Would Not Stop Unless Hamas Releases All Remaining Hostages

March 19, 2025

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the strikes “just the beginning” ([Times of Israel](#)). By midday today local time, there were no reports of Hamas retaliating militarily; the group said it was communicating with mediators ([Al Jazeera](#)). Thousands demonstrated in Jerusalem today against the return to war and Netanyahu’s efforts to dismiss Israel’s internal security chief ([Times of Israel](#)). Meanwhile, EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas called Israel’s return to fighting in Gaza “unacceptable” ([Times of Israel](#)).

Israel Launches Extensive Air Strikes Across Gaza Strip

March 18, 2025

It is Israel’s first major attack on the territory since a cease-fire with Hamas began two months ago; more than four hundred people were killed and hundreds were injured, according to Gaza’s health ministry ([Reuters](#)). Targets were struck in northern, central, and southern Gaza within hours; Israel’s prime minister said they had ordered the attacks after negotiations with Hamas had stalled—and that Israel would “act against Hamas with increasing military strength” going forward ([NYT](#)). Israel’s military said that its operations are expected to expand beyond air attacks, telling Gaza residents living in border areas to evacuate ([CNN](#)). Hamas confirmed five of its senior officials were killed in the strikes, while hospitals reported that women and children were among those dead ([NPR](#); [AP](#)). Hamas said Israel had broken the cease-fire agreement through an “unprovoked escalation” and exposed the hostages in Gaza “to an unknown fate” ([AP](#); [FT](#)). In the hours following Israel’s strikes, there were no immediate reports of Hamas military retaliation ([NYT](#)).

Fifteen Killed in Gaza After Israeli Forces Launch Strikes

March 16, 2025

Israeli airstrikes killed nine Palestinians in the northern Gaza Strip on March 15, including four journalists, though the Israeli military claimed that six of those killed were militants; separate strikes over March 15 and 16 killed six others, despite the ongoing ceasefire between Israel and Hamas ([Reuters](#)).

UN Independent Inquiry Found Israel Carried Out “Systematic” Gender-Based Violence in Gaza

March 13, 2025

The report detailed targeting fertility clinics and maternity wards ([WaPo](#)). It was the first time a UN committee has said Israel committed “genocidal acts” under the Rome Statute and the Genocide Convention; Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the accusations “baseless,” while Israel’s mission to the United Nations in Geneva said the commission had a “predetermined and biased political agenda” ([NYT](#)). The report comes amid uncertainty over the fate of the current Gaza cease-fire and as Israel conducts a new freeze on aid entering Gaza ([AP](#)).

Six Palestinians Killed in West Bank as Israeli Offensive Continues

March 11, 2025

The Palestinian Authority stated that Israeli forces shot and killed armed Palestinians along with a sixty-year-old woman in Jenin on Tuesday ([Reuters](#)). Meanwhile, Israel’s air force killed four Palestinians in Gaza after claiming they were terrorists who posed a threat to its personnel ([Reuters](#)).

France, Germany, Italy, and the UK Jointly Endorse Five-Year Plan for Gaza’s Postwar Reconstruction Proposed by Arab Countries

March 8, 2025

The European countries called the proposal “realistic” and hailed its pledges of a “swift and sustainable improvement” of the territory’s living conditions; Israel and the United States rejected it last week ([BBC](#)). Meanwhile, Israel’s energy minister said that the country was cutting its remaining electricity supplies to Gaza, adding that Israel aimed to “ensure the return of all the hostages” ([CNN](#)).

Trump Administration Has Held Direct Talks With Hamas Over Potential Hostage Releases

March 6, 2025

It is unusual for U.S. officials to talk directly with groups that it lists as terrorists; the nominee for U.S. special presidential envoy for hostage affairs conducted the talks ([Bloomberg](#)). The White House said it had consulted with Israel ([BBC](#)). Trump said on social media last night that there would be “hell to pay” if hostages were not released “now” ([CNN](#)).

United States and Israel Reject Arab Plan for Gaza

March 5, 2025

Arab leaders yesterday endorsed a \$53 billion reconstruction plan for postwar Gaza that would avoid displacing Palestinians from the territory ([CNN](#)). It would sideline Hamas and empower an initial committee of bureaucrats to run Gaza before turning it over to a reformed Palestinian Authority (PA); the proposal did not directly answer the questions of how or whether to disarm Hamas ([NYT](#)). A U.S. National Security Council spokesperson said the plan “does not address the reality that Gaza is currently uninhabitable,” while Israel accused the PA of “corruption” and “support for terrorism” ([NBC](#)). In U.S. President Donald Trump’s address to Congress last night, he said he was jointly working to “bring back our hostages from Gaza;” he praised the Abraham Accords deal signed during his first administration and pledged to help

“create a more peaceful and prosperous future for the entire region” ([NYT](#)). Separately, partners in Gaza for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) stated that Israel’s blockade on humanitarian aid to the Strip has caused food prices to double and raises the risk of charity kitchens completely running out of food stocks ([BBC](#)).

Arab Leaders Meet in Cairo to Discuss Rebuilding Postwar Gaza

March 4, 2025

One proposal would sideline Hamas and rely on administrative bodies run by Arab, Muslim-majority, and Western countries; a senior Hamas official said the group rejects the imposition of a non-Palestinian administration but that “we are keen for the success of the summit” ([Reuters](#)). Meanwhile, Israeli soldiers killed a Hamas commander and an additional Hamas fighter and arrested three others in a West Bank operation in Jenin ([Reuters](#)).

Israeli Forces Demolish and Clear Nur Shams Refugee Camp in West Bank

March 3, 2025

Israeli bulldozers cleared a roadway for military vehicle access through the camp, and the head of the camp stated that nearly all of its thirteen thousand Palestinian inhabitants had left ([Reuters](#)).

Israel Announces Freeze on All Aid Flowing Into Gaza

March 2, 2025

Israel said Hamas had not accepted a new U.S. proposal to extend phase one of their cease-fire; that proposal would see Hamas release half of its remaining hostages at the start of a seven-week extension ([NPR](#)). Hamas accused Israel of “blackmail” and of attempting to evade the original cease-fire agreement; negotiations on its second phase have barely started ([BBC](#)). Mediators Egypt and Qatar said Israel was violating humanitarian law, while a U.S. National Security Council spokesperson said Washington supports Israel’s decision on next steps ([AP](#); [ABC](#)).

Israel and Hamas Conduct Another Exchange of Hostages and Prisoners as Phase One of Truce Nears Its End

February 27, 2025

Hamas released the bodies of four Israeli hostages yesterday while Israel by this morning had released more than six hundred Palestinian prisoners ([FT](#); [Times of Israel](#)). The January cease-fire deal said negotiations on the second phase were slated to have wrapped up by last Sunday, but formal talks have yet to start in earnest ([NYT](#)). Phase two was envisioned to include additional releases of Hamas-held hostages and Israeli-held prisoners, as well as Israeli withdrawals from more zones of Gaza; that includes an area called the Philadelphi Corridor, though an unnamed Israeli official told news outlets today that Israel plans to stay there ([CNN](#)). Hamas said today it was ready for talks on phase two ([France24](#)). Israel, for its part, seeks an open-ended extension of phase one rather than a new phase that aims to lay the foundation for a

more lasting settlement, unnamed sources close to the negotiations told the *Financial Times* ([FT](#)). A restart to the war would end a six-week period in which hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have been able to return to their homes and increased aid has flowed into Gaza ([AP](#)). Netanyahu is seeking domestic political support to pass a budget; some of his coalition members said they would leave his government if he agreed to end the war ([WaPo](#)). U.S. President Donald Trump campaigned saying he would end the war in Gaza and pushed hard to secure the truce deal. But in recent weeks he has proposed a takeover of Gaza that Palestinians and Arab countries have rejected, saying it would violate international law and work against the prospect of sustainable peace ([Anadolu Agency](#)).

Hamas Will Release Four Bodies of Israeli Hostages, Israel Will Release Around Six Hundred Palestinian Prisoners

February 26, 2025

Israel had delayed the prisoner release, which was originally scheduled for last Saturday, saying Hamas violated the truce agreement and mistreated hostages ([Times of Israel](#)). The first phase of the cease-fire deal is due to expire this weekend ([AP](#)).

Hamas Hands Over Six Hostages While Israel Declines to Release More Than 600 Palestinian Prisoners as Scheduled

February 23, 2025

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu justified the move by accusing Hamas of repeatedly violating the truce and making hostage releases into “humiliating ceremonies” ([FT](#)). U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff said that he expects phase two of the cease-fire deal to move forward and that he will visit the Middle East in the coming week ([Times of Israel](#)). Meanwhile, journalists in the West Bank spotted Israeli tanks entering Jenin for the first time since 2002, furthering the displacement of Palestinians from refugee camps in the territory; Israel’s Defense Minister Israel Katz stated that its forces will remain in the West Bank for a year, adding that Israeli forces must remain to prevent residents from returning to the camps to prevent terrorism ([AP](#)). Separately, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned against any movement of Syrian forces “south of Damascus,” indicating Israel’s attempt to use its forces currently deployed in southern Syria to create a demilitarized buffer zone ([AP](#)).

Netanyahu Vowes Response to “Cruel and Malicious Violation” of Cease-Fire With Hamas

February 21, 2025

Israel says a body returned yesterday was not that of Shiri Bibas, as Hamas claimed ([AP](#)). Hamas said it would “conduct a thorough review” of information about the body and that Bibas’ remains appear to have been mixed with those of other people in a bombed building ([Reuters](#)). Separately, Arab leaders are meeting in Saudi Arabia today to discuss a plan for postwar Gaza ([Le Monde](#)). Meanwhile, U.S. President Donald Trump suggested he will only “sit back and recommend” a Gaza takeover plan; this

comes as Egypt and Jordan, who would accept the refugees from Gaza under President Trump's proposed takeover plan, voiced opposition to the idea ([Al Jazeera](#)).

Hamas Returns Bodies of Four Hostages It Abducted From Israel in Its October 7, 2023 Attack

February 20, 2025

Israel's military plans to confirm their identities, while Hamas said they were a mother and her two young children as well as an elderly peace activist; they are the first deceased hostages released as part of the ongoing truce deal ([FT](#)).

Three Killed by Israeli Forces in West Bank

February 19, 2025

Palestinian state news said Israeli soldiers attacked the Palestinians in their homes in the al-Faraa camp, while the Israeli military stated that the targets were "wanted terrorists;" the operation was part of Israel's "Iron Wall" counterterrorism offensive ([Reuters](#)).

Israel Agrees to Start Negotiations on Second Phase of Gaza Cease-Fire and Hostage Release Deal

February 18, 2025

The announcement from Israeli foreign minister Gideon Sa'ar came as Hamas said it would release three living hostages ahead of schedule on Saturday, a move that mediators said was designed to get negotiations moving ([WSJ](#)). Phase two talks were meant to begin on February 4—but the truce saw a near-breakdown earlier this month as both sides accused each other of violating its terms ([Reuters](#)). Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has swapped his lead negotiator for phase two, choosing close political ally and Israeli strategic affairs minister Ron Dermer instead of the head of the Mossad intelligence service, who led previous negotiation rounds ([CNN](#)). A Hamas spokesperson said that in phase two, the group is ready to release all of its remaining hostages at once in exchange for a permanent truce and full withdrawal of Israeli forces ([WaPo](#)). Additionally, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio met with United Arab Emirates (UAE) President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, who said the UAE rejects the potential displacement of Palestinians from their land ([Reuters](#)).

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio Discusses Gaza With Netanyahu

February 17, 2025

After the conversation on Sunday, Netanyahu appeared to endorse U.S. President Donald Trump's plan to resettle Gazans and have the U.S. take over the territory ([BBC](#)). Rubio discussed Gaza and other issues on Monday with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, after which both affirmed their support for a cease-fire ([NYT](#)). Palestinians and Arab countries continue to voice alarm about President Donald Trump's proposal to expel Gazans, which international legal scholars say would be a war crime if enacted ([NYT](#)). In response, Egypt is developing a plan to rebuild Gaza that would keep Palestinians living there, unnamed

Egyptian, Arab, and Western officials told the Associated Press ([AP](#)). Arab countries are planning to hold an emergency summit on Gaza on March 4 ([Reuters](#)).

Hamas Greenlights Saturday Hostage Release

February 13, 2025

The announcement walked back the group's threat to pause the releases—which had prompted an Israeli threat to resume fighting; after talks with mediators, Hamas said it was in contact with Qatari leadership about increasing humanitarian supplies into Gaza ([AP](#)).

Netanyahu Says Israel Will Resume Fighting in Gaza If Hamas Does Not Release Hostages by Saturday

February 11, 2025

Hamas had said Monday it would delay Saturday's incremental release due to alleged Israeli violations of the truce ([Times of Israel](#)). Separately, Trump met with Jordan's king, who said he rejected the displacement of Palestinians from Gaza; Jordan agreed to accept two thousand sick children from the territory, and Trump suggested he was backing off a previous threat to withhold aid from Jordan ([AP](#)).

President Trump Gives Ultimatum to Hamas Over Postponed Hostage Release

February 11, 2025

Trump stated that he would like Hamas to release all of its currently held hostages by noon on February 15, or else he would support an end to the ceasefire and "let hell break out;" Trump added that Netanyahu could "override him on the issue" ([Reuters](#)).

Hamas Announces Indefinite Postponement of Hostage Release to Israel

February 10, 2025

Hamas leadership cited Israeli violations of the ceasefire terms, namely a continuation of attacks on Palestinian civilians returning to the Gaza strip as well as the blocked entry of humanitarian aid; Israel claims that Hamas is responsible for violating the ceasefire deal, with Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz stating that Israel Defense Forces (IDF) will be put on high alert and prepare for "any possible scenario in Gaza" ([BBC](#)). Hamas originally planned to release the hostages on February 15 ([Reuters](#)).

Israeli Forces Begin Pulling Back From Netzarim Corridor, Which Bisects Gaza

February 9, 2025

The move is part of the ongoing cease-fire and hostage release agreement, which saw three Israeli hostages and 183 Palestinian prisoners freed on Saturday ([WSJ](#); [NYT](#)). An Israeli delegation arrived in Qatar for talks on the potential next phase of that deal, while Egypt said it will host a summit of Arab leaders this month regarding "new and dangerous developments in the Palestinian issue" ([Reuters](#); [NPR](#)).

Israel Prepares for Removal of Palestinians From Gaza

February 6, 2025

Israel's defense ministry announced its plans to facilitate the mass relocation of Palestinians, despite international condemnation of President Trump's mass removal and reconstruction plan; Trump suggested that upon removal of Palestinians from Gaza, Israel would hand over the land, all without deploying U.S. troops ([Time](#)). Egypt condemned any forced removal as a violation of international law, with Cairo warning that a U.S. takeover of Gaza could incite further instability across the region and threaten its peace treaty with Israel ([AP News](#)).

Trump Suggests United States Would "Take Over" Gaza

February 5, 2025

In what would be a shocking break from decades of U.S. policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the president further suggested that the nearly two-million-strong population of Palestinians in Gaza be permanently removed to other countries and refused to rule out deploying U.S. troops ([Reuters](#); [WaPo](#)). The comments came amid a White House visit from Netanyahu that was slated to focus on a cease-fire deal in the territory ([NBC](#)). Earlier in the day, Trump said the United States would continue the Joe Biden administration's policy of withholding funding for the UN agency that provides aid to Palestinian refugees ([AP](#)). Trump defended his new proposal because much of the territory has been destroyed in the current war, but it flew against the stances of Palestinians and many U.S. Arab allies, and international law prohibits attempts to forcibly transfer populations ([NYT](#)). Netanyahu said the idea was "worth paying attention to," and Israel's foreign minister, Gideon Sa'ar, praised Trump for his "out of the box ideas" on Gaza, saying that the enclave "in its current form has no future" ([NYT](#)). The Palestinian Authority rejected "all calls for displacement of Palestinian people from their homeland," a senior advisor to its president said; Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey condemned Trump's remarks and reiterated their support for a Palestinian state ([NYT](#)).

Netanyahu Becomes First Foreign Leader of Trump's Second Term to Visit White House

February 4, 2025

The pair will discuss the next phase of the Gaza cease-fire and hostage release deal; Trump has said he hopes to end the war, but some in Netanyahu's coalition have pushed for it to continue ([NPR](#)).

Netanyahu Arrives in Washington for Talks on Gaza

February 3, 2025

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will discuss the second phase of the Gaza cease-fire and hostage deal in a meeting today with Trump's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff, Netanyahu's office said ([NYT](#)). Hamas released three hostages and Israel released over 180 prisoners on Saturday ([NYT](#)).

U.S. Contractors to Staff Gaza Checkpoint During Truce

January 31, 2025

A U.S. security firm is hiring almost one hundred U.S. special forces veterans to assist in vehicle inspection in Gaza during the ongoing cease-fire, a company spokesperson told Reuters; an unnamed Palestinian official close to the talks said that U.S. contractors would be deployed away from Gaza residents ([Reuters](#)). After yesterday's hostage and prisoner exchange was completed, albeit delayed, the next stage of hostage releases is set for tomorrow ([Times of Israel](#)).

Latest Round of Hostage, Prisoner Releases Begin in Gaza, Israel

January 30, 2025

Hamas released three Israelis and five Thai nationals this morning in the day's scheduled trade of hostages for 110 Palestinian prisoners ([Times of Israel](#), [CNN](#)). Trump's Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff, is in Israel to oversee the latest phase of the deal and made a rare visit to Gaza yesterday; the second, complex phase of the deal will confront questions over Gaza's political outlook and the Palestinian Authority's role ([WaPo](#)).

Israel Announces Indefinite Suspension of Collaboration With UNRWA

January 28, 2025

Israel's envoy to the United Nations, Danny Daron, announced a ban on all activities with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency in Palestine (UNRWA), which calls for a cessation of UNRWA operations in Gaza by January 30 ([Al Jazeera](#)). The move, which Washington has backed, comes as Jerusalem claims that Hamas is utilizing UNRWA sites to hold Israeli hostages ([DW](#)).

Netanyahu to Meet With Trump Envoy, Invited to White House

January 28, 2025

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is due to meet today with U.S. Mideast envoy Steven Witkoff, Netanyahu's office said; the talks are expected to cover the unfolding Gaza cease-fire and hostage deal ([NYT](#)).

Palestinians Return to Northern Gaza After Truce Overcomes Strain

January 27, 2025

Tens of thousands of displaced Palestinians began returning to northern Gaza today as part of the cease-fire and hostage release deal between Israel and Hamas ([AP](#)). After extra mediation raised doubts of resolution yesterday, Hamas said it would release Arbel Yehud and other Israeli hostages this week, too ([NYT](#)). Much of northern Gaza is now rubble, and aid groups urged the continued flow of humanitarian assistance to support returnees ([UNICEF](#)). U.S. President Donald Trump over the weekend downplayed the cease-fire's commitment to Palestinian return, suggesting that "we just clean out" Gaza, and that Egypt and Jordan could accept its residents either temporarily or "long term" ([WSJ](#)). That's a sharp departure from

most U.S. presidents, who have viewed Gaza as part of an eventual Palestinian state; Egypt and Jordan rejected Trump's suggestion ([NYT](#)).

Head of UN Agency for Palestinian Refugees Warns Recent Israeli Laws Restricting Its Actions Could "Sabotage" Gaza Cease-fire

January 24, 2025

The ceasefire's implementation hinges on aid entering the territory ([NYT](#)). UNRWA's head, Philippe Lazzarini, met with EU officials in Brussels, seeking support for reversing the laws; legal action against them has been filed at the International Court of Justice and Israel's High Court ([FT](#)).

Israel Announces 'Extensive' New Military Operation in West Bank

January 21, 2025

Israel's military has increased its operations in the West Bank as the cease-fire in Gaza continues to hold, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announcing an "extensive and significant" new campaign there aimed at "eradicating terrorism" ([NYT](#)). Ten people were killed and at least forty wounded, the Palestinian Health Ministry said; Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said that the West Bank had become a part of Israel's "war goals," reflecting concerns about Hamas efforts to fortify fighters there after the group's strength was diminished in Gaza ([CNN](#)). The military push in the city of Jenin came after Israeli settler groups attacked Palestinians in the West Bank Monday, the same day U.S. President Donald Trump removed sanctions imposed in 2024 on dozens of individuals and settler groups accused of violence ([The Guardian](#)). Since the Gaza cease-fire took effect, violence in the West Bank has risen, the UN Human Rights Office in Ramallah said ([United Nations](#)). The Palestinian Authority has waged its own crackdown against militants in the territory for weeks ([FT](#)).

Hundreds of Aid Trucks Surge Into Gaza in Cease-Fire

January 20, 2025

More than nine hundred aid trucks entered the Gaza Strip on the second day of the Israel-Hamas cease-fire, the UN humanitarian office said ([Reuters](#)). They followed 630 aid trucks that entered Sunday, the highest on a single day since the war began ([NYT](#)). Some 92 percent of homes in Gaza were destroyed or damaged and 90 percent of the population was displaced, with 1.8 million people in urgent need of shelter and essentials, the UN said ([CNN](#)). Israel released ninety Palestinian prisoners and Hamas freed three Israeli hostages over the weekend ([CNN](#)). Meanwhile, Yemen's Houthi rebels said they would limit their attacks on international shipping to only target Israeli-registered vessels, the *Financial Times* reported ([FT](#)).

Cease-Fire Deal Moves to Israel's Cabinet for Approval

January 16, 2025

Many Israelis, Palestinians, and global observers celebrated yesterday's announcement that Israel and Hamas had reached a complex cease-fire and hostage release agreement, even as political hurdles remained to its full implementation; the deal followed intensive diplomacy by the United States—both the outgoing and incoming administrations—Egypt, and Qatar ([Reuters](#)). Israel's cabinet delayed a vote today that is required for the deal to move forward; if approved, the first stage of the cease-fire could be set in motion as soon as Sunday ([CNN](#)). Leaders from around the world voiced hope that the cease-fire could move forward and that humanitarian aid could surge into Gaza ([ABC](#)). A White House spokesperson said the Joe Biden administration is confident the deal will commence on Sunday despite the delay in the Israeli government ([NYT](#)). While the details of the agreement are still subject to final approval, drafts that have been widely reported in the media feature a first six-week phase in which Hamas would release thirty-three hostages, Israel would release hundreds of Palestinians, Israeli forces would begin to withdraw from population centers in Gaza, and humanitarian aid would surge into the enclave ([CNN](#)).

Blinken Describes Most Detailed Postwar Gaza Vision Yet

January 15, 2025

As Israel and Hamas reportedly drew closer to a cease-fire deal, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a speech yesterday described an immediate phase in which the Palestinian Authority (PA) worked together with international partners and eventually took on governance responsibilities for a “fully reformed PA administration;” Biden's team will hand the proposal to the Trump administration ([CNN](#)).

Israel-Hamas Cease-Fire and Hostage Deal Reaches ‘Final Stages,’ Qatar Says

January 14, 2025

Israel and Hamas are at their closest point in months to reaching a truce and hostage release agreement, Qatar's foreign ministry said today; officials from both sides have acknowledged progress toward a deal as talks continue in Doha with mediation by Qatar along with the United States and Egypt ([WaPo](#)). Previous potential deals have collapsed multiple times in the course of more than fifteen months of fighting ([AP](#)). Envoys for both U.S. President Joe Biden and U.S. President-elect Donald Trump have pressed for the current agreement in recent days ([NPR](#)). The draft deal resembles a three-phase agreement detailed by Biden in May, the Associated Press reported based on a copy of the draft verified by unnamed Egyptian and Hamas officials; it would reportedly begin with a six-week period that includes the gradual release of thirty-three Hamas-held hostages and potentially hundreds of Palestinian women and children detained by Israel ([AP](#)). In this first phase, Israel would begin to withdraw from Gaza's population centers, and displaced Palestinians could return to their homes ([Axios](#)). The details of the subsequent phases still need to be negotiated during the first one ([BBC](#)). Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is meeting today with Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich—who voiced opposition to the cease-fire—in a test of Netanyahu's ability to hold his governing coalition together if the deal moves forward ([CNN](#)). An unnamed Israeli official told CNN that Israel had “made all the compromises that are needed” for a deal, while two unnamed officials involved in the talks told the Associated Press that Hamas had accepted the draft ([CNN](#)).

Reports: White House Notifies Congress of Planned \$8 Billion Arms Sale to Israel*January 3, 2025*

The informal notification covers a package that includes air-to-air missiles, artillery shells, and 500-pound warheads, unnamed sources told multiple news outlets ([Axios](#)). It would mark the final sale of weapons to Israel approved by the Biden administration, and supplement at least \$17.9 billion in military aid to Israel since Hamas's 2023 attack ([AP](#)).

SIX MONTHS AFTER CEASEFIRE, SOME IN NORTH ARE SLOW TO RECOVER AS FEARS OF NEW FIGHT LURK

**Rebuilding amid detritus of 13-month war,
Shtula residents embark on a prolonged comeback,
while Kibbutz Sasa mourns loss of elderly evacuees who couldn't stand to be away**

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL [Diana Bletter](#) 30 May 2025

SHTULA – Shula Giladi, known as Shula from Shtula, used to welcome tourists into her northern Israel home with Kurdish delicacies and stories of her family's life in Kurdistan a century ago.

Then the Lebanese terror group Hezbollah began firing anti-tank missiles, rockets and explosive drones across the border, damaging her home and hundreds of others'.

Now, the displaced 72-year-old jokes wryly that she is known as Shula with a suitcase.

Giladi's house sits less than 500 meters (1640 feet) from the Lebanese border, which has remained quiet since late November, when a ceasefire was reached to end the Iran-backed group's 13-month campaign of terror.

But six months after the fighting stopped, many, like Giladi, are still living with its effects, their homes still in disrepair and their communities scattered.

Sitting with The Times of Israel in her garden, once lush and verdant but now in ruins, the former host was unable to offer a glass of water or even the use of a bathroom.

Giladi hopes to move back once the repairs are finished, but she is now waiting for appraisers to submit reports and for the government to approve her expenses, with no idea how long the whole process will take.

"I've dropped the word 'return' from my lexicon," said Giladi.

Her sense of displacement is echoed by many of the 60,000 residents of 32 communities in northern Israel, who have been homeless since being evacuated beginning on October 8, 2023, when Hezbollah and allied groups began firing into Israel in solidarity with Hamas and the war that the allied terror group had sparked in Gaza with its invasion of the south a day earlier.

The fighting in the north saw daily indiscriminate Hezbollah attacks on communities near the border, and occasionally further south, drawing Israeli reprisals. The simmering conflict broke open in late September as Israel decapitated the terror group's leadership and launched a limited ground invasion into southern Lebanon amid intensified fire on the north. It came to an end with a temporary truce on November 27, 2024, followed in February by a permanent, albeit shaky, ceasefire agreement.

Over 13 months, the attacks claimed the lives of 46 civilians inside Israel and 83 Israeli soldiers, with hundreds more wounded. Homes, businesses, farms and infrastructure in dozens of northern towns suffered extensive damage, and a once-thriving tourist industry was left decimated.



A car sits on the side of the road in Shtula, destroyed by Hezbollah rocket fire during the Israel-Hezbollah war, on May 23, 2025. (Diana Bletter/Times of Israel)

About 61% of the evacuees have returned to their communities since fighting ended, according to the Alma Research and Education Center, an independent nonprofit specializing in security challenges on Israel's northern border.

Some are staying away until the end of the school year, or have no homes to return to yet. In Shtula and nearby Kibbutz Sasa, many expressed a deep sense of uncertainty about whether the ceasefire with Hezbollah will hold.

In the six months since the ceasefire, Israel has carried out sporadic attacks on what it says are Hezbollah members in southern Lebanon, and has left troops at four key locations across the border in a bid to ensure the terror group does not rebuild a military foothold along the frontier. So far, Hezbollah, which is thought to have been significantly weakened by the war, has resisted responding.

"From 2022 until the summer of 2023, Hezbollah was 100 percent ready to invade northern Israel," Lt. Col. (Ret.) Sarit Zehavi, the CEO and founder of the Alma Center, spoke at a conference in Kibbutz Lochamei HaGhettaot on May 21. "Right now is what I'd call the cease between fires. We can't keep fooling ourselves after October 7."

On October 7, 2023, thousands of Hamas-led terrorists invaded Israel, killed 1,200 people, and kidnapped 251 people into the Gaza Strip. The attack stands as a chilling, ominous reminder to northern residents of what could have befallen them if Hezbollah had implemented what Israel says were its own plans for a massive cross-border assault.

DESTROYED CARS AND BUS SHELTERS

The western Galilee moshav of Shtula was founded in 1969 by a small group of families from Kurdistan and Iraq. The family of Giladi, who was 16 at the time, was among them.

Residents mostly supported themselves with small family farms. Giladi dreamed of opening a hospitality business, but worried about the community's location on the northern border. "Who will come to Shtula to eat?" she recalled asking herself at the time.

Before the war, approximately 300 people called the moshav home. The community prided itself on its mix of religious, traditional, and "young folks with dogs and tattoos," according to another Shtula resident, [Hadas Lahav](#).

After the war ended, the roads damaged by tank treads were repaired. But there are still destroyed cars and

Giladi, a member of the temporary planning board of the moshav, said that 20% of residents had already moved back. She believes more will return in July, after the end of the school year.

Only some 2% said they do not plan to return. Still, the community hopes to expand its footprint, with 15 families expressing interest in moving there.

The community is also hoping that visitors will return.

Ohad Hatan, who owns the On the Border Cafe in the moshav, said he is finishing renovations and plans to re-open shortly, hoping that people will visit.

The cafe is located in a grove of trees next to what is known as the "Talking Walls" border, a concrete barrier erected to protect the town that was festooned in 2018 with murals by a number of international artists.



"Talking Walls" border with Lebanon in Shtula on May 26, 2025. (Lindy Barnett/Courtesy)

During the first part of Giladi's evacuation, she stayed at her children's houses and then at a hotel in Tel Aviv, where she ran a pop-up Kurdish food restaurant and did well.

“But a house is not only four walls, it’s also my history, my memories, my essence,” she said. As the war raged, she had “moments of crisis, but I know how to find happiness. My friends who had nothing to do except sit in the hotel lobby were broken.”

Speaking at the Alma Center conference, Dmitry Apartsev, Senior Director of Government Relations Department, Northern Reconstruction Headquarters, said that the government has allocated NIS 8 billion (\$226,000,000) over four years to address the needs of the frontline communities in the north. The money is an opportunity to provide “broad and comprehensive solutions, not just localized or emergency responses.”

Giladi said she is optimistic but also pragmatic.

Walking her visitor out of her gate, she reached for a grape leaf hanging off a vine and nimbly folded it into an envelope, explaining how she used to stuff them to make kubbeh for guests visiting her home, something she won’t be able to do, at least for a while.

“This is a reality I can’t change,” she said.

KIBBUTZ SASA, WHERE 12 ELDERLY MEMBERS DIED OF ‘BROKEN HEARTS’

Some 15 kilometers (nine miles) to the east, members of Kibbutz Sasa were chatting over food at long tables in the community’s communal dining room.

During the war, almost all the 450 members of the kibbutz were evacuated, but 90% of them have since returned.

Varda Yatom, 79, who has lived on the kibbutz since 1964, said that during the evacuation, “12 elderly kibbutz members died of broken hearts.”

“It was very hard for them to be away from the kibbutz,” Yatom said.

Surrounded by grapevines, apple orchards, and trees, Sasa sits about 3 kilometers (two miles) from the Lebanese border, a short distance that was seemingly enough to save it from the kind of extensive damage seen on Shtula.

The worst damage was suffered by a school auditorium that took a direct hit, with much of the rest of the town escaping unscathed.

Yatom said she wanted to believe that Hezbollah leaders decided not to destroy the kibbutz the way “Nazis preserved Paris, so they’d have somewhere to go for a holiday.”



Artist Varda Yatom stands next to her sculpture, "Girl with Dove of Peace," at her gallery in Kibbutz Sasa on May 23, 2025. (Diana Bletter/Times of Israel)

The internationally acclaimed artist moved to Kibbutz Nachsholim during her evacuation, but was unable to find a place to make her art.

During the war, she sometimes returned under fire to her studio in the kibbutz.

"I didn't feel fear," Yatom said as she stood in her kibbutz gallery, where her sculptures are displayed. "I'd rather die with clay in my hand than not work on my art. A day without doing art is wasted."

Another kibbutz member, Edna Angelica Calo Livne, 69, stayed on the kibbutz during the war to be with her husband, who is part of the kibbutz's emergency response team.

People eat lunch at the communal dining room in Kibbutz Sasa after being evacuated during the Israel-Hezbollah War on May 23, 2025. (Diana Bletter/Times of Israel)

Calo Livne, who moved from Italy to the kibbutz in 1975, is the founder of Beresheet LaShalom, a community theater group for Jews, Muslims, Druze, and Christians meant to foster dialogue through performing arts.

During the fighting, she traveled to Italy on several occasions to speak about her experiences. People there were surprised to hear that even during war, she still believed in peace, she said.

Edna Angelica Calo Livne stands on the porch of her house in Kibbutz Sasa 1200 meters (.7 miles) from the Lebanese border after the Hezbollah war on May 24, 2025. (Courtesy/Yehuda Calo Livne)

Many in the north remain circumspect that the calm will last. Next week will mark 43 years since Israel invaded Lebanon in an operation advertised as bringing peace to the Galilee, a promise belied by decades of skirmishes and now two major wars.

"Hezbollah has not given up its dream of destroying Israel," Tal Beer, the director of Alma's Research Department, said at the May 21 conference. "The ideology of Hezbollah hasn't changed."

But Calo Livne remains undeterred.

"If we don't believe in peace, we have no future," she said. "Each day, we can discover how many resources, energy, and answers we have. Life always teaches us something new and unpredictable."

PART 17 UNRWA

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT UNRWA AND ITS CONTROVERSIAL ROLE IN THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT



AJC (American Jewish Committee) February 12, 2024

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has been a focal point in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for several decades, and while it defines its position as providing essential support for Palestinians across the Middle East, many questions have been raised about its place in perpetuating the conflict and incitement to violence.

Amid the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, further questions have been raised about the agency's ties with Hamas, and what function, if any, it would fulfill in a post-war Gaza. On January 26, the U.S. announced it would temporarily pause funding to UNRWA after Israel revealed that at least a dozen employees were allegedly involved in the October 7 Hamas terror attack on Israel.

[AJC Policy on UNRWA](#)

HERE'S WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT UNRWA, WHY IT'S CONTROVERSIAL, AND ITS [ROLE IN THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR](#).

What were UNRWA's ties to the October 7 Hamas terror attack on Israel?

According to Israeli intelligence reports, at least 12 employees of UNRWA were part of the unprecedented Hamas terror assault on Israel on October 7, which left 1,200 people dead and over 250 taken hostage on the deadliest day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust.

Israel [revealed](#) that six UNRWA workers were part of the wave of terrorists who breached the Gaza-Israel border and massacred civilians inside of Israel. Additionally, two helped to kidnap Israelis, two others were tracked to sites where hundreds of Israeli civilians were shot and killed. Others coordinated logistics for the assault, including procuring weapons.

Among the 12 UNRWA employees who were linked to the terror attacks, seven were primary or secondary school teachers, including two math teachers, two Arabic language teachers, and one primary school teacher.

Israeli intelligence seen by The Wall Street Journal [identified](#) that a UNRWA Arabic teacher was also a Hamas commander and took part in the terrorist attack on Kibbutz Be'eri, where 97 innocent people were slaughtered in their homes in the early morning of October 7, and about 26 people were taken hostage. Also, according to The Wall Street Journal report, Israeli intelligence estimates shared with the U.S. conclude that around 1,200 of UNRWA's estimated 12,000 employees in Gaza have links to the Iranian-backed Gaza terror groups Hamas or Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

What has been the international reaction to UNRWA-October 7 links?

Israeli intelligence has briefed the U.S. on the findings, which led to the U.S. announcement on January 26 that it would temporarily suspend funding to the UN Agency.

"The Department of State has temporarily paused additional funding for UNRWA while we review these allegations and the steps the United Nations is taking to address them," spokesperson Matthew Miller said. "There must be complete accountability for anyone who participated in the heinous attacks of October 7," he added.

Several other countries have also joined the U.S. in suspending payments to UNRWA, including the UK, Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Australia, Finland, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Canada, and Japan. In his first direct comments on the issue, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that the world body would hold to account "any UN employee involved in acts of terror" and called them "abhorrent alleged acts," but also implored governments to continue to support the UN refugee agency for Palestinians. "The tens of thousands of men and women who work for UNRWA, many in some of the most dangerous situations for humanitarian workers, should not be penalized. The dire needs of the desperate populations they serve must be met."

Of the 12 employees implicated, nine have been fired, one was confirmed dead, and the identities of two others were being clarified.

What do we know about the Hamas tunnel found under UNRWA's Gaza headquarters?

On February 10, the IDF revealed it had found a tunnel connected to the UNRWA headquarters in Gaza, which they described as a significant Hamas military intelligence asset. The tunnel, about 700 meters long and 18 meters deep, contained a data center with power sources, cables linked to the UNRWA building, and living quarters for Hamas operators. UNRWA head Philippe Lazzarini denied any knowledge of the tunnel, calling for an independent investigation despite security challenges in Gaza. Israel's Foreign Minister, Israel Katz, demanded Lazzarini's resignation, citing the discovery as evidence of UNRWA's alleged involvement with Hamas. An Israeli government spokesperson asserted that UNRWA was aware of the tunnel's existence and had ignored an invitation to inspect it.

What is UNRWA and why was it started?

UNRWA was established in 1949, following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, also known as Israel's War of Independence. The agency was created in response to the displacement of Palestinians resulting from the conflict, notably after the rejection of the 1947 UN Partition Plan by Arab states and the subsequent war waged by Palestinian irregular forces against Israel as well as five Arab countries following Israel's

independence in May 1948. UNRWA's goal is to provide Palestinians with humanitarian assistance and quasi-state services.

UNRWA is also unique from other international refugee agencies in two ways.

First, UNRWA is separate from the United Nations' main agency that handles refugees and displaced persons, known as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), created in 1950-51. UNHCR handles all other refugees, while UNRWA is just solely dedicated to the Palestinian refugees and their descendants.

Secondly, UNRWA is unique in that its policy allows the inheritance of refugee status across generations. This practice has expanded the original count of an estimated 750,000 Palestinian refugees to over 5 million today, significantly amplifying the refugee issue in the region. The status of automatic inheritance of the refugee classification continues and worsens the Palestinian problem - and remains one of the main points of criticism against UNRWA.

Where does UNRWA get its funding?

UNRWA's funding primarily comes from voluntary contributions of UN member states. In 2022, significant donors included the United States, Germany, the European Union, and Sweden, together contributing over 60% of UNRWA's budget of \$1.6 billion.

In 2023, the U.S. provided \$422 million to UNRWA.

In 2018, then-U.S. President Donald Trump suspended U.S. funding to the agency, accusing it of bias and incitement against Israel. President Biden restored the funding in 2021.

U.S. Ambassador Robert Wood, Alternate Representative of the U.S. for Special Political Affairs in the United Nations, spoke about U.S. support for UNRWA at the UN Security Council in December 2023.

"...UNRWA must be supported – and the United States has provided more than \$422 million to its 2023 appeals to that end. ...ultimately, we must all work towards a two-state solution, which serves as the only foundation for a truly sustainable peace."

Why is UNRWA so controversial?

UNRWA is controversial because, unlike all other refugee situations worldwide, the Palestinians get their own refugee agency.

There are currently 35.3 million registered refugees worldwide, of whom 29.4 million are under the mandate of UNHCR. The remaining 5.9 million people are under UNRWA's mandate. The existence of a separate agency to deal with Palestinian refugees, while all other refugees are under UNHCR's mandate, is why UNRWA is controversial.

Another long-held controversy regarding UNRWA has been the accusation that it has played a role in perpetuating the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. First, granting refugee status to the descendants of Palestinian refugees has ensured that the number of refugees will continue to grow each successive generation. At the same time, many also believe that Arab nations have used UNRWA to perpetuate the conflict against Israel. Aside from Jordan, most Palestinian refugees have not been granted citizenship in their host countries, despite residing there for nearly 75 years.

In 1952, Lt. Gen. Alexander Galloway, director of UNRWA in Jordan, stated, *"It is perfectly clear that Arab nations do not want to solve the Arab refugee problem. They want to keep it as an open sore, as an affront against the United Nations, and as a weapon against Israel."* The Palestinians have never let go of this agenda.

In addition, Palestinians living in UNRWA refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza, who have never crossed an international border in previous wars, are still considered by the UN as refugees. In every other case, a person must be forced to leave one country and cross an international border to be deemed a refugee by the UN.

UNRWA's controversy also partially stems from its educational role.

A [recent report](#) by the watchdog group IMPACT-se highlighted that UNRWA's educational materials, based on the Palestinian Authority (PA) curriculum, contain antisemitic content and celebrate violence and martyrdom-jihadist culture. Additionally, there have been reports of UNRWA staff endorsing violence and terrorism, and UNRWA-educated individuals becoming affiliated with Hamas.

UNRWA has a significant position in educating almost 545,000 Palestinian children across the Middle East. The IMPACT-se report examined educational materials used in UNRWA schools, particularly in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, where the PA curriculum is adopted.

The PA curriculum, which has been under scrutiny since its 2016 revision, is found to contain – like it did before its revision – antisemitic content and the promotion of violence, jihad, and 'martyrdom' culture, while omitting teachings of peace and coexistence. UNRWA, while not producing its own curriculum, supplements the host country's curriculum with additional materials. Despite pledges to counter-act calls for violence by UNRWA, the report found a disturbing failure to do so.

The report also revealed alarming findings regarding UNRWA staff's public endorsements of violence and terrorism. Notably, it discusses how some UNRWA staff publicly praised and supported deadly assaults on Israeli civilians.

[7 Ways Hamas Exploits Palestinian Civilians in Gaza](#)

Detailed reports from the watchdog group UN Watch have exposed over 150 instances since 2015 in which UNRWA staff have been implicated in supporting terrorism and antisemitism.

More than 80 UNRWA teachers and staff across more than 30 schools have been caught distributing hateful content in their textbooks.

According to UN Watch: "Teachers and schools at the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, which runs education and social services for Palestinians, regularly call to murder Jews, and create teaching materials that glorify terrorism, encourage martyrdom, demonize Israelis and incite antisemitism."

Matthias Schmale, a former Gaza-based director of UNRWA, was transferred from his posting in Gaza after comments he made to the Israeli press following the May 2021 conflict between Israel and Hamas, where he appeared to praise Israel's "huge sophistication" in carrying out "precision" strikes. He faced protests from his Palestinian employees outside of UNRWA's headquarters in Gaza, and Hamas said that it could no longer guarantee his safety.

What has UNRWA been doing since the Israel-Hamas war began?

Since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war, UNRWA has focused on distributing food and other aid to Palestinians in Gaza. The agency has also coordinated with the IDF to facilitate aid delivery through border crossings.

[5 Reasons Why the Events in Gaza Are Not “Genocide”](#)

Throughout the conflict, there have been examples of Hamas terrorists using UNRWA facilities and equipment for their activities. For example, in December, in Gaza, following information regarding Hamas terrorists hiding inside schools, the IDF raided Al Rafaa and Zavaha schools in Tuffah in the northern Gaza Strip. During the encounter with the terrorists and their elimination, the soldiers located dozens of explosive devices in UNRWA bags, Kalashnikovs, and 15 explosive belts. In one of Hamas’ attempts to attack Israeli soldiers, a terrorist fired an anti-tank missile at the IDF position.

Israeli journalist Almog Boker, a reporter with Israel’s Channel 13, [shared the testimony](#) of an Israeli taken on October 7 who was held hostage and starved by a UNRWA teacher. UNRWA [has called on the reporter](#) to provide more information or retract the claim.

UN Watch also released a [report](#) in January 2024 detailing a Telegram group of 3,000 UNRWA teachers with posts celebrating the Hamas massacre on October 7. Within minutes of the attack, members of the group praised the perpetrators as “heroes,” lauded the education received by the terrorists, shared images of dead or captured Israelis, and called for the execution of hostages.

UNRWA announced on January 26 that it had opened a probe into the alleged involvement of several employees in the October 7 attack.

“The Israeli authorities have provided UNRWA with information about the alleged involvement of several UNRWA employees in the horrific attacks on Israel on October 7,” said Philippe Lazzarini, UNRWA Commissioner-General.

What is AJC saying about UNRWA?

AJC is keenly aware that some two million Palestinian civilians in Gaza depend on aid from UNRWA. Their condition might deteriorate further due to the allegations against UNRWA employees, which led the U.S. and several other major donor countries to suspend their financial aid to the agency. Despite the serious issues with UNRWA that must be investigated, continued delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza is essential, and next steps on UNRWA must be conducted in a manner that does not harm Palestinian civilians in need of humanitarian assistance.

[Click here to read the full AJC policy position on UNRWA.](#)

ISRAEL CUTS TIES WITH UNRWA OVER LINKS WITH TERROR GROUPS, AS BAN COMES INTO EFFECT

Foreign Ministry spokesman calls UN's Palestine refugee agency 'an organization infested with Hamas terror activity'; Supreme Court rejects petition contesting ban

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) By [Agencies](#) and [Tol Staff](#) 30 January 2025,



A right-wing activist hangs a national flag at the shuttered gate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency UNRWA's West Bank Field Office in Jerusalem on January 30, 2025. (John Wessels/AFP)

An Israeli ban on the United Nation's agency for Palestinians because of its ties to terror organizations, including Hamas, came into effect on Thursday, a day after the Supreme Court rejected a petition from a rights group contesting the move.

UNRWA, formally titled the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, is now banned from operating on Israeli soil, and contact between it and Israeli officials is also forbidden.

The ban was passed by the Knesset in November with a wide majority, with the support of opposition parties, amid a series of revelations about employees of the agency who were actively involved in terror groups in the Gaza Strip, participation of some of its staff in the October 7, 2023, Hamas invasion and slaughter, and repeated use of UNRWA infrastructure for terror activities. Israel has also provided evidence that the agency's schools incited hatred of Israel and glorification of attacks against Israelis.

The Supreme Court noted in its Wednesday ruling against Palestinian human rights group Adalah's petition that the legislation "prohibits UNRWA activity only on the sovereign territory of the State of Israel," but "does

not prohibit such activity in the areas of Judea-Samaria and the Gaza Strip,” referring to the West Bank by its biblical name.

The ban does apply, however, to East Jerusalem, where UNRWA has a field headquarters for its operations in the West Bank.

UNRWA has for decades run schools and clinics in East Jerusalem for tens of thousands of registered refugees there. The vast majority of East Jerusalem Palestinians have not sought Israeli citizenship, an option that is formally available to them, though applications are often rejected.

The Israeli ban on UNRWA, which has been backed by Washington, has drawn condemnation from aid groups and US allies.

In a statement reacting to the judgment, Adalah said the law would come into effect “disregarding the catastrophic humanitarian consequences.”

The agency says it has brought in 60 percent of the food aid that has reached Gaza since the war started with Hamas’s brutal October 7, 2023, onslaught on Israel.

UNRWA was established in 1949 following Israel’s 1948 War of Independence. It provides aid, health, and education to millions of Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, and neighboring Arab countries — Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan.

File: A woman instructs children on arithmetic multiplication in a classroom at a school run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) at the Shati camp for Palestinian refugees, west of Gaza City, on May 7, 2024. (AFP)

Some 5.9 million people are registered as Palestinian refugees by UNRWA, because they are descended from Arabs displaced in the war surrounding Israel’s creation in 1948.

Israel has long argued that UNRWA perpetuates the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by using this definition of refugee, the only case in which the status is passed down generationally.

It is one of two UN refugee agencies. While UNRWA caters to Palestinians, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is responsible for all other refugees around the world.

The hostility between Israel and the UN body intensified in the wake of Hamas’s October 7, 2023 attack, which saw some 3,000 terrorists burst across the border, killing some 1,200 people and seizing 251 hostages, with accusations that UNRWA employees participated in the assault.

“Humanitarian aid doesn’t equal UNRWA, and UNRWA doesn’t equal humanitarian aid. UNRWA equals an organization infested with Hamas terror activity,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Oren Marmorstein wrote on X ahead of the ban.

“This is why, beginning on January 30 and in accordance with Israeli law, Israel will have no contact with UNRWA.”

Government spokesman David Mencer told journalists on Wednesday that “UNRWA is riddled with Hamas operatives,” adding that “if a state funds UNRWA, that state is funding terrorists.”

“UNRWA employs over 1,200 Hamas members, including terrorists who carried out the October 7 massacre,” Mencer said. “This isn’t aid, it’s direct financial support for terror.”

UN chief says agency ‘irreplaceable’

In response, UN chief Antonio Guterres on Monday demanded that Israel rescind its order.

“I regret this decision and request that the government of Israel retract it,” he said, stressing that UNRWA was “irreplaceable.”

The agency’s chief, Philippe Lazzarini, said UNRWA’s capacity to distribute aid “far exceeds that of any other entity.”

He called Israel’s actions against UNRWA a “relentless assault... harming the lives and future of Palestinians across the occupied Palestinian territory.”

Israel has provided evidence that a dozen UNRWA employees were involved in the deadly 2023 attack and insists that other agencies can pick up the slack to provide essential services, aid and reconstruction — something the UN and many donor governments dispute.

A series of investigations, including one led by former French foreign minister Catherine Colonna, found some “neutrality-related issues” at UNRWA, but claimed Israel had not provided evidence for its headline allegation.

Under US President Donald Trump, who returned to the White House earlier this month, Washington has thrown its weight behind Israel’s move, accusing UNRWA of overstating the impact of the decision.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN UNRWA AND HAMAS IN GAZA

ISRAEL GOVERNMENT

Following the October 7th 2023 massacre perpetrated by Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist organizations, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) uncovered extensive evidence exposing the depth and scope of Hamas' infiltration into the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in Gaza and the systematic and long-term effort by Hamas to exploit the agency's infrastructure, workforce, and operational footprint for terrorist purposes.

Since this scandal broke out publicly in January 2024, the UN's leadership chose to dismiss Israel's claim that Hamas had systematically infiltrated and abused UNRWA without even launching an investigation into it. Therefore, after a lengthy process of verification and declassification, this page now presents part of the intelligence on UNRWA for the public view and for the observation of countries which are funding UNRWA (is your country one of them?).

DOWNLOAD THE FULL DOCUMENT:

[A summary of declassified intelligence, methodologies, and sources \(PDF\)](#)

Key findings:

Among the 12,521 UNRWA employees in the Gaza Strip, at least 1,462 (12%) are members of Hamas or other designated terrorist organizations.

Out of 546 principals and deputy-principals in UNRWA's education facilities, at least 80 (15%) are members of terrorist organizations.

UNRWA employees actively participated in the October 7th attacks on Israel.

[Read more on UNRWA's employment of terror operatives](#)

Throughout the current war and long before it, Hamas systematically exploited UNRWA's facilities, equipment and infrastructure as a method of warfare.

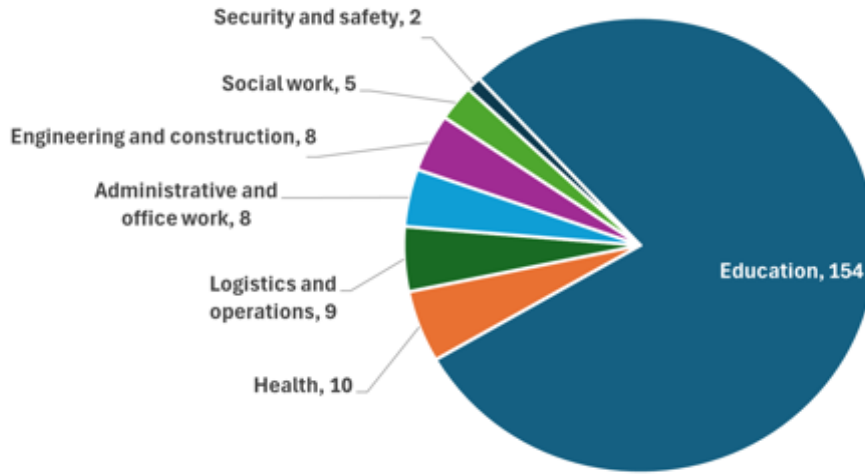
Hamas dug terror tunnels intentionally under UNRWA schools placing shafts in or next to those facilities. In at least two confirmed cases, the schools' principals were Hamas military wing members.

Hamas operated the advanced server farm of its central intelligence command center underneath UNRWA's Gaza headquarters using electricity from that facility.

Hamas regularly fired rockets from areas adjacent to UN institutions, especially from the vicinity of UNRWA schools.

[Read more on Hamas' use of UNRWA's infrastructure](#)

Chart 2: UNRWA employees in Gaza who are operatives in Hamas's military wing divided by professional categories



UNRWA EMPLOYEES' INVOLVEMENT IN THE OCTOBER 7TH ATTACK

Humanitarian staff who took part in the deadliest terrorist assault in Israel's history.

Intelligence provided to the UN's Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) identified at least 18 UNRWA employees who actively participated in the October 7th massacre, including in killings, abductions, and operational support to Hamas' invading forces.

Evidence included among others:

- Video footage showing staff members in Israeli communities during the attack.
- Phone call recordings and cellphone triangulation confirming their presence and coordination.
- Documentation of hostage abductions, including an UNRWA social worker seen loading the body of a murdered civilian into a vehicle.

**These individuals continued to function simultaneously
as UNRWA employees and Hamas operatives.**

Faisal Ali Mussalem Al-Naami from Nuseirat is an UNRWA Social Worker. A Hamas military wing operative serving in the comms and combat support branch of the Nuseirat Battalion.

CEM - Hamas membership records - His name and ID were found in a Hamas military document entitled "Personal details of comms branch" (بيانات أفراد سلاح الإشارة)

10/03/1988	3/10/1988	801904558	معتصم فايز علي الثوابنة
30/10/1983	30/10/1983	949820443	علي عبد المعطي الميلة
03/22/1970	22/3/1970	910743930	نعم عبد الرحمن حمدان
03/12/1987	12/3/1987	801810466	سماح سمير محمود ابو جبارة
03/02/1989	2/3/1989	802198184	حنيفة عبد الفتاح حسن دحلان
14/11/1987	14/11/1987	801802679	محمود عبد الله عبد القادر جهموح
02/01/1994	1/2/1994	804689867	حمزة ملاك عبد الرحمن راضي
16/8/1978	16/8/1978	900641721	فيصل علي مسلم النعاسي
05/10/1984	10/5/1984	800276867	شادي اسماعيل احمد لوهاني
07/12/1993	12/7/1993	804438729	جاسم عبد جبار عبد

Faisal was identified in Israeli territory, and was involved in kidnapping a man from Be'eri based on CCTV, CEM, and cellular activity .At 9:34am on October 7th, Faisal appeared in CCTV footage from within Kibbutz Be'eri. He can be seen loading the dead body of an Israeli into this SUV to kidnap it.



Mohammad Abu Itiwi has been employed by UNRWA since July 2022. On October 7th, 2023 Mohammad Abu Itiwi led the murderous attack on the bomb shelter on Route 232 in the area of Re'im in southern Israel in which 16 were murdered, 4 were kidnapped, and only 7 survived.

Mohammad Marwan Abu Itiwi - UNRWA Driver - Al-Qassam Militant

[Read more](#)

UNRWA STAFF WHO ARE MEMBERS OF TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS

A humanitarian agency employing hundreds of operatives from Hamas and other terrorist factions. At least 1,462 UNRWA employees in Gaza are members of Hamas, PIJ, or similar organizations—comprising nearly 12% of the agency's workforce in Gaza were verified up to this point, Of these:

- 1,157 are employed in the education system.
 - 80 school principals and deputy principals are members of terrorist groups, including 16 from Hamas' military wing.
 - Additional operatives were found in engineering, health, logistics, and administration.
- These figures are based on cross-referencing UNRWA's official staff lists with Hamas' own personnel records—including internal recruitment databases, military training rosters, and administrative files—matched through national ID numbers.

As investigation into the matter is continuing, more are expected to be found.

أنية الإغلاق	السلح	المرحلة (الخطة) أ-ب-ج-د	قائد الفصيل	العدد	النداء	المروية	المكان
حواجر حديبية	R.B.G + B.K.C + سلاح شخصي	أ + ب	قائد فصيل أول: "عمر عمار" أبو عمار (72170) قائد فصيل ثاني: محمد كاتلي "أبو حمزة" رقم جوال (0598959431) أرضي (73119)	8	صلاح 1	الحاسنة	المصلحة
حواجر حديبية	B.K.C + سلاح شخصي	أ + ب		8	صلاح 2	الحاسنة	مقرى حسين
حطب طيبة المكان	سلاح شخصي	أ + ب		8	صلاح 3	الحاسنة	دار الأرقم
حطب طيبة المكان	سلاح شخصي	أ + ب		8	صلاح 4	الحاسنة	مدرسة الرئيس
حطب طيبة المكان	سلاح شخصي	أ + ب + ج		8	صلاح 5	الحاسنة	مقرى السالكور
حطب طيبة المكان	سلاح شخصي	أ + ب + ج		8	صلاح 6	الحاسنة	مقرى صلاح الدين مع رعد
حطب طيبة المكان	سلاح شخصي	أ + ج		8	صلاح 7	الحاسنة	مقرى الوثلة مع السكة
حطب طيبة المكان	سلاح شخصي	أ + ج	حازم البريملي + مهند الشوا	8	عري 1	الرابعة	ساحة الشوا
حطب طيبة المكان	سلاح شخصي	أ + ج		8	عري 2	الرابعة	مدرسة الزهراء
حطب طيبة المكان	سلاح شخصي	أ + ج		8	عري 3	الرابعة	مسجد الشيخ خالد
حطب طيبة المكان	سلاح شخصي	أ + ج		8	عري 4	الرابعة	مقرى الساحة

CEM: The document "The 2022 Deployment Plan", contains the operatives' positions in 2 schools armed with personal weapons.

[illegible][illegible]

Hamas has exploited UNRWA's extensive infrastructure in Gaza as part of its military doctrine.

- **Tunnels, firing positions, and weapons depots inside or adjacent to UNRWA schools and compounds.**
- **Field headquarters and deployment points operating from UNRWA facilities.**
- **Use of UNRWA schools for direct fire against IDF forces, as captured in battlefield footage.**

Naji Abdalla Abu Aziz - A Military Wing Member that Israel Notified UNRWA about in 2011

Figure 1 displays three documents related to the CEM (Central Executive Meeting).

The left document, titled "CEM - the POI is mentioned Manufacturing Unit Document," is a list of names and dates, likely a roster or schedule. It includes columns for names and dates, with some entries highlighted in yellow.

The middle document, titled "CEM - Military Security Document affiliating Naji to the Manufacturing Unit," is a document featuring a photograph of a man (Naji) and Arabic text, likely a security clearance or affiliation document.

The right document is a document with Arabic text and a signature, likely a statement or report related to the CEM.



A tunnel shaft was found in 2023, near a school run by Naji Abu Aziz.



Hamas's armed terrorists using UNRWA vehicles for transportation



Despite these findings—and years of prior warnings—UNRWA did not report any such breaches, (except when it was publicly exposed) nor did it conduct effective inspections of its own facilities.

[Read more](#)

The Connection Between UNRWA and Hamas in Gaza (PDF) [Download](#)

DISMANTLING UNRWA CHIEF LAZZARINI'S FALSEHOODS

ISRAEL GOVERNMENT January 2025

Since the extensive terror infiltration into UNRWA was exposed in early 2024, UNRWA's Commissioner General Philippe Lazzarini has consistently made false statements which have profoundly misinformed the public debate on this issue, particularly in countries which continue to fund UNRWA with their taxpayer's money. Unfortunately, many of these falsehoods were echoed by media outlets without any critical assessment. This page dismantles some of Lazzarini's blatant falsehoods from recent months and clarifies the facts as they actually stand.

1. Lazzarini: "All allegations [against UNRWA] for which any evidence has been offered have been thoroughly investigated"
2. Lazzarini: The Colonna Report found that UNRWA "has a more robust neutrality framework than any comparable entity."
3. Lazzarini: For years UNRWA regularly provided Israeli authorities with staff lists for vetting and "never heard any concerns" from them.
4. Lazzarini: In UNRWA, "membership in any militant or armed group or entity is prohibited".
5. Lazzarini: UNRWA's education and health services "can only be transferred to a functioning State".
6. Lazzarini: The education UNRWA provides "promotes tolerance and respect for cultural identity"
7. Lazzarini: Israel is conducting a "disinformation campaign" against UNRWA

UNRWA's campaign of misleading statements should be seen in the broader context of the anti-Israel bias of key UN agencies. For more information on this issue, visit [this page](#).

[1] See a few examples: [24 October 2023](#), [3 December 2023](#), [13 February 2024](#), [4 March 2024](#), [4 March 2024](#) (2), [19 August 2024](#).

RESETTLEMENT-1 GAZA – TRUMP

THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF PRESIDENT TRUMP'S GAZA RELOCATION PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: President Donald Trump's controversial initiative to relocate the Palestinian population from the Gaza Strip, primarily to Egypt and Jordan, is causing a stir in the Arab world.

While the strong public resistance to the idea expressed by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and Jordanian King Abdullah seems to negate the possibility that the president's initiative can be implemented, President Trump insists that his plan is achievable and that Egypt and Jordan will eventually cooperate. His resettlement idea, viewed in today's political environment as anathema, has a series of historical precedents.

BESA [Col \(Res.\) Dr. Raphael G. Bouchnik-Chen](#) February 13, 2025



BESA Center Perspectives Paper No. 2,332, February 13, 2025

President Donald Trump has overturned the Middle East chessboard by proposing that the population of Gaza be resettled elsewhere to allow for the total razing and reconstruction of the Gaza Strip and the full eradication of its terrorist infrastructure. He views Egypt and Jordan as logical hosts to the resettled Gaza population. By mentioning the critical contributions the US makes to Egypt and Jordan, not to say their full reliance on the US, Trump is sending a strong hint to President Sisi and King Abdullah that their reservations about his proposal will come with a price. This could have serious consequences for the two Arab states, both of which face major domestic challenges including economic instability and political unrest.

Those fears notwithstanding, Egypt and Jordan have called on the Arab League to demonstrate a determined and united front against the relocation initiative. The Joint Arab statement of February 1, 2025, read, "We affirm our rejection of [any attempts] to compromise Palestinians' unalienable rights, whether

through settlement activities, or evictions or annexation of land or through vacating the land from its owners...in any form or under any circumstances or justifications.”

Several European countries have wondered about the ethics of forcibly relocating a population. Relocation, even if framed as voluntary, often involves coercion when individuals have no real alternatives. This raises questions about the morality of displacing millions of people who have already suffered decades of conflict, displacement, and loss.

Will this thwart the American president’s ambitious plan? Not necessarily. Trump will likely exert additional pressure on the Jordanian king and Egyptian president, alongside generous economic incentives.

It should be noted that the current relocation initiative is not a new idea. It has long historical roots that stretch all the way back to the conclusion of Israel’s War of Independence (1948-1949) and the emergence of the problem of Palestinian refugees. Plans were proposed that were mainly directed toward resettling the refugees through formal absorption into host countries.

Most of these initiatives were thwarted by the Arab League countries as part of a strategy intended to eventually annihilate Israel by inflating the cause of the refugees’ “right of return” to the territory of the State of Israel.

The lessons learned from past failures can serve as reference points for considering President Trump’s plan to relocate the residents of the Gaza Strip. The following historical overview sheds light on the circumstances that played a critical role in the past and can help us judge the prospects for Trump’s relocation and resettlement initiative.

BACKGROUND

The documented evidence shows that the Arab countries, since the very beginning of the Palestinian refugees’ tragedy, have never been interested in any kind of solution to the refugee problem but solely in their return to their homes within Israel. Using this rationale, all the Arab states, with the exception of Jordan, refused to grant citizenship to any Palestinian refugees residing within their borders. Most Arab leaders reasoned that resettling the Palestinians was tantamount to renouncing Arab claims to Palestine. Out of an overt hostility toward Israel, they deliberately refused to resettle Palestinian refugees in an effort to maintain their refugee status and keep the Palestinian issue alive in the world’s consciousness.

RESETTLEMENT VERSUS THE “RIGHT OF RETURN”

Official Arab discourse on the matter centered around the implementation of the “right of return” and the preservation of UNRWA as a symbol of both the refugees’ plight and the international community’s responsibility for implementing UN General Assembly Resolution 194.

At the birth of the Palestinian refugee crisis, the Arab states faced a political challenge. While they encouraged their peoples to demand the refugees’ repatriation in Israel, the Arab governments lacked the power to force Israel to accept them. Arab host states found themselves insisting that the Palestinian refugees “go home” even though they did not have the ability to make this happen.

In striking testimony, British MP Richard Cross Brian said, on visiting a refugee camp in Jordan in March 1951, that "...the Arab League needs the refugee problem in order to keep the struggle against Israel. The resettlement of the refugees would have denied its most important tool in this respect".

Systematic Arab rejection of the refugees' resettlement

Ever since the early stages of the Palestinian refugee problem, numerous resettlement projects have been proposed, international funds provided, and studies undertaken, all of which focused on the benefits to the refugees of their absorption into Arab host countries. The main idea was that the Palestinians' rehabilitation could help the host countries develop their own economic potential under proposed aid programs as well as remove the main obstacle to a settlement in the Middle East.

However, the resettlement initiatives, all of which were intended to better the lives and ease the suffering of the Palestinian people, became the official symbol of "betrayal" of the refugee cause. The term "return" remains to this day – an empty slogan devoid of any clear reference to the modalities of its implementation, either in terms of procedure or in terms of the political regime that might prevail in a recovered Palestine.

The principle of maintaining the refugees as stateless persons in order to retain their Palestinian nationality and thus preserve their "right of return" was the key premise of the Arab League's Palestinian refugee policies.

Walter Eytan, the first director general of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, wrote in his book *The First Ten Years*^[1]:

...The Arab states were quick to see that they had in the refugees a priceless political asset. They were determined to do everything to preserve it – which meant doing nothing for the refugees...The Arab states as a whole will have no interest in the solution of the problem until the refugees become a political liability for them, as they have been for Israel, or at least cease to be an asset.

THE LOGIC BEHIND THE PRINCIPLE OF RESETTLEMENT

The first UN secretary general, Trigve Lie, expressed a realistic vision on the topic by stating, "The Arab States would have a change of opinion, and they would recognize the inevitability of reintegration of refugees elsewhere than in Israel." A Report of the Special Study Mission of the US Congress stated in 1954 that the objective should be for refugees to become citizens of the Arab states – but also noted that "any Arab political leader suggesting an alternative to repatriation in what was formerly Palestine would have been ousted from office and, perhaps, have run the risk of assassination".

THE APPROACH OF ISRAELI PRESIDENT YITZHAK BEN-ZVI

A creative idea of how to solve the refugee problem was proposed in December 1960 by the late former Israeli President Yitzhak Ben-Zvi. He suggested that the Arab refugees be regarded as a fair exchange of population for the Jews expelled from Muslim countries who subsequently settled in Israel.

Ben-Zvi said, "The Arabs must accept the fact that Arab refugees should be resettled in their respective countries just as Jews were resettled in Israel...The UN must understand that this was the only way of solving the problem, even if it required financial support." The Arab side rejected President Ben-Zvi's proposal on the claim that it violated UN resolutions.

Resettlement initiatives that were stopped by the Arabs

Several initiatives were explored based on the idea of resettlement. They included the following:

1. The Syrian case: After its 1948 defeat, the Syrian government was in desperate need of agricultural workers. A joint US-UK initiative to offer a deal for the resettlement of Palestinian refugees in Syria was raised, first with then Syrian Prime Minister Husni Za'im (mid-1949) and then with Adib Shishakly (who overthrew Za'im). The basic framework was settlement in return for money. The plan was to resettle 500,000 refugees in Syria at a cost of \$200,000,000. However, shortly after the Egyptian revolution of July 1952, Shishakly shut down the project, claiming that he was being accused of suppressing freedom, binding Syria to the imperialist organizers of Western pacts and to the oil companies, and of "selling" the refugees. In February 1954, Shishakly was driven from the country by a military coup.
2. The American plans: A plan was put forward by US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in August 1955 that suggested the resettlement of the refugees in Arab states. This was to be incentivized through the development of water management projects with the US as a major contributor; payment of compensation for lost property; return of a limited number of refugees to Israel; and a solution to the border problem between Israel and the Arab states. Another US plan, initiated by President Eisenhower after the Israeli military campaign in Sinai (October-November 1956), offered an economic solution to the refugee problem through regional economic development. The last official US plan in this regard was that of Joseph Johnson in October 1962, who suggested that refugees be given a choice of return or compensation from UN and US funds while maintaining Israel's right to refuse returnees on security grounds.
3. The Iraqi case: On several occasions, the feasibility of resettling the refugees in Iraq was raised both theoretically and practically. One of the ideas was a possible quid pro quo in which Iraq would absorb a major share of Palestinian refugees in exchange for the 100,000 Jewish residents of Iraq, who would be authorized to emigrate to Israel without hindrance. Though a preliminary scheme for this kind of population exchange was raised by the Iraqi side, the idea was never implemented. This is unfortunate, as resettlement of the refugees in Iraq could have benefited the refugees while helping to solve one of Iraq's own development problems.
4. The Canadian case: In mid-1955, at the request of UNRWA, the Canadian government expressed a readiness to admit displaced Palestinian refugees. Canadian officials believed that alleviating the refugee problem in the Middle East would help to further regional stability. The resettlement scheme was still politically sensitive, however. Arab governments protested what they labeled a Zionist plot

to remove Palestinians from their ancestral land, and Palestinian activists threatened to conduct violent attacks in Canadian cities if Ottawa kept offering Palestinian refugees safe haven in Canada.

5. The South American option: It was recently revealed that the US proposed giving Palestinian refugees land in South America as a solution to the refugee problem. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who served during the administration of George W. Bush, suggested that displaced Palestinians be settled in Argentina and Chile. Rice made the proposal during a June 2008 meeting with US, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators in Berlin. The initiative was bluntly rejected by the Palestinian side.

The special resettlement initiative of UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld

Of all the resettlement proposals, the initiative of UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld was the most comprehensive. On June 15, 1959, he made the assertion that there were feasible means of absorbing the refugees into the economy of the Arab region. He asserted further that the refugees would be beneficial to their host countries by adding vital manpower to assist in their development. Hammarskjöld detailed the estimated cost of the refugee absorption, which he said could be financed by oil revenues and outside aid.

The Arab states strongly rejected the plan on the grounds that it overlooked the Palestinians' national rights. They also strongly objected to its blueprint for regional economic development, which would result in economic cooperation with Israel and eventually political cooperation. This was deemed unacceptable as it would benefit Israel by ending the boycott.

The most radical remark on behalf of the Arab States was delivered by Saudi Arabian representative to the UN Ahmad Shukeiri, who warned that unless Israel was forced to accept the complete repatriation of the refugees, 80,000,000 Arabs "from Casablanca to the Persian Gulf" were ready and eager to go to war against the Jewish State.

THE JORDANIAN OPTION AS AN "ALTERNATIVE HOMELAND"

The case of Jordan, which bears the highest burden of refugees, illustrates why other Arab states are reluctant to accept Palestinian refugees. In terms of demographics, the over 2 million refugees who reside in Jordan – 40% of all registered refugees – represent more than 70% of the total Jordanian population. The idea of flooding Jordan with large numbers of additional Palestinian refugees directly threatens the future of the Hashemite Kingdom. It can therefore be easily understood why Jordan's King Abdullah expressed his firm position that he will never accept turning Jordan into the Palestinians' "alternative homeland".

No matter what the official Jordanian position may be, the notion of Jordan as an "alternative homeland" is still alive. It is being pushed by Dr. Mudar Zahran, the Secretary General of the Jordanian Opposition Coalition, who aims to bring about the collapse of the Kingdom of Jordan.

CONCLUSION

In all the proposals for resettling Palestinian refugees, they were identified not as a liability but as an asset. They were described as a reservoir of manpower which, combined with the economic potentialities of the area, could contribute toward raising the standard of living across the whole region. But on the political level, the refugees were perceived as a threat to stability and peace, and as people who could easily be exploited by Communist and other radical movements.

Since neither Israel nor the US had the power to compel resettlement, the Palestinians and the Arab states succeeded in resisting it. In the wake of the failure of any resettlement strategy to take hold, UNRWA – a tool of UN – was suspected of indirectly helping to subsidize Palestinian terror groups and even of abetting Palestinian atrocities against Israelis on October 7.

The Arab States' resistance to resettlement was well reasoned. Notwithstanding the 1949 armistice, the Arab governments did not accept Israel's legitimacy. To agree to resettlement as a resolution to the refugee problem would have been tantamount to acknowledging the permanence of Israel.

Israeli historian Prof. Benny Morris, commenting on the 1948-49 negotiations concerning repatriation and resettlement, bluntly argued that the Arab states regarded the refugees as a potential fifth column. Some Arab governments feared that the absorption of Palestinian refugees could undermine their own political stability.

Finally, voices among the refugees themselves have described their feelings on the matter: "The Arab States do not want to solve the refugee problem. They want to keep it as an open sore, as an affront to the United Nations and as a weapon against Israel. Arab leaders don't give a damn whether the refugees live or die."

[view pdf](#)

[1] Walter Eytan, *The First Ten Years* (Simon & Schuster, 1958) p. 131.

Dr. Raphael Bouchnik-Chen is a retired colonel and author of the books Diplomat and Secret Man and The Intelligence Failure and the Yom Kippur Surprise.

TRUMP AIDES DEFEND GAZA TAKEOVER PROPOSAL BUT WALK BACK SOME ELEMENTS

[REUTERS](#)



Summary

- Russia, China, Germany and Saudi Arabia condemn it
- Critics warn of possibly violating international law
- U.S. public opinion opposes new conflict zone entanglements
- Netanyahu urges consideration of Trump's "remarkable" proposal

WASHINGTON/CAIRO, Feb 5 (Reuters) - President [Donald Trump](#)'s top aides staunchly defended his push to transfer Palestinians out of Gaza and have the U.S. take over the war-ruined enclave, but they also backed away from elements of his proposal in the face of international condemnation.

A longtime New York property developer, Trump drew rebukes on Wednesday from world powers Russia, China and Germany, which said it would foster "new suffering and new hatred." Regional heavyweight Saudi Arabia rejected the proposal outright.

But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Wednesday that Trump's proposal was "remarkable" and urged that it be explored, even as he was not specific about what he believed Trump was offering.

Barely two weeks in the job, Trump shattered decades of U.S. policy on Tuesday with a vaguely worded announcement saying he envisioned transforming Gaza into the "Riviera of the Middle East" where international communities could coexist after nearly 16 months of Israeli bombardment devastated the coastal strip and killed more than 47,000 people, according to Palestinian tallies.

At a White House briefing on Wednesday, press secretary Karoline Leavitt hailed his Gaza proposal as historic "outside of the box" thinking but stressed that the president had not committed to putting "boots on the ground" in the territory. She declined, however, to rule out the use of U.S. troops there.

At the same time, Leavitt walked back Trump's earlier assertion that Gazans needed to be permanently resettled in neighboring countries, saying instead that they should be "temporarily relocated" for the rebuilding process.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio also said the idea was for Gazans to leave the territory for an "interim" period of reconstruction and debris-clearing.

In an interview with Fox News, Netanyahu only vaguely addressed Trump's proposal, saying he did not believe the president was suggesting sending U.S. troops to fight Hamas in Gaza or that the United States would finance rebuilding efforts there.

Netanyahu, who met with Trump at the White House on Tuesday, said he supports Trump's suggestion that Gazans be free to leave and return to the war-ravaged area.

"They can leave, they can then come back. They can relocate and come back," he said.

"It's a remarkable idea and I think it should be really pursued, examined, pursued and done, because I think it will create a different future for everyone," Netanyahu said without offering specifics.

It was unclear whether Trump would go ahead with his proposal or, in keeping with his self-image as a shrewd dealmaker, was simply laying out an extreme position as a [bargaining](#) ploy. His first term was replete with what critics said were over-the-top foreign policy pronouncements, many of which were never implemented.

Trump's son-in-law and former aide, Jared Kushner, last year described Gaza as valuable waterfront property, and on Tuesday Trump made similar claims as he called for the permanent resettlement of the more than 2 million Palestinians from there.

Some experts said the proposed actions could violate international law. Others described his ideas as unworkable. Human rights advocates said it would amount to "ethnic cleansing."

"Everybody loves it," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office earlier on Wednesday, referring to his Gaza idea.

Trump's proposal, however, appears to run counter to U.S. public opinion, which polls have shown is overwhelmingly opposed to new entanglements in conflict zones following lengthy military interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Trump frequently asserted during the 2024 election campaign and since returning to office that he would end what he called "ridiculous" wars and prevent others from starting.

His Gaza proposal drew broad condemnation from Democratic lawmakers but [confusion and skepticism](#) from some fellow Republicans, while others praised the moves as bold.



Item 1 of 9 A Palestinian sits among the rubble of buildings destroyed during the Israeli offensive, amid a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip February 4, 2025.

REUTERS/Hatem Khaled

[1/9]A Palestinian sits among the rubble of buildings destroyed during the Israeli offensive, amid a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip February 4, 2025. REUTERS/Hatem Khaled [Purchase Licensing Rights, opens new tab](#)

"I thought we voted for America first," Republican Senator Rand Paul said on X. "We have no business contemplating yet another occupation to doom our treasure and spill our soldiers blood."

On a trip to Guatemala, Rubio, apparently seeking to counter the wave of global criticism, insisted Trump's proposal was not a hostile move but a generous one that expressed "the willingness of the United States to become responsible for the reconstruction of that area."

In contrast, Leavitt said U.S. taxpayers would not foot the bill and that Trump would strike a deal with regional partners.

'TRUMP CAN GO TO HELL'

Jordan's King Abdullah, who will meet Trump at the White House next week, said he rejected any moves to annex land and displace Palestinians. Egypt said it would back Gaza recovery plans, following a ceasefire that took effect on Jan. 19, without Palestinians leaving the territory.

In Gaza, Palestinians living among the wreckage of their former homes said they would never accept the idea.

"Trump can go to hell, with his ideas, with his money, and with his beliefs. We are going nowhere. We are not some of his assets," said [Samir Abu Basel](#), a father of five in Gaza City displaced from his house by the war.

Since taking office on Jan. 20, Trump has talked about a U.S. takeover of Greenland, warned of the possible seizure of the Panama Canal and declared that Canada should become the 51st U.S. state.

Some critics have said his expansionist rhetoric echoes old-style imperialism, suggesting it could encourage Russia in its [war in Ukraine](#) and give China justification for invading self-ruled Taiwan.

[World leaders](#) said they remained supportive of the two-state solution that has formed the basis of U.S. policy in the region for decades, which has held that Gaza would be part of a future Palestinian state that includes the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said, before a meeting with Netanyahu, that the Pentagon was "prepared to look at all options" related to Gaza. Experts say a major deployment of U.S. forces would be needed to secure Gaza if Trump implements his proposal.

'RIDICULOUS AND ABSURD'

An official from the Palestinian militant group Hamas called Trump's proposal "ridiculous and absurd." Hamas ruled the Gaza Strip before the war there, which was triggered by its October 7, 2023, cross-border attack on Israel in which 1,200 people were killed and 250 abducted, according to Israeli tallies.

"Any ideas of this kind are capable of igniting the region," Sami Abu Zuhri told Reuters, saying Hamas remains committed to the ceasefire accord with Israel and negotiating its next phase.

What impact Trump's proposals have on indirect talks over the second stage of the Gaza ceasefire and hostage-release deal was unclear. Hamas has adamantly insisted it wants to remain in Gaza while Netanyahu has vowed to destroy the group and never allow it to again rule the territory.

Trump's proposal raises questions about whether Saudi Arabia would be willing to join a renewed U.S.-brokered push for a historic normalisation of relations with Israel.

Saudi Arabia, a pivotal U.S. ally in the Middle East, said it would not establish ties with Israel without the creation of a Palestinian state, contradicting Trump's claim that Riyadh was not demanding a Palestinian homeland.

Trump would like Saudi Arabia to follow in the footsteps of the United Arab Emirates, a Middle East trade and business hub, and Bahrain, both of which signed the Abraham Accords in 2020 and normalised ties with Israel.

But on Wednesday, the kingdom's foreign ministry said Saudi Arabia rejected any attempts to remove Palestinians from their land and said Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman had affirmed this position in "a clear and explicit manner."

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TRUMP WANTS JORDAN AND EGYPT TO ACCEPT MORE PALESTINIAN REFUGEES AND FLOATS PLAN TO 'CLEAN OUT' GAZA

[AP](#) [ZEKE MILLER](#) and [WILL WEISSERT](#) January 26, 2025

ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE (AP) — President [Donald Trump](#) said he would like to see Jordan, Egypt and other Arab nations increase the number of [Palestinian refugees](#) they are accepting from the Gaza Strip, potentially moving out enough of the population to “just clean out” the war-torn area to create a virtual clean slate.

During a 20-minute question-and-answer session Saturday with reporters aboard Air Force One, Trump also said he has ended his predecessor’s hold on sending 2,000-pound bombs to Israel. That lifts a pressure point meant to reduce civilian casualties during [Israel’s war with Hamas](#) in Gaza, which is now halted by a tenuous ceasefire.

“We released them today,” Trump said of the bombs. “They’ve been waiting for them for a long time.” Asked why he lifted the ban on those bombs, Trump responded, “Because they bought them.”

0:00 / 12

AUDIO: Trump’s comments on Gaza

Aboard Air Force One Saturday, President Donald Trump said he wants Jordan and Egypt to accept more Palestinian refugees and floats a plan to ‘clean out’ Gaza and has spoken to Jordan’s King.

Trump has built his political career around being unapologetically pro-Israel. On his larger vision for Gaza, Trump said he had call earlier in the day with [King Abdullah II](#) of Jordan and would speak Sunday with President [Abdel Fattah el-Sissi](#) of Egypt.

“I’d like Egypt to take people, and I’d like Jordan to take people,” Trump said. “You’re talking about probably a million and a half people, we just clean out that whole thing.”

Trump said he complimented Jordan for having successfully accepted Palestinian refugees and that he told the king, “I’d love for you to take on more, cause I’m looking at the whole Gaza Strip right now, and it’s a mess. It’s a real mess.”

Such a drastic displacement of people would openly contradict Palestinian identity and deep connection to Gaza. Still, Trump said the part of the world that encompasses Gaza, has “had many, many conflicts” over centuries. He said resettling “could be temporary or long term.”

“Something has to happen,” Trump said. “But it’s literally a demolition site right now. Almost everything’s demolished, and people are dying there.” He added: “So, I’d rather get involved with some of the Arab nations, and build housing in a different location, where they can maybe live in peace for a change.”

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a statement Sunday, thanked Trump for “keeping your promise to give Israel the tools it needs to defend itself.” He did not mention Trump’s suggestion on Palestinian refugees.

AUDIO: Trump’s comments on Gaza, continued

Aboard Air Force One Saturday, President Donald Trump said he would like to see Jordan, Egypt and other Arab nations increase the number of Palestinian refugees they are accepting from Gaza, to “clean out” the war-torn area to create a virtual clean slate.

But Jordan’s foreign minister, Ayman Safadi, told reporters that his country’s rejection of the proposed transfer of Palestinians was “firm and unwavering.”

Sen. Lindsay Graham, a Trump ally, was asked on CNN’s “State of the Union” about what Trump meant with his remark about Palestinians. “You know, I really don’t know,” said Graham, R-S.C.

“The idea that all the Palestinians are going to leave and go somewhere else, I don’t see that to be overly practical,” Graham said. He added, though, that Trump should keep talking to Mideast leaders, including Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and officials in the United Arab Emirates and Egypt.

“I don’t know what he’s talking about. But go talk to MBS, go talk to UAE, go talk to Egypt,” Graham said. “What is their plan for the Palestinians? Do they want them all to leave?”

Trump has offered nontraditional views on the future of Gaza in the past. He suggested after he was inaugurated on Monday that Gaza has “really got to be rebuilt in a different way.”

The new president added then, “Gaza is interesting. It’s a phenomenal location, on the sea. The best weather, you know, everything is good. It’s like, some beautiful things could be done with it, but it’s very interesting.”

Resuming delivery of large bombs, meanwhile, is a break with then-President Joe Biden, who halted their delivery in May as part of an effort to keep Israel from launching an all-out assault on the southern Gaza city of Rafah. A month later, Israel did take control of the city, but after the vast majority of the 1 million civilians that had been living or sheltering in Rafah had fled.

“Civilians have been killed in Gaza as a consequence of those bombs and other ways in which they go after population centers,” Biden told CNN in May when he held up the weapons. “I made it clear that if they go into Rafah ... I’m not supplying the weapons that have been used historically to deal with Rafah, to deal with the cities, that deal with that problem.”

The Biden pause had also held up 1,700 500-pound bombs that had been packaged in the same shipment to Israel, but weeks later those bombs were delivered.

Trump's action comes as he has celebrated the first phase of a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel that has paused the fighting and seen [the release of some hostages](#) held by Hamas in Gaza in return for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

Negotiations have yet to begin in earnest on the more difficult second phase of the deal that would eventually see the release of all hostages held by Hamas and an enduring halt to the fighting.

If the remaining hostages are not released, the Israeli government has threatened to resume its war against Hamas, which launched a massive assault against Israel on Oct. 7, 2023.

‘WHEN HE WANTS SOMETHING, IT HAPPENS.’

ISRAEL’S FAR RIGHT APPLAUDS TRUMP’S GAZA PLAN

[CNN World](#) Tim Lister, CN January 28, 2025

US President Donald Trump has doubled down on his proposal to [“clean out” Gaza](#) by removing Palestinians living there to Jordan and Egypt, a plan which has appalled some allies but has been quickly embraced by Israel’s far right.

Having first floated the idea Saturday, Trump warmed to his theme Monday, saying of Gaza’s population: “I’d like to get them living in an area where they can live without disruption and revolution and violence so much.”

He has not specified whether such emigration would be voluntary. The forcible displacement of civilians “can constitute a war crime and/or crime against humanity” depending on the context, [according](#) to the United Nations.

“I think you can get people living in areas that are a lot safer and maybe a lot better and maybe a lot more comfortable,” he said on Monday.



[video](#)

[Related video Trump: Gaza is ‘literally a demolition site right now’](#)

While there has been no response from the Israeli Prime Minister’s Office, the idea was applauded by far-right Israeli politicians.

[Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich](#), who leads the Religious Zionism party, said Trump had recognized that Gaza was “a breeding ground for terror,” and “there is no doubt that in the long run, encouraging migration is the only solution that will bring peace and security to the residents of Israel and alleviate the suffering of Gaza’s Arab residents.”

Smotrich, who also has a ministerial position in the defense ministry, said he was working on a plan to implement Trump’s vision. “When he wants something, it happens,” he said. Smotrich has been advocating for what he calls “the voluntary emigration of [Gaza Arabs](#) to countries around the world” since 2023.

But the idea of displacement, voluntary or otherwise, is [horrifying to Jordan and Egypt](#) and likely alarming to other Arab allies of the US, threatening decades of international consensus about the [right of Palestinians to a homeland](#). Ayman Safadi, Jordan’s foreign minister, said Sunday: “Jordan is for Jordanians and Palestine is for Palestinians.”

“Our rejection for the deportation is steadfast and unchanging.”

Trump said the removal of Palestinians might be temporary or “long-term,” but Arab critics allege that Palestinians have never been allowed by Israel to return to land once removed.

Neither Egypt nor Jordan would contemplate being party to a repeat of the Palestinian [‘Nakba’ or ‘catastrophe’](#) in 1948. Roughly 700,000 Palestinians were forced from their homes when the state of Israel was born. A second iteration would be tantamount to condoning and supporting ethnic cleansing.

Much like [Denmark hopes](#) Trump will abandon his ideas for US control of Greenland, the moderate Arab states will be praying that the US President forgets about transferring the Gazans.

The comparison was not lost on Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, who said in an interview with Sky News Tuesday that “Palestine cannot be deleted and Palestinians cannot be expelled. My suggestion: Instead of Palestinians, try to expel Israelis to Greenland. Take them to Greenland so you can kill two birds (with) one stone.”

SAUDI-UAE SILENCE

Jordan and Egypt seem likely to huddle with their allies in the Gulf, especially Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, in an effort to present a united front.

So far, the Saudis and Emiratis have remained publicly silent on the Trump plan. King Abdullah II of Jordan has also said nothing about his call with Trump on Saturday. But the Jordanian court pointedly released a read-out of his call Monday with new Secretary of State Marco Rubio, which may have been an effort at damage limitation.

The statement said they discussed ways to “enhance regional security and stability...and means to strengthen the strategic partnership between Jordan and the United States, as well as keenness to maintain coordination and consultation on various issues.”

The response from Cairo was more puzzling. A senior Egyptian official denied that President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi had spoken with Trump, despite the latter’s assertion Monday that they had spoken. Trump declined to say directly if the Egyptian president had an opinion on taking additional Palestinian refugees.

“He’s in a very rough part of the world, to be honest, as they say, it’s a rough neighborhood, but I think he can do it,” Trump said.

The Egyptian official added that readouts between the Egyptian president and heads of state are released when they take place. The Egyptian Presidency itself has made no comment about any call and the White House hasn't released a readout.

Trump also appears to have nodded towards the belief among some Israelis that Gaza isn't really Palestinian land anyway.

"You know, when you look at the Gaza Strip, it's been hell for so many years, and it just seems to be this – various civilizations start here, started thousands of years before," he said Monday.

That fits right in with the perspective of people like the former Israeli Minister of National Security Itamar Ben Gvir, who leads the Jewish Power party.

Trump's remarks will also encourage the idea among some Israeli right-wing groups such as Nachala that Israel should establish settlements in Gaza. [Daniella Weiss](#), who leads Nachala, told CNN last year: "No Arab, I'm speaking about more than two million Arabs. They will not stay there. We Jews will be in Gaza."

FOREIGN AID AS POTENTIAL LEVERAGE

After a year of transformative upheaval in the Middle East, even the idea that millions of Palestinians might be moved from their homes is potentially a source of still greater instability. Sisi has previously said that taking in Gazans would threaten Egypt's peace agreement with Israel because of the risk that some of them would resume fighting the Jewish state from within his country's borders.

The risk is existential to Jordan, which has more than a million refugees from neighboring countries as well as about 2.4 million registered Palestinian refugees. Indeed, more than half of its inhabitants are of Palestinian descent, and its demography would be transformed by another influx. But Jordan cannot afford to dismiss Trump's idea out of hand. A country of few resources, its 2023 budget deficit stood at 5.1% of its economic output, and a fifth of its workforce is unemployed. It is heavily reliant on foreign aid and is [the](#) second biggest recipient of US aid in the Middle East after Israel, with more than \$1.7 billion delivered in 2023.

Trump has already moved to put foreign aid and tariffs at the center of a foreign policy whose first tenets have been more stick than carrot. That will not be lost on the Jordanian and Egyptian governments now in the crosshairs. Egypt is the region's [third-biggest recipient](#) of US aid, with \$1.5 billion delivered in 2023.

"I wish he would take some," Trump said of Sisi on Monday, referring to Gazans. "We help them a lot, and I'm sure he can help us, he's a friend of mine."

Were Trump to persist with the idea, the prospect of extending the Abraham Accords to include normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabia – a centerpiece of his Middle East policy – would also be jeopardized. While Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has close personal ties with Trump, he has repeatedly made clear that normalization is linked to a [pathway to a Palestinian state](#). Emptying Gaza would not fit with that priority.

CNN's Sarah El Sirgany, Nadeen Ebrahim and Jomana Karadsheh contributed to this report.

TRUMP: US WILL 'TAKE OVER' GAZA, LEVEL IT AND CREATE 'THE RIVIERA OF THE MIDDLE EAST'

In press conference with PM, president proposes US replace Hamas in Gaza,
doesn't rule out possibility of sending troops;

says he'll soon announce policy on Israel annexing West Bank

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL [Jacob Magid](#) and [Lazar Berman](#)



US President Donald Trump (R) and Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu take questions during a press conference in the East Room of the White House in Washington, DC, on February 4, 2025.

(Andrew Caballero-Reynolds/AFP)

WASHINGTON — US President Donald Trump on Tuesday declared his desire for the United States to “take over” and “own” the Gaza Strip, again stunning a global audience hours after doing so with his [call for permanently relocating](#) the coastal enclave’s entire population.

“The US will take over the Gaza Strip, and we will do a job with it too. We’ll own it,” Trump said in prepared remarks at the start of a joint press conference with visiting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu after the two leaders met in the Oval Office.

There had been speculation that Trump would use his Tuesday meeting with Netanyahu to urge him to commit to carrying out the second phase of the ongoing Gaza ceasefire and hostage release deal. The prime minister is under pressure from his far-right coalition partners to resume fighting at the conclusion of the first phase next month.

But Trump avoided publicly leaning on Netanyahu at all, instead praising his leadership and seemingly offering him a political lifeline by getting fully behind an idea — emptying Gaza — that has long been

endorsed by the Israeli far right, and thereby giving ultranationalist lawmakers an incentive to keep the government intact.

The proposal also seemed likely to swing focus away from the hostage talks, or at least shake them up. Israel and Hamas are set to begin negotiations this week on the terms of the second phase of the ceasefire in Gaza, which is supposed to see the release of the remaining living hostages in exchange for Israel permanently ending the war — something that would likely leave Hamas in power, falling short of Netanyahu's pledge to fully dismantle the terror group's military and governing capabilities.

To fulfill that pledge, Trump on Tuesday proposed that the US be the one to replace Hamas in Gaza, offering an alternative that Netanyahu could get behind after the premier repeatedly rejected the Palestinian Authority in that role — the preference of the Biden administration and Arab allies.

Whether Trump's proposal is viable was another question, as was what it would mean for the 79 remaining hostages in Gaza, whom Hamas has sought to leverage as an insurance policy to remain in power.

Still reading from his prepared remarks, highlighting that this was not an off-the-cuff idea thrown around during his regular banter with reporters, Trump said he envisioned "long-term [US] ownership" of the Strip. "We will be responsible for dismantling all of the dangerous unexploded bombs and other weapons on the site, [for] get[ting] rid of the destroyed buildings, level[ing] it out, creat[ing] an economy development that will supply unlimited numbers of jobs and housing to the people of the area," Trump said.

"[We've got to] do something different. You just can't go back. If you go back, it's going to end up the same way it has been for 100 years," he said, adding that other leaders in the region backed his idea.

"It should not go through a process of rebuilding and occupation by the same people that have... lived there and died there and lived a miserable existence there," Trump said of Gaza. He added that he planned to visit the enclave as well as Israel and Saudi Arabia, without saying when.

Trump insisted the Palestinians "have no alternative" but to leave the "big pile of rubble" that is Gaza after over 15 months of Israeli bombardments aimed at dismantling Hamas in response to the terror group's October 7 onslaught.

The US president reiterated his belief that Palestinians should be removed from the "hellhole" of the Strip and placed in one or multiple other countries "with humanitarian hearts."

Trump, since returning to office, has insisted that Egypt and Jordan volunteer to serve as hosts for the Gazans, but the two countries have adamantly rejected the idea, arguing that it would destabilize them and that the Palestinians should be allowed to remain on their land, just as Israelis are.

He said the "world's people" would be the ones to live in Gaza once the US finishes rebuilding it, and that while the Palestinians could be among them, the enclave will become an "international" hub.

"Gaza is a hellhole right now. It was before the bombing started, frankly, and we're going to give people a chance to live in a beautiful community that's safe and secure," he said.

"I don't want to be cute, I don't want to be a wise guy," Trump said and then referred to Gaza as potentially "the Riviera of the Middle East. This could be something that could be so magnificent."

It is not the first time the former property tycoon has spoken about the Palestinian territory in terms of real estate, saying in October it could be "better than Monaco."

Last year, Trump's son-in-law and former senior White House adviser Jared Kushner described Gaza as "waterfront property that could be valuable," adding that he would "do his best to move the people out and then clean it up."



A Palestinian woman hangs laundry as children climb debris in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip on February 4, 2025. (Omar AL-QATTAA / AFP)

Asked whether American troops would be sent to Gaza, Trump said, "As far as Gaza is concerned, we'll do what is necessary. If it's necessary, we'll do that."

The response and Trump's broader plan for a US takeover of Gaza appeared to be a departure from his previous policy of reducing the US military presence in the region, rather than bolstering it.

The last time the US sent troops to Gaza — or at least to the enclave's shores — was to try and set up a temporary port to help funnel in humanitarian aid last year. But poor weather conditions forced the dismantlement of the platform just several weeks after it was set up at the direction of then-president Joe Biden.

Palestinians fume as some Republicans cast doubt

Trump's plan doesn't seem contingent on whether or not Gaza's population of roughly two million people even want to leave, and the Palestinian envoy to the United Nations quickly insisted that they don't.

"Our homeland is our homeland," said Riyadh Mansour. "And I think that leaders and people should respect the wishes of the Palestinian people."

Hamas in a statement decried Trump's vision. "We reject Trump's statements in which he said that the residents of the Gaza Strip have no choice but to leave, and we consider them a recipe for creating chaos and tension in the region."

Trump's Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff said Palestinians need not be tied to the land they're currently on in order to have a better life.

"A better life is not necessarily tied to the physical space that you are in today," he said in an interview with Fox News shortly after the Trump-Netanyahu press conference.

"A better life is about better opportunity, better financial conditions, better aspirations for you and your family. That doesn't occur because you get to pitch a tent in the Gaza Strip and you're surrounded by 30,000 munitions that could go off at any moment," said Witkoff, who visited Gaza during a trip to the region

last week. “Gaza today is uninhabitable and will probably be uninhabitable for at least the next 10 to 15 years.”

Earlier Tuesday, the envoy tore into the ceasefire framework crafted by Biden, which he helped to finalize in Doha last month, arguing that it unrealistically envisioned a Gaza reconstruction process of five years when the effort would take much longer.

Even some Republicans chafed at Trump’s proposal.

“We’ll see what our Arab friends say about that,” said Trump ally and Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham. “I think most South Carolinians would probably not be excited about sending Americans to take over Gaza. It might be problematic.”

‘JAW-DROPPING’ AWE FROM NETANYAHU

Standing at a podium beside Trump, Netanyahu hailed the president as Israel’s “greatest friend” and praised his “willingness to think outside the box.”

“You say things others refuse to say. And after the jaws drop, people scratch their heads and they say, ‘You know he’s right,’” the prime minister said, adding that Trump’s plan could “change history” and was worth “paying attention to.”

Netanyahu was making the first visit of a foreign leader to the White House since Trump assumed office.

The two have had tense relations in the past, but Netanyahu has seized on the Republican’s return to power after his ties with Biden became increasingly frayed over Israel’s conduct of the war in Gaza.

“You are the greatest friend Israel has ever had in the White House,” said Netanyahu, listing Trump’s policies toward the Jewish state in his first term, including leaving the Iran nuclear deal, brokering the Abraham Accords, and moving the US embassy to Jerusalem.

“You’ve picked up right where you left off,” he said.

“Your leadership has brought hostages home,” said Netanyahu. He added that Trump freed up munitions allegedly withheld by the previous administration, ended “unjust sanctions against Israeli citizens” — referring to sanctions on violent settlers — “confronted antisemitism, stopped funding UNRWA, and renewed maximum pressure against Iran.”

All this has been done by Trump in just two weeks, he said. “Can you imagine where we’ll be in four years?”

Israel, said Netanyahu, has been changing the face of the Middle East since the Hamas onslaught of October 7, 2023.

“We have defeated some of America’s worst enemies. We took out terrorists that were wanted for decades for shedding rivers of American blood,” the premier said.

“Israel has never been stronger and the Iran terror axis has never been weaker,” he said.

But to secure Israel’s future and bring peace to the region, “we have to finish the job,” added Netanyahu, reiterating pledges — which some have criticized as conflicting — to return all the hostages and remove Hamas from power in Gaza.

“Israel will end the war by winning the war,” Netanyahu promised. This, in turn, will “usher in the peace with Saudi Arabia and with others.”

He said he believes “peace between Israel and Saudi Arabia is not only feasible; it’s going to happen.”

If Trump had had another half-year in his first term, it would already have happened, said the prime minister. “I’m committed to achieving it, and I know the president is committed to achieving it. And I think the Saudi leadership is interested in achieving it.”

But shortly after the press conference concluded, Saudi Arabia issued a statement reiterating that it would not normalize ties with Israel before a Palestinian state is established. The statement was specifically in response to Trump’s claim earlier in the day that Riyadh has not, in fact, conditioned Israel normalization on a two-state solution.

While Trump gave much for the Israeli right to gush about, he told reporters in the Oval Office with Netanyahu earlier in the day that he did not support Israel reestablishing settlements in Gaza. “I don’t see it happening. It’s too dangerous for people. No one wants to be there. [Israel’s] warriors don’t want to be there. Their soldiers don’t want to be there.”

Asked at the press conference whether he’d back Israel annexing the West Bank, Trump said he’ll likely be “making an announcement” on the matter at some point in the next four weeks.

“We’re discussing that with many of your representatives. You’re represented very well... [but] we haven’t been taking the position on it yet,” Trump said during the press conference to a reporter who signaled that he supported annexation.

Regarding the hostages, Trump said the US would get “somewhat more violent” if Hamas did not release all of them, “because they would have broken their word.”

“We also see eye to eye on Iran,” said Netanyahu — the same Iran, he noted, that “tried to kill us both: they tried to kill you, Mr. President, and through their proxies, they tried to kill me.”

“We are both committed to rolling back Iran’s aggression in the region and ensuring that Iran never develops a nuclear weapon,” Netanyahu said.

Trump seemed a bit less militant, and expressed his desire to address the Iranian nuclear threat through diplomatic means.

“If we could solve this problem without warfare, without all of the things that you’ve been witnessing over the last number of years, I think it would be a tremendous thing,” the president said.

Asked whether he’d back an Israeli strike on Iran, Trump responded, “We’ll have to see what happens.”

Agencies contributed to this report.

THE MAN WITH THE PLAN: DC PROFSSENT TRUMP STUDY ON GAZA RELOCATION, DEVELOPMENT IN JULY

GWU economics professor Joseph Pelzman wrote detailed proposal for Trump's team; says 'you have to destroy the whole place, restart from scratch'

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Tal Schneider](#) 7 February 20



Model illustration of a new Gaza Strip, from the X account of Dr. Kobby Barda; inset: Professor Joseph Pelzman (courtesy)

US President Donald Trump's proposal to relocate Gaza's Palestinians and then redevelop the Gaza Strip has sent shockwaves worldwide. Rejected by the Arab world and much of the international community, it has been welcomed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as an idea that "could change history," "worth listening carefully to," and "the first original idea that has been raised in years."

For one man in Washington, however, the proposal Trump unveiled when hosting Netanyahu at the White House on Tuesday came as no shock: George Washington University [Professor Joseph Pelzman](#). An expert in economics and international relations and head of the university's Center of Excellence for the Economic Study of the Middle East and North Africa (CEESMENA), Pelzman authored the plan and submitted it to Trump's team as early as July 2024.

The details of Pelzman's plan were first made public by Dr. Kobby Barda, an Israeli historian specializing in American politics and geo-strategy, during a discussion he held with Pelzman on the podcast ["America, Baby!"](#) in August 2024.

"I figured, well, why don't I write sort of an out-of-the-box perspective on how to fix Gaza after the war is finished," Pelzman told Barda. "The paper went to the Trump people because they were the ones who

initially had an interest in it – not the Biden people. I was asked [by Trump’s team] to think outside the box on what do we do after [the war], as nobody was really talking about it.”

Pelzman’s paper, titled “An Economic Plan for Rebuilding Gaza: A BOT Approach,” has since been published in the Global World Journal. (He wrote it up in July, but it was [put online](#) in October.)

Professor Joshep Pelzman speaks about his Gaza redevelopment plan with podcaster Dr. Kobby Barda on 25 August 2024 (in English)

It presents a viewpoint whereby Gaza’s economy has reached absolute rock bottom. Pelzman cites World Bank data, which states that between 2007 and 2022, Gaza’s annual GDP growth averaged 0.4%, while per capita GDP declined by 2.5% per year due to high population growth.

Moreover, because of the war that erupted following Hamas’s attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, the destruction in Gaza has become so extensive that it is beyond repair or reconstruction, according to the professor. In fact, according to Pelzman, no private or international investment entity would enter Gaza as things stand. “You have to restart it from scratch,” he told Barda.

Pelzman presented additional data, already known to the public: As of 2022, Gaza’s unemployment rate stood at 45%, and 53% of the population lived below the poverty line, compared to about 13% of the Palestinians living in the West Bank. According to World Bank estimates from March 2024, cited by Pelzman, approximately 1.2 million people in Gaza were homeless and destitute “due to Hamas actions.” Additionally, 62% of the buildings still standing had sustained severe damage that rendered them uninhabitable and 90% of the main roads had been destroyed.



Professor Joseph Pelzman (courtesy)

“You have to destroy the whole place, you have to restart from scratch,” Pelzman said on Barda’s podcast. “And then you have an economy which actually has three sectors: you have tourism potential, you have agriculture potential, and then you have – because a lot of them are smart – high-tech.”

He said his plan “started with a three-sector model of Gaza, but it requires that the place be completely emptied out. I mean, literally emptied out, dug up from scratch – and the concrete can be recycled.

“This is a triangular-sector model, but its implementation requires the area to be completely vacated so that the destroyed concrete can be recycled – ensuring that nothing remains of the vertical construction extending deep underground.”

The plan presented by Pelzman, who previously worked with USAID on economic developments in China, utilizes the BOT method – Build-Operate-Transfer – a model implemented in developing countries. According to this method, private sector companies and organizations enter into investment partnerships with governmental entities, receiving a property lease from the government for 50-100 years.

Under this system, a private entity constructs and operates the project for several decades, after which ownership is transferred to a public authority. During the operational period, the private entity is allowed to charge fees for the use of the infrastructure.



People walk amid collapsed buildings along Saftawi Street in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip on February 5, 2025 (Omar AL-QATTAA / AFP)

CHINA-STYLED HOUSING UNITS

In his research paper, Pelzman characterizes his approach as treating Gaza “from a purely economic perspective,” which seeks “the investment solution to a failed experiment” – namely, the Gaza Strip since Israel withdrew from it in 2005.

Among other things, Pelzman’s plan would see a Gaza Strip powered entirely by solar energy, traversed by a light rail system and serviced by air- and sea-ports. The Strip will be independent of Israel for its energy needs.

Meanwhile, he writes, “there are no ex-ante restrictions on the mobility of local residents to exit Gaza.” According to Pelzman’s plan, “the cost of this massive reconstruction of Gaza will range from \$1 to \$2 trillion and will take 5 to 10 years to complete.” His estimate is based on a model that analyzes a Gazan post-war economy driven by the agriculture, tourism and tech sectors.



Displaced Palestinians walk on a road to return to their homes in the northern Gaza Strip, January 28, 2025. (AP Photo/Abdel Kareem Hana)

Pelzman envisions restaurants, hotels and other luxury amenities on the Strip's western, seafront side; and residential buildings – “[People's Republic of China]-styled 30-floor housing units” on the eastern side. In between, he writes, will be agricultural areas and greenhouses. The reconstruction will require “the complete excavation of the terror tunnels,” though Pelzman says the IDF has already done much of the work.

Pelzman indicates repeatedly in his paper that his preferred mode for Gaza's governance is e-government, meaning government that makes use of technological means. In particular, “the exchange of funds between residents and businesses will be exclusively via an online exchange network,” precluding the need for paper money, credit cards or foreign aid. The Strip will have no monetary authority and “all capital flows will be controlled by foreign stakeholders.”

Furthermore, Pelzman suggests that experts appointed by the foreign shareholders would oversee an educational system based on deradicalization, “with external oversight to assure the development of a skilled population.” Pelzman suggests importing curricula – from kindergarten to university – from the educational models of the UAE or Saudi Arabia, based on their recent reforms and Sunni-Sufi Islamic teachings.

Security must be assigned to “partners who share the common interest of removing Hamas and their co-conspirators from any role,” and are “interested in demilitarizing Gaza permanently.”

Per Pelzman, Hamas has no property rights in Gaza, under the 1993 Oslo Accords, which he says were left intact when Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005.

TRUMP'S START-FROM-SCRATCH SCHEME TO RESURRECT GAZA FROM THE RUBBLE INSPIRED BY FUTURISTIC 'RIVIERA' PROPOSAL

**After last week's dramatic idea, there will be no going back to business
as usual in the Middle East**

[Sunday Independent \(Ireland\)](#) Barry O'Halloran 9 Feb 2025

Just when we thought Donald Trump had exhausted our capacity for shock, he does it again, nonchalantly announcing on live television that the United States was going to assume control of Gaza. For most people, it was a "do not adjust your set, adjust your brain" moment.

If at that precise moment Trump had also announced the winning numbers for next week's lottery, or the third secret of Fatima, nobody would have heard him, because in a cacophony of different global languages, everyone was responding with various linguistic versions of "WTF?".

When people recovered their composure, what most wanted to know was: where did this idea come from? Well, with a little digging, I may have the answer.

Last July, Professor Joseph Pelzman, an internationally recognised trade economist at George Washington University, wrote an interesting document called "An Economic Plan for Rebuilding Gaza". Its purpose was "to approach the problem from a purely economic viewpoint", because, the report says, the destruction of Gaza was so extensive it is beyond repair, so "you have to destroy the whole place, you have to restart from scratch".

To do this, he concludes, "the area needs to be completely vacated so that the destroyed concrete can be recycled".

The costs of this massive reconstruction project "will range from \$1 tn to \$2 tn and take five to 10 years to complete".

Pelzman sent an outline of his ideas to both the Biden and Trump teams last summer. Only Trump's people replied, asking him "to think outside the box on what do we do after the war, as nobody was really talking about it".

So now we know where Trump's "Gaza Riviera" plan comes from.

More generally, however, trying to make sense of Trump's outlandish plan for Gaza involves distinguishing between signal and noise. It's an onerous task at the best of times, but is made infinitely more difficult by the president's personality and unorthodox behaviour.

When trying to figure out what Trump is trying to say, it is critically important that one takes him seriously, but not literally. In other words, there is nearly always a method in his madness. This is particularly the case in decoding Trump's Gaza gambit.

Apart from the appalling loss of civilian life, one thing that has always struck me about the recent war in Gaza is: why didn't more refugees leave?

When Putin started bombing the far less densely populated Ukraine, millions fled immediately, over 100,000 of them to Ireland.

Israeli leaders claimed they endeavoured to minimise the loss of civilian life, but even if you take them at their word, which few do, it is impossible not to kill civilians if you drop 2,000-pound bombs in a densely populated area.

About 100,000 Palestinians did flee the relentless Israeli bombing by escaping through the Rafah crossing to Egypt. These were the more affluent citizens who could afford to pay the hefty bribes that Egyptian border guards demanded.

But why didn't the Egyptian government open the border with Gaza to allow hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to escape what the Arab world and much of the West was calling a genocide by Israel?

For that matter, why didn't any neighbouring Arab states or the super-wealthy Gulf states offer to rescue the long-suffering Gazans and give them refuge?

For seven decades, the Muslim states have used the Palestinians as pawns in the game

There are two aspects to that conundrum.

First, based on bitter experience, Arab states consider the Palestinians to be fundamentally disruptive. They caused a civil war in Jordan in 1970 when tens of thousands of them were expelled by the Jordanian army to Lebanon. They caused further disruption there and were expelled again, to Tunisia.

Egypt wants nothing to do with Palestinians because Hamas is a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood won the presidential election in 2011, but the democratically-elected president Mohamed Morsi was overthrown a year later in a military coup led by Abdel El-Sisi, the current president. The Egyptians have been adamant that letting in hundreds of thousands of Palestinians could destabilise the state.

Second, for seven decades, the Muslim states have used the Palestinians as pawns in a game of pressing Israel and undermining its legitimacy.

They invaded Israel on four occasions in order to eliminate it, all in the name of preserving Palestinian rights. Except for Iran, that game is largely played out now.

Trump's priorities are to free the Israel hostages and stop the war. To that end, he pushed Netanyahu to conclude the first phase of the hostage deal. It worked, and he was duly praised, including by me.

However, the second phase of that deal is a much trickier proposition.

It involves a fundamental contra

diction: a permanent ceasefire (thereby allowing Hamas to reconstitute itself) in return for the release of all hostages is in total conflict with the objective of eliminating Hamas as a governing force in Gaza.

Trump sees the conflict in this binary choice and he doesn't like it — so he has come up with a completely curve-ball third option.

One of Trump's quintessential but under-appreciated instincts is his consummate ability to sense where his opponents' vulnerabilities lie.

Once identified, he targets them relentlessly, usually with devastating effect.

In my view, this is what Tuesday night's TV performance was all about. But please note, this was not performative — Trump was being deadly serious. He was reading from an autocue, not riffing at a rally. Since he descended the golden escalator in Trump Tower to announce his candidacy for president 10 years ago, he has relished his role as disruptor-in-chief.

Right from the start, he made the then outlandish proposal to build a wall to keep Mexican "rapists and murderers" out of the US.

There was a lot of noise over that, too, but what Trump was signalling was that illegal immigration was going to be the ace up his sleeve. This week's broad-brush plan for Gaza is another deliberately provocative move to shake up the Middle East.

There have been four wars in Gaza since Israel ended its occupation there two decades ago.

Each one culminated in a ceasefire that in turn was ended by Hamas firing fusillades of Iranian rockets into civilian areas inside Israel.

Israel would then bomb parts of Gaza to smithereens, and when hostilities ended with yet another ceasefire, the international community would rebuild the place and pick up the tab.

The latest episode in this seemingly endless process of "wash, rinse, repeat" was the brutal Hamas invasion of Israel on October 7, 2023.

As a consequence, Trump is drawing a line in the sand and signalling to everyone that there will be no going back to this business as usual in Gaza.

Trump is also saying to the Arab and Muslim world that for seven decades "you've been offering nothing but political platitudes to the Palestinians".

To put it more colloquially, he is telling them that when it comes to the Palestinians, the Arab states are all fur coat and no knickers.

It's a classic Trump ploy. He is calling their bluff by saying: "If you don't like what I'm proposing, come up with your own alternative."

Could it be that through what is by any measure an outrageous proposal, the undoubtedly flawed instrument that is Donald Trump might be able to breathe new life and hope into a conflict that has defied resolution for decades? Stranger things have happened.

EGYPT SAID PRIVATELY WARNING TRUMP'S GAZA PLAN ENDANGERS PEACE TREATY WITH ISRAEL

**Officials say message has been passed to State Department and members of Congress
and also conveyed to Israel**

and its Western European allies, including Britain, France and Germany

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL AP](#) and [ToI Staff](#)6 February 2025, 4:21 pm

CAIRO — Egypt has launched a behind-the-scenes diplomatic blitz to try to head off US President Donald Trump's proposal for the mass relocation of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip.

Egypt has warned that such a plan could undermine its peace treaty with Israel, a cornerstone of stability and American influence in the Middle East for decades.

Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi has not publicly responded to Trump's stunning proposal that most of Gaza's population of 2.3 million Palestinians be relocated and the United States take charge of rebuilding the territory. The 15 months of fighting between Israel and Hamas, which began when the Palestinian terror group led thousands of terrorists on a devastating invasion of southern Israel, had reduced large parts of Gaza to rubble before a fragile ceasefire took hold last month.

But Egyptian officials, speaking Wednesday on condition of anonymity to discuss the closed-door talks, said Cairo has made clear to the Trump administration and Israel that it will resist any such proposal, and that the peace deal with Israel — which has stood for nearly half a century — is at risk.

One official said the message has been delivered to the Pentagon, the State Department, and members of the US Congress. A second official said it has also been conveyed to Israel and its Western European allies, including Britain, France, and Germany.

A Western diplomat in Cairo, also speaking anonymously because the discussions have not been made public, confirmed receiving the message from Egypt through multiple channels. The diplomat said Egypt was very serious and viewed the plan as a threat to its national security.

The diplomat said Egypt had rejected proposals from the Biden administration and European countries to take in some Gazan refugees early in the war, which was sparked by the Hamas-led October 7, 2023, attack in southern Israel that killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians. The earlier proposals were broached privately, while Trump announced his plan at a White House press conference alongside Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Trump administration has already dialed back aspects of the proposal after it was widely rejected internationally, saying the relocation of Palestinians would be temporary. US officials have provided few details about how or when the plan was intended to be carried out.

In a social media post on Thursday, Trump said Israel would turn Gaza over to the United States after the war and that no US soldiers would be needed for his plan to redevelop it.

The Palestinians have vehemently rejected Trump's proposal, fearing that refugees would never be allowed to return.

Saudi Arabia, another key US ally, has also rejected any mass transfer of Palestinians and says it will not normalize relations with Israel — a key goal of the Trump administration — without the creation of a Palestinian state that includes Gaza.

Saudi Arabia's former intelligence chief Prince Turki al-Faisal on Thursday slammed Trump's proposal, calling it a "mad ethnic cleansing plan" in lockstep with the agenda of Israel's far right.

"It is a fantasy to think that ethnic cleansing in the 21st century can be condoned... There's no way that I can explain it," he said, warning that the plan will cause "more conflict and more bloodshed."

He called on the international community to take the matter up in the United Nations, but noted that "with the American veto, I cannot expect that there will be much success in passing any resolution."

Trump and Israeli officials have depicted the proposed relocation from war-ravaged Gaza as voluntary, but the Palestinians have universally expressed their determination to remain in their homeland.

Trump and Israeli officials have not said how they would respond if Palestinians refuse to leave. But Human Rights Watch and other groups say the plan, if implemented, would amount to "ethnic cleansing," the forcible relocation of the civilian population of an ethnic group from a geographic area.

Defense Minister Israel Katz said he has ordered the military [to make preparations](#) to facilitate the voluntary emigration of large numbers of Palestinians from Gaza through land crossings as well as "special arrangements for exit by sea and air."

There were no immediate signs of such preparations on the ground and Israeli officials stressed that this was only for Palestinians who wanted to leave.

US OFFICIALS SCALE BACK TRUMP'S PROPOSAL

Trump said he wanted to "permanently" resettle most of Gaza's population in other countries and for the United States to take charge of clearing debris and rebuilding Gaza as a "Riviera of the Middle East" for all people. He did not rule out the deployment of US troops there.

US officials later [appeared to walk it back](#), saying the relocation of Palestinians would be temporary and that Trump had not committed to putting American boots on the ground or spending American tax dollars in Gaza.

The Egyptian officials said their government does not believe the Palestinians need to be relocated for reconstruction to proceed and is committed to the creation of a Palestinian state in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, territories Israel gained control of in the 1967 Six Day War.

Israel's government is opposed to Palestinian statehood and has said it will maintain open-ended security control over both Gaza and the West Bank. Israel annexed East Jerusalem in a move not recognized by most of the international community and considers the entire city its capital. Trump during his first term of office moved the US embassy to Jerusalem in a move seen as giving legitimacy to Israel's holding of the unified city.

Last week, Egypt hosted a meeting of top diplomats from Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates — which was the driving force behind the 2020 Abraham Accords Trump brokered with Israel. All five Arab nations rejected the transfer of Palestinians out of Gaza or the West Bank.

In an editorial on Thursday, Egypt's main state-run daily, Al-Ahram, warned that "the Arab countries' independence, their peoples' unity and their territorial integrity are under grave threat."

PM CALLS TRUMP'S GAZA PLAN 'REMARKABLE'; KATZ TELLS IDF TO PREP FOR VOLUNTARY EMIGRATION

Netanyahu says Palestinians 'can relocate and come back,' stresses he does not expect US to supply troops on the ground or funds to carry out effort

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Lazar Berman](#), [Sam Sokol](#) [Tol Staff](#) 6 February 2025,

WASHINGTON — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu offered an endorsement on Wednesday of US President Donald Trump's proposal to relocate Gazans from the Strip while work is carried out to rebuild it, calling the plan "remarkable."

"This is the first good idea that I've heard," Netanyahu said in an interview with Fox News host Sean Hannity. "It's a remarkable idea. And I think it should be examined, pursued, and done — because I think it will create a different future for everyone."

The comments marked Netanyahu's first full-throated endorsement of the idea that Trump floated on Tuesday during a joint press conference in the White House.

In the wake of Trump's declaration, Defense Minister Israel Katz on Thursday said he had instructed the military to prepare a plan that would enable Gazans seeking to leave the Strip voluntarily to do so.

Appearing to surprise Netanyahu and shocking much of the world, Trump suggested during his prepared remarks that "the US will take over the Gaza Strip and we will do a job with it too. We'll own it and be responsible for dismantling all of the dangerous unexploded bombs and other weapons on the site, level the site and get rid of the destroyed buildings, level it out.

"The only reason the Palestinians want to go back to Gaza is they have no alternative," Trump said, suggesting they be "permanently" relocated to other nations.

The White House later [sought to soften](#) the comments, saying the relocation was meant to be temporary. Speaking to Hannity a day later, Netanyahu said: "I don't think [Trump] talked about sending US troops to complete the job of destroying Hamas — that's our commitment, that's our job and we're absolutely committed to it."

"I also don't think he said he's going to fund it. He said that neighboring states, wealthy states, would do it," Netanyahu added.

"But the actual idea of allowing Gazans who want to leave to leave — I mean, what's wrong with that?" Netanyahu continued. "They can leave, they can then come back, they can relocate and come back."

Arab allies have long rejected any possible displacement of Gazans from the Strip, refusing throughout the war to take in any significant number of refugees. Egypt and Jordan have in recent days denounced Trump's suggestion that they absorb Gazans, while Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have also called such an idea untenable.

Netanyahu said during his Fox News interview that after 16 months of war in Gaza, "so far, we have decimated most of Hamas's military — but not all. There is still some left, and we'll make sure that it's not there when this war ends. And it could end very quickly."

The prime minister reiterated his commitment to bringing home all of the hostages being held in Gaza, including those who are no longer alive: "We intend to do that. I won't talk here [about] how we intend to do it, but it's something that's in my mind, it's also on the president's mind."

The entrance of Trump into the White House, said Netanyahu, and his commitment to preventing a nuclear Iran, "elevates the spirit of Israelis, it elevates the spirit of all those who want to see a different Middle East, a prosperous and peaceful Middle East. I think it changes the global equation."

In a statement Thursday, Katz welcomed Trump's "courageous plan, which could enable a wide swath of the population in Gaza to leave to various places around the world."

He said he had ordered the military to prepare a plan by which any resident who wants to can emigrate to any nation willing to take them in. The plan would provide for exits through land crossings, as well as "special arrangements" for departure via maritime and aerial routes, he said.

"Gaza's residents should be allowed the freedom to exit and emigrate, as is the practice anywhere around the world," Katz suggested, adding that Trump's plan could advance "rehabilitation plans in a demilitarized Gaza that poses no threat in the post-Hamas era, which will take many years."

Taking aim at countries critical of Israel throughout the war, Katz suggested potential destinations such as Spain, Ireland, Norway and other countries that have leveled "false accusations" against Israel, arguing that if those nations refuse to accept Palestinians, "their hypocrisy will be exposed."

He also mentioned Canada, which has "an organized immigration program" and has "previously voiced a willingness to absorb Gazan residents."

Far-right Israeli politicians hailed Katz's announcement, welcoming the possibility of Gazans exiting the Strip for other destinations as an ideal "solution."

"I congratulate the defense minister on his decision to instruct the IDF to prepare to fulfill our role in the migration plan to allow the departure of Gazans from Gaza to receiving countries," said Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich.

"As we have been saying for many years, and even more so since the beginning of the war, there is no other realistic solution that will ensure peace and security for Israel and personal wellbeing for the residents of Gaza."

Otzma Yehudit chairman Itamar Ben Gvir called Katz's instructions an "important step, which recognizes that the real solution for Gaza is no longer dreams of 'reconstruction' and a return to the previous situation, but a fundamental change in reality."

Ben Gvir added that "the possibility of voluntary departure is a necessary step to ensure the security of Israeli citizens and to strengthen Israeli deterrence." He called on the government "to move forward with

determination, remove every bureaucratic obstacle, and ensure that this option becomes a reality as soon as possible.”

Trump’s bombshell proposal, which was scant on details, [sent shockwaves](#) through much of the world on Tuesday, [including among many](#) in his own Republican Party, and [reports varied](#) on how many people had known about the announcement ahead of time.

By Wednesday, several top US officials [sought to walk back](#) some aspects of Trump’s comments, saying the removal would only be temporary, though Trump had said he hoped Gazans “wouldn’t want to return” to Gaza if they were set up in new homes elsewhere in the world.

Netanyahu himself appeared surprised by the pronouncement following the two leaders’ sit-down White House meeting, not commenting directly on it during his own remarks, but praising Trump for “your willingness to puncture conventional thinking, thinking that has failed time and time and time again, [and] your willingness to think outside the box with fresh ideas.”

TRUMP'S 'EXTREME MAKEOVER: GAZA EDITION' HAS MANY FLAWS. ONE OF THE WORST IS ITS ABSENT MORALITY

Hamas brought war down upon Gaza with its mass slaughter in Israel on October 7.

That doesn't mean the US has the right to ship out all its residents
 and develop it as real estate for others

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [David Horovitz](#) 5 February 2025

This Editor's Note was sent out earlier Wednesday in Tol's weekly update email to members of the Times of Israel Community. To receive these Editor's Notes as they're released, join the Tol Community [here](#).

The conventional expectation ahead of the Trump-Netanyahu summit on Tuesday was that the two leaders would publicly present a warm, united front that reflected their broadly similar positions on getting the hostages out of Gaza, destroying Hamas, advancing normalization with Saudi Arabia, and keeping Iran from the bomb. And that, behind closed doors, the president, the prime minister and their teams would **tussle constructively over their differences and chart a joint course forward.**

Instead, we got the president announcing that the United States intends to take over from Hamas in Gaza, encourage and achieve the evacuation of its entire populace, level the "hellhole," redevelop it like a strip of real estate, and then sell off the new housing to the international community — including Palestinians, he allowed when asked, but evidently not Gazans, *all* of whom, he specified in the Oval Office, will be permanently "resettled in areas where they can live a beautiful life and not be worried about dying every day." A case of "Extreme Makeover: Gaza Edition."

To radically understate, the Trump Gaza-for-anyone-but-Gazans bombshell, as dropped in the course of his Oval Office appearance with Netanyahu and the full-scale press conference that followed soon after, prompts some profound concerns:

1. HOW IS THIS MEANT TO WORK? PART I

The neighboring states Trump is repeatedly urging to absorb large numbers of Gaza's 1.8 million Palestinians don't want to do so. They consider it a betrayal of the Palestinians but, far more importantly, they also rightly fear it would destabilize their own broadly restless, unhappy, and potentially insurrectionist masses.

Meanwhile, at least some Gazans doubtless would rather live in peace, liberated from the decades-old threat of being gunned down at any moment, as the president noted, but only if they were truly being moved to somewhere better, and with the opportunity to return home should Gaza actually become livable. Evacuation will be widely unpalatable if the small print on the relocation deal is that they can never return to the place where they were born, and that it is to be usurped by US government-organized real estate developers building, as the president put it, **“the Riviera of the Middle East.”**

2. HOW IS THIS MEANT TO WORK? PART II

Israel has been seeking for 16 months since Hamas’s invasion and slaughter to destroy Gaza’s ruling terror group, to significant effect, but not, as Netanyahu repeatedly highlights, to the point of total victory. This has cost tens of thousands of lives in Gaza — perhaps half of them Hamas gunmen and half not — and hundreds of lives of Israeli soldiers.

Is Trump about to send US forces to fight alongside the IDF in an effort to complete the job? “If it’s necessary, we’ll do that,” he said, when asked at the press conference about the possibility of deploying American troops. Or is the idea to encourage all Gazans, including all Hamas terrorists, gunmen and supporters, to board the buses and the boats to unknown climes, in the expectation that the mere act of their relocation will render all of them “wonderful people,” as Trump described Gazans, and a boon to their new host countries, solving the problem of monstrous Hamas terrorism at a stroke?

3. MORALITY

What regard is being paid to the morality of what might be termed Trump’s “War to Prosperity” plan? By what international right does the US intend to occupy, empty, and repopulate a territory that, indeed, has no legitimate sovereign government, but is also not open and available to the United States simply by virtue of its desire to take it over?

By extension, what message does the very unveiling of this intention convey, say, to China as regards Taiwan, or Russia as regards Ukraine?

“A better life is not necessarily tied to the physical space that you are in today,” proclaimed Steve Witkoff, Trump’s Middle East envoy, in an interview later Tuesday. What might the likes of Putin seek to make of that? And let’s not even contemplate what Israeli Jews would say if someone attempted to make that argument about us.

There are international legal provisions for the temporary relocation of civilian populations at risk in times of war, but with the essential proviso that such evacuation is genuinely voluntary and temporary. As Trump made clear several times on Tuesday, however, what he is planning is permanent.

4. WHAT OF THE HOSTAGES?

Barely mentioned in the Oval Office comments or the main press conference, where does the Trump plan leave the 79 Israeli hostages still in Gaza? Families of some hostages who were in Washington planning a press conference after the White House summit canceled their event as they struggled to understand how what was being said would impact the fates of their loved ones.

Will Hamas now lay down its arms, raise a white flag, and depart the combat zone? Or will it abrogate the current deal before the still-unfinalized second phase, in which 24 living male hostages are to be released, or even during the current first phase, in which 20 more hostages have yet to be freed, 12 of them living?

5. AN ANNEXATION POLICY IN FOUR WEEKS

What are we to make of the president's curiously precise prediction that he would be announcing his administration's position on the matter of Israeli annexation of the West Bank in the next "four weeks." That coincides with the end of the 42-day phase one, at which point Bezalel Smotrich has threatened to take his Religious Zionism party out of the coalition if Israel does not resume its military campaign against Hamas. Is this a Trump carrot, along with his Gazan-free Gaza blueprint and the insistence — denied by Riyadh — that normalization can be had with Saudi Arabia without a Palestinian state, in a package designed to enable Netanyahu to maintain his governing majority?

If so, is Trump, in return, expecting Netanyahu to stick with the current Gaza deal at least until all living hostages have been returned — a goal the president has repeatedly endorsed and championed? But if that is the case, why has Trump unveiled a plan that would appear to put those hostages' lives at greater risk?

AFTER THE JAWS DROP

These are by no means the only concerns and questions surrounding the surreal proceedings we watched unfold on Tuesday.

The look on Netanyahu's face, a mixture of embarrassment and glee, suggested (as is [now being reported](#)) that he was hearing for the first time at least some of what Trump was telling the world, and so did the prime minister's rather halting response: "President Trump... sees a different future for that piece of land... He has a different idea... I think it's worth paying attention to this... I think it's something that could change history..."

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (L) and US President Donald Trump (R) participate in a news conference in the East Room of the White House, February 4, 2025, in Washington. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci) Israelis have been here before to some extent — almost exactly five years ago — when the same US president, with the same prime minister at his side, [unveiled his Israeli-Palestinian "Peace to Prosperity" plan](#).

That White House event prompted a chaotic period in which Netanyahu wanted to believe that he had been given carte blanche to annex the settlements and the Jordan Valley within days, until Jared Kushner was dispatched to disabuse him of the notion.

A major difference this time is that Israel is in the midst of a grueling multifront war, with dozens of its people held hostage, and the margins for misunderstandings and outright missteps are even narrower than in our fraught regional norm.

It could be — it could *well* be — that for all the president's repeated insistence on the necessity of his Gaza plan, what we saw on Tuesday was a characteristic Trumpian deliberate overreach gambit: the unveiling of a proposal so radical and so unpalatable that it shifts the various forces that are complicating his goals — from Hamas, to Egypt and Jordan, to the Saudis, even to Iran — and blasts open a viable path to weaken, marginalize and eliminate shared American and Israeli enemies, and jolt reluctant potential allies.

Nine months after the 2020 annexation fiasco, it should be remembered, Trump was able to [broker the Abraham Accords](#), complete with a widely [reported assurance](#) to the United Arab Emirates that annexation was off the table for at least a few years.

“You cut to the chase. You see things others refuse to see. You say things others refuse to say,” Netanyahu extolled Trump in his prepared remarks at the press conference. “And after the jaws drop, people scratch their heads and say, ‘You know? He’s right.’”

Except this time, the vision is short on morality, legitimacy and practical applicability.

Gaza is indeed a blighted, blood-drenched territory, from where despicable barbarians set out to slaughter Israelis 16 months ago. And in the war that Hamas brought down upon it, Gaza has indeed been rendered largely uninhabitable for many years to come.

Israel, with the support of a patently empathetic US president and his team, needs to ensure that a future Gaza is a dependable, allied neighbor, not another genocidal threat. What Gaza isn’t is a real estate fixer-upper.

MEETING NETANYAHU, US DEFENSE SECRETARY SAYS TRUMP SEEKING 'NEW WAYS TO SOLVE PROBLEMS'

Receiving PM at the Pentagon, Hegseth praises Israel's military achievements against Iran and its proxies over last 16 months, vows support for Israel's right to defend itself

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Lazar Berman](#) 6 February 2025



US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth (R) places his hand on his heart as he welcomes Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, on February 5, 2025.
(Jim WATSON / AFP)

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met with US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth at the Pentagon on Wednesday, where the top US defense official praised Israel's military achievements over the past 15 months of fighting with Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The meeting came on the third day of Netanyahu's visit to Washington, where he met earlier in the week with US President Donald Trump and a slew of senior members of his new administration.

It was the first meeting with a foreign leader that Hegseth has hosted since entering the role last month.

Arriving at the Pentagon on Wednesday afternoon, the premier was greeted by a military band, decked out in red and playing Hatikvah — the Israeli national anthem — and the Star-Spangled Banner. A Marine Corps honor guard bearing the Israeli flag waited to greet him as well.

During the meeting, Hegseth took the opportunity to praise Israel for its actions against the Hezbollah terror group in Lebanon, and in particular for the assassination of its top military commander [Fuad Shukr](#) in July 2024.

Shukr, who had been a right-hand man to then-Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, was wanted by the US for his role in the 1983 bombing of a US Marines barracks in Beirut.

"You have a long memory, and we have a long memory," Hegseth said.

US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, right, welcomes Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the Pentagon, during a ceremony, February 5, 2025, in Washington. (AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta) He also praised Israel more widely for having “significantly degraded Iran and its proxies” over the past 16 months, the Department of Defense said in a readout of the meeting.

The two men also discussed the war against Hamas in Gaza, which was sparked by the terror group’s invasion and massacre in southern Israel on October 7, 2023, in which some 1,200 people were killed and 251 were seized as hostages. Dozens of US citizens were among the victims of the attack.

Stressing that the US will “support Israel’s right to defend itself,” Hegseth slammed the previous administration under the leadership of then-president Joe Biden for having held back a shipment of 2,000-pound bombs, over concerns that Israel would use them in densely populated parts of Gaza.

Trump lifted the hold on the weapons upon his return to the White House, and the Wall Street Journal reported earlier this week that the White House was readying a new package of weapons and military equipment for Israel to the tune of some \$1 billion.

“We supplied munitions that were previously not supplied, that were useful in eradicating radical enemies,” Hegseth told Netanyahu, who, according to the US readout, praised the Trump administration for its “commitment to providing Israel with the munitions it needs.”

Touching on Trump’s bombshell declaration earlier this week, when he announced that the US would “take over” and “own” the Gaza Strip, Hegseth declined to say whether such a move would involve the deployment of US troops to the Palestinian enclave.

Instead, he explained that “the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and over again.”

“The president is willing to think outside the box,” Hegseth said. “To find new and unique ways to solve problems that felt like they were intractable,” he says. “We are prepared to look at all options.”

Hegseth also noted that Netanyahu was the first foreign leader he has hosted since he was appointed Secretary of Defense last month.

He emphasized “the unbreakable bond that exists between the United States and Israel,” the readout stated, and he lauded Israel as “a model ally in the Middle East.”

In remarks of his own, Netanyahu also highlighted the unique allyship of Israel and the United States.

“We have no compunction about fighting our enemies by ourselves,” he said. “We are willing to shoulder the burden of our defense by confronting the forces of radicalism and terror, and the forces that are anti-American at their core.”

“They call you the Great Satan, and they call us the Small Satan, we just stand in their way. You are their great enemy,” he argued. “By confronting these various enemies, we are not only defeating those who wish to attack us, but those who wish to attack you as well.

“Therefore our victory is your victory,” said Netanyahu, adding that Israel is “well advanced” in pursuing its war goals.

In addition to meeting with Hegseth, Netanyahu met Wednesday with Vice President JD Vance and National Security Adviser Mike Waltz in Blair House.

Neither the US nor Israel provided a readout of the meeting.

Much of Netanyahu's visit to Washington has been centered around [Trump's vision](#) for post-war Gaza, which involves emptying it of its population and rebuilding it as "the Riviera of the Middle East."

The president has insisted that Egypt and Jordan should volunteer to serve as hosts for the Gazans — an idea that the two countries have adamantly rejected, arguing that it would destabilize them and that the Palestinians should be allowed to remain on their land, just as Israelis are.

Netanyahu, in response to Trump's plan, praised the president's "willingness to think outside the box," and said that his plan was "worth paying attention to."

"You say things others refuse to say. And after the jaws drop, people scratch their heads and they say, 'You know he's right,'" he said of Trump during their joint press conference Tuesday.

Netanyahu's visit to the White House is the first of a foreign leader since Trump assumed office.

The two have had tense relations in the past, but Netanyahu has seized on the Republican's return to power after his ties with Biden became increasingly frayed over Israel's conduct of the war in Gaza.

"You are the greatest friend Israel has ever had in the White House," said Netanyahu on Tuesday. "Can you imagine where we'll be in four years?"

Times of Israel Staff contributed to this report.

References

[Israelis respond to Trump's Gaza proposal with jubilation, disbelief, and dark humor](#)

After bombshell press conference in which US president pledged to 'take over' war-torn enclave, some Israelis call the plan 'delusional,' while others say it's 'terrific news'

THE ISSUE OF EMIGRATION FROM THE GAZA STRIP IN LIGHT OF PRESIDENT TRUMP'S PROPOSAL

THE MEIR AMIT INTELLIGENCE HERITAGE AND COMMEMORATION CENTER 7 Feb 2025

OVERVIEW⁽¹⁾

- On January 25, 2025, after the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip went into effect, U.S. President Trump proposed the temporary or permanent relocation of all Gazans to Egypt, Jordan and other countries in light of the extensive destruction and to facilitate reconstruction. The proposal sparked condemnations from the Palestinians, Iran and Arab states, which accused it of being a “forced displacement” in violation of international law. Hamas threatened that any attempt to implement the plan would be met with a “firm response” and warned that it could potentially impact the continuation of the ceasefire.
- The proposal reignited the issue of emigration from the Gaza Strip in general and of young people in particular, known even before the Gaza Strip War. Unofficial data indicated that approximately 300,000 young people had left the Strip since Hamas took control in 2007, primarily due to the economic situation and lack of hope for the future.
- The Hamas leadership sought to downplay emigration, calling any reference to it a Palestinian Authority smear campaign, but a document found by the IDF in Gaza written by the Khan Yunis Brigade of Hamas’ military wing indicated concerns over the departure of young people, who constituted a significant part of the movement’s fighting force. According to the document, loyalty to the homeland and the “struggle” was a religious and moral duty, while emigration meant abandoning [Palestinian] identity and “surrendering to the enemy.”
- **In ITIC assessment, the Palestinians and Arab states will continue to present a united front against the plan in an attempt to eliminate it in its early stages. However, even if the plan is not implemented, the opening of the Rafah Crossing and others at the end of the war could lead to a significant wave of emigration from Gaza because of the widespread destruction and uncertainty about the future. Such a scenario would pose a significant challenge to Hamas, which would do everything in its power to prevent the emigration of young people, which could weaken its political and military stranglehold on the Gazan public.**

THE TRUMP RESETTLEMENT PLAN

- On January 25, 2025, President Trump proposed relocating more than a million Gazans to neighboring countries, primarily Egypt and Jordan, because of the extensive destruction caused during the war (CNN, January 25, 2025). Later, during a press conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Trump stated that the entire population of the Gaza Strip, approximately two million people, should leave for other countries. He said the United States would take control of the Strip, assume responsibility for destroying the remaining weapons and rebuild Gaza to transform it into the “Riviera of the Middle East.” He claimed that the

only reason people wanted to return to their destroyed homes in Gaza was because they had no other choice, while they could instead settle in “beautiful areas in peace and harmony” rather than being forced to return to ruins (The New York Times, February 5, 2025).

- His statements sparked condemnations among the Palestinians, led by the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Hamas, which accused him of attempting to forcibly displace the Gazans in violation of international law, and claimed they would never leave “Palestine.” Arab states, particularly Egypt and Jordan, which were mentioned as potential destinations for Palestinian resettlement, also expressed strong opposition and noted the need to advance Gaza’s reconstruction and promote the two-state solution as a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.^[2]



Right: “We dream of Jerusalem, not emigration” (Instagram account of Hamas’ in-house cartoonist, Alaa’ al-Laqta, February 4, 2025);

Left: “Popping the Trump balloon” (Arabi21, January 29, 2025)



Right: An Alaa’ al-Laqta cartoon of an elderly Palestinian holding a key symbolizing the [so-called] “right of return,” says, “These things aren’t for sale” (X account of The Popular Conference of Palestinians Abroad, February 6, 2025).

Left: Egypt and Jordan oppose Trump’s “displacement” idea (al-Masry al-Youm, February 6, 2025)

EMIGRATION FROM THE GAZA STRIP BEFORE THE GAZA STRIP WAR

Young people

- Emigration from the Gaza Strip, particularly by young people, increased in recent years, even before the outbreak of the Gaza Strip War, which began with the Hamas’ terrorist attack and massacre on Israel on

October 7, 2023. According to unofficial data, approximately 250,000 young people aged 18 to 29 have left the Gaza Strip since Hamas took control in 2007, citing as reasons the economy, unemployment, loss of hope for the future, the destruction of the private sector and Israeli restrictions.^[3]

- In June 2024, Dr. Khalil Shikaki's Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research published the results of a survey which focused on emigration and was conducted among residents of the Gaza Strip, Judea and Samaria between September 28 and October 8, 2023. According to the so-called Arab Barometer poll, 44% of young people in Gaza (aged 18 to 29), 38% of all men and 31% of Fatah operatives (compared to 14% of Hamas operatives) had considered emigrating. Among respondents in Gaza, 54% cited economic reasons as the primary factor, followed by educational opportunities (18%), security concerns (7%), corruption (7%), and political reasons (5%). Turkey was mentioned as the leading destination (22%), followed by Germany (16%), Canada (12%), and Qatar (10%) (PCPSR website, June 26, 2024).^[4]

The Hamas regime copes with the emigration of the young

- The Hamas administration in the Gaza Strip sought to downplay the extent of emigration, claiming references to it were attempts by the PA to discredit Hamas and that the young people who left had been motivated primarily by humanitarian reasons, needed medical treatment or wanted to visit relatives (Sama, September 8, 2023; Filastin al-A'an, September 10, 2023). However, a document found by the IDF in the Gaza Strip indicated that emigration was a concern for Hamas leadership, particularly at the command level of its military wing, as the young people seeking to emigrate constituted the core of its fighting force.
- The memorandum from the Khan Yunis Brigade of Izz al-Din al-Qassam from October 2023 [exact date unspecified], was addressed "to all the mujahideen." It was entitled, "Young people chasing a mirage and moving from the house of honor to the disgrace of exile," represented the emigration of young people as a dangerous religious, moral and social threat. It warned that an easy and comfortable life in a foreign country was an illusion, claiming that emigration led to alienation from religion, moral decline and abandoning the "national struggle." The main theme was that "struggle" was the only path to "liberation and honor," whereas emigration was a betrayal of values, Islam and the "national cause."^[5]

There has been much discussion about the emigration of young people from the Gaza Strip, most of whom have gone to European countries on a journey fraught with great dangers before reaching their destinations. Those who do manage to arrive face disasters of religion and morality, known only to Allah, unless they were fortified in their minds and faith against the doubts that the Crusader world raises against Islam, doubts so deep that they lead to fear and its portrayal as a source of terrorism...

فقد كثر الحديث في الآونة الأخيرة عن هجرة الشباب من قطاع غزة، حيث يتوجه أكثرهم إلى بعض الدول الأوروبية في رحلة محفوفة بالمخاطر الجسام قبل أن يصلوا إليها، ومن قُرّر له أن يصل؛ فإن بانتظاره من المصائب المتعلقة بدينه، أو خلقه، ما لا يعلمه إلا الله، ما لم يكن محصّناً سلفاً فكرياً وعقيدة تجاه الشبهات التي يثيرها العالم الصليبي ضدّ الإسلام؛ لدرجة الترهيب منه بوصفه مصدر الإرهاب، وما لم يكن قد أوتى نصيباً من التربية والترقية ما

Warning of the challenges of emigration (Document 1)

- The author noted that young people involved in preparations for jihad and seeking to emigrate could be committing a grave sin. Moreover, the document warned that such young people were considered a “treasure” for most intelligence agencies around the globe, including the Israeli Mossad.

The young men of the resistance, especially the servants of Allah who are the bravest among the battalions' youth, if one of them leaves the Stronghold of Gaza, he will become a target for intelligence services which will attempt to extract the information he possesses about the men of the resistance and its capabilities. Even if he stands firm under the pain of torture, he will have gone from the frying pan into the fire, or he may collapse and reveal his secrets, thereby exposing his people to the wrath of the Omnipotent. The result will be that he remains in prison for several years, and who knows, he may die under torture, with no one to ask about him or respond, or he may be released with an illness or a disability that could reach the level of insanity or worse.

إن شباب المقاومة يراهم عباد الله أولو البأس الشديد من شباب الكتاب، إذا خرج أحدهم من عرين غزة سيكون هدفاً لأجهزة المخابرات؛ لاغتصار ما لديه من معلومات عن رجال المقاومة، وما لديها من المقدرات؛ فلما أن يصمد تحت العذاب الأليم، فيكون كمن قرّر من الرمضاء إلى النار، وإما أن ينهار، فيفتشي بما لديه من أسرار، ويتعرض بذلك لغضب الجبار، وسخط القهار، والنتيجة أن يلبث في السجن عدّة سنين، ومن يدرى؛ فقد يموت تحت التعذيب، حيث لا سائل عنه ولا مجيب، وقد يخرج باقّة أو عاهة، قد نصل إلى حدّ الخلل في العقل، وما شابه ذلك.

The danger that “fighters” who emigrate would be imprisoned or be interrogated by intelligence agents (Document 1)

- The document suggested that anyone seeking to emigrate should prepare a list of the dangers awaiting them to ensure they were ready to face them. However, he warned that even if emigration led to gain, it remained a grave sin that could result in the émigré's being lost both in this world and in the afterlife.
- It also cautioned that if the émigrés were to marry “barbarian foreign women” and have children, the children risked “absorbing” the customs of foreign countries, making it difficult to instill in them the traditions of their father's homeland if they later decided to return. Additionally, the document questioned why jihad in the path of Allah required parental approval, while emigration for profit or marriage did not.
- The document ends with an impassioned plea to potential émigrés not to abandon the Gaza Strip, emphasizing the honor and pride of a place “fighting for freedom.” It gives two choices, struggle and surrender, and criticizes those who leave while others remain to fight and endure hardship. The main theme is that victory is assured for those who hold steadfast to their principles and that Allah tests the faithfulness of believers in this world.

My departing or adventurous brother, may Allah guide us and you:

Where does all of this stand in relation to Gaza, the home of pride, the land of honor, the homeland of security and the stronghold of freedom, whose glory is sung by a billion Muslims, along with an equal number of free people of the world who hate the Zionists and the Crusaders?! Even from an economic perspective, do we measure our crisis against one hundred million Egyptians living below the poverty line, or ten million displaced or oppressed Syrians?! Is the situation any better in Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Sudan or many other countries?!

Life is lived under the shadow of swords, and it is the resistance that will bring the servants of the occupation to their knees, lift the siege and dictate the terms of victory, which is the promise of Almighty Allah. You will regret [emigrating], but only when it is too late!!

أخي المقامر أو المقامر - هداانا الله وإياك:
 أين كل ذلك من غرة دار النخرة، وبلد الكرامة، وموطن الأمن، ومناحة الحرية التي يتغنى بأمجادها مليار مسلم،
 ومثلهم معهم من أحرار العالم المنقبضون للصهاينة والصليبيين؟!، وحتى من الناحية الاقتصادية؛ هل تُقاسُ أزمنا
 بمائة مليون مصري تحت خط الفقر، أو بعشرة ملايين من السوريين مهجرين أو مقموعين؟!، وهل الحال أحسن في
 العراق أو لبنان، أو في ليبيا أو السودان، وفي العديد من البلدان؟!
 إن الرزق تحت ظلال السيوف، وبوشك للمقاومة أن تُركَعَ الاحتلال، وعبية الاحتلال؛ لرفع الحصار، والخضوع
 لشروط الانتصار، وهو وَغْدُ رَبِّنا العزيز القهار، ولسوف تندمون، ولكن بعد فوات الأوان!!.

The importance of the "resistance" vis-à-vis emigration (Document 1)

- To understand the dangers of emigration and the religious prohibitions associated with it, the document recommended reading the booklet written by Saudi Arabian academic Muhammad Salem al-Zameli called, Before You Emigrate..... A Warning and Reminders, a copy of which was also found by the IDF.^[6]



The front cover of the booklet

- The booklet, based on quotations from the Qur'an, the Hadiths and writings of Islamic scholars, discusses the meaning of emigration in Islam and its implications for the émigré's religious, social and personal identity.

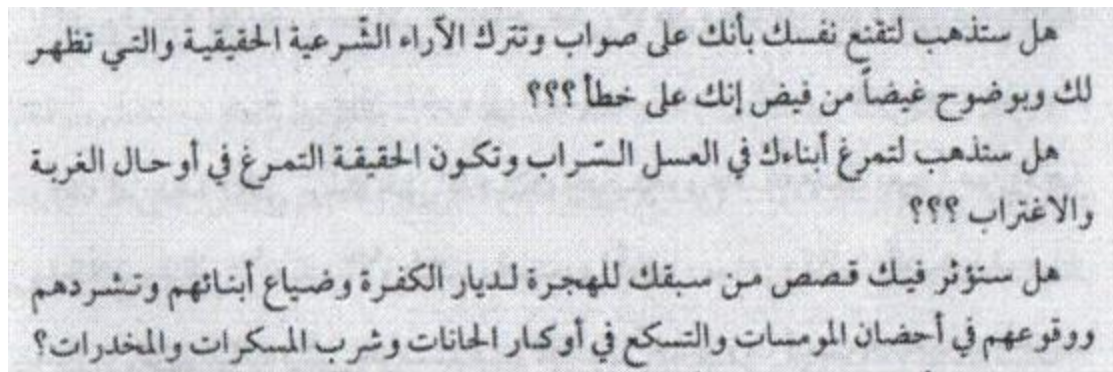
It represents emigration as both physical and spiritual estrangement, and notes the conflict between the desire for a comfortable life in foreign countries and the need to uphold religious and traditional values.

- According to al-Zameli, emigration means being a stranger in a strange land, whether in time or location. Emigration is estrangement from place, family, society, life among brothers and friends, and a detachment from one's homeland and roots. Emigration distances the soul from the homeland; it is not merely a physical transition but a migration of the spirit, of the homeland, leading to the loss of roots and identity.
- The booklet outlines various dangers that emigration may pose, such as exposure to foreign cultures which could influence a Muslim's behavior and faith; visits to immoral places, corruption and temptations; detachment from one's original religious and social environment and assimilation; negative cultural and media influences from Western propaganda, which portrays Western culture as ideal; unconscious economic support for non-Muslim countries, which could aid them in their struggle against Islam; exposure to physical and psychological dangers, diseases, uncertainty and constant stress; exposure to unhealthy food, epidemic-prone areas and risks of sexually transmitted diseases; and situations where individuals might be forced to lie to survive in a foreign country, contradicting the principles of integrity in Islam.
- Al-Zameli specified exceptional cases in which emigration from one's homeland was permissible, such as traveling for a pilgrimage to the three holy mosques in Islam [the Grand Mosque in Mecca, the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem]; emigration from infidel countries as a religious duty; cases of life-threatening danger; temporary emigration for advanced studies unavailable in one's homeland; travel for specialized medical treatment not available in one's homeland; and necessary travel for earning a livelihood.
- If one is forced to emigrate, al-Zameli stressed the importance of adhering to key principles to ensure the preservation of religious faith in a challenging environment, including maintaining extensive knowledge of religious fundamentals to prevent deviation from faith; upholding moral values, avoiding bad company and staying away from questionable places; strictly observing prayers, fasting and zakat [giving charity]; not deviating from Sharia even if it requires a great effort; refraining from participating in social events which contradict Islamic principles; avoiding immoral content or activities which are inconsistent with Sharia; and refraining from working in industries based on earning interest, alcohol, or gambling, while seeking employment that complies with halal guidelines.
- According to al-Zameli, if emigration is necessary, one must relocate to countries where Islam can be fully practiced. Only in cases of existential necessity for religious purposes or studies should one reside in countries considered "infidel." He warned that prolonged stays in non-Muslim countries could lead to the adoption of foreign habits and a Western lifestyle, ultimately leading to forgetting or abandoning Islamic values.
- After detailing dangers and justifications, al-Zameli addressed his readers, asking if they still considered "traveling to distant countries and emigrating to a crazy nation?" He asked questions in a final attempt to convince them that emigration was a sin and that had only negative consequences for the individual and their religious faith.

Will you go and convince yourself that you are right while abandoning the true religious teachings that clearly show you are wrong???

Will you go and allow your children to wallow in the honey of illusions, when in reality, they are sinking into the mud of alienation and estrangement???

Are you not affected by the stories of those who emigrated before you to the lands of the infidels, how their children were lost, became homeless, fell into the hands of prostitutes, spent their nights in bars and dens drinking alcohol and taking drugs?



Questions for the potential émigré, page 62

Appendix 1: Reactions to the American Proposal

THE PALESTINIAN ARENA

- PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas condemned Trump's call for the "takeover of the Gaza Strip and the uprooting of Palestinians from their homeland." He stated that they would not allow any infringement of Palestinian rights, for which they have fought for years. He said the call violated international law, adding that regional peace and stability would not be achieved without the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. He also reiterated that the PLO was the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and that no one had the right to make decisions about their future on their behalf (Wafa, February 5, 2025).
- PLO executive committee secretary Hussein al-Sheikh said the Palestinian leadership reaffirmed its firm stance regarding the two-state solution based on international legitimacy and international law. He added that the leadership rejected calls for the "uprooting of the Palestinian people from their homeland" (Hussein al-Sheikh's Facebook page, February 5, 2025).
- The office of the PA "president" strongly opposed and condemned the plan, whose objective was to displace the Gazans, calling it "crossing red lines." The office warned that the Palestinian people would not abandon their land or holy sites and would not allow a repetition of the catastrophes of 1948 and 1967 (Wafa, January 26, 2025).
- Mahmoud al-Habbash, advisor to Mahmoud Abbas, warned that the plan would destabilize peace, shatter the Palestinian issue and harm Arab states. He suggested that Trump "return Gazans to their homes within

the 1948 territories,” referring to Israel. He also praised the positions of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan in rejecting the plan (al-Arabiya, February 5, 2025).

- Hamas called Trump’s remarks “hostile” and a disservice to regional stability, fueling the fire. Hamas called on the American administration to retract its statements, adding that the Palestinian people would not allow any country to occupy their land or assume control over them. Hamas also urged the Arab League, the UN and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to monitor the dangers posed by such statements (Hamas Telegram channel, February 5, 2025).
- The Hamas government media information office in Gaza strongly rejected the plan, calling it “racist and condescending, “as if we are a group of slaves who can be expelled or have our fate dictated by American political whims.” Hamas conceded that they agreed with Trump on one point, that Gazans did not want to return to their destroyed refugee camps, but argued that it was because they had never chosen to live there in the first place, having been forcibly displaced from their original homes (Hamas media office Telegram channel, February 5, 2025).
- Senior Hamas figure Sami Abu Zuhri said Trump’s statements sowed chaos and tension. He said the Gazans would not allow such plans to come to fruition and the correct course of action was “to end the occupation and aggression” against the Palestinians, not “expulsion” (Shehab News Agency, February 4, 2025).
- Senior Hamas figure Izzat al-Rishq said the remarks reflected confusion and deep ignorance about “Palestine” and the Middle East. He claimed Gaza was not a no-man’s land subject to unilateral decisions but an inseparable part of “occupied Palestinian land,” and that any solution had to be based on ending the “occupation” and realizing Palestinian rights rather than the coercive approach of a real estate dealer. He said the Palestinian people, together with their “resistance forces,”^[7] the Arab and Islamic nations and “supporters of justice” around the world would prevent any attempt to impose plans of emigration or expulsion upon them (Hamas Telegram channel, February 5, 2025).
- A “Hamas source in Gaza” warned that the movement would respond with “firm action” if Trump or the Israeli far right attempted to advance the plan to evacuate the Gazans. He said there would be significant regional repercussions and that “no one can predict what would happen.” “Hamas sources” stated that the movement’s leadership had not yet discussed the proposals, but a “source close to the leadership in Gaza” said that while they were accustomed to such statements, this time they were taking them seriously because they had been presented publicly to the whole world. He also warned that the plans amounted to a new “occupation,” and therefore the response would be “resistance and necessary force.” A “Hamas source outside Gaza” warned that any attempt to displace the population would impact the next phases of the ceasefire agreement (al-Sharq al-Awsat, February 6, 2025).
- The Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) said Trump was deluding himself if he believed his proposal could uproot Palestinians from their land after 15 months of war with American weapons had failed to do so. The PIJ noted that Palestinians would continue to adhere to “resistance” as they had before Trump and would continue to do so afterward (al-Jazeera Mubasher, February 4, 2025).

- The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) condemned Trump's statements, calling them a continuation of the "genocidal war" waged by the "Zionist occupation" with American backing and an attempt to [allegedly] perpetuate "ethnic cleansing." The PFLP stated that Gaza was not a real estate asset but an inseparable part of "historic Palestine" and that any attempt to control Gaza would fail in the face of Palestinian "resistance" (al-Quds Telegram channel, February 5, 2025).
- Muhammad al-Buraim (Abu Mujahid), spokesman for the Palestinian Resistance Committees, said that the Palestinian people and the "resistance" would not allow the "Zionist enemy" to achieve his objectives while maintaining their hold on the land despite the heavy sacrifices. He claimed that the "expulsion" plan had failed, as displaced Palestinians had returned to their land despite the bombings and destruction. He added that Egypt and Jordan would not permit an alternative homeland to be established for Palestinians and would stand firm against Trump's plans (al-Aqsa Telegram channel, February 5, 2025).
- The al-Quds daily's editorial was entitled, "Trump's delusions...a declaration of war." It stated that the Palestinian people would remain steadfast and rooted in their land and homeland, clinging to every inch of soil, while Trump would inevitably disappear and ultimately leave the White House. It emphasized the need for a Palestinian national consensus and a united stance among all Arab states against the "schemes targeting the Palestinian cause" (al-Quds, February 6, 2025).
- Fayez Abu Shamala, a political commentator from Khan Yunis,^[8] wrote (in Arabic and Hebrew), "To our Israeli and American enemies: We, the people of Gaza, are capable of rebuilding Gaza with our own hands and brains. Stay away from us with your tanks and planes, and let us build Palestinian Gaza. We will be the ones to turn Gaza into a paradise, on the condition that you stay away" (Fayez Abu Shamala's X account, February 5, 2025).

THE ARAB WORLD

- King Abdullah II of Jordan met with PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas and expressed opposition to any attempts to annex land or uproot Palestinians (Jordanian Royal Court X account, February 5, 2025). He also spoke with UAE President Mohammed bin Zayed, warning against attempts to "displace Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza" and stating that "no solution would come at the expense of Jordanian and regional security" (Petra News Agency, February 5, 2025).
- Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said "Jordan is for Jordanians, and Palestine is for Palestinians." He firmly rejected the displacement of Palestinians and stressed that Jordan's position would remain unchanged (al-Mamlaka TV, January 26, 2025).
- The Egyptian foreign ministry stated that Egypt rejected any infringement on Palestinian rights, whether through land annexation, displacement or encouraging their transfer from their land, whether short-term or long-term, as it threatened to escalate the conflict. The ministry added that resolving the Palestinian issue remained the central topic in the Middle East and that Egypt supported the legitimate rights of Palestinians in their homeland (Egyptian foreign ministry Facebook page, February 26, 2025).

- “Egyptian diplomatic sources” reported that discussions between Egyptian, Jordanian and American officials addressed the dangers of Trump’s plan, which could destabilize the region. “Senior sources” stated that Cairo opposed the displacement of Palestinians to Sinai because of security concerns and potential harm to the peace agreement with Israel. However, Egypt was willing to allow the entry of Palestinians in humanitarian cases but not for permanent settlement (al-Araby al-Jadeed, January 27, 2025).
- The foreign ministers of Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE, along with PLO executive committee secretary Hussein al-Sheikh, sent a joint letter to United States Secretary of State Marco Rubio expressing their opposition to plans to displace Gazans. The letter stated that “reconstruction in Gaza should involve direct participation by Gazans” and that Palestinians would remain in their land and contribute to rebuilding it (Reuters, February 4, 2025).
- The Hezbollah-affiliated Lebanese daily al-Akhbar reported that Egypt was in contact with Arab and Palestinian figures to coordinate a unified position against the American plans. “Egyptian sources” stated that Cairo was working to advance discussions with European countries so that along with Arab actors, especially Saudi Arabia, pressure could be exerted on Washington to abandon the idea of “displacement.” According to the report, Egypt also warned the Americans of “the expected violent response from the resistance” if discussions on “displacement” continued (al-Akhbar, February 6, 2025).
- The Saudi Arabian foreign ministry reiterated the kingdom’s absolute rejection of any violation of Palestinian rights. The statement noted that the international community had a duty to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people, who would remain rooted in their land and would not leave it. It further stated that the position was not subject to negotiation and that a lasting and just peace could not be achieved without securing the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people in accordance with international decisions. The statement also noted that the position had been communicated to both the previous and current American administrations (Saudi Arabian foreign ministry X account, February 5, 2025).
- Qatari foreign ministry spokesman Majed al-Ansari refrained from directly condemning the plan. He said Qatar had received various ideas from the parties involved in the negotiations for Gaza’s future, including the United States. He described them as part of broader discussions about “the day after the war” but said that achieving peace required an international effort led by countries such as the United States (Fox News, February 5, 2025).
- The Arab League condemned Trump’s statement, declaring it a violation of international law and a recipe for instability, as it did not contribute to achieving the two-state solution. The statement noted that Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip formed the territory of the future Palestinian state (Wafa, February 5, 2025).



Right: Headline from the Saudi-owned *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, “Widespread Arab and international opposition to Trump’s bombshell” (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, February 6, 2025).

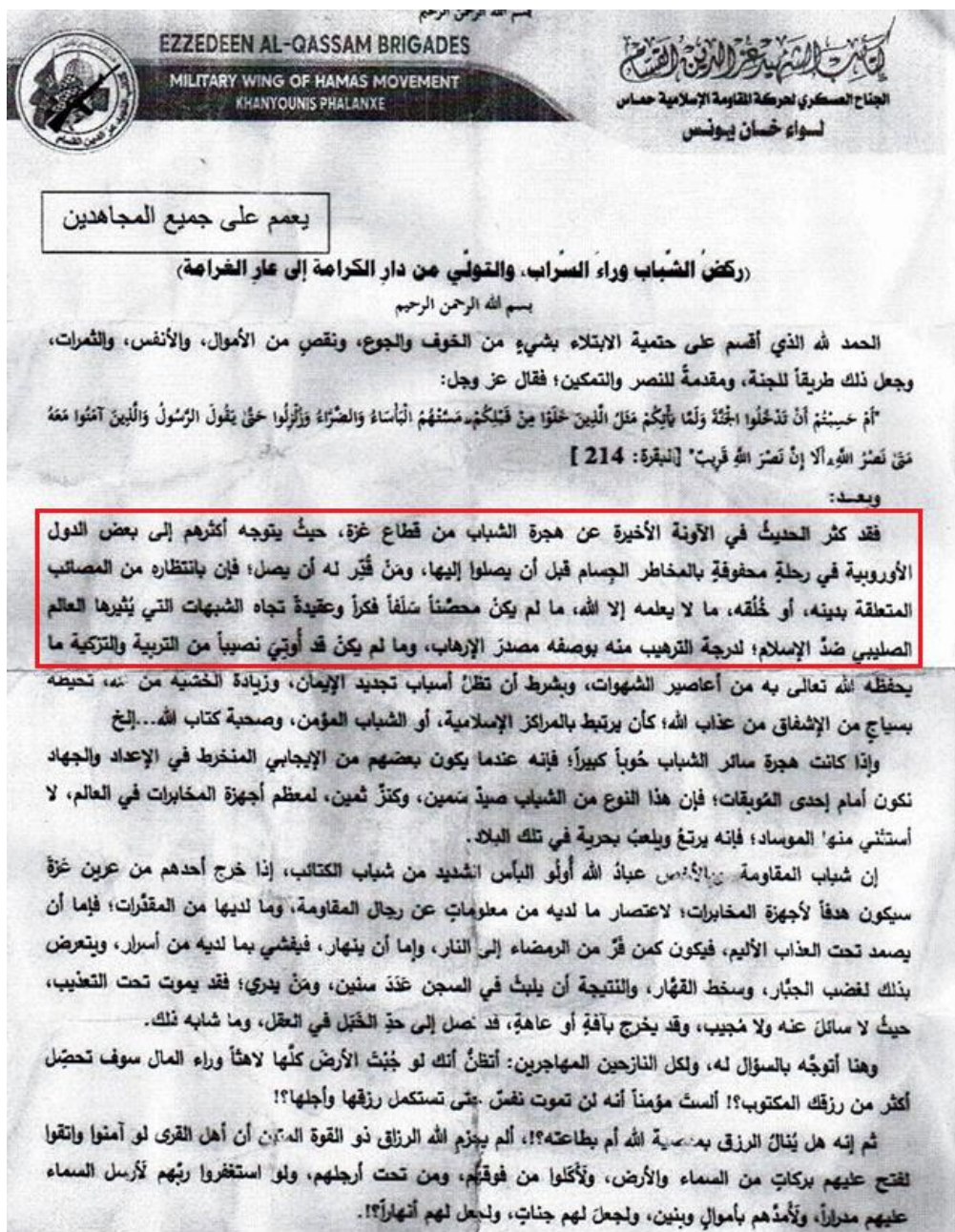
Left: Headline from the Qatari-owned *al-Araby al-Jadeed*, “Opposition to Trump or Inaction” (*al-Araby al-Jadeed*, February 6, 2025)

IRAN AND THE “RESISTANCE AXIS”^[9]

- Iranian leader Ali Khamenei published a statement in Hebrew, declaring that “all of Palestine, from the river to the sea, belongs to the entire Palestinian people” (Iran’s leader’s Hebrew X account, February 6, 2025).
- Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi mocked Trump’s proposal to transfer Palestinians from Gaza to other countries. He suggested an alternative solution, “sending Israelis to Greenland,” claiming that in that way Trump could kill two birds with one stone (Sky News, January 28, 2025).
- Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei strongly condemned the latest statements by American officials regarding control over the Gaza Strip. He claimed that the proposal was consistent with “the occupation’s plan to erase Palestine.” He called on the international community and the UN to denounce the idea, adding that Trump’s intention to control Gaza was an unprecedented violation of international law and the UN Charter. He also urged Islamic nations to cooperate and adopt an unequivocal, unified stance (Tasnim, February 6, 2025).
- Hassan Mousavi, political advisor to Hezbollah’s secretary general, accused Trump of demanding that Gazans be expelled from their ancestral land [sic] to Egypt and Jordan. He condemned the silence and apathy of the “free world,” which, he claimed, had “filled the streets with calls for Palestine and condemnation of the genocide^[10] war against Gaza” but was now failing to act. He called for raising voices against the “ongoing and new American-Zionist aggression” and criticized “cowardly Arabs” for causing all hope to be lost (Hezbollah combat information Telegram channel, February 5, 2025).
- Houthi movement leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi stated that the goal of the United States and Israel was the “destruction, total control and complete expulsion” of Palestinians from Gaza. He claimed that the only thing preventing it so far was the “Palestinian resistance” (al-Masirah, February 3, 2025).

- The Houthi political bureau condemned the statements made by the American president. In an official statement, it declared that Yemen would stand shoulder to shoulder with “Palestine” in its struggle against all forms of “aggression” against it and its rights. The statement also claimed that the United States had been the primary partner in “the genocidal crimes” in Gaza and was now leading the project of “forced displacement” (SABA News Agency, February 5, 2025).
- Houthi political bureau member Mohammed al-Bukhaiti stated that American “arrogance” would not spare anyone if it encountered submission from the Arab world. He stressed that choosing the “resistance support front” was the right course of action and added that if Egypt or Jordan decided to confront Washington, the Houthis would stand by them “with full force and without reservation” (Mohammed al-Bukhaiti’s X account, February 5, 2025).

Appendix 2: Document 1.





EZZEDEEN AL-QASSAM BRIGADES
MILITARY WING OF HAMAS MOVEMENT
KHAYOUNS PHALANX

كتبة الشهيد ياسر عرفات
الجناح العسكري لحركة المقاومة الإسلامية حماس
لسواء خسان يونس

قبل أن تهاجروا يجب أن تستحضروا قائمة من المخاطر والمفاسد بانتظاركم؛ حتى تقيموا الوزن بالقسط، ولو صرتم في بلاد الكفر والفسوق والعصيان كقارون أو هامان؛ هل كنتم من الراحين أم من الخاسرين؛ فإن الهجرة والرحيل لفيهما إنم كبير، ومنافع للناس، وإلتهما أكبر من نفعهما، وقد تُششون ممن خسر الدنيا والآخرة، ذلك هو الخسران المبين، وختبكم أن تقرأوا كُتُيباً من ستين صفحة بتأليف الأخ الأستاذ/ محمد سالم الزاملني بعنوان: (قبل أن تهاجر ... ومضات وتكبير).

فقد ذكر فيه من المفاسد الكثير، ونقل عدداً من الفتاوى تقضي بحرمة هذه الهجرة، فضلاً عن قصصٍ لحبٍ من النادمين، لاسيما خطر الموت المصنّف في قائمة الانتحار بالفرق في قاع البحار، ثم في خطر الردة والكفر، أو الجنابة على الزوجة والأولاد؛ فإن الحرية الشخصية، أو عبادة الهوى والشيطان، تمنع الأب أو الولي تحت طائلة القاتون - أن ينهي أيّاً من رعيته عن أيّ من كبائر الإثم والفواحش، وقد يتورط الكثيرون في تزوجون من فتيات العلوج الأعاجم، فيقع في الارتباط بالمومسات، وحتى لو كنّ مسلمات؛ فإن خطر خسران الأولاد عند أيّ خلافات قائم، وحتى لو بقيت الأمور ستمتاً على غنل كما يقول المثل؛ فإن أولئك الأولاد ينشربون عادات تلك البلاد، ويصبح من العسير أن يتأقلموا مع أعرافنا؛ فيما لو فُكر المهاجر أن يعود إلى بلده؛ فإزاء دينه من الفتن التي هي كقطع الليل المظلم، أو متى لو كان رغبة منه في استرخاء والمي بعد طول الحزن على فراقه؛ وإذا كان الجهاد في سبيل الله موقوفاً على إذن الوالدين؛ فكيف بالهجرة من أجل دنيا يُصيبها، أو امرأة ينكحها؟!، إنه لو لم يكن في المغادرة إلى الذلة والمهانة التي تتنافى مع عزة الإسلام؛ لأنها تجعل للكافرين على المؤمنين سبيلاً، ولو لم يكن إلا تبالّد الإحساس تجاه الكفر، والفسوق، والعصيان، وذهاب القيرة على محارم الله، وموت القلوب لكثرة ما يرى من العيوب، أو يسمع من أخبار الذنوب لدى القطيع الذي لا يغار على دين، ولا على عِرْض؛ لكفى ذلك دليلاً على أشدّ الحرمة، وفطاعة الكبيرة.

أخي المغامر أو المغامر - هدايا الله وإياك:

أين كل ذلك من غرة دار الهجرة، وبلد الكرامة، وموطن الأمن، ومناحة الحرية التي يتغنى بأمجادها مليار مسلم، ويمثلهم معهم من أحرار العالم المُنبِضون للصهاينة والصليبيين؟!، وحتى من الناحية الاقتصادية؛ هل تُقاس أزمنا بمائة مليون مصري تحت خط الفقر، أو بعشرة ملايين من السوريين مهجرين أو مقموعين؟!، وهل الحال أحسن في العراق أو لبنان، أو في ليبيا أو السودان، وفي العديد من البلدان؟!.

إن الرزق تحت ظلال السيوف، وبوشك للمقاومة أن تُزكّع الاحتلال، وعبث الاحتلال؛ لرفع الحصار، والخضوع لشروط الانتصار، وهو وَغْذ رَبَّنَا العزيز القهار، وسوف تدمعون، ولكن بعد فوات الأوان!!.

والله غالب على أمره، ولكنكم تستعجلون.



FULL DOCUMENT IN PDF FORMAT

(Wikipedia). ^[1] Click <https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en> to subscribe and receive the ITIC's daily updates as well as its other publications

^[2] For reactions to the plan, see Appendix 1.

^[3] For further information, see the September 2023 ITIC report, [The mass exodus of young men from the Gaza Strip.](#)"

^[4] Responding to the poll were 339 Gazans and 790 Palestinians from Judea and Samaria.

^[5] The full document in Arabic appears in Appendix 2.

^[6] Muhammad Salem al-Zameli, *Before You Emigrate..... A Warning and Reminders*, Mecca 2015.

^[7] Terrorist organizations.

^[8] Fayez Abu Shamala's political positions oppose the PA and negotiations, but he does not hesitate to criticize the Hamas regime.

^[9] Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, the Palestinian organizations, the Shi'ite Houthis in Yemen and the pro-Iranian militias in Iraq.

^[10] According to claims from the ministry of health in Gaza, about 43,000 people were killed in the Gaza Strip; according to the IDF, almost half of them Hamas and PIJ terrorist operatives. Hutus in Rwanda killed between 500,000 and 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutus, the Turks killed between 664,000 and 1.2 million Armenians, the Nazis killed six million Jews, and Stalin killed between an estimated six and nine million people

COUNTRIES SCRAMBLE TO OFFER TRUMP

AN ALTERNATE PROPOSAL FOR POST-WAR GAZA ARAB

Egyptian plan would see terror group Hamas sidelined in governance of coastal enclave; issue to be discussed at end of month in Riyadh

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL [Pesha Magid](#), [Samia Nakhoul](#), [Suleiman Al-Khalidi](#) and [Ahmed Mohamed Hassan](#) 14 February 2025



Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan, hosting a meeting of top diplomats from the Middle East and Europe to discuss Syria, poses for a picture with the participants in Riyadh on January 12, 2025. (Fayez Nureldine/AFP)

Reuters — Saudi Arabia is spearheading urgent Arab efforts to develop a plan for Gaza’s future as a counter to US President Donald Trump’s ambition for a Middle East riviera cleared of its Palestinian inhabitants, 10 sources told Reuters.

Draft ideas will be discussed at a meeting in Riyadh this month of countries including Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates. Proposals may involve a Gulf-led reconstruction fund and a deal to sideline Hamas, five of the people said.

Saudi Arabia and its Arab allies were aghast at Trump’s plan to permanently “clean out” all Palestinians from Gaza and resettle most of them in Jordan and Egypt, an idea [immediately rejected](#) by Cairo and Amman and seen in most of the region as deeply destabilizing.

The dismay in Saudi Arabia was aggravated, sources said, because the plan would nix the kingdom’s demand for a clear path to Palestinian statehood as a condition to normalize ties with Israel — something

that would also pave the way for an ambitious military pact between Riyadh and Washington, shoring up the kingdom's defenses against Iran.

Reuters spoke to 15 sources in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and elsewhere to build a picture of the hurried efforts by Arab states to pull together existing proposals into a new plan they can sell to the US president — even potentially calling it a “Trump plan” to win his approval.

All the sources declined to be identified because the issue involves international or domestic sensitivities and they were not authorized to speak in public.



People walk past building rubble in a ruined neighborhood in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on January 21, 2025 (Eyad Baba/AFP)

One Arab government source said at least four proposals had already been drafted for Gaza's future, with an Egyptian proposal emerging as central to the Arab push for an alternative to Trump's idea.

THE EGYPTIAN PROPOSAL

The latest Egyptian proposal involves forming a national Palestinian committee to govern Gaza without Hamas involvement, international participation in reconstruction without displacing Palestinians abroad, and movement toward a two-state solution, three Egyptian security sources said.

Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates and Palestinian representatives will review and discuss the plan in Riyadh before it is presented at a scheduled Arab summit on February 27, the Arab government source said.

The role of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, widely known as MBS, is shaping up to be key.

“We are telling the Americans we have a plan that works. Our meeting with MBS is going to be critical. He is taking the lead,” a Jordanian official said.

The crown prince had a warm relationship with the first Trump administration and is increasingly central to Arab ties with the United States during the new Trump era.

Long a major regional partner of the United States, the crown prince is expanding Saudi Arabia's relationship through business and global power politics.

Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund is holding a conference in Miami this month, which Reuters revealed Trump is expected to attend. Riyadh is also expected to host his upcoming talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin to try to end the Ukraine war.

The White House did not respond to several requests for comment on this story.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, speaking on Thursday, referred to the coming Arab meeting, saying: "Right now the only plan — they don't like it — but the only plan is the Trump plan. So if they've got a better plan, now's the time to present it."

Spokespeople for Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, the UAE and Israel did not immediately respond to Reuters requests for comment.

BUFFER ZONE

Clear plans for Gaza's post-war future have already proven hard to develop, as they require positions on contentious debates regarding the territory's internal governance, security management, funding and reconstruction.

Israel has already rejected any role for Hamas or the Palestinian Authority in governing Gaza or ensuring security there. Arab countries and the United States have said they do not want to put troops on the ground to do that.

Gulf states, which have historically paid for reconstruction in Gaza, have said they do not want to do so this time without guarantees that Israel will not again destroy what they build. Israel is unlikely to make guarantees that prevent it from acting against threats from the territory.

Jordan's King Abdullah emphasized to Trump on Monday at their meeting in the White House that he was working with Saudi Arabia and Egypt on a Gaza plan that would work, a Jordanian official said.

In televised comments after the meeting, Abdullah said the countries would review an Egyptian plan and "we will be in Saudi Arabia to discuss how we can work with the president and the United States."

Reuters could not immediately reach Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi for comment. After Abdullah's meeting with Trump, Safadi said: "We are now working on crystallizing the Arab plan."

Initial proposals shared by the three Egyptian security sources relating to reconstruction and financing appear to be in advanced stages.

A buffer zone and physical barrier would be erected to prevent tunnels from being built across Gaza's border with Egypt. As soon as the rubble is removed, 20 areas will be established as temporary living zones. Around 50 Egyptian and other foreign companies would be brought in to carry out the work.

Financing would involve international and Gulf money, a regional source with knowledge of the matter said. A potential fund could be named the Trump Fund for Reconstruction, an Arab government official said.

However, the most difficult issues regarding Gaza's governance and internal security remain to be decided, the official said.

Forcing Hamas out of any role in Gaza would be critical, said the Arab official and the three Egyptian sources.

Hamas has previously said it is willing to cede government in Gaza to a national committee, but it would want a role in choosing its members and would not accept the deployment of any ground forces without its consent. Israel will be loath to agree to such terms.

The three Egyptian sources said that while nothing in the plan was very new, they believed it was good enough to change Trump's mind and that it could be imposed on Hamas and the Palestinian Authority under Mahmoud Abbas.

'NOT PLEASED'

Saudi annoyance over Gaza had already been building before Trump's announcement.

The kingdom had repeatedly said normalization with Israel was conditional on a path to creating a Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem.

That stance hardened as Saudi public anger grew at the destruction and death in Gaza in the war brought on by Hamas's Oct. 7, 2023, assault on Israel. Thousands of Hamas-led terrorists invaded southern Israel and slaughtered some 1,200 people, most of them civilians, amid horrific acts of brutality. They abducted 251 people, 73 of whom are still held captive in Gaza.

In November, the crown prince publicly accused Israel of genocide during an Islamic summit and doubled down on the need for a two-state solution. Frustration was running high in the kingdom over the ongoing war, two regional intelligence sources said.

Washington appeared ready to ignore Riyadh's demand for two states. The day before his Gaza announcement, Trump was asked whether a normalization deal could proceed without a two-state solution. He said: "Saudi Arabia is going to be very helpful."

Trump's Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff, had held meetings in Riyadh in late January. Two senior diplomats said Witkoff laid out a three-month timeline for the normalization process.

But Saudi frustration quickly turned into surprise and then anger when Trump announced his Gaza idea. "He is not pleased," a source close to the Saudi royal court said of Prince Mohammed's reaction.

The level of anger was quickly evident in state media broadcasts — which analysts say are often a measure of official Saudi viewpoints — with television news reports personally excoriating Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

“They are outraged,” said Aziz Alghashian, a Saudi analyst familiar with official thinking, describing the mood among senior Saudi officials. “This is outrageous. More than frustration, this is on another level.”

Many experts say Trump may be using an old bargaining ploy from his diplomatic playbook, setting out an extreme position as an opening gambit for negotiations. During his first term, he often issued what were widely seen as over-the-top foreign policy pronouncements, many of which never came to fruition.

Still, it has complicated the normalization talks.

Former Saudi intelligence head Prince Turki al-Faisal, who holds no current role in the government, said in a CNN interview last week that if Trump visited Riyadh, “I’m sure he will get an earful from the leadership here.”

Asked if he could see any prospect of normalization talks advancing with Israel, he said: “Not at all.”

Times of Israel staff contributed to this story.

NETANYAHU COMMITTED' TO TRUMP'S PLAN TO TAKE OVER GAZA

**Comments suggest Israeli PM will reject Hamas pledge
to hand over control of territory to the PA**

THEGUARDIAN [Bethan McKernan](#) *Jerusalem correspondent* Mon 17 Feb 2025

Benjamin Netanyahu has reiterated that he is “committed” to Donald Trump’s plan to take over and develop the Gaza Strip, amid uncertainty over whether Israel will send a delegation to Qatar to discuss the second stage of the fragile ceasefire in the war with Hamas.

In a statement on Monday, the Israeli prime minister said: “Just as I have committed to, on the day after the war in Gaza, there will be neither Hamas nor the Palestinian Authority. I am committed to US president Trump’s plan for the creation of a different Gaza.”

The remarks come after a report by Sky News Arabia on Sunday night that [Hamas](#) was prepared to hand over control of Gaza to its West Bank-based rival, the semi-autonomous Palestinian Authority (PA), following pressure from mediator Egypt.

The broadcaster said, citing Egyptian sources, that the Palestinian militant group had agreed to the establishment of a temporary committee to oversee [the reconstruction of the territory](#), which has been levelled by Israeli airstrikes over 16 months of war.

Netanyahu’s latest comments will weigh heavily over the future of the month-old truce after it [almost collapsed last week](#) following news of Trump’s surprise plan for the US to “take over” Gaza and [“relocate” its 2.3 million people to countries such as Egypt and Jordan](#). International humanitarian law experts say the proposal amounts to ethnic cleansing.

Netanyahu’s defence minister, Israel Katz, announced the establishment of a new agency late on Monday to oversee the “voluntary departure” of Palestinians from [Gaza](#).

A three-month-old ceasefire between Israel and the Lebanese militia Hezbollah is also in doubt ahead of Tuesday’s deadline for Israel to withdraw remaining troops from its northern neighbour.

In a briefing on Monday, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) spokesperson, Lt Col Nadav Shoshani, told reporters that Israeli forces would remain in five “strategic locations” over the border in order to protect nearby Israeli towns and villages, an announcement met with frustration by Lebanese officials.

Israel’s security cabinet is set to decide on Monday evening whether to send a delegation to the Qatari capital, Doha, to discuss the difficult second stage of the Gaza ceasefire agreement. The second phase is scheduled to begin in early March, and would involve the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, effectively ending the war. The third phase is supposed to address the exchange of bodies, a reconstruction plan for Gaza, and future governance.

[Donald Trump's Gaza plan: the key takeaways](#)

According to Israeli media, finance minister Bezalel Smotrich's far-right Religious Zionism party, which was opposed to the ceasefire, is still threatening to collapse Netanyahu's coalition if Israel does not return to fighting when the first stage of the truce expires.

It is widely believed at home and abroad that Netanyahu, afraid that losing office will leave him more vulnerable to corruption charges, has prioritised the survival of his government over a hostage deal.

While Israeli public opinion is [unlikely to sway](#) government decision making on the war, protests were held across the country on Monday to mark 500 days since Israeli hostages were kidnapped and taken to Gaza in the Hamas attack of October 2023 that triggered the conflict. In Jerusalem, dozens of demonstrators marched to Netanyahu's residence, chanting slogans and carrying banners that read "Home Now", before meeting lawmakers at the Knesset.

Captives have been released in batches of three or four in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners and detainees on a weekly basis since 19 January, but about 45 more Israelis and foreign nationals are not eligible for release until the second stage of the agreement.

Israel is preparing to receive the bodies of four hostages from Gaza on Thursday and is working on bringing back six living hostages in the next scheduled release on Saturday, an Israeli security official said on Monday. If the handovers are successful, the timeline for the start of the second stage of the truce will be moved up by a week.

Netanyahu has repeatedly publicly embraced Trump's plan for the US to take ownership of Gaza and redevelop the coastal strip as a resort, telling reporters on Sunday during a visit to Israel by the US secretary of state, Marco Rubio, that the government was "working closely" alongside Washington to implement the Trump proposal.

The US president's vision for Gaza has been flatly rejected by the Palestinians and the rest of the Arab world, which is now scrambling to come up with alternatives.

Saudi Arabia is hosting a summit for delegations from Egypt, Jordan, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates on Friday, and the Arab League will convene to discuss the reconstruction of Gaza and governance options on 27 February.

Reuters reported on Monday that the EU is planning to tell Israel next week that Palestinians displaced from their homes in Gaza should be ensured a dignified return and that Europe will contribute to rebuilding the shattered territory.

In Lebanon, the IDF said the decision to maintain five positions in the country was a temporary measure that was approved by the US-led body monitoring the truce. The ceasefire was extended for another three weeks after the first deadline at the end of January.

Lebanon's president, Joseph Aoun, said in a statement that Lebanese officials were working diplomatically to achieve the Israeli withdrawal, and that he "will not accept that a single Israeli remains on Lebanese territory". Under the agreement, the Lebanese army and UN peacekeepers are supposed to patrol a buffer zone after the Israeli pullout.

Also on Monday, the Israeli military said it had killed Muhammad Shaheen, a Hamas leader, in an airstrike in Sidon in southern Lebanon. The attack was the deepest Israeli strike on Lebanese territory since the ceasefire went into effect in November, freezing a two-month-old Israeli ground operation. Iran-backed Hezbollah and Israel began trading cross-border fire on 8 October 2023, a day after the Hamas attack that began the war in Gaza.

The conflict in the Middle East has destroyed countless lives and the horrific scenes since 7 October 2023 from Gaza and Israel have haunted millions around the world.

Understanding what has happened – and what comes next – is more important than ever.

TRUMP SHARES AI MUSIC VIDEO REIMAGINING GAZA STRIP AS GLITZY BEACHFRONT HAVEN

Cocktails by the pool with Netanyahu, bearded belly dancers, Elon Musk lookalikes, and gold statues of Trump feature in 30-second clip posted by US president, after his calls to expel Gazans

By [Tol Staff](#) 26 February 2025



An AI-generated video, posted by US President Donald Trump to his Truth Social platform on February 26, 2025, depicts Trump (L) and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (R) reclining on the beach in a future "Riviera" in the Gaza Strip.

US President Donald Trump shared an AI-generated music video to his Truth Social platform on Wednesday, showing a version of his stated vision for a Gaza Strip "riviera."

Trump has repeatedly called in recent weeks for the United States to "take over" and "own" the Gaza Strip, forcibly evicting all its 2.2 million residents — [without](#) guaranteeing them a right to come back – and making the enclave a massive real estate development.

The short clip, which was not attributed to any maker, depicts a modern coastal strip lined with promenades, high-rises and shimmering beaches.

Odd details include bearded belly dancers, a child clutching a golden balloon shaped like Trump's face, and a massive golden statue of Trump himself. People dance as dollar bills rain down. Many of the people in the video bear a resemblance to billionaire Trump confidant Elon Musk.

Trump himself is seen dancing with a scantily clad woman and, at the end, lounging with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu by the pool at one of his hotels, emblazoned with the large golden words "Trump Gaza."

Meanwhile, upbeat music plays in the clip's background, with the lyrics: "Donald's coming to set you free/Bringing the light for all to see/No more tunnels, no more fear/Trump Gaza is finally here.

"Trump Gaza shining bright/Golden future, a brand new light/Feast and dance, the deed is done/Trump Gaza, number one," it continues, twice.

The war in the Gaza Strip started October 7, 2023, when thousands of Hamas-led terrorists invaded southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people and taking 251 hostages, amid acts of brutality and sexual assault.

The subsequent war between Israel and the terror group has devastated the enclave and killed tens of thousands of people.

Trump's proposal for a mass population transfer has infuriated the Arab world, which has promised an [alternative plan](#) to rebuild Gaza without displacing its residents.

Meanwhile, Israel and the US refuse to allow Hamas any governing role in post-war Gaza, and Netanyahu has also refused any role for the Ramallah-based Palestinian Authority, which has [called](#) to take over civil administration of the Strip.

Speaking in Washington on Tuesday, Opposition Leader Yair Lapid presented his own ["day after" plan](#), envisioning an extended Egyptian guardianship of the war-torn Strip.

The discussion comes as a hostage, ceasefire and prisoner-release deal, agreed to last month, faces an uncertain future, with its first, 42-day phase due to end on Saturday, though Israeli and US negotiators [reportedly seek](#) to extend it.

The deal calls, in its second phase, for the release of the remaining living hostages in exchange for a permanent end to the war.

‘TRUMP GAZA IS FINALLY HERE!’: US PRESIDENT PROMOTES GAZA PLAN IN AI VIDEO

CNN WORLD By Mick Krever and Mostafa Salem, February 26, 2025



CNN ANALYZES TRUMP'S AI GAZA VIDEO

US President Donald Trump posted a video on his Truth Social account late on Tuesday, which appears to have been created with generative AI, promoting the transformation of Gaza into a Gulf state-like resort featuring a golden statue of himself, a hummus-eating Elon Musk, and shirtless American and Israeli leaders lounging on a beach.

“No more tunnels, no more fear,” a voice sings over a dance beat. “Trump Gaza is finally here!”

The American president has proposed expelling 2.1 million Palestinians from Gaza and transforming the enclave into a “Riviera” that would be owned by the United States.

The West Bank-based Palestinian Authority has called that proposal a “serious violation of international law.” The PA foreign minister, Varsen Aghabekian Shaheen, said earlier this month: “We have tried displacement before, and it will not happen again,” referring to the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians displaced during the Arab-Israeli war that led to the creation of Israel in 1948.

The video opens on barefoot Palestinian children walking through Gazan rubble. “What’s next?” a title card asks. They walk towards a skyline of skyscrapers lining Gaza’s coast.

“Donald’s coming to set you free,” a voice sings. “Trump Gaza shining bright. Golden future, a brand-new light. Feast and dance. The deed is done.”

The video, incongruously, features bearded and bikini-clad belly dancers, a child holding a golden balloon in the shape of Trump’s head, and Elon Musk dancing on a beach under a shower of US dollars.

As the Truth Social video ends, the camera pushes in on Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sipping drinks on a beach.

CNN has asked the White House for clarification.

In a statement, Gaza’s Hamas-run Government Media Office denounced the video as “disgraceful.”

“This video and its degrading content reflect the deeply rooted racist colonial mindset that seeks to distort reality and justify the occupation’s crimes,” said director-general Ismail Al-Thawabtah. “By portraying Gaza as if it were a land without a people, this desperate attempt aims to legitimize the ongoing ethnic cleansing carried out by the Israeli occupation with clear American support.”

It is unclear whether Trump intends to carry through on his expulsion plan. After receiving forceful pushback from Egyptian and Jordanian leaders, Trump told Fox News on Friday: “The way to do it is my plan. I think that’s the plan that really works. But I’m not forcing it. I’m just going to sit back and recommend it.”

Reacting to the video on Wednesday, Wassel Abu Yousuf, a member of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)’s executive committee, told CNN that the video was “a clowning gimmick and nothing more than that.”

“There will not be resorts or Middle East riviera or anything else,” he said. “What Trump wants to do should be done somewhere else, but not on the backs of the Palestinian people. This is the land of our ancestors and parents, and a lot of blood has been shed to defend it.”

A CNN poll conducted by telephone and online in mid-February found that the proposal for Gaza with no right of return for Palestinians was the least popular Trump action or proposal asked about. Only 13% of Americans in the poll called it a “good thing,” while 58% described it as a “bad thing.”

ALTERNATIVE ARAB PLAN

Arab leaders met in the Saudi capital Riyadh on Friday for the first time to formulate a response to Trump’s plan for Gaza. The leaders are set to meet in Cairo on March 4 to discuss the plan and will likely present it to Trump at a later date.

A senior United Arab Emirates official said Wednesday that there needs to be a “bold” plan to reconstruct the territory, but said any plan cannot take place without a clear path to a Palestinian state.

The UAE has conducted preliminary discussions about the possibility of playing a role in postwar efforts to rebuild Gaza, but has said that its conditions, including a reformed Palestinian Authority and an Israeli commitment to Palestinian statehood, have not yet been met.

Netanyahu has repeatedly rejected the prospects of an independent Palestinian state and has endorsed Trump’s Gaza ownership plan.

“The conclusion is we need a bold plan of reconstruction but that plan of reconstruction must ensure that we don’t go back to a situation of conflict and to do that we have to have a clear path where the Palestinians actually have a state,” the UAE’s diplomatic adviser to the president Anwar Gargash told CNN’s Becky Anderson at an investment conference in Abu Dhabi.

Egypt, one of the countries Trump suggested should take in Gazans, has led the Arab effort to formulate an alternative plan for the enclave, which its prime minister has claimed would take three years to complete and cost \$20 billion.

Asked by CNN whether Egypt, as a major recipient of US aid, feels coerced by Trump to accept his plan, Hassan El Khatib, the Egyptian minister of investment, said: “The right for the Palestinians to live on their own land is a principle... No we’re not going to take pressure on this.”

CNN’s Kareem Khadder contributed to this report.

Correction: This story has been updated to correct the timing of Trump’s post.

US REPORTEDLY DEVELOPING PLAN TO RESETTLE 1 MILLION GAZANS IN LIBYA

NBC News says proposal is serious enough to have been discussed with Libyan leaders; unclear where in the North African country the Palestinians would live, or how they’d get there

By [Agencies](#) and [Tol Staff](#) Today, 2:55 am

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[10](#)



Palestinians transport their belongings as they flee Gaza City on May 16, 2025. (Bashar Taleb/AFP)

The Trump administration is working on a plan to permanently relocate as much as one million Palestinians from the Gaza Strip to Libya, NBC News [reported Friday](#), citing five people with knowledge of the matter.

The plan is under serious enough consideration that the US has discussed it with Libya’s leadership, the report said, while stressing a final agreement has yet to be reached.

In exchange for resettling the Palestinians, the administration would release to Libya billions of dollars of funds the US froze more than a decade ago, NBC added.

According to three of the sources quoted in the report, Israel has been kept in the loop about the administration’s talks on the matter.

“These reports are untrue,” an administration spokesperson told NBC in response. “The situation on the ground is untenable for such a plan. Such a plan was not discussed and makes no sense.”

There was no response from Israel or either of Libya's two rival governments to the report, which also said administration officials have discussed offering incentives such as free housing and possibly a financial stipend to encourage Palestinians to leave Gaza for the North African country.

An official told the US network that it remains unclear where one million Palestinians from Gaza could be settled in the largely lawless Libya, which has been plunged into chaos and division since the 2011 civil war in which longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi was overthrown and killed.

The NBC report also noted the logistical challenges involved in transporting one million people from Gaza to Libya, particularly with no airport in the Strip.



People gather at a beach in the Libyan capital Tripoli on May 15, 2025. (Mahmud Turkia/AFP)

US President Donald Trump triggered global perplexity in early February by suggesting the US “take over” Gaza and turn it into a “Middle East Riviera” while forcing its Palestinian inhabitants to relocate to Egypt, Jordan, or other countries. He has since said, however, that no Gazans would be expelled.

Visiting the Middle East this week, Trump said he wanted the United States to “take” Gaza and turn it into a “freedom zone”: “I have concepts for Gaza that I think are very good. Make it a freedom zone. Let the United States get involved and make it just a freedom zone,” he said. “I’d be proud to have the United States have it, take it, make it a freedom zone.”

While far-right ministers in Israel who have urged using the ongoing war with Hamas as an opportunity to reestablish Israeli settlements in the Strip lauded the plan, the Palestinian Authority and Arab nations rejected it outright.

Despite public opposition among the region’s leaders, the government has moved forward with plans to encourage Palestinians to relocate, though The Times of Israel [found](#) no meaningful change in Israel’s exit policy for Gaza residents in recent months.

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THE TIMES OF ISRAEL [Agencies](#) and [Tol Staff](#)



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TRUMP PLAN OR NOT, ISRAEL IS LETTING MORE PALESTINIANS LEAVE GAZA

REUTERS [Nidal Al-Mughrabi](#), [Alexander Cornwell](#) and [Maayan Lubell](#) May 19, 2025



Item 1 of 2 Smoke rises following Israeli strikes, as seen from a tent camp sheltering displaced Palestinians, in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, May 19, 2025. REUTERS/Hatem Khaled

SUMMARY

- Israel eases Gaza exit restrictions, some families flee to Europe, vowing to return
- Israeli officials deny link to Trump's resettlement proposal, while Netanyahu celebrates resettlement plans
- Palestinian academic Ayed Ayoub escapes with family, but nephew with French fellowship killed in Gaza

CAIRO/RAMALLAH/ISRAEL-GAZA BORDER, May 19 (Reuters) - For more than a year, Israeli authorities prevented Ayed Ayoub from escaping Gaza's hunger and war with his family for an academic fellowship in France. He finally left last month, after Israel unexpectedly eased its tight control of the border.

Ayoub, his wife and their four children are among around 1,000 Palestinians who have left Gaza following Israel's relaxation of rules in recent months, bussed from the enclave to board flights to Europe and elsewhere, according to interviews with affected Gazans and foreign diplomats.

The Reuters Daily Briefing newsletter provides all the news you need to start your day. Sign up [here](#).

Reuters reported earlier in the day that the U.S. is preparing a partial evacuation of its Iraqi embassy in Baghdad, according to U.S. and Iraqi sources, and that Washington will let military dependents leave locations around the Middle East

"The situation in Gaza has become unbearable," said 57-year-old Ayoub, an engineer who earned his doctorate and masters degree at a French university after moving there in the early 2000s. His return was as part of a group of [115 Gazans accepted by France](#) in April.

The new departures require a request to Israel by a foreign government and their numbers remain relatively small.

Reuters could not establish why Israel was now letting more Palestinians leave Gaza, which comes amid international outcry over the humanitarian conditions there. However, the easing of restrictions parallels the Israeli government's stated goal of facilitating the resettlement of Gaza's population in other countries.

For Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, talk of mass resettlement of Palestinians from Gaza has helped shore up [support with far-right allies](#) who oppose a further truce with Hamas and want to re-establish Jewish settlements there.

Interior Minister Moshe Arbel has described the recent departure of Gazans to European countries as a bid to temporarily and voluntarily vacate the Gaza Strip to allow for its reconstruction, a process he said was

The Republican U.S. president has proposed developing the enclave as a coastal resort, free of Palestinians.

"I thank President Trump for thinking of this important initiative," Arbel said on April 1, after supervising the departure of a flight taking Gazans to Germany. "Together, joining forces, we will turn this place into a paradise. With God's help, let us succeed."

His spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment. After the evacuation that Ayoub's family were part of, the French Foreign Ministry said France remained opposed to the forced displacement of people from Gaza. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has warned that the Trump idea could amount to [ethnic cleansing](#).

Despite the comments from Arbel, five Israeli officials told Reuters the easing of restrictions was not a direct response to Trump's Gaza proposal or part of any such plan. One of the Israeli officials said Israel was not trying to reduce Gaza's population but rather responding to mounting requests by countries seeking to help people reach a safe destination.

For many Palestinians, the opportunity to move is fraught with echoes of historical dispossession of their lands. Ayoub and others among those who recently left told Reuters their departure was only temporary. However, nearly half of Gazans [would now consider leaving](#), according to a recent Palestinian poll, after Israel's 19-month offensive has left much of the strip in ruins, with its population largely displaced and dependent on dwindling aid supplies.

Policies in place since Israel broke a fragile six-week ceasefire on March 2 further increased pressure on Gaza's population, even as U.S. and Arab mediators [push for an end to the war](#).

[Famine risks](#) have worsened under Israel's two-month blockade of all aid deliveries in Gaza. It renewed a bombing campaign, killing 464 people last week, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. And it launched a new "extensive" [land offensive](#) on Sunday, two days after Trump concluded a tour of Gulf states.

Israel also said on Sunday it would ease the blockade and allow in [limited aid](#).

Netanyahu has hailed Trump's idea for Gaza but cites a major obstacle: "We have one problem - we need receiving states," he told a hawkish group of Gaza war veterans on Tuesday. Neighbours Jordan and Syria - which have large Palestinian refugee populations dating back decades - and Egypt are loathe to take in large numbers of Gazans.

For this story, Reuters spoke with five Gazans who have left recently, along with nine foreign diplomats and seven Israeli officials to establish details of the impact of the new rules around exits from Gaza.

The foreign diplomats said Israel began informing foreign governments late last year, before Trump took office and floated his proposal, that they would soon ease the restrictions. The diplomats asked to remain anonymous because they were not authorised to speak to the media.

The relaxed restrictions largely took effect at the start of the year. Israeli officials now take days instead of weeks or months to approve requests for Palestinians with foreign citizenship, their relatives, and recipients of foreign scholarships, the diplomats involved said. Among those now allowed to leave were Palestinians previously denied exit by Israel on security grounds, they added.

Israel's Prime Minister's office, Defence Ministry and its COGAT branch which coordinates with the Palestinians did not respond to Reuters queries about the scope or reason for the recent easing of restrictions. Hamas, which has urged Gazans not to take part in any relocation offers, said it was looking into reports of restrictions being eased.

GAZA

The population of Gaza has already fallen by about 160,000 during the course of the war to around 2.1 million, according to the Palestinian statistics agency. More than 53,000 residents have been killed and the rest have left, including some allowed out for medical emergencies. Others have been able to leave through an expensive system involving Egyptian brokers.

Thousands of foreign nationals fled earlier in the war, but it became much harder to get permission once Israel took over the Rafah crossing with Egypt in May last year and enforced a near-total closure of Gaza's borders.

In late March, Israel's government established a new agency that would help Gazans who want to resettle in third countries. Reuters was unable to establish whether the department is functioning.

Reuters could not establish exactly how many people had been able to leave under the new criteria. Three diplomats estimated at least a thousand, while several said they could only be sure of their own citizens, citing numbers in the high hundreds.

Israeli authorities did not respond to a question about numbers.

Over a dozen, primarily European, countries have now been able to get people out from Gaza, with most exits occurring since March, all the diplomats said.

Gisha, an Israeli human rights group that advocates for freedom of movement for Palestinians, said Israel's easing of restrictions were "partial, inconsistent, and non-transparent," arguing that many more people should be allowed to leave.

"What may appear to be 'concessions' are, in fact, selective and limited responses to international pressure and legal action," Gisha spokesperson Shai Grundberg told Reuters.

The organisation estimates thousands of Palestinians still in Gaza hold foreign citizenship, residency, student visas, or eligibility for entry into a third country through family reunification visas or similar programs.

'WE WILL COME BACK'

Only a fraction of Gazans meet the present Israeli criteria for being allowed out. For those who do, the choice is not easy.

Many fear leaving their land would result in another "Nakba" or catastrophe, when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were dispossessed of their homes in the 1948 war between Arab states and the newly created state of Israel. Many of those hoping to return within weeks remained refugees.

"We will come back to Gaza once the conditions allow, as soon as we can," said poet Dunia Al-Amal Ismail, a 53-year-old widow who made it out as part of the same group as Ayoub, with her 21-year-old daughter and 18-year-old son.

Ismail secured a place in the same French academic program that helps researchers, artists and their families get out of conflict zones.

Those leaving face a perilous journey through the enclave, which is scattered with unexploded rockets and shells. Palestinians are gathered by vehicles before dawn and driven to an Israeli-run border crossing, where they undergo Israel security checks before being processed by foreign diplomats, the people Reuters spoke to said.

Israel only allows those leaving to bring one small bag each. They travel in buses under Israeli military escort to the Jordan border, four diplomats said.

Aware of severe food scarcity, the diplomats said they bring sandwiches and drinks for those leaving Gaza.

One diplomat said a Palestinian man, eating a chicken sandwich, had commented that he had forgotten the taste of meat.

An academic among the group that recently arrived in France described meeting the diplomats in the desert.

"All of a sudden, a fridge appears from nowhere, and you see everything you have been deprived of for many months," he told Reuters. "I ate, but with pain in my chest for the people who we left behind."

Several of the Palestinians Reuters spoke to declined to be identified for fear of retribution from Hamas and other armed groups.

Travel documents present logistical challenges, several of the diplomats said. Some papers have been lost in the war, while others are needed for children born since it began. Some must have travel documents issued by the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah or Cairo, they said.

From Jordan, they board flights to the countries that helped them leave, though there have been some flights from Israel, according to the diplomats, flight data and Israel's Interior Ministry.

For Ayoub, painful memories weigh heavily.

One of Ayoub's sisters, her husband and their son were killed in bombardments at the start of the war, which was triggered by the Hamas-led attack on southern Israeli communities on October 7, 2023, in which about 1,200 people were killed and 251 were taken as hostages to Gaza.

Ayoub's nephew, an architect, had also recently won a fellowship in France but never made it out. He died on Thursday from injuries he sustained in an airstrike. The French programme backing the fellowship issued a statement mourning his death.

Ayoub was conflicted about leaving: relieved to secure a better future for his children but at the same time distraught "because I left my sister and her children, and many people who are dear to me," he said, referring to another of his siblings.

"One moment I'm happy, and the next I remember what's happening in Gaza," Ayoub said.

Writing by Maayan Lubell and Alexander Cornwell; Additional reporting by Mustafa Abu Ganeyeh, James Mackenzie, Nuha Sharaf and Emily Rose in Jerusalem, Padraic Halpin in Dublin, Stephanie Van Den Berg in Amsterdam; Joanna Plucińska and William James in London, Angelo Amante in Rome; Editing by Frank Jack Daniel

Our Standards: [The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles.](#)

RESETTLEMENT - 2 - EGYPT

THE FORGOTTEN PALESTINIANS: HOW PALESTINIAN REFUGEES SURVIVE IN EGYPT

FORCED MIGRATION REVIEW

Palestinians fled to Egypt after the wars of 1948, 1956 and 1967. Gazans employed as civil servants when the Gaza Strip was under Egyptian administrative rule and Gazan students in Egypt when it was occupied by Israel in 1967 were also prevented from returning home. Neither group of displaced Palestinians has been protected or assisted either by UNHCR or by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) – the agency set up to assist Palestinian refugees which began operations in 1950. While UNRWA established relief and assistance projects in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, West Bank and Gaza, Egypt did not allow UNRWA to operate on its territories.

The rise to power of Gamal Abdel-Nasser in 1952 ushered in a golden age for Palestinians in Egypt. Palestinians were regarded as equal to Egyptian nationals and were able to access education and other state services and to work without restrictions. However, by the late 1970s the dispersed Palestinian communities in Egypt were increasingly affected by tensions between the Egyptian government and the Palestinian liberation organisation. The Camp David peace agreement and the assassination of Egypt's culture minister by the Palestinian faction headed by Abu Nidal in 1978 proved a turning point. Laws and regulations were amended to treat Palestinians as foreigners. Rights to free education, employment and residency were rescinded. The state media projected negative images of 'ungrateful' Palestinians and accused them of having brought about their expulsion by their greed and willingness to sell their land to Zionists. As a result, many Egyptians believe that Palestinians are rich, economically powerful and influential and deserve neither sympathy nor assistance.

PALESTINIAN RIGHTS IN EGYPT SINCE 1978

University education, free for Palestinians under Nasser, now has to be paid for in foreign currency. Even those Palestinians entitled to exemption from paying 90% of the fees charged to foreign students are often unable to raise the remainder. Some Palestinians report forging birth certificates to indicate they are Egyptian in order to get free education. Others have initially paid the minimum fees that Egyptians pay, promising to pay the remaining foreign fees after graduation. Often they are unable to do so and are thus denied official accreditation.

Due to their educational qualifications Egypt-based Palestinians were able to secure well-paid employment in the Gulf in the 1960s and 1970s. Palestinians were known as highly educated professionals and worked in medicine, commerce, engineering, teaching and management. Those who began professional careers prior to 1978 have been able to keep their posts. However, education restrictions mean they have not been joined by younger Palestinians. Many adolescent Palestinians have dropped out of school. Aware of the constraints on their livelihoods, many young men only aspire to learning a vocational skill or owning a shop. Young women have given up hope for an education and resign themselves to household duties and child-rearing. Public sympathy for Palestinians as a result of new hardships suffered since the outbreak of the

current Al Aqsa intifada has recently led to the education authorities allowing Palestinian students to attend government schools without paying fees. This has assisted a few but has done little to make up for the lack of education over the years.

The private sector requires skills which, without education, Palestinians are unable to obtain. Private employers are required to obtain work permits for Palestinians and regulations restrict the number of 'foreigners' in any company to 10%. Palestinians are thus forced to work as truck or taxi drivers, unskilled or semi-skilled labourers, bicycle-repairers, street vendors of used clothing or itinerant 'suitcase merchants' carrying items from governorate to governorate.

A minority of Palestinians are more fortunate. Employees of the PLO and former Egyptian civil servants are assured a regular income and have been able to send their children to public schools and are exempted from paying university fees.

Palestinians are also affected by:

- the risk of health emergencies: while basic health services for Palestinians in Egypt are satisfactory, most fear inability to pay for unexpected and costly medical operations and prolonged medication.
- a 1976 law restricting foreigners from owning buildings and lands and a 1988 limiting ownership of agricultural land to Egyptians.
- strict residency requirements: renewal of permits is conditional on paying a fee and proving a reason to remain in Egypt- even though none of them can go back to Palestine. Palestinians unable to provide evidence of educational enrolment, a work permit, marriage to an Egyptian, a business relationship with an Egyptian or a bank balance of \$5,000 are at risk of jail or deportation.
- tight travel restrictions: if Palestinians spend more than six months out of Egypt their residency may be revoked. Those who need to reside abroad for one year are required to apply for a one year return visa which is invalidated if the holder does not return to Egypt before its expiry. Many Egyptian-born Palestinians are stranded in Arab states, living illegally and unable to return to Egypt. In 2001-2002 a student who had studied in Russia spent 14 months shuffling between Moscow and Cairo airports before UNHCR managed to secure asylum in Sweden.

WHO PROTECTS THE RIGHTS OF PALESTINIANS IN EGYPT?

In theory, UNHCR has a mandate to protect Palestinians living outside the five UNRWA areas of operation. However, Arab politicians have hampered UNHCR's ability to provide protection. Arab states have argued that as the UN is responsible for Palestinian expulsion – the General Assembly Resolution 181 in 1947 approved the Partition Plan for Palestine – the UN has therefore an ongoing responsibility to develop mechanisms for repatriation and compensation. Allowing Palestinians to be protected by UNHCR would prejudice their case by encouraging third-country resettlement.

Palestinians have been excluded from the protection of UNHCR, based on the fact that they receive assistance from UNRWA – regardless of the fact that only those who live within its five areas of operation

are assisted. Only in September 2002 did UNHCR reinterpret Article 1D of the 1951 Refugee Convention in order to emphasise that Palestinian refugees are *ipso facto* refugees and are to be protected by UNHCR if the assistance or protection of the other UN body ceases. In light of this, it has included those Palestinians not living in the countries of UNRWA field operations within UNHCR's protection mandate. In practice, however, UNHCR is still not doing much for Palestinians who do not come under the UNRWA mandate.

CONCLUSION

Egypt is a signatory to the 1965 Casablanca Protocol⁽¹⁾ and has ratified its articles designed to give Palestinians rights to residency, work and travel while emphasising the importance of preserving Palestinian nationality and maintaining refugee status. In 1981 Egypt additionally signed the 1951 UN Convention. In practice, neither document has been implemented. Egypt's shifting policies towards its Palestinians have led to a gradual erosion of their rights. Regulations have marginalised Palestinians and reduced them to the status of foreigners denied access to international bodies able to voice their needs. All the legal instruments of the UN and the Arab League have failed to protect the basic human rights of Palestinians, not only in Palestine but also in exile. If Egypt, and other Arab states, are to sincerely support the Palestinian refugee cause they must provide rights and access to services until such time as Palestinians are able to return.

Oroub El Abed is an independent researcher based in Amman, Jordan whose focus is on Palestinian refugee issues in host countries. This paper is based on a two-year project undertaken in 2001-2003 under the auspices of the Forced Migration Refugee Studies Programme (FMRS) of the American University in Cairo www.aucegypt.edu/academic/fmrs and funded by Canada's International Development Research Centre (www.idrc.ca). It is adapted from a forthcoming book 'Palestinians in Egypt: analysis of survival and livelihoods strategies'. For further information, contact the author: oroub@yahoo.com

Notes

1. For more information on the Casablanca Protocol and residency rights of Palestinians in Egypt and other Arab states, see
: www.badil.org/Protection/Documents/Arab_States/Casablanca_Protocol.htm and www.shaml.org/publications/monos/mono1.htm

EGYPT SAYS GAZA RECONSTRUCTION PLAN READY, WILL INTENSIFY EFFORTS FOR PHASE TWO

Foreign minister says once plan is adopted at coming Arab summit, Cairo will seek international donors to fund program that would leave Gazans in place

— unlike Trump's vision

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL AGENCIES AND TOI STAFF 2 March 2025

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty said Sunday that his country's Gaza reconstruction plan, which would ensure that the Palestinian population remains in the Strip, is ready and will be presented to an emergency Arab summit on March 4.

Arab states that were swift to reject US President Donald Trump's plan for the US to take control of Gaza and resettle Palestinians are scrambling to agree on a diplomatic offensive to counter the idea.

Trump's plan, announced on February 4 during a fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, has infuriated Palestinians and Arab countries and upended decades of US diplomacy that envisioned the Gaza Strip as part of a future Palestinian state under a two-state solution.

The Egyptian counter-plan, according to Abdelatty, will not be purely Egyptian or Arab but will seek international support and funding to ensure its successful implementation.

"We will hold intensive talks with major donor countries once the plan is adopted at the upcoming Arab summit," Abdelatty said in a press conference with European Union Commissioner for the Mediterranean Dubravka Šuica.

Abdelatty said Europe's role, especially in the economic aspect of rebuilding the war-torn enclave, is critical.



Palestinians gather for a communal iftar, or fast-breaking meal, on the first day of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, amid building rubble in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on March 1, 2025. (AFP)

Asked about the ceasefire deal, whose first phase ended last week, Abdelatty said Egypt will continue its intensive efforts to ensure the truce is maintained and negotiations for its second phase can begin.

He stressed the importance of safely executing the ceasefire agreement signed in January, emphasizing Egypt's commitment to ensuring its proper implementation.

“The first phase has concluded successfully, and now we must shift to discussions on the second phase, which is key to sustaining the ceasefire,” he said. “Naturally, it will be difficult, but with goodwill and political determination, it can be achieved.”

The fate of the ceasefire was thrown into confusion on Sunday as its first phase came to an end.

Abdelatty said that following the emergency Arab summit, there will be an urgent ministerial meeting in Saudi Arabia of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, where foreign ministers will push for the summit’s outcomes to be presented globally.

“We will ensure that the results of the Arab summit are presented to the world in the best possible way,” he said.

The three-stage ceasefire agreement, reached last month, halted some 15 months of fighting triggered by Hamas’s October 7, 2023, invasion of southern Israel, when thousands of terrorists killed some 1,200 people and took 251 hostages.

The deal requires Hamas to release all the hostages, Israel to release thousands of Palestinian security prisoners — including hundreds serving life sentences — and a halt to fighting in the Strip, followed by negotiations for a “sustainable calm” and IDF withdrawal from the enclave.

The first stage, though plagued by missteps, ended Saturday, having achieved its targets. Talks on the second phase, during which additional hostages would be released and Israel would fully withdraw from Gaza, were meant to begin on day 16 of the 42-day first phase. However, Israel has not engaged in mediated talks with Hamas on the topic.

Then, on Sunday, [Israel said](#) it would not allow any more goods to enter Gaza over what it called Hamas’s refusal to accept a proposal to extend the expiring initial stage of the ceasefire and hostage release deal. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s government said the move had rock-solid backing from Trump’s White House.

Hamas rejected the new proposal and lashed out against Israel for cutting off aid, calling it “cheap extortion, a war crime and a blatant attack on the [hostage-ceasefire] agreement.”

Both sides stopped short of saying the ceasefire had ended.

Abdelatty on Sunday called for total compliance with the Gaza ceasefire deal, urging both Israel and Hamas to honor their commitments.

“There is no alternative to the faithful and full implementation by all parties of what was signed last January,” Abdelatty said.

Even before the ceasefire was signed, Netanyahu came under pressure from the far-right flank of his coalition to continue the war. Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich has threatened to pull his Religious Zionism party from the government if his demand to resume the war after the first stage is not met, which would eliminate Netanyahu’s parliamentary majority.

RESETTLEMENT - 3 – ARAB

FRANCE, GERMANY, ITALY AND UK GIVE SUPPORT TO ARAB-BACKED PLAN FOR REBUILDING GAZA

Foreign ministers say proposal rejected by US and Israel and that
does not significantly address Hamas ‘shows a realistic path to the reconstruction of Gaza’

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL Agencies](#) and [ToI Staff](#) 8 March 2025



German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock gives a press statement on the support of Ukraine, at the Foreign Office in Berlin on March 1, 2025 (RALF HIRSCHBERGER / AFP)

The foreign ministers of France, Germany, Italy and the UK said Saturday they supported an Arab-backed [plan](#) for the reconstruction of Gaza that would cost \$53 billion and avoid displacing Palestinians from the enclave.

“The plan shows a realistic path to the reconstruction of Gaza and promises – if implemented – swift and sustainable improvement of the catastrophic living conditions for the Palestinians living in Gaza,” the ministers said in a joint statement.

“We are clear that Hamas must neither govern Gaza nor be a threat to Israel any more,” they said. “We commend the serious efforts of all involved stakeholders and appreciate the important signal the Arab states have sent by jointly developing this recovery and reconstruction plan.”

The plan, which was drawn up by Egypt and adopted by Arab leaders earlier this month, has been rejected by US President Donald Trump and Israel, although there have been mixed signals from Washington.

It is a counter to Trump, who triggered global outrage by suggesting the US “take over” Gaza and turn it into the “Riviera of the Middle East,” while forcing its Palestinian inhabitants to relocate to Egypt, Jordan, or other countries.

The Arab plan envisions an independent committee of technocrats running Gaza for six months before handing off control of the Strip to the Palestinian Authority. It provides for Palestinians to remain in the Strip while it is being rebuilt, as opposed to Trump's proposal that the entire population be relocated.

It offers international peacekeeping troops to be dispatched in Gaza through a UN Security Council resolution. In the meantime, Egypt and Jordan will train Palestinian Authority police officers so that they can then be dispatched to Gaza to uphold law and order, the plan says.

However, the Arab proposal does not significantly address Hamas, instead maintaining that armed groups in Gaza can only be fully addressed through a political process that establishes a Palestinian state.

Friday saw the Organization of Islamic Cooperation adopt the Arab plan.

The decision by the 57-member grouping came at an emergency meeting in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, three days after the Arab League ratified the plan at a summit in Cairo.

"The emergency ministerial meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation adopted the Egyptian plan, which has now become an Arab-Islamic plan," Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty said, in comments echoed by his Sudanese counterpart.

"It is certainly a very positive thing," Abdelatty said.

State Department spokeswoman Tammy Bruce told reporters on Thursday that the plan "does not meet the expectations" of Washington. White House National Security Council spokesperson Brian Hughes said it didn't account for "the reality that Gaza is currently uninhabitable."

Trump's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff gave a more positive reaction, calling it a "good-faith first step from the Egyptians."

Witkoff reiterated that rebuilding Gaza would take 10 to 15 years, during which the Strip would be uninhabitable. Still, he avoided criticizing the Egyptian plan that allows Palestinians to remain in Gaza while it is being rebuilt by dividing the enclave into seven zones and working on them separately.

"We're evaluating everything there. It's a little bit early to comment," Witkoff said in response to a question regarding this aspect of the Egyptian plan. "We need more discussion about it."

PART 8 LEBANON

OTHER COUNTRIES - 1 - LEBANON

LEBANON-ISRAEL: MARCH 2025

RENEWED TENSIONS THREATEN CEASEFIRE AMID REGIONAL UNREST

[ACLED](#)

March saw tensions between Hezbollah and Israel escalate to their highest level since the ceasefire took effect in November 2024, with ACLED recording a 100% increase in airstrikes and drone attacks by the Israeli military in Lebanon compared to February 2025, and the highest number of airstrike events in Lebanon since November 2024.

On 22 and 28 March, rockets were fired from Lebanon at Israel for the first time since the November 2024 ceasefire. Hezbollah denied responsibility, hinting at another faction within its sphere of influence.⁶ Regardless of Hezbollah's involvement, the attacks came amid rising regional tensions, including renewed fighting in Gaza, the commemoration of al-Quds Day on 28 March — an annual event in solidarity with the Palestinian cause — and Houthi attacks from Yemen. In response, Israel carried out an airstrike campaign against Hezbollah, holding the Lebanese government responsible for not reining Hezbollah in.⁷

In addition to their intensity, the airstrikes stood out for the high number of reported fatalities — over 30, the highest since December 2024 — and their expanded geographic scope. Notably, on 28 March, Israel struck Beirut for the first time since the ceasefire, marking a shift from previous attacks focused on southern Lebanon and the Bekaa, where the IDF claims it was targeting Hezbollah infrastructure and weapons depots. The ceasefire has so far remained in force despite these renewed flare-ups, but regional tensions, including the resumption of fighting in Gaza and the United States' strikes against the Houthis in Yemen, threaten the fragile truce in Lebanon.

For more information, see the [Israel-Hezbollah weekly situation update](#).

[Back to map](#)

ISRAELI TROOPS 'STAYING INDEFINITELY' IN LEBANON BORDER BUFFER ZONE, DEFENCE MINISTER SAYS

Israeli forces are "staying indefinitely" in a buffer zone on the border with Lebanon, Defence Minister Israel Katz said on Thursday, adding that their presence was "situation-dependent". The news comes after Lebanon called for the full withdrawal of Israeli troops under a ceasefire that came into effect late last year.

[FRANCE 24](#) 27/02/2025 -

Defence Minister Israel Katz said on Thursday that Israeli forces would indefinitely remain in what he called a "buffer zone", in southern [Lebanon](#).

Katz earlier this month had said troops would stay at five locations in Lebanon's south even after the expiry of an [extended deadline](#) for [Israel](#) to withdraw under a [ceasefire](#) with Lebanon's Iran-backed [Hezbollah](#) group.

"There is a buffer zone. It wasn't easy but I stood my ground, and we received a green light from the United States. We gave them a map, and we are staying indefinitely – this is situation-dependent, not time-dependent," Katz said at a conference, according to a statement issued by his office.

Israeli forces were to withdraw from southern Lebanon on February 18 under a November 27 truce agreement which ended more than a year of hostilities, including two months of all-out war during which Israel sent in ground troops.

On the deadline day, Katz said Israel's military "will remain in a buffer zone in Lebanon with five control positions."

Foreign Minister Gideon Saar called them "strategic high points" that were "necessary for our security". He said at the time that Israel would "temporarily" remain in the five points until "Lebanon fully implements its side of the deal".

Lebanese President [Joseph Aoun](#) and the country's other leaders declared any Israeli presence on Lebanese soil an "occupation".

Under the ceasefire brokered by Washington and Paris, Lebanon's military was to deploy alongside United Nations peacekeepers as the Israeli army withdrew over a 60-day period that was prolonged to February 18.

Hezbollah was to pull back north of the Litani River, about 30 kilometres (20 miles) from the border, and dismantle remaining military infrastructure there.

Read more [At Nasrallah's funeral, Hezbollah and Iran set to put on a 'show of strength'](#)

In a joint statement, UN envoy Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert and the UNIFIL peacekeeping force said that at "the end of the period set" for Israel's withdrawal and the Lebanese army's deployment, any further "delay

in this process is not what we hoped would happen" and a violation of a 2006 Security Council resolution that ended a past Israel-Hezbollah war.

Hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel – initiated by the militant group's support of its ally Hamas – ended with the ceasefire that has largely held despite mutual accusations of violations.

WHAT IS HEZBOLLAH?

The Iran-backed Shiite militia was considered the most powerful non-state group in the Middle East, but an Israeli military campaign against Hezbollah in 2024 has considerably weakened it.

COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

SUMMARY

- Hezbollah wields significant power in Lebanon, where it operates as both a Shiite Muslim political party and militant group.
- It violently opposes Israel and Western powers operating in the Middle East, and it functions as a proxy of Iran, its largest benefactor.
- Israel's killing of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in September 2024 has dealt the militant group a severe blow.

INTRODUCTION

Hezbollah is a Shiite Muslim political party and militant group based in Lebanon, where it has fostered a reputation as “a state within a state.” Founded during the chaos of the fifteen-year Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990), the Iran-backed group is driven by its violent opposition to Israel and its resistance to Western influence in the Middle East.

Hezbollah is considered a terrorist organization by the United States and many other countries, and has deep-rooted military alliances with repressive, anti-Israel regimes in Iran and Syria. Cross-border clashes between Hezbollah and Israel escalated in recent years, particularly amid Israel's ongoing war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip that broke out last year. In a major intensification of its battle with Hezbollah, in late 2024 Israel killed longtime leader Hassan Nasrallah, and launched a ground offensive against the group in southern Lebanon.

MILESTONES IN HEZBOLLAH'S HISTORY

1943: After twenty-three years as a French mandate, Lebanon gains independence. Its new leaders sign the National Pact, which creates a government system dividing power among the major religious groups.

1970

1971: The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) relocates its headquarters from Jordan to Lebanon.

1983: In April, Beirut's U.S. embassy is bombed, killing 63 people. In October, suicide attacks on barracks housing U.S. and French troops kill 305 people. A U.S. court decides Hezbollah is behind the attacks.

1975–1990: Lebanon’s civil war rages as the country’s religious, political, and ethnic sects vie for control, leading to invasions by Israel and Syria and the involvement of the United States and other Western forces, as well as the United Nations.

1980

1984: A car bombing attributed to Hezbollah kills dozens of people at the U.S. embassy annex in Beirut.

1985: Hezbollah releases its first manifesto.

1992: In March, the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires is bombed in an attack attributed to Hezbollah. Later this year, Hassan Nasrallah becomes Hezbollah’s secretary-

general after Israeli forces assassinate his predecessor. Hezbollah wins eight seats in Parliament after participating in national elections for the first time.

1989: Lebanon’s parliamentarians meet in Taif, Saudi Arabia, and sign an agreement to end the civil war and grant Syria guardianship over Lebanon. The agreement also orders all militias except for Hezbollah to disarm.

1990

1994: Car bombings at Israel’s London embassy and a Buenos Aires Jewish community center are attributed to Hezbollah.

1997: The United States designates Hezbollah a foreign terrorist organization.

2000

2005: Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri is assassinated. His death, attributed to Syria, kick-starts the Cedar Revolution. A UN tribunal later implicates Hezbollah in Hariri’s death.

2006: Hezbollah abducts two Israeli soldiers, sparking a monthlong war with Israel that leaves more than one thousand Lebanese and fifty Israelis dead.

2009: Hezbollah releases an updated manifesto that expresses more openness to the democratic process.

2010

2011: Syria descends into civil war. Hezbollah eventually sends thousands of fighters to support Bashar al-Assad’s regime.

2012: A suicide bombing targeting a bus carrying Israeli tourists in Bulgaria kills six people. The European Union blames Hezbollah.

2013: The EU designates Hezbollah’s armed wing a terrorist organization after considerable debate among the bloc’s members.

2018: Israel discovers miles of tunnels into Israel from southern Lebanon that it says belong to Hezbollah.

2019: Economic woes trigger mass protests calling for the political elite, including Hezbollah, to give up power. Prime Minister Saad Hariri resigns.

2020

2020: Hezbollah vows revenge after a U.S. drone strike kills Iranian Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani. Later this year, a top judge begins investigating officials tied to Hezbollah in relation to explosions at a Beirut port that kill hundreds.

2023: Hezbollah launches attacks across the Israel-Lebanon border in a show of support for Palestinians amid the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. Hezbollah and Israel trade attacks at the border well into 2024, raising fears that Lebanon will be dragged into a full-scale war.

Source: CFR research.

HOW DID HEZBOLLAH ORIGINATE?

Hezbollah emerged during Lebanon's civil war, which broke out in 1975 when long-simmering discontent over the large, armed Palestinian presence in the country reached a boiling point. Various Lebanese sectarian communities held different positions on the nature of the Palestinian challenge.

Under a 1943 political agreement, political power is divided among Lebanon's predominant religious groups—a Sunni Muslim serves as prime minister, a Maronite Christian as president, and a Shiite Muslim as the speaker of Parliament. Tensions among these groups evolved into civil war as several factors upset the delicate balance. The Sunni population had grown with the arrival of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, while Shiites felt increasingly marginalized by the ruling Christian minority. Amid the infighting, Israeli forces invaded southern Lebanon in 1978 and again in 1982 to expel Palestinian guerrilla fighters that used the region as their base to attack Israel.

Get to Know Lebanon

A Guide to the War-Torn Democracy

A group of Shiites influenced by the theocratic government in Iran—the region's major Shiite government, which came to power in 1979—took up arms against the Israeli occupation. Seeing an opportunity to expand its influence in Arab states, Iran and its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) provided funds and training to the budding militia, which adopted the name Hezbollah, meaning "The Party of God." It earned a reputation for extremist militancy due to its frequent clashes with rival Shiite militias, such as the Amal Movement, and its attacks on foreign targets, including the 1983 suicide bombing of barracks housing U.S. and French troops in Beirut, in which more than three hundred people died. Hezbollah became a vital asset to Iran, bridging Shiite Arab-Persian divides as Tehran established proxies throughout the Middle East.

Hezbollah bills itself as a Shiite resistance movement, and it enshrined its ideology in a 1985 manifesto that vowed to expel Western powers from Lebanon, called for the destruction of the Israeli state, and pledged

allegiance to Iran's supreme leader. It also advocated an Iran-inspired Islamist regime, but emphasized that the Lebanese people should have the freedom of self-determination.

WHO WAS HEZBOLLAH'S LEADER, HASSAN NASRALLAH?

Hassan Nasrallah helped found Hezbollah in the early 1980s and led the group for more than thirty years, until he was killed by an Israeli air strike in September 2024. Many Middle East experts credit the Beirut-born Shia cleric with molding Hezbollah into the most formidable non-state fighting force in the region, and Iran's most powerful anti-Israel proxy.

"Among Nasrallah's most important achievements was enmeshing Israel in an enervating war that in May 2000 prompted the unilateral withdrawal of Israeli forces from south Lebanon, ending its eighteen-year-long occupation," says CFR Senior Fellow Bruce Hoffman. "Thereafter, Hezbollah effectively supplanted the Lebanese Army as the country's only truly effective military force. Moreover, Nasrallah's commanding authority and popularity among most Lebanese—Sunni, Christian, and Shi'a alike—was cemented.

As leader, Nasrallah oversaw the seven-member Shura Council and its five subcouncils: the political assembly, the jihad assembly (military body), the parliamentary assembly, the executive assembly, and the judicial assembly. "Nasrallah's death is a crushing blow," writes Hoffman, "there are no clear successors to Nasrallah given his unique and unrivaled stature at the top of the movement."

HOW IS HEZBOLLAH LED AND ORGANIZED?

Following Nasrallah's death, his long-serving deputy Naim Qassem took over as Hezbollah's interim leader for several weeks, and then was selected as secretary-general by the Shura Council in late October. The seventy-one-year-old, Beirut-born Qassem has been a part of Hezbollah since its founding. In the days prior to his taking the helm, the Israeli military killed Hashim Safieddine, another prominent Hezbollah leader, and several other members of the militant group in a Beirut air strike. Qassem's whereabouts are unclear, although a recent report indicated he fled Beirut for refuge in Tehran.

Hezbollah's Central and Military Leadership



Sources: Alma Research and Education Center; Eye on Hezbollah; New York Times; Getty Images; Reuters.

COUNCIL ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

“With its leadership effectively decapitated and its communications compromised,” said Hoffman after Nasrallah’s death, “Hezbollah for the time being will have trouble mobilizing to engage in any kind of effective and sustained combat with Israel.”

Hezbollah controls much of Lebanon’s Shiite-majority areas, including parts of Beirut, southern Lebanon, and the eastern Bekaa Valley region. Although Hezbollah is based in Lebanon, its manifesto states that its operations, especially those targeting the United States, are not confined by domestic borders: “The American threat is not local or restricted to a particular region, and as such, confrontation of such a threat must be international as well.” The group has been accused of planning and perpetrating acts of terrorism against Israeli and Jewish targets abroad, and there is evidence of Hezbollah operations in Africa, the Americas, and Asia.

WHAT ROLE HAS IT PLAYED IN LEBANESE POLITICS?

Hezbollah has been a fixture of the Lebanese government since 1992, when eight of its members were elected to Parliament, and the party has held cabinet positions since 2005. The party marked its integration into mainstream politics in 2009 with an updated manifesto that was less Islamist than its predecessor and called for “true democracy.” The most recent national elections, in 2022, saw Hezbollah maintain its 13 seats in Lebanon’s 128-member Parliament, though the party and its allies lost their majority. Lebanon has had a caretaker government with limited powers since October 2022.

Hezbollah essentially operates as a government in the areas under its control, and neither the military nor federal authorities can counter this, Arab Barometer analysts MaryClare Roche and Michael Robbins wrote for Foreign Affairs in July 2024. It manages a vast network of social services that include infrastructure, health-care facilities, schools, and youth programs, all of which have been instrumental in garnering support for Hezbollah from Shiite and non-Shiite Lebanese alike. Even so, Arab Barometer polling in 2024 found that “despite Hezbollah’s significant influence in Lebanon, relatively few Lebanese support it.”

WHAT IS HEZBOLLAH’S MILITARY ROLE AND WEAPONS ARSENAL?

Hezbollah is the dominant military force in Lebanon. Its fighting strength is difficult to assess amid the ongoing conflict with Israel that has devastated the group’s leadership and significantly eroded its rank-and-file. In 2021, Nasrallah said the group had 100,000 fighters, although analysts say this could have been an exaggerated figure. In 2022, the U.S. State Department estimated [PDF] that there were “tens of thousands of supporters and members worldwide.” Other more recent analysts have put the number at roughly 40,000–50,000.

Under the 1989 Taif Agreement, which ended Lebanon’s civil war, Hezbollah was the only militia allowed to keep its arms. Security analyst and ex-Israeli general Assaf Orion says Hezbollah possesses “a larger arsenal of artillery than most nations enjoy,” and a 2018 report from the Center for Strategic and International Studies called it “the world’s most heavily armed non-state actor.” In June 2024, experts speculated that Hezbollah had 150,000–200,000 rockets and missiles of various ranges.

Iran provides most of Hezbollah's training, weapons, and funding, sending the group hundreds of millions of dollars each year, according to the State Department. Hezbollah also receives some support from the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria, as well as financing from legal businesses, international criminal enterprises, and the Lebanese diaspora.

Critics say Hezbollah's existence violates UN Security Council Resolution 1559—adopted in 2004—which called for all Lebanese militias to disband and disarm. The UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), first deployed in 1978 to restore the central government's authority, remains in the country and part of its mandate is to encourage Hezbollah to disarm.

The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), the country's all-volunteer conventional military, numbers about 80,000 troops and draws recruits from Lebanon's various religious communities. But regional analysts say it has limited resources for national defense and focuses primarily on maintaining domestic stability. The United States has viewed the LAF as a stabilizing counterweight to Hezbollah, providing it with some \$3 billion in aid since 2006.

WHAT IS HEZBOLLAH'S CONNECTION TO SYRIA?

Hezbollah finds a loyal ally in Syria, whose army occupied most of Lebanon during Lebanon's civil war. The Syrian government remained as a peacekeeping force in Lebanon until it was driven out in the 2005 Cedar Revolution, a popular protest movement against the foreign occupation. Hezbollah had unsuccessfully pushed for Syrian forces to remain in Lebanon, and has since remained a stalwart ally of the Assad regime. In return for Tehran's and Hezbollah's support, experts say, the Syrian government facilitates the transfer of weapons from Iran to the militia.

Hezbollah's experience fighting in Syria has helped it become a stronger military force.

Hezbollah publicly confirmed its involvement in the Syrian Civil War in 2013, and it sent some seven thousand militants to assist Iranian and Russian forces in supporting the Syrian government against largely Sunni rebel groups. Hezbollah withdrew many of its fighters in 2019, attributing the decision to the Assad regime's military success. Analysts say fighting in Syria helped Hezbollah become a stronger military force, while some Lebanese complain that focusing on the war led the group to neglect its domestic duties. Hezbollah's support from Sunnis in particular has waned over the group's backing of the Assad regime. Hezbollah's involvement in the war also opened it to further attacks by Israel, which regularly launches air strikes against Iran-allied forces in Syria.

WHERE DOES IT STAND ON ISRAEL?

Israel is Hezbollah's main enemy, dating back to Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon in 1978. Hezbollah has been blamed for attacks on Jewish and Israeli targets abroad, including the 1994 car bombings of a Jewish community center in Argentina, which killed eighty-five people, and the bombings of the Israeli Embassy in London. Even after Israel officially withdrew from southern Lebanon in 2000, it continued to clash with Hezbollah, especially in the disputed Shebaa Farms border zone. Periodic conflict

between Hezbollah and Israeli forces escalated into a monthlong war in 2006, during which Hezbollah launched thousands of rockets into Israeli territory.

The group reiterated its commitment to the destruction of the Israeli state in its 2009 manifesto. In December 2018, Israel announced the discovery of miles of tunnels running from Lebanon into northern Israel that it claimed were created by Hezbollah. The following year, Hezbollah attacked an Israeli army base—the first serious cross-border exchange in more than four years. In August 2021, Hezbollah fired more than a dozen rockets in response to Israeli air strikes in Lebanon; it was the first time the group claimed responsibility for rockets fired into Israel since the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war.

HOW HAVE THE UNITED STATES AND OTHER COUNTRIES TREATED THE GROUP?

U.S. policymakers see Hezbollah as a global terrorist threat. The Bill Clinton administration designated Hezbollah a foreign terrorist organization in 1997, and several individual Hezbollah members, including Nasrallah, are labeled “specially designated global terrorists,” which subjects them to U.S. sanctions. In the mid-2010s, the Barack Obama administration provided aid to Lebanon’s military with the hope of diminishing Hezbollah’s credibility as the country’s most capable military force. However, Hezbollah’s and the Lebanese military’s parallel efforts to defend the Syrian border from the Islamic State and al-Qaeda-affiliated militants made Congress hesitant to send further aid [PDF], for fear that Hezbollah could acquire it.

In 2015, the U.S. Congress passed the Hizballah International Financing Prevention Act, which sanctions foreign institutions that use U.S. bank accounts to finance Hezbollah. Lawmakers amended it in 2018 to include additional types of activities. Additionally, the Donald Trump administration sanctioned some of Hezbollah’s members in Parliament as part of its “maximum pressure” campaign against Iran. While Trump’s approach disrupted Iran’s economy, analysts say the country’s increasingly self-sufficient proxies have weathered the worst of the sanctions.

President Joe Biden’s administration has continued sanctioning individuals connected to Hezbollah’s financing network, including Ibrahim Ali Daher, head of the group’s Central Finance Unit. In 2021, the Treasury Department announced sanctions targeting an international finance network accused of laundering tens of millions of dollars through regional financial systems to benefit Hezbollah and Iran.

The European Union (EU) has taken a less aggressive approach to Hezbollah. The bloc designated Hezbollah’s military arm a terrorist group in 2013 over its involvement in a bombing in Bulgaria and its backing of the Assad regime. In 2014, the EU’s multinational police agency, Europol, and the United States created a joint group to counter Hezbollah’s terrorist activities in Europe. In recent years, several European countries have taken a stronger stance. The United Kingdom deemed all of Hezbollah a terrorist group in 2019, followed by the German government in 2020.

Hezbollah has scorned the largely Sunni Gulf Arab countries over their relations with the United States, Israel, and European powers. The Gulf Cooperation Council—comprising the seven Arab states of the Persian Gulf, with the exception of Iraq—considers Hezbollah a terrorist organization. Additionally, Saudi

Arabia and the United States co-lead the Terrorist Financing Targeting Center, created in 2017 to disrupt resource flows to Iran-backed groups such as Hezbollah.

WHAT'S HAPPENED AMID THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR?

Following Hamas's October 2023 assault on Israel, the Iran-backed Palestinian militant group based in the Gaza Strip, Hezbollah began firing rockets, mortars, and drones across the Israel-Lebanon border in a show of what the group's leaders called "solidarity" with its militarily inferior ally. The attacks have forced some 60,000 Israelis to flee their homes in the country's north.

Hezbollah-Israel, and Iran-Israel clashes have only intensified in 2024, fueling concerns of a wider regional war. Israel blamed Hezbollah for a missile strike in the Golan Heights in late July that killed twelve children, an attack that the group denies. Israel responded shortly after by targeting Fuad Shukr, a senior Hezbollah commander in Beirut, in a strike that also reportedly killed three civilians and wounded dozens more.

In September, Israel ramped up air strikes on Hezbollah military infrastructure in Lebanon and is suspected of conducting thousands of coordinated bombing attacks against Hezbollah members, remotely detonating their private electronic devices. An Israeli air strike killed longtime group leader Hassan Nasrallah on September 27. Days after, Israel launched a ground invasion of southern Lebanon, aiming to drive Hezbollah from the border region and allow displaced Israelis to return home. Israel has said it is effectively a military campaign to enforce a UN Security Council resolution from 2006, which called for a withdrawal of all armed personnel, except for the LAF and UNIFIL, from a portion of southern Lebanon. Lebanese authorities in late October said Israel's heavy bombardments, some of which have leveled entire buildings in Beirut, had killed more than 2,500 people and displaced more than one million since it stepped up its campaign against Hezbollah in late September.

Kali Robinson and Jonathan Masters contributed to this Backgrounder.

Recommended Resources

CFR's Center for Preventive Action tracks the instability in Lebanon.

CFR Senior Fellow Ray Takeyh unpacks Hezbollah's view of the war in the Gaza Strip.

For Foreign Affairs, Arab Barometer's MaryClare Roche and Michael Robbins explain what Lebanon really thinks of Hezbollah.

CFR's Christina Bouri takes a closer look at the history of tensions between Hezbollah and Israel.

This Backgrounder by CFR's Kali Robinson discusses the role of Hezbollah's Palestinian partner Hamas.

This Backgrounder looks at Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

HEZBOLLAH READY TO LAY DOWN WEAPONS IF ISRAEL WITHDRAWS FROM LEBANON, OFFICIAL SAYS

"Hezbollah is ready to discuss the matter of its arms if Israel withdraws from the five points and halts its aggression against Lebanese," the senior official said.

[JERUSALEM POST](#) by REUTERS April 15, 2025



Hezbollah flags flutter as protesters, mainly Houthi supporters, rally to show support to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon's Hezbollah, in Sanaa, Yemen September 27, 2024.

(photo credit: REUTERS/KHALED ABDULLAH)

As calls for Lebanon's [Hezbollah](#) to disarm gain momentum, a senior Hezbollah official told Reuters the group is ready to hold talks with the Lebanese president about its weapons if Israel withdraws from South Lebanon and stops its strikes.

The prospect of talks aimed at securing Hezbollah's disarmament - unimaginable when it was at the zenith of its power just two years ago - underlines dramatic shifts in the Middle East power balance since Israel pummelled the Iran-backed group in a devastating conflict triggered by the Gaza war.

US-backed President Joseph Aoun, who vowed when he took office in January to establish a state monopoly on the control of arms, intends to open talks with Hezbollah over its arsenal soon, three Lebanese political sources said.

Hezbollah emerged severely weakened from the 2024 conflict with Israel when its top leaders and thousands of its fighters were killed, and much of its rocket arsenal was destroyed. The blow was compounded when its ally Bashar al-Assad was toppled from power in Syria, cutting its supply lines from [Iran](#).



Lebanese President Joseph Aoun attends a joint press conference with French President Emmanuel Macron, at the Elysee Palace in Paris, France, March 28, 2025.

(credit: REUTERS/Sarah Meyssonier/Pool)

The senior Hezbollah official said the group was ready to discuss its arms in the context of a national defense strategy, but this hinged on Israel pulling out its troops from five hilltops in south Lebanon.

HEZBOLLAH EXPRESSES ITS READINESS

"Hezbollah is ready to discuss the matter of its arms if Israel withdraws from the five points and halts its aggression against Lebanese," the senior official told Reuters.

Hezbollah's position on potential discussions about its arms has not been previously reported. The sources spoke on the condition of anonymity due to political sensitivities.

Hezbollah did not respond to a Reuters request for comment. After this story was published, Hezbollah's media office issued a statement saying that allegations published in "some media outlets" and attributed to Hezbollah officials "are completely false." The statement did not mention Reuters or specify which allegations were false.

The presidency declined to comment.

Israel, which sent ground troops into south Lebanon during the war, has largely withdrawn but decided in February not to leave the five hilltop positions. It said it intended eventually to hand them over to Lebanese troops once it was sure the security situation allowed.

RENEWED FOCUS ON HEZBOLLAH'S ARMS

Despite a ceasefire since November, Israeli airstrikes have kept pressure on the group while Washington has demanded Hezbollah to disarm and is preparing for nuclear talks with Hezbollah's Iranian backers.

Hezbollah has been the most powerful of the paramilitary groups that Iran has backed across the region.

Reuters reported on Monday that several Iranian-backed militia groups in Iraq are prepared to disarm for the first time to avert the threat of an escalating conflict with the Trump administration in the US.

Hezbollah has long rejected calls from its critics in Lebanon to disarm, describing its weapons as vital to defending the country from Israel. Deep differences over its arsenal spilled into a short civil war in 2008.

The group's critics say the group has unilaterally dragged Lebanon into conflicts, and the presence of its large arsenal outside of government control has undermined the state.

A US-brokered ceasefire with Israel requires the Lebanese army to dismantle all unauthorised military facilities and confiscate all arms, starting in areas south of the Litani River, which flows into the Mediterranean some 20 km (12 miles) north of the Israeli border.

Two sources familiar with Hezbollah's thinking said it is weighing handing to the army its most potent weapons north of the Litani, including drones and anti-tank missiles.

CALL FOR A DISARMAMENT TIMETABLE

Aoun has said Hezbollah's weaponry must be addressed through dialogue because any attempts to disarm the group by force would prompt conflict, the sources said.

Patriarch Bechara Boutros Al-Rai, the head of Lebanon's Maronite church, said last week it was time for all weapons to be in state hands, but this would need time and diplomacy because "Lebanon cannot bear a new war".

Communication channels with relevant stakeholders are being opened to "begin studying the transfer of weapons" to state control, after the army and security services had extended state authority across Lebanon, a Lebanese official said, saying this was a move to implement Aoun's policy.

The issue was also being discussed with Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, an important Hezbollah ally, who plays a key role in narrowing differences, she said.

US envoy Morgan Ortagus, who visited Beirut at the weekend, repeated Washington's position that Hezbollah and other armed groups should be disarmed as soon as possible, and the Lebanese army was expected to do the job.

"It's clear that Hezbollah has to be disarmed, and it's clear that Israel is not going to accept terrorists shooting at them, into their country, and that's a position we understand," Ortagus said in an April 6 interview with Lebanon's LBCI television.

Several Lebanese government ministers want a disarmament timetable, said Kamal Shehadi, a minister affiliated with the anti-Hezbollah Lebanese Forces party. Shehadi told Reuters disarmament should take no more than six months, citing post-civil war militia disarmament as a precedent.

A timetable - which presumably would impose deadlines on the process - is, he said, the "only way to protect our fellow citizens from the recurring attacks that are costing lives, costing the economy and causing destruction".

He said he and other ministers hoped the full cabinet would endorse the idea and task the minister of defense with preparing the timetable. "We're going to keep asking for it," he said.

The most recent conflict began when Hezbollah opened fire in support of Hamas at the start of the Gaza War after the [October 7 Hamas attacks](#) in 2023.

Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem, in a March 29 speech, said his group no longer has an armed presence south of the Litani and had stuck to the ceasefire deal while Israel breached it "every day". Israel has accused Hezbollah of maintaining military infrastructure in the south.

Hezbollah has put the onus on the Lebanese state to get Israel to withdraw and stop its attacks. Qassem said there was still time for diplomatic solutions. But he warned that the "resistance is present and ready" and indicated it could resort "to other options" if Israel doesn't adhere to the deal.



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LEBANON SEIZES \$2.5 MILLION BOUND FOR HEZBOLLAH, LOCAL OFFICIALS SAY

Sources say it is the first time such a seizure is made, as cash caught on man arriving from Turkey; Beirut has also halted all flights from Iran over alleged Israeli warnings

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Reuters](#), [Tol Staff](#) and [Emanuel Fabian](#) 28 February 2025

Lebanon seized \$2.5 million in cash from a man arriving from Turkey on Friday, the finance ministry said, with three sources saying the money was destined for the Hezbollah terror group.

One of the sources said it was the first time such a seizure had been made. There was no immediate comment from Hezbollah.

"The detainee and the seized funds will be handed over to the investigation division at the General Directorate of General Security," Lebanon's finance ministry said in a statement, without making a reference to Hezbollah.

The terms of a ceasefire agreed by Israel and Hezbollah in November require the Lebanese army to deploy into south Lebanon as Israeli troops and Hezbollah withdraw forces.

Iran-backed Hezbollah was the most powerful force in Lebanese politics but its influence and resources took a hit during its year-long conflict with Israel.

Its weakened stature has been reflected in Lebanon's post-war politics, with the group unable to impose its will in the formation of a new government and language legitimizing its arsenal omitted from the new cabinet's policy statement.

Last month, Israel's UN ambassador accused Hezbollah of trying "to regain strength and rearm with the assistance of Iran." A senior Lebanese source close to Hezbollah denied the allegations.

Lebanon halted flights from Iran this month indefinitely after the Israeli military accused Tehran of using civilian aircraft to smuggle cash to Beirut to arm Hezbollah.

The move prompted protests from supporters of Hezbollah. A United Nations convoy was attacked, leaving a vehicle torched and two peacekeepers wounded.

Lebanese security forces said the ban came after the United States, which helped broker a November 27 ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah, warned that the IDF might shoot the planes down.

Hezbollah chief Naim Qassem charged that the government's decision to halt flights from Iran was "implementing an Israeli order."

Iran said in turn that it would not allow Lebanese flights to land until its flights were cleared to land in Beirut. The November 27 agreement between Israel and Hezbollah ended two months of full-scale war that followed months of lower-intensity cross-border exchanges, which the Iran-backed terror group began, unprovoked, one day after Hamas's October 7, 2023, attack on Israel triggered the war in Gaza. Hezbollah said its attacks were in support of Hamas in Gaza.

By the time the ceasefire came into effect, Israel had eliminated most of Hezbollah's senior leadership. It also targeted the Al-Qard Al-Hassan financial institution, which has over 30 outlets across Lebanon, which both Jerusalem and Washington say was being used by Hezbollah for money laundering and terrorism financing, assertions the group denies.

On Thursday an IDF drone strike in northern Lebanon's Hermel District killed a Hezbollah operative involved in procuring weapons for the terror group amid the ongoing ceasefire, the military said.

According to the IDF, Mohammed Mahdi Ali Shaheen was "coordinating terrorist transactions for the purchase of weapons on the Syria-Lebanon border, since the understandings between Israel and Lebanon came into effect."

Shaheen was described by the IDF as a prominent member of Hezbollah's regional division in the Beqaa Valley area, involved in smuggling weapons from Syria to Lebanon. As part of his role, Shaheen was responsible for making procurement deals with smugglers and suppliers, mediating the arrival of shipments, and distributing them to various Hezbollah units, the military said.

The IDF said his actions "posed a threat to Israel and its citizens, and constituted a blatant violation of the understandings between Israel and Lebanon."

On Wednesday, a separate IDF drone strike in northeastern Lebanon killed Mahran Ali Nasser al-Din, a prominent member of Hezbollah's Unit 4400, which is responsible for smuggling weapons into Lebanon.

LEBANON: HOW ISRAEL, HEZBOLLAH, AND REGIONAL POWERS ARE SHAPING ITS FUTURE

An array of domestic and foreign powers are vying for influence in Lebanon, including the Lebanese Armed Forces, Hezbollah, Israel, Iran, Syria, and the United States.

COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS [Jonathan Masters](#) *January 27, 2025*

SUMMARY

- Lebanon is one of the Middle East's rare democracies, but it has long suffered dysfunction at the hands of corrupt sectarian elites and meddling foreign powers.
- Israel's 2024 assault significantly eroded Hezbollah's military power in southern Lebanon, but the Iran-backed group could remain a major political force in the country.
- The United States continues to provide extensive financial and military support to the Lebanese Armed Forces, which it sees as a critical counterweight to Hezbollah.

INTRODUCTION

Lebanon, one of the most troubled countries in the Middle East, is once again at a critical crossroads. Several recent developments—a new leadership, a cessation of the Israel-Hezbollah conflict, and a weakening of Iran's power in the region—could help it emerge from one of its darkest periods, experts say. But many obstacles remain on its road out of crisis, including a still fragile political and security environment, and an economy in a state of collapse.

As postwar Lebanon looks to stabilize and rebuild, several institutions and groups are playing or could play influential roles, including the Lebanese government, Hezbollah, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), and several foreign powers.

LEBANON AT A GLANCE

Despite or—as some analysts have suggested—because of its fragility, Lebanon is seen as one of the most politically and socially liberal states in the Middle East. Freedom House, the human rights watchdog, rates the country as “partly free” in a [predominantly “not free” region](#).

Beirut, by far the country's largest city, has historically been a regional trade and financial center and was once considered the “capital of Arab modernity” for its rich cultural and political milieu. “For decades, Lebanon had lured not just revolutionaries but also poets, ideologues, artists and all types of opposition figures and plotters. A weak state was both a blessing and a curse,” [writes Lebanese journalist Kim Ghattas](#) about the country during the 1970s and 80s.

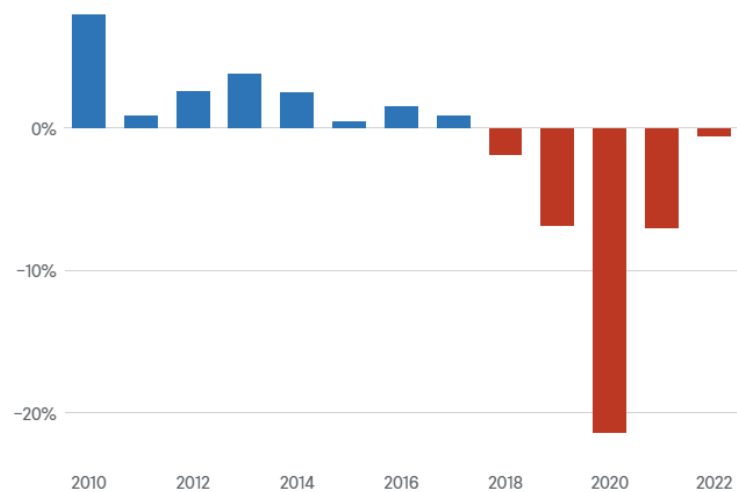
Lebanon's unique “confessional” democracy has ensured its government has a measure of pluralism, but regional experts say its power-sharing system has choked under the influence of corrupt sectarian elites, powerful militias—chiefly Hezbollah—and intervening foreign powers. “Positions continue to be doled out based on religious affiliation, as are state resources, which are in turn cycled through networks of other officials, bureaucrats, and supportive business interests at the expense of the greater good,” [wrote CFR Senior Fellow Steven A. Cook](#) of Lebanon in 2020.

The small Mediterranean country is no stranger to volatility and hardship, having endured a long and bloody civil war (1975–1990), extended periods of foreign occupation, and the humanitarian burden that comes with more than 1.5 million refugees. But analysts say that Lebanon has experienced a period of historic adversity over the last five years as a series of crises have compounded the suffering, including a sovereign default, the [Beirut port explosion of 2020](#), the COVID-19 pandemic, and the war between Israel and Hezbollah.

In one of the most telling metrics, Lebanon's [economy has contracted](#) by some 34 percent since 2019, according to the World Bank. The country “has been assailed by the most devastating, multi-pronged crisis in its modern history,” [said the bank](#) in 2022, before the added devastation brought on by the Israel-Hezbollah conflict.

Lebanon's Economy Has Fallen Sharply in Recent Years

Change in gross domestic product (GDP)



Source: World Bank.

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RELATIONS

WHAT IS LEBANON'S GOVERNMENT?

Gaining its independence from France during World War II, Lebanon formed a democracy that put religious affiliation at the center of the distribution and dynamics of political power. Per the country's decades-old power-sharing agreement, the three major religious groups are guaranteed a specific leadership role in each government: the president is always a Maronite Christian; the prime minister is a Sunni Muslim; and the speaker of parliament is a Shia Muslim. The president is elected by parliament and appoints the prime minister in consultation with parliament. The pair then form a cabinet, the government's chief executive body.

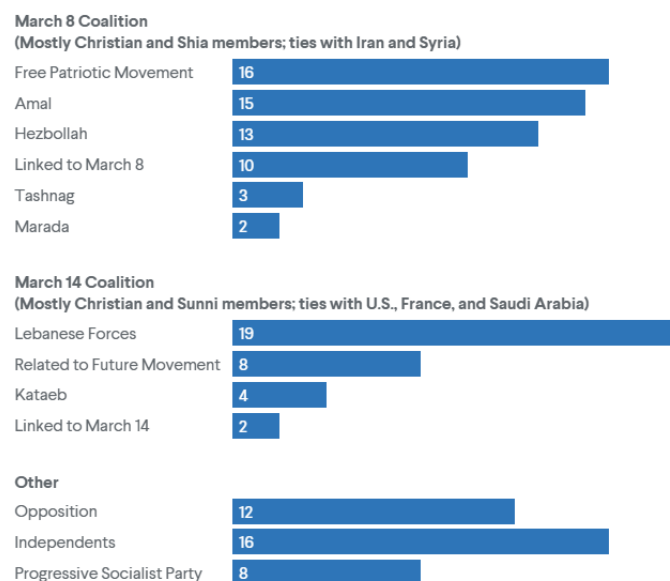
Lebanon was politically paralyzed for more than two years beginning in 2022, when its last parliamentary elections failed to produce a majority coalition with a mandate to govern. However, the long political stalemate ended in early 2025 when a majority in parliament elected veteran army commander **Joseph Aoun** as president, and **Nawaf Salam**, a prominent lawyer and diplomat, as prime minister. Regional analysts say the breakthrough highlighted how Hezbollah's influence has waned following its devastating,

fourteen-month war with Israel. Hezbollah long opposed Aoun but [reportedly acceded to his candidacy](#) to unlock much-needed international aid for Lebanon's reconstruction.

For the past twenty years, two major political groups have jockeyed for power in Lebanon: the **March 8 Coalition** and the **March 14 Coalition**, both of which have traditionally had a mix of Christian and Muslim members. A major political divergence between the groups has been foreign relations. The March 8 coalition, which has Christian and Shia members, including from Hezbollah, favors ties with Syria and Iran; while the March 14 coalition, which has typically had Christians and more Sunnis, is generally for closer ties with the United States, France, and Saudi Arabia.

Lebanon's Fractured Parliament

Seats awarded in 2022 election (sixty-five seats are needed for a majority)



Source: L'Orient Today via Congressional Research Service.

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WHAT IS HEZBOLLAH?

The Iran-backed Shia Islamist group was until recently considered to be the most [powerful paramilitary force](#) in the Middle East, with tens of thousands of foot soldiers and a deep arsenal of rockets and missiles. Founded following Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, the group is driven by its violent opposition to the Jewish state and its resistance to Western influence in the region. Many countries, including Israel and the United States, consider Hezbollah a terrorist organization.

In addition to its paramilitary operations, Hezbollah has also overseen a broad network of social services in Lebanon, including health-care facilities and schools, which accounted for some of its domestic public appeal. Since 2005, Hezbollah has been a part of the March 8 coalition, with its ministers in recent years overseeing cabinet portfolios such as culture, sports and youth, and parliamentary affairs. The group has also disrupted, at times violently, Lebanon's government—most notably, three Hezbollah members were [convicted by a UN tribunal](#) for their involvement in the car bombing assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005.

Hezbollah's political and military power has, however, greatly diminished over the last year. Israel decimated its leadership and rank-and-file in their recent conflict; its major regional allies were toppled by rebels in the case of the [Bashar al-Assad regime](#) in Syria and [militarily degraded by Israel](#) in the case of Iran.

The Israel-Hezbollah conflict came to a close in late 2024, after Israel conducted heavy air strikes and a ground assault against Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon. Hassan Nasrallah, the group's longtime leader, was killed in an Israeli strike in September. A [sixty-day cease-fire](#) agreement reached in late November between Israel and the government of Lebanon calls for Hezbollah forces to permanently withdraw from the southern territory they have long occupied. Prior to the agreement, Israel said its aim was to push Hezbollah from Lebanon's border region to prevent the group from launching air assaults on northern Israel. Both Israel and Hezbollah have claimed the other has violated the cease-fire. On the agreement's expiration in late January 2025, the United States [unilaterally announced](#) it would be extended to February 18.

WHAT IS THE LEBANESE ARMED FORCES?

The Lebanese Armed Forces is the country's all-volunteer national military service and largest employer. Security analysts have said that Lebanon's highly fragmented society and political establishment have kept the LAF from accruing much power, and noted that it remained a relatively weak force, particularly compared to Hezbollah, prior to Israel's 2024 assault on the latter.

The LAF has long had limited resources for traditional defense operations and focuses primarily on providing domestic security, although critics, including Israel, say it failed (along with UNIFIL) to remove Hezbollah from southern Lebanon since the UN Security Council established a demilitarized zone there in 2006 following Israel's last major clash with the group.

The LAF is composed of about eighty thousand personnel and draws recruits from Lebanon's various religious communities, including Shia Muslim, Sunni Muslim, and Christian. The army is by far the largest component with about 55,000 troops, followed by an internal security force of about 20,000. Nominal air and naval forces have less than two thousand members each.

Despite its deficiencies, the LAF remains Lebanon's most trusted public institution (about 90 percent have confidence in the military), according to [recent polls](#). The United States views the multiconfessional LAF as a potentially stabilizing counterweight to Hezbollah, and has provided it with some \$3 billion in aid since 2006. Washington and its European allies pledged [more funding to the LAF](#) in recent weeks, hoping its forces would secure Lebanon's southern border region in line with its commitments under the cease-fire.

The cease-fire calls for the LAF to deploy ten thousand soldiers across the stretch of Lebanon south of the Litani River, as Israel and Hezbollah withdraw over the next two months. The LAF is to dismantle all of Hezbollah's military infrastructure in this region and remain the only security force there, allowing displaced civilians to return to their homes on both sides of the so-called Blue Line, the de facto border with Israel.

WHAT IS THE UNITED NATIONS INTERIM FORCE IN LEBANON?

UNIFIL is a multinational peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon that, today, is made up of some ten thousand people from [fifty countries](#). The UN Security Council initially created UNIFIL in 1978 to oversee the withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon following their weeklong ground assault against the

Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which was based there at the time. Israel invaded Lebanon in response to the PLO's killing of dozens of Israeli civilians in the so-called Coastal Road massacre.

Southern Lebanon

Southern Lebanon



*In March 2019, the United States recognized Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights, but as of December 2024 it is the only country to do so.

Source: United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

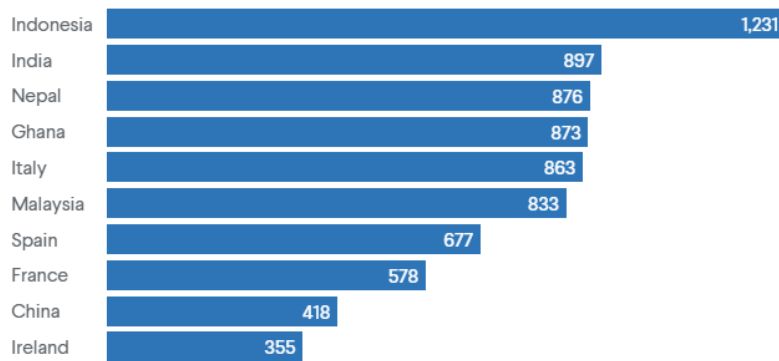
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Israel launched a larger invasion against the PLO in southern Lebanon again in 1982 and kept its forces there until 2000. Since Israel's withdrawal, UNIFIL peacekeepers have been tasked with patrolling the Blue Line border region separating Israel and Lebanon. Following a monthlong war between Israel and Hezbollah in 2006, the Security Council expanded UNIFIL's mandate with Resolution (UNSCR) 1701, which called on it to help the LAF secure a demilitarized zone in southern Lebanon between the Blue Line and the Litani River. (This is the same land at the heart of the recent cease-fire agreement.)

As noted, some critics faulted UNIFIL (and the LAF) for failing to [fulfill its mandate](#) and allowing Hezbollah to remain in the border region. Some security analysts [countered](#) that UNIFIL's mandate is "obscure and unachievable," noting that the peacekeepers have had restrictions on their ability to enforce it. Blue-helmeted UN peacekeepers can only use force in self-defense and in defense of their legal mandate. UNIFIL's mission has [included demining](#): it has reportedly destroyed more than fifty thousand explosives since 2006.

Which Countries Are Contributing to UNIFIL?

Top ten contributors of troops and police to UNIFIL as of August 2024



Source: UN Peacekeeping.

COUNCIL
FOREIGN
RELATIONS

Hezbollah remained in southern Lebanon and expanded its military infrastructure there despite UNSCR 1701; Israel said its 2024 invasion aimed in part to finally push Hezbollah from this stretch of land. Israel notified UNIFIL of its intent to cross the Blue Line in September and requested UNIFIL withdraw its forces from the region for their own safety. UNIFIL refused, and in the weeks following, reported that Israeli forces damaged some of its installations and injured its personnel. Israel said it only targeted Hezbollah, but that the group has used UNIFIL forces and infrastructure as a shield. More UN [peacekeepers](#)—338—have lost their lives in Lebanon than in any other ongoing UN mission.

As of the implementation of the Israel-Lebanon cease-fire in November 2024, UNIFIL had its forces spread across fifty locations in the roughly one thousand square kilometer area. The agreement effectively calls on the parties to implement UNSCR 1701, and says “UNIFIL’s work pursuant to its mandate will continue.”

UNIFIL is to host and coordinate with a cease-fire monitoring group composed of Israel, Lebanon, France, and the United States, with the United States as chair.

WHAT FOREIGN COUNTRIES ARE INVOLVED IN LEBANON?

Lebanon has been shaped by other and often competing world powers for millennia, and several continue to have influential roles today, most notably Iran, Syria, Israel, Saudi Arabia, France, and the United States. *Iran.* Iran’s primary influence on Lebanon has come through its enduring support for Hezbollah, which since the 1980s has pushed pro-Iran policies in the Lebanese government and Shia communities, and has violently opposed Israel on behalf of Iran. Prior to the 1979 revolution that swept Ayatollah Khomeini to power in Iran, refugee camps in southern Lebanon were a hub for Iranian dissidents, Islamists, and others opposed to the Western-backed Pahlavi regime. Khomeini started sending [Iran’s revolutionary guards](#) and money into Lebanon’s Beqaa Valley in the early 1980s to spread the Islamic revolution and recruit Shia youth to its cause. The result was the emergence of Hezbollah, a group committed to Khomeini and the destruction of Israel.

Iran’s influence in Lebanon has declined markedly in recent months following the aforementioned erosion of Hezbollah’s power there, as well as the collapse of its erstwhile ally in the Assad regime in Syria. Experts say it’s unclear if Iran can rebuild its clout in Lebanon given [these setbacks](#), and that doing so would require a long time.

Syria. Syria has also played a central, complex, and meddlesome role in Lebanon's history, and it continues to have deep ties with its smaller neighbor. As with Lebanon, Syria was part of the Ottoman Empire, came under control of the French in the 1920s, and gained its independence in the 1940s. However, Syrian leaders have long viewed Lebanon as a lost territory and fertile ground for sowing its influence. Led by Hafez al-Assad, Bashar's father, Syria intervened in Lebanon's civil war in the mid-1970s and became the dominant force there for decades, particularly after the 1989 Taif Agreement brought that conflict to an end. Syrian forces, which remained until 2005, allowed Damascus to establish a large intelligence regime and corrupt political patronage networks in Beirut. Meanwhile, Syria helped its ally Iran move weapons to Hezbollah, a mutual proxy in their bitter rivalry with Israel.

Syria's influence diminished considerably following its precipitous military withdrawal in 2005, which followed mass protests amid allegations it was behind the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri. Hezbollah later played a major role in supporting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime after the outbreak of the [country's civil war](#) in 2011. During that conflict, Syria flooded Lebanon with some 800,000 refugees. The sudden ouster of the Assad regime by Sunni Islamist rebels in late 2024 threw into question the role that Syria, which remains deeply fractured, will play in Lebanon's future.

Israel. Israel has had perennially fraught relations with neighboring Lebanon. Lebanon joined several Arab states that attacked Israel unsuccessfully shortly after the latter's founding in 1948, a war that displaced some 700,000 Arab Palestinians, about 100,000 of which sought refuge in southern Lebanon. Particularly after the June 1967 war, refugee camps in southern Lebanon became a hotbed for anti-Israel Palestinian militants and other armed insurgent groups from around the world.

Over the decades, Israel has undertaken several and varied military operations against hostile groups based there, including the PLO and Hezbollah. Israel supported the Kataeb (Phalanges), a right-wing Christian political party and paramilitary group that came to power during Lebanon's civil war. Israeli forces invaded and occupied Lebanon from 1982 to 2000. They waged a monthlong campaign against Hezbollah in 2006, and battled the group once again in 2024. Israeli forces have remained in parts of southern Lebanon during the current cease-fire, although they have agreed to withdraw in the weeks ahead as part of the agreement, assuming Hezbollah does as well.

Saudi Arabia. In Lebanon, the Saudis have primarily focused on economic development and countering the influence of Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah, particularly since the 2005 assassination of Hariri. The twice-serving, billionaire prime minister, who played a central role in brokering the Taif Agreement and rebuilding war-torn Lebanon, had extremely close business and personal ties to the Saudi royal family. Some regional experts say his killing was in effect a declaration of war by Iran (and Hezbollah) on Saudi Arabia.

Prior to that, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states had invested billions of dollars to help Lebanon develop its economy and financial sector. Following his death, Riyadh supported the anti-Iran March 14 coalition in parliament, led by Saad Hariri, Rafik's son, who then also twice served as prime minister. The Saudis have [thrown their support](#) behind Lebanon's new leaders—Aoun and Salam, hoping to reengage with and provide aid to the new government. Riyadh is also working closely with the new leadership in Damascus.

France. France has a much more limited influence on what happens in Lebanon today but could perhaps claim the most indelible historical role in that, as one of the major European powers of the early twentieth

century, it created and administered what is modern-day Lebanon under a League of Nations mandate following World War I. It also ruled over neighboring Syria. In doing so, the French forcefully integrated what had long been distinct Christian and Muslim regions of Lebanon, laying some of the groundwork for the country's sectarian-driven politics. Historically, France had close ties to Lebanon's Maronite Christians, and French remains a widely spoken language in the country behind Arabic and English.

French President Emmanuel Macron has sought to maintain France's diplomatic engagement with Lebanon, pushing for international aid following the Beirut port disaster and during the recent Hezbollah-Israel conflict. France cosponsored the current cease-fire along with the United States, and is part of the agreement's multilateral monitoring group. France [also supports](#) Lebanon's newly elected leaders.

United States. The United States is the primary foreign backer of the LAF, which it views as a critical guarantor of Lebanon's sovereignty and the most viable counterweight to Hezbollah and other Islamist militant groups operating in or around the country, such as the self-declared Islamic State known as ISIS, and al-Qaeda. Washington has provided the LAF with some \$3 billion in military aid over the last two decades, including training and equipment, and given aid groups in Lebanon another roughly \$3 billion in assistance for refugees.

The Ronald Reagan administration attempted to play a direct peacekeeping role in Lebanon in the early 1980s, deploying hundreds of U.S. troops to support the LAF in the country's civil war. However, Reagan withdrew all U.S. forces following a series of deadly Hezbollah attacks on U.S. facilities, including the embassy and military barracks in Beirut. More than 250 Americans were killed, the largest toll on the U.S. military since Vietnam.

The United States continues to support the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions calling for militias in Lebanon including Hezbollah to disarm and disband, and for the LAF to secure all of Lebanon's territory, particularly in southern Lebanon pursuant to the cease-fire it brokered in late 2024. Washington also serves as chair of the agreement's monitoring group, saying [it is committed](#) to building international support for the LAF and for Lebanon's economic reconstruction and recovery. The United States also supports Lebanon's new leaders, and [reportedly worked closely](#) with the Saudis and others to end the long political stalemate.

Will Merrow created the graphics for this article.

OTTHER COUNTRIES – 2 - SYRIA

ISRAEL DEMANDS COMPLETE DEMILITARISATION OF SOUTHERN SYRIA

BBC NEWS Sebastian Usher 24 February 2025

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has demanded the complete demilitarisation of much of southern Syria.

It is an announcement that could make conflict between Israel and the new leadership in Syria, after the toppling of President Bashar al-Assad, more likely.

In a speech to Israeli military cadets on Sunday, Netanyahu said that Israel would not allow the forces of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) - the Islamist group that led the overthrow of Assad - nor the new Syrian army that is being formed to "enter the area south of Damascus".

"We demand the complete demilitarisation of southern Syria in the provinces of Quneitra, Deraa and Suweida from the forces of the new regime," he added. "Likewise, we will not tolerate any threat to the Druze community in southern Syria."

He also said that Israeli forces would remain indefinitely inside the Syrian territory that they have seized since Assad's fall last December - which would be a shift in Israeli strategy.

Until now, Israel had described its move into a UN-monitored demilitarised buffer zone in the Golan Heights as a temporary measure to ensure the security of Israelis on the other side.

The rationale appeared to be to prevent extremist groups from moving down to the Golan in the power vacuum.

But with his latest comments, Netanyahu has made it clear that he believes that the new authorities in Syria - with their background in jihadism - could represent a similar danger.

Israel seized most of the Golan from Syria during the 1967 Middle East war and later annexed. The move was not recognised internationally, although the US did so in 2019.



Image source, Getty Images

Image caption,

Syrian protested against Netanyahu's demand on Monday in Quneitra province

Syria's new interim President, HTS leader Ahmed al-Sharaa, has tried to reassure Israel that he does not want conflict and that he is ready to uphold the long-standing disengagement agreement between the two countries concluded after another war in 1973.

He has also stressed that he will not allow Syria to be used as a base for attacks against Israel.

But Sharaa has also called on Israel to withdraw from the buffer zone it has taken, as he tries to assert sovereignty across the whole of Syria's fractured landscape.

Clearly, Netanyahu does not trust these assurances.

Like much of the international community, the Israeli prime minister is waiting to see if Sharaa makes good on his moderate, emollient stance in action as well as words.

From the perspective of the new Syrian leadership, freeing the country from the influence of all the foreign powers that jockeyed for position during the long years of civil war is seen as vital to ensuring a more positive future for the country and a definitive break with the past.

Some foreign players, such as Iran and Russia, have seen for now at least the curtailment of the overweening influence they once had.

Under President Donald Trump, the US might also further disengage from Syria - a role which has helped underpin Kurdish-led forces in the north-east of the country.

There has, though, been growing influence from Turkey - which provided essential support for HTS in its lightning campaign against Assad.

How big a part it chooses to play could be a determining factor in how Syria develops in the post-Assad era.

But Israel may present a more immediate challenge to the independence of Syria's new leadership.

To have Israeli troops increasingly infringing on the country's territory - as well as carrying out numerous strikes on targets associated with what's left of Assad's military arsenal - does not fit with the vision of a re-unified, sovereign state that Sharaa is trying to convince Syrians both inside and outside the country that his leadership can provide.

Netanyahu's move to forbid Syrian forces from operating freely within the country's borders may be a step too far for the new order in Damascus to stomach, however non-confrontational an image it is trying to maintain.

IN SOUTHERN SYRIA, A VIOLENT NEW ISRAELI OCCUPATION EMERGES

Israeli forces have advanced miles into Syrian territory — confiscating land and homes, killing farmers, and seeking to divide the region's diverse population.

+972 MAGAZINE [Tareq al-Salameh](#) April 10, 2025



An Israeli Merkava tank parked between Medinat al-Salam and Khan Arnabeh in Quneitra province, Syria, Jan. 5, 2025. (Tareq al-Salameh)

As it resumes military operations in the Gaza Strip, Israel has expanded its ground incursions across southern Syria in recent weeks, while also launching airstrikes throughout the country — from Latakia and Homs to rural Damascus. In a major attack on March 25, Israeli forces shelled [Koya](#), a small village in the Yarmouk Valley in Deraa Governorate, leaving at least six dead.

“[Israeli troops] started shooting at the farmers as soon as they saw them,” Nadia Aboud, a 28-year-old journalist from the nearby city of Deraa, told +972, recounting testimonies from village residents. “The farmers, who keep weapons to protect their land, fired back.” The situation quickly spiraled into a larger clash, with the Israeli military launching at least one airstrike on the village. “Two of [the farmers] were killed on the spot. When others rushed to help, the fighting intensified.”

Though Aboud stressed that “the people of Deraa want peace and for the [1974 Syrian-Israeli disengagement agreement] to be upheld,” she warned that resistance would persist. “If Koya is attacked again, they’ll defend it to the last man.”

The attack on Koya was among the deadliest since Israel invaded Syria some four months ago. On Dec. 8, just hours after the collapse of former Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad’s regime, Israeli forces moved swiftly to seize abandoned mountaintop checkpoints, occupying territory [in violation](#) of the 1974 agreement.

Since then, Israeli warplanes have conducted near-daily flights and struck Assad's former military sites — [600 attacks](#) in the first eight days of military operations. Meanwhile, ground troops have advanced 12 miles into Syrian territory, building at least nine military bases and [expanding road networks and other communications infrastructure](#).

The Israeli high command justifies its bombardments as necessary to prevent the weapons stockpiles from falling into the hands of Damascus' new government, led by interim president Ahmed al-Sharaa. Yet al-Sharaa has [shown no signs](#) of seeking conflict with Israel, focusing his attention on rebuilding Syria and lobbying to lift international sanctions, while Iran's influence in Syria has been systematically weakened by Assad's departure. And on the ground, often in the vicinity of former military outposts, a scattering of villages remains — home to thousands of Syrians who bear the brunt of Israel's new, violent military occupation.



Farmers from Al-Rafeed, Syria, on the outskirts of the village, Feb. 20, 2025. (Tareq al-Salameh)

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

In Rasm al-Rawadi, a small village near Quneitra in the demilitarized Syrian-Israeli buffer zone, residents awoke on Dec. 8 to the sound of gunfire and aerial bombardment. “At 11 a.m., [Israeli] soldiers broke down the doors of the houses to check everything inside,” Ali al-Ahmad, a 65-year-old village elder, recounted. “While the Israeli army searched the houses and destroyed some of them, many families were placed in a school.” For the past four months, the village has remained under Israeli control and almost 350 people have been forced out of their homes — taken over, according to al-Ahmad, for military use.

Although Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu initially framed the Israeli incursion into southern Syria as [“temporary,”](#) Israel's deepening military presence suggests otherwise. More recently, Defense Minister Israel Katz affirmed that Israel is prepared to stay in the country [indefinitely](#).

Mohammed Fayyad, a lawyer and human rights activist, was [beaten and detained](#) by Israeli forces in January while covering their operations in the village of Hamidiye. In addition to these violent encounters, he told +972 in his office in Quneitra that Israeli military officials have been “entering villages in white

civilian vehicles to collect data, carrying out statistical questionnaires under the pretext of offering humanitarian aid.” In addition, he claimed that they have been offering to pay locals “at least \$75 per day to build the bases’ infrastructure.

“After taking everything from us, they offer us food, medicine, electricity, and work,” Fayyad explained. “They aim to provoke division and separation from the new administration.” But so far, he noted, residents have been rejecting these offers and “refuse any interference regarding the division of Syria.”

On Feb. 24, families in Quneitra and Deraa experienced a night of Israeli shelling after a month of relative calm. The next day, they woke up to tanks and armed pickup trucks rolling into their villages. The assault came just after Syria’s first [National Dialogue Conference](#), where political and religious leaders from all communities had gathered to discuss the country’s future.



Youth from Al-Rafeed village look towards Mount Peres, where an Israeli soldier is stationed, Feb. 20, 2025. (Tareq al-Salameh)

“We have just finished a war, but we have no problem starting another one with Israel to defend our country,” 47-year-old Omar Hanoun told +972 in his home in the village of Al-Rafeed, near Quneitra. Hanoun was one of the organizers of a [civilian protest](#) on Feb. 25 against Israel’s military incursion as soldiers advanced on the village from Mount Peres, which has remained under Israeli control since the occupation of the Golan in the 1967 war.

According to Hanoun and other locals +972 interviewed, the conduct of the invading Israeli soldiers has followed a similar pattern across many villages in the region. “They destroyed 100-year-old trees and shot at anyone who came near,” he said, describing the Israel army’s arrival in Al Asbah, a small village near Al-Rafeed. “They even killed two young men on a motorbike who carried a shotgun with them, which is normal in this region to protect livestock.”

Bader Safi, a teacher at the local school in Kodana, a village on the border of the occupied Golan, told +972 that dozens of Israeli soldiers have confiscated residents’ land and conducted regular patrols through the town with dogs. “I have lost count of how many times they have entered our village,” he said. “A

neighbor and friend of mine whose land was taken [by the soldiers] is living in my house. He cries every day because he has lost everything.”

Sheikh Abu Nasr, 70, from Al-Rafeed, said that when the Israeli army invaded, the local population resisted orders to remain inside their homes. “We believe this is our land. We planted grapes and figs here. We don’t recognize the occupying state,” he said, adding that the new Syrian government’s forces never came to the village to offer assistance. “We are alone, but we will stay here on our land, even if someone else controls us.”



Sheikh Abu Nasr at the gate of his house in Al-Rafeed village near Quneitra, Syria, Feb. 20, 2025. (Tareq al-Salameh)

EXPLOITING THE DRUZE

Another tactic Israel has been using to justify its occupation is to claim the support of southern Syria’s Druze, the third largest religious minority at around 3 percent of the country’s population. Drawing on the [loyalty of Israeli Druze](#), who serve in its armed forces in significant numbers, Israel has sought to portray its presence as locally sanctioned.

On March 1, Netanyahu and Katz ordered Israeli army forces to [prepare to defend Jaramana](#), a Druze village in southern Syria. “We will not allow the extremist Islamic regime in Syria to harm the Druze,” Katz declared, following reports of clashes in the Damascus suburb. “If the regime attacks the Druze in Jaramana, we will respond.”

Once a small neighborhood on the outskirts of Damascus, Jaramana is today home to more than a million working-class Syrians. According to resident K. Aboulhosn, a 25-year-old arts student, Jaramana is now a “multi-ethnic and multi-religious city,” whose population swelled during the civil war when it became a “refuge for displaced people from other areas of Damascus because of its relative calm.”

Externally, the [two skirmishes in Jaramana](#) that sparked the Israeli reaction — one at Al-Mujtahed hospital and another at Jaramana checkpoint — appeared to be a dispute between local security personnel and the forces of the new Syrian government led by Ahmad al-Shara. But according to Makram Oubaid, a lawyer

with the Jaramana Civil Action Committee, they were in fact “two unrelated clashes of a personal nature” that escalated into a larger-scale confrontation. The incidents ultimately led to an agreement allowing Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) forces, who, according to Oubaid, “only intervened to stop the fighting and restore order,” to establish an office and share security responsibilities in the village with the local Druze population.

US MILITARY SAID POISED TO SLASH TROOPS IN SYRIA; ISRAEL SEEKS TO LIMIT REDUCTION

Israel has been kept in the loop about plan that could see US troop presence shrunk from 2,000 to 1,000; Jerusalem fears it will increase Turkey's 'appetite' to control Syria

[REUTERS](#) and [TOI STAFF](#) 16 April 2025



Illustrative: American soldiers drive a Bradley fighting vehicle during a joint exercise with Syrian Democratic Forces at the countryside of Deir Ezzor in northeastern Syria, December 8, 2021. (Baderkhan Ahmad/AP)

The US military is set to consolidate its presence in Syria over the coming weeks and months, two US officials told Reuters on Tuesday, in a move that could reduce the number of troops it has in the country by half.

Pentagon officials have informed their counterparts in the Israeli security establishment of the planned troop reduction in Syria, Ynet reported, adding that it is expected to begin within two months.

A senior Israeli official told the news site that Jerusalem is working to convince Washington to limit the withdrawal, fearing that the move will increase Turkey's "appetite" to control Syria — something that Israel opposes.

The US has kept Israel up-to-date on its plans, Ynet said.

The US military has about 2,000 US troops in Syria across a number of bases, mostly in the northeast. The troops are working with local forces to prevent a resurgence of Islamic State, which in 2014 seized large swathes of Iraq and Syria but was later pushed back.

One of the officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that consolidation could reduce the number of troops in Syria to about 1,000.



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, right, shakes hands with Syria's interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa during a joint press conference following their meeting at the presidential palace in Ankara, Turkey, Feb. 4, 2025. (AP/Francisco Seco)

Another US official confirmed the plan for a reduction but said there was no certainty on numbers and was skeptical of a decrease of that scale at a time when President Donald Trump's administration has been negotiating with Iran and building up forces in the region.

The United States has recently sent aircraft including B-2 bombers, warships and air defense systems to reinforce the Middle East.

Trump said on Monday that he believes Iran is intentionally delaying a nuclear deal with the United States and that it must abandon any drive for a nuclear weapon or face a possible military strike on Tehran's atomic facilities.

Meanwhile, US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth is carrying out a global review of US military troops around the world.

The Islamist-led government in Syria that took over after Bashar Assad was ousted in December has sought to rebuild Syria's ties in the region and further afield.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, backed by the US, last month signed a deal with Damascus on merging Kurdish-led governing bodies and security forces with the central government.

The US gave Syria a list in March of conditions to fulfill in exchange for partial sanctions relief but the Trump administration has otherwise engaged little with the country's new rulers.

Some White House officials have been keen to take a more hardline stance, pointing to the new Syrian leadership's former ties to Al-Qaeda as reason to keep engagement to a minimum.

Trump's team talked openly about withdrawing them before the president returned to office.

Trump announced a full withdrawal of US troops from Syria during his first term but never followed through completely. Then too, Israel opposed the move, expressing concern that an American withdrawal would create a power vacuum in the region, allowing Tehran to expand its military entrenchment near the Israeli border.

SYRIA LEADER JOLANI PRIVATELY PROMISED TO NORMALISE TIES WITH ISRAEL BY 2026, EX-UK DIPLOMAT SAYS

- [5 Comments](#)

[MEM MIDDLE EAST MONITOR](#) April 16, 2025



Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa gives a speech in the capital Damascus, Syria on March 13, 2025
[Izzettin Kasım – Anadolu Agency]

Former British diplomat, Craig Murray, has claimed that Syrian President Ahmed Al-Sharaa, previously known as [Abu Mohammed Al-Jolani](#), has privately assured the UK that Syria will normalise ties with Israel, formally recognising the occupation state, and exchange ambassadors by the end of 2026.

“The move by the Hay’at Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS) militant group leader Abu Mohammed Al-Jolani is aimed at attracting substantial Western financial support and the lifting of sanctions on Syria,” Murray explained.

“I asked whether the withdrawal of Israeli occupation forces from Syria was part of the deal, and surprisingly, this was not raised by either side. The UK regards it as a bilateral matter between Syria and Israel, and Al-Jolani does not appear to prioritise Israeli withdrawal,” he added, highlighting part of his conversation with a British diplomatic source.

Murray also stated that the European Union’s External Action Service (EEAS) and its Directorate General for International Partnerships believe Al-Jolani’s transitional government aligns with promises made during the EU Pledging Conference in Brussels on 17 March, including the inclusion of Alawite and Christian communities and the appointment of women to ministerial roles.

However, he pointed out that the cabinet is largely controlled by Al-Jolani’s loyalists, who hold nearly all major portfolios such as defence, foreign affairs, finance and interior. Of the 24 ministers, only three represent minority groups, and only one woman is included, a Christian from Canada. There is also one Kurd, one Alawite and one Druze.

The Brussels conference committed €5.5 million (\$6.25 million) in loans and grants to Syria, with half coming directly from the EU.

Murray further alleged that Al-Jolani enjoys support from both MI6 and UK special forces operating in Syria. He suggested that Western backers ultimately aim to consolidate power under Al-Jolani's pro-Israel government, and that a purge of more radical factions within his ranks may eventually follow.

READ: [Anger in Israel as US says it's withdrawing from Syria](#)

WHAT IS BEHIND LATEST CLASHES IN SYRIA BETWEEN DRUZE AND PRO-GOVERNMENT GUNMEN

The tensions that led to the deadly violence, and how Israel has also become involved

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [BASSEM MROUET](#) 3 May 2025



A man checks a charred car that was burnt after clashes erupted between members of the minority Druze sect and pro-government fighters, in the town of Sahnaya, south of Damascus, Syria, Thursday, May 1, 2025. (AP Photo/Omar Sanadiki)

BEIRUT (AP) — Four days of clashes between pro-government gunmen and members of a minority sect in Syria have left nearly 100 people dead and raised fears of deadly sectarian violence. The country is deeply divided as it tries to emerge from decades of dictatorship.

The clashes are the worst between forces loyal to the government and Druze fighters since the fall of President Bashar al-Assad in early December, whose family ruled Syria with an iron grip for more than five decades.

The situation between the two sides has been tense for weeks, and a smaller clash broke out in March in a suburb of Damascus.

Here are the main reasons the clashes expanded in recent days and background on the two sides:

Who are the Druze?

The Druze religious sect is a minority group that began as a 10th-century offshoot of Ismailism, a branch of Shiite Islam. More than half of the roughly 1 million Druze worldwide live in Syria. Most of the other Druze live in Lebanon and Israel, including in the Golan Heights, which Israel captured from Syria in the 1967 Six Day War and annexed in 1981. In Syria, they largely live in the southern Sweida province and some suburbs of Damascus, mainly in Jaramana and Ashrafiyat Sahnaya to the south.

The transitional government has promised to include the Druze, but has so far kept authority in the hands of the Islamist former insurgents who toppled Assad in December — Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS.



Syria's security forces deployed at a highway where they found bodies of Syrian Druze fighters who were in a convoy heading from the southern Sweida province towards the capital to support their people, at al-Sor al-Kobra village near the Sweida town, southern Syria, Thursday, May 1, 2025. (AP Photo/Omar Albam)

The new 23-member government in Syria announced in late March only has one Druze member, Minister of Agriculture Amjad Badr.

Under the Assad family's tight rule, religious freedom was guaranteed as the country then boasted about its secular and Arab nationalist system.

The Druze have been slightly divided over how to deal with their issues with the new status quo in the country. Most Druze support a dialogue with the government, while others support a more confrontational approach, so the reactions have differed while they are all concerned about the safety of their people.

What is behind the tension between the sides

Syria's religious and ethnic communities are worried about their place in Syria's new system that is mostly run by Islamists, including some who have links to extremist groups.



Druze boys hold their sect's religious flags next to Druze gunmen, a day after clashes between members of the minority Druze sect and pro-government fighters left at least four people dead in the southern suburb of Jaramana, Damascus, Syria, Tuesday, April 29, 2025. (AP Photo/Omar Sanadiki)

The country's new President Ahmad al-Sharaa is himself a former militant who was once a member of al-Qaeda and was held for years in jails in neighboring Iraq for his role in the anti-American insurgency. Although al-Sharaa had said that the rights of ethnic and religious minorities will be protected, there have been several rounds of sectarian killings since Assad's fall.

The Assad family rule, which was dominated by members of the Alawite sect, had oppressed much of the country's Sunni majority while giving minorities some powers. Being a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, the largest Islamic group in the country decades ago, was punishable by death as of the 1980s.

The Druze have major concerns about Muslim groups since they came under attack by members of the Islamic State group in 2018 in the southern Sweida province. It left dozens killed or wounded, and more than two dozen people were taken hostage for nearly four months. Muslim extremists consider the Druze heretics.

During Syria's 14-year conflict, the Druze had their own militias.



Syria's security forces are deployed at a highway where they found bodies of Syrian Druze fighters who were in a convoy heading from the southern Sweida province towards the capital, at al-Sor al-Kobra village near the Sweida town, southern Syria, Thursday, May 1, 2025. (AP Photo/Omar Albam)

WHAT TRIGGERED THE CLASHES?

The clashes broke out around midnight Monday in the southern Damascus suburb of Jaramana after an audio clip circulated on social media of a man criticizing Islam's Prophet Muhammad. The audio was attributed to a Druze cleric. But cleric Marwan Kiwan said in a video posted on social media that he was not responsible for the audio which angered many Sunni Muslims.

The fighting later spread to the outskirts of the southern town of Sakhnaya, triggering the first Israeli airstrike against pro-government gunmen. Facing pressure from their own Druze community, Israeli officials have vowed to protect the Druze of Syria and warned Islamic groups from entering predominantly Druze areas.

The clashes have pulled Israel further into the conflict with the airstrike two days ago, and Friday marked a major increase in tensions with an attack close to the presidential palace in Damascus in what Syria's presidency called a major escalation.



Members of Syria's security forces deploy in the town of Sahnaya, south of Damascus, on Wednesday, April 30, 2025, after earlier clashes with Druze fighters (AP Photo/Omar Albam)

Israel says it does not want Islamic extremists near the country's northern border. Since Assad's fall, Israel has carved a buffer zone in southern Syria and has destroyed much of the Syrian army's assets so they don't fall into the hands of groups that removed him from power.

Israel had been warning for decades that Iran and its proxies pose a danger along its northern border, and now it is doing the same with the new authorities in Syria, who are backed by Turkey.

Other sporadic attacks in different areas, as well as an ambush on the Damascus-Sweida highway, made the situation worse until a deal was reached early Friday, after which Interior Ministry forces and local Druze gunmen deployed in different areas.

The Britain-based war monitor The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights alleged that 99 people were killed over the past four days, of which 51 were killed in Sakhnaya and the Druze-majority Damascus suburb of Jaramana. Among them were local gunmen and security forces.



Syria's security forces stand on their vehicle, after reaching a deal with Druze gunmen to deploy around Jaramana, a Damascus suburb that saw fighting earlier this week, in Damascus, Syria, early Friday, May 2, 2025. (AP Photo/Omar Sanadiki)

WHAT ARE THE MAIN CONCERNS?

The clashes near Damascus and in southern Syria came nearly two months after an ambush by fighters loyal to Assad triggered days of sectarian and revenge attacks. The fighting in the country's coastal region left more than 1,000 people dead. Many of the dead were civilians who were gunned down because they belonged to the minority Alawite sect that Assad belongs to.

Security forces deployed in the coastal provinces of Latakia and Tartus but activists say that sectarian killings against Alawites are still taking place, albeit at a much slower pace when compared to the early March attacks.

Members of religious minorities in Syria, such as Alawites, Christians and Druze, fear persecution by the main Sunni Muslim groups. Videos have circulated on social media showing Islamist fighters insulting Druze detainees and humiliating them, such as by shaving their mustaches.

ISRAEL, THE DRUZE AND SYRIA'S REIGN OF LIES

*Damascus pretends to be moderate while inciting deadly violence against minorities
and building a sectarian jihadist regime*

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL Reda Mansour May 4 2025



Members of Syria's security forces stand guard next to their vehicles in the capital Damascus on April 29, 2025, following overnight sectarian clashes that left nine people including six Druze fighters dead.

(Bakr ALKASEM / AFP)

Many people in Israel and overseas are trying to understand what the role of Israel should be in the dramatic events involving the Druze in Syria and the new government in Damascus. To do so, we have to look at the unfolding saga of the relationship between the Syrian minorities and the Al-Shara government.

The Syrian regime is trying to impose by force an extreme Sunni regime on the four significant minorities in Syria: Alawites, Druze, Kurds, and Christians. There are, of course, many other small minorities who do not dare to speak out right now, such as the Ismailis, the Yazidis, and others.

It began with the massacre of Alawites in the coastal areas, which was prompted by the accusation that they were planning a rebellion against the Al-Shara regime. This story was fabricated, and under this pretext, all the Islamist factions in Syria mobilized to come to the Alawite area, massacre them in the streets, kidnap their women, and rob their homes and businesses.

After the suppression of the Alawites, the government of Syria incited the Bedouin tribesmen against the Kurds and pretended not to be involved in the matter for fear of the American reaction. The attacks failed, so they tried to reach a compromise agreement with the Kurds. The Kurds withdrew from the agreement after discovering that it was impossible to trust the regime in Damascus.



The spiritual leader of Syria's Druze community in Suwayda Hammoud al-Hennawi speaks during the funeral of members of the Syrian minority who were killed in recent sectarian clashes, in Salkhad village in the country's southern Suwayda governorate on May 3, 2025. (Shadi AL-DUBAISI / AFP)

After failing with the Kurds, the regime began inciting against the Druze. Social media in Syria has been flooded for some time with calls to wipe out the Druze, to massacre them, to burn their villages. The regime seems neither to see nor hear. A fabricated recording of a Druze speaker cursing the Prophet Muhammad, which apparently came from Turkey, was the excuse for the current attack.

The regime in Damascus pretends to be moderate and innocent in the international and Arab media and lies about its intentions and actions on the ground: they lied about disbanding the militias; they moved under their direction and came all the way from Edlib in the north to Jaramana. Then they lied about the role of foreign Islamist terrorists in the new security forces. And finally, their biggest lie is about the integration of minorities. Instead, they built a sectarian jihadist establishment.

Israel's interests in this situation are threefold: A. Israel owes the Druze-Jewish alliance at least the obligation to apply diplomatic pressure and air cover to the Druze in Syria, and this is what it has been doing. B. Israel has to be vigilant with a regime whose people came from ISIS and needs to keep it in check all the time, and not wait for a Syrian Hamas-style invasion of the kind seen on October 7, 2023. Strategically, Israel must mark a zone of interest in southern Syria that will balance what Qatar and Turkey are building in northern Syria.

Jews are a small minority in the Middle East, and the alliance of minorities has never been more necessary than today. Israel is an essential player in protecting minorities and thus in protecting itself.

About the Author

Reda Mansour served as the Ambassador of Israel to Brazil, Ambassador to Panama, Ambassador to Ecuador, Deputy Ambassador in Portugal, Consul General of Israel in Atlanta, and Consul in San Francisco; at age 35 he was the youngest Ambassador in Israel's history, and the first Druze- career diplomat.

OTHER COUNTRIES - 3 - YEMEN

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT THE HOUTHIS, THEIR ATTACKS ON ISRAEL AND THE U.S., AND THEIR TREATMENT OF YEMEN'S JEWS

[AJC](#) March 20, 2025



The Houthis are an extremist Shia-Islamist movement and terrorist army. Backed by Iran, this organization controls approximately one-third of Yemen's territory and more than two-thirds of the country's population. It has emerged as a prominent player in the [Israel-Hamas war](#), which began on October 7 with a mass murder attack by Hamas on Israelis.

Since late 2023, Houthi terrorists have fired near daily ballistic missiles and suicide drones at Israel and ships in the Red Sea – most of them intercepted by Israel's multi-layered air defense system or U.S. warships in the Red Sea – and have violated international maritime law by hijacking commercial ships sailing in the Red Sea, posing a direct threat to international shipping and the global economy.

Latest updates:

The conflict between Israel and Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi movement has escalated in recent months, characterized by a series of missile and drone attacks by the Houthis on and subsequent retaliatory airstrikes by Israel and the United States. The Houthis have launched numerous ballistic missiles and drones toward Israel, with a notable incident in July 2024 when a drone attack reached downtown Tel Aviv.

In response, Israel has conducted multiple airstrikes targeting Houthi-controlled infrastructure in Yemen, including ports, oil facilities, and the airport in the capital, Sanaa. The United States has also engaged in military actions against the Houthis; in December 2024, U.S. forces carried out precision strikes in Yemen following attacks on American warships and commercial vessels in the Red Sea.

After halting attacks on Israel following the January 2025 ceasefire and hostage agreement, the Houthis have resumed their assaults on the Jewish state, firing several long-range ballistic missiles in recent days that have sent millions of Israelis into bomb shelters. In response to Houthi attacks on U.S. assets and threats to international shipping around the Arabian Peninsula, the U.S. escalated its campaign, launching airstrikes on Houthi-controlled provinces. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio noted that over the past 18 months, the Houthis have attacked the U.S. Navy 174 times and targeted commercial vessels 145 times, marking the most significant naval combat for American forces since World War II. On March 17, President

Trump posted on his Truth Social platform: "Every shot fired by the Houthis will be looked upon, from this point forward, as being a shot fired from the weapons and leadership of IRAN, and IRAN will be held responsible, and suffer the consequences." Days after taking office, President Donald Trump re-designated the Houthi rebel group as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO).

1. Who are the Houthis?

Made up of members of Yemen's Shia-Zaidi minority group in the Saada district of northern Yemen, the Houthis have gained considerable power and influence over the last several years amid the ongoing civil war in Yemen. They are receiving Iranian funding, weapons, and training, posing a growing challenge to regional stability and global security.

[Get the Facts About Iran's Unprecedented Attack on Israel](#)

According to the Alma Research and Education Center, initially a neglected group, the Houthis capitalized on the Arab Spring's momentum in the early 2010s to strengthen their position. By the end of 2014, they had taken control of Yemen's capital, Sanaa, and by February 2015, they declared control over the country. This power shift was supported by Iranian influence and aid from Iran's Lebanese terror proxy, Hezbollah.

The Houthi movement is led by Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, who assumed leadership after the death of his brother and founder, Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi, in 2004. Abdul-Malik serves as the group's spiritual and political leader, shaping its ideology and strategies. Hussein had initially established the movement to address the marginalization of Yemen's Zaidi Shia community, and his death marked a shift toward militarization. Other key figures include Mohammed Ali al-Houthi, a senior political leader and member of the Supreme Political Council, and Abdul-Karim al-Houthi, who oversees political and organizational efforts.

The movement also relies on influential military commanders like Yusuf al-Madani, who directs significant military operations. Leadership within the Houthis is rooted in the al-Houthi clan and supported by tribal alliances and religious scholars. While originally focused on Zaidi Shia issues, the Houthis have broadened their base and ideology, becoming a major political and military force in Yemen's ongoing conflict.

2. Who finances and arms the Houthis?

Iran has played a central role in financing and arming the Houthis, turning them into a powerful and destabilizing force in the region. Tehran's support includes providing advanced weaponry such as ballistic missiles, drones, and cruise missiles, as well as facilitating training through operatives from Hezbollah, its proxy in Lebanon. This assistance has enabled the Houthis to expand their military capabilities and challenge the Saudi-led Sunni Muslim coalition that has intervened in Yemen to support its internationally recognized government.

The rivalry between Iran, a Shia-majority Persian state, and Saudi Arabia, a Sunni Arab powerhouse and guardian of Islam's two holiest cities—Mecca and Medina—has been a key driver of regional tensions. Although the two nations restored diplomatic relations in early 2023, Saudi Arabia remains deeply

concerned about Iran's ambitions, including its nuclear program and its support for militant groups across the Middle East. Since 2015, Saudi Arabia has led a military coalition in Yemen to counter the [Iranian-backed Houthis](#), viewing their rise as a direct threat to Gulf stability and Sunni dominance in the region. Iran's backing of the Houthis thus serves as a broader strategy to extend its influence and challenge Saudi hegemony in the Arabian Peninsula.

3. How powerful are the Houthis?

The Houthis have demonstrated formidable military capabilities, particularly through their use of ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). These weapons have been deployed against targets in Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, showcasing their ability to conduct long-range strikes. Their access to advanced weaponry, much of it reportedly supplied or supported by Iran, underscores their position as a significant regional actor with increasing military strength.

Since the outbreak of war between Hamas and Israel on October 7, 2023, the Houthis have aligned themselves with Hamas, launching a series of missile and drone attacks against Israel in solidarity. Despite the intensity of these strikes, U.S. and Israeli air defense systems have effectively intercepted most of the threats, preventing widespread damage and casualties. However, the Houthis' persistent attacks and advanced weaponry continue to pose a serious security challenge in the region.

4. What threat do the Houthis pose to Israel and the world and why are Houthis attacking ships in the Red Sea?

The Houthis pose a significant threat to regional and global stability due to Yemen's strategic location, particularly its control over the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, which connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. This critical chokepoint facilitates global commerce, including approximately 19,000 vessels annually—30% of global container traffic—and 10% of the world's seaborne oil. Disruptions in this area could have severe implications for trade and energy supplies, impacting economies worldwide.

The Houthis' actions, including missile attacks on Israel and hijacking commercial vessels in the Red Sea, reflect their ambitions to project power beyond Yemen's borders. Their leadership has explicitly threatened to target all ships bound for Israel, regardless of their origin, heightening risks to maritime security. Israel's southern city of Eilat, a vital trade hub on the Red Sea, is particularly vulnerable. The group's aggressive stance, coupled with its alignment with Iran, underscores an expansionist agenda that threatens not only regional players like Israel and Saudi Arabia but also the stability of critical global trade routes.

5. What do the Houthis want?

The Houthis' ideology is deeply rooted in antisemitic, Islamic fundamentalist, anti-American sentiment, as reflected in the slogan on its flag: "Allah is great, death to the USA, death to Israel, curse the Jews, victory to Islam." This extremist stance aligns with Iranian interests and suggests a broader objective of promoting Iran's radical Islamist revolution throughout the Middle East.

The Houthi rebels in Yemen have been associated with antisemitic rhetoric and actions, raising concerns for the country's tiny remaining Jewish community. [While the majority of Yemen's Jewish population, which once totaled 50,000, had left decades ago](#), the small amount that has remained has come under increasing persecution which started under former President Ali Abdullah Saleh but intensified under the Houthis, including the imprisonment of Levi Marhabi, who has been held by the Houthis since 2016, [according to a United Nations report released in 2022](#). Additionally, the Houthis have also targeted other religious minorities, including Christians and members of the Baha'i community.

The Houthis want to control the region and often disrupt Yemen's stability and neighboring countries' security. They pose a major challenge in the Middle East, getting support from Iran and following an ideology that aims to reshape the region through destruction and warfare.

6. What is the U.S. Stance on the Houthis?

On Wednesday, January 22, President Donald Trump issued an executive order to re-designate the Houthi terror group as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). During his first term, President Trump designated the Houthis as both a FTO and a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) group. The Biden administration later reversed these designations due to humanitarian concerns but reinstated the SDGT label in 2024 after Houthi attacks on shipping lanes. However, Biden opted not to improve the stricter FTO designation, saying at the time the administration wanted to balance security and humanitarian concerns.

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FRESH US AIRSTRIKES AGAINST HOUTHI REBELS KILL AT LEAST 1 IN YEMEN

Satellite photos show US moving more stealth bombers to Indian Ocean base in striking distance of Yemen and Iran; rebels have launched 7 missile attacks at Israel since March

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) Jon Gambrell 29 March 2025 DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Suspected US airstrikes pounded Yemen overnight into Saturday, reportedly killing at least one person as the American military acknowledged earlier bombing a major military site in the heart of Sanaa controlled by the Houthi rebels. DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Suspected US airstrikes pounded Yemen overnight into Saturday, reportedly killing at least one person as the American military acknowledged earlier bombing a major military site in the heart of Sanaa controlled by the Houthi rebels.

The full extent of the damage and possible casualties wasn't immediately clear. The attacks followed a night of airstrikes early Friday that appeared particularly intense compared to other days in the campaign that began March 15.

An Associated Press review has found the new American operation under US President Donald Trump appears more extensive than those under former President Joe Biden, as the US moves from solely targeting launch sites to firing at ranking personnel as well as dropping bombs in cities.

Meanwhile, satellite photos analyzed by the AP show a mysterious airstrip just off Yemen in a key maritime chokepoint now appears ready to accept flights and B-2 bombers within striking distance of the country Saturday.

New strikes come as US releases video of one bombing

The strikes into Saturday targeted multiple areas in Yemen under the control of the Iranian-backed Houthis, including the capital, Sanaa, and in the governorates of al-Jawf and Saada, rebel-controlled media reported. The strikes in Saada killed one person and wounded four others, the Houthi-run SABA news agency said.

SABA identified the person killed as a civilian. Houthi fighters and their allies often aren't in uniform. However, analysts believe the rebels may be undercounting the fatalities given the strikes have been targeting military and intelligence sites run by the rebels. Many of the strikes haven't been fully acknowledged by the Houthis — or the US military — while the rebels also tightly control access on the ground.

One strike early Friday, however, has been confirmed by the US military's Central Command, which oversees its Mideast operations. It posted a black-and-white video early Saturday showing an airstrike targeting a site in Yemen. While it didn't identify the location, an AP analysis of the footage's details

corresponds to a known strike Friday in Sanaa. The footage shows the bomb striking the military's general command headquarters held by the Houthis, something the rebels have not reported.

The Houthi-controlled Telecommunications and Information Technology Ministry in Sanaa separately said US strikes on Friday destroyed "broadcasting stations, communication towers and the messaging network" in Amran and Saada governorates. The strikes in Amran around the Jebel Aswad, or "Black Mountain," had appeared particularly intense.

US campaign follows Houthi shipping threats

The new campaign of airstrikes, which the Houthis now say have killed at least 58 people, started after the rebels threatened to begin targeting "Israeli" ships again over Israel blocking aid entering the Gaza Strip. The rebels in the past have had a loose definition of what constitutes an Israeli ship, meaning other vessels could be targeted as well.

The Houthis began attacking the vital Red Sea maritime route in November 2023, a month after fellow Iran-backed group Hamas stormed southern Israel on October 7, 2023, to kill some 1,200 people and take 251 hostages, sparking the war in Gaza.

They had targeted over 100 merchant vessels with missiles and drones, sinking two vessels and killing four sailors before they paused their attacks in January of this year, after Israel and Hamas reached a ceasefire and hostage deal.

Since March 18, when the IDF resumed its offensive against Hamas in the Gaza Strip, they have launched at least seven missile attacks against Israel, the most recent of which occurred on Thursday. They have all been intercepted without causing significant damage.

The attacks greatly raised the Houthis' profile as they faced economic problems and launched a crackdown targeting any dissent and aid workers at home amid Yemen's decade-long stalemated war that has torn apart the Arab world's poorest nation.

The Houthis have begun threatening both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, two American allies in the region, over the US strikes. That's even as the nations that have sought a separate peace with the Houthis have stayed out of the new US airstrike campaign.

An AP analysis of satellite photos from Saturday shows the American military has moved at least four long-range stealth B-2 bombers to Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean — a base far outside of the range of the rebels that avoids using allies' Mideast bases. Three had been earlier seen there this week.

That means a fourth of all the nuclear-capable B-2s that America has in its arsenal are now deployed to the base. The Biden administration used the B-2 with conventional bombs against Houthi targets last year.

The aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman has launched attacks from the Red Sea and the American military plans to bring the carrier USS Carl Vinson from Asia as well.

Meanwhile, France said its sole aircraft carrier, the Charles de Gaulle, was in Djibouti, an East African nation on the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, which links the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden. The French have shot down Houthi drones in the past, but they are not part of the American campaign there.

Mysterious airstrip in Bab el-Mandeb appears ready

Satellite images Friday from Planet Labs PBC show an airstrip now appears ready on Mayun Island, a volcanic outcropping in the center of the Bab el-Mandeb. The images showed the airstrip had been painted with the designation markings "09" and "27" to the airstrip's east and west respectively.

A Saudi-led coalition battling the Houthis had acknowledged having "equipment" on Mayun, also known as Perim. However, air and sea traffic to Mayun has linked the construction to the UAE, which backs a secessionist force in Yemen known as the Southern Transitional Council.

World powers have recognized the island's strategic location for hundreds of years, especially with the opening of the Suez Canal linking the Mediterranean and Red Seas.

The work on Mayun follows the completion of a similar airstrip likely constructed by the UAE on Abd al-Kuri Island, which rises out of the Indian Ocean near the mouth of the Gulf of Aden.

Times of Israel Staff contributed to this report.

DEADLIEST US STRIKE IN YEMEN KILLS 74 AT OIL TERMINAL, HOUTHIS SAY

REUTERS April 18, 2025



Item 1 of 4 A fuel tank burns following, what Al Masirah TV said, was a U.S. strike on the Ras Isa fuel port, Yemen, in this screengrab from a handout video released on April 18, 2025.

Al-Masirah TV /Handout via REUTERS

[1/4]A fuel tank burns following, what Al Masirah TV said, was a U.S. strike on the Ras Isa fuel port, Yemen, in this screengrab from a handout video released on April 18, 2025. Al-Masirah TV /Handout via REUTERS [Purchase Licensing Rights, opens new tab](#)

- Summary
- Deadliest strike since US campaign began
- Strikes against Houthis in response to Red Sea attacks
- US military says target was fuel source
- Rescue teams continuing search site, says Houthi-run ministry

ADEN/WASHINGTON, April 17 (Reuters) - U.S. strikes on Yemen's Ras Isa fuel terminal on the Red Sea coast have killed at least 74 people in the deadliest attack since the U.S. started its bombing campaign against the Houthis last year, according to the Houthi-run health ministry.

U.S. President Donald Trump ordered the intensification of strikes last month in the biggest U.S. military operation in the Middle East since he took office in January. Washington [has vowed](#) to keep attacking the Iran-aligned Houthis until the group halts [attacks](#) on Red Sea shipping.

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20 ISRAELI FIGHTER JETS STRIKE IN YEMEN AFTER HOUTHI MISSILE HITS BEN GURION AIRPORT

IDF says 50 munitions dropped on Hodeidah port, nearby concrete factory, in a 'blow' to Houthi economy and military; Israeli officials: Attack coordinated with US

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Emanuel Fabian](#), [Tol Staff](#) and [Agencies](#) 5 May 2025,

The Israeli Air Force on Monday evening carried out airstrikes in the Houthi-held port city of Hodeidah in Yemen in response to the Iran-backed terror group's ballistic missile attack on Ben Gurion Airport that left several injured a day earlier.

According to the military, the strikes carried out by some 20 IAF fighter jets targeted Houthi infrastructure along the coast of Yemen, including at the Hodeidah port and a concrete factory near the nearby city of Bajil, some 2,000 kilometers from Israel.

The jets dropped 50 munitions on the Houthi targets, the military said, publishing images showing the jets preparing for takeoff. IAF refuelers and spy planes also participated in the operation.

The Israel Defense Forces said the Hodeidah port was used by the Houthis "for the transfer of Iranian weapons, equipment for military needs, and other terror purposes."

The Bajil concrete factory "serves as an important economic resource for the Houthi terror regime and is used for building tunnels and military infrastructure," the IDF said, adding that the strikes "constitute a blow to the regime's economy and its military buildup."

"The strike was conducted in response to the repeated attacks by the Houthi terrorist regime against the State of Israel, during which surface-to-surface missiles and UAVs were launched toward Israeli territory and its civilians," the military said in a statement

It was the sixth Israeli strike in Yemen since the beginning of the war, and the first since January. The IDF had stopped responding to the Houthis missile and drone fire on Israel, after the US launched a major aerial campaign against the Iran-backed group several months ago.

Israeli officials said the strikes were coordinated with the US, but were not a joint operation.

Footage posted online purportedly showed a large fire at the concrete factory, where the Houthi-run health ministry reported at least 21 people were injured.

Images released by the Defense Ministry and Prime Minister's Office showed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defense Minister Israel Katz, and IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir overseeing Monday's operation together with officers at the IAF's underground headquarters at the IDF's Kirya base in Tel Aviv.

IAF chief Maj. Gen. Tomer Bar, who was not pictured, joined the officials shortly after, as he was commanding the operation from an adjacent command post.

Nasruddin Amer, head of the Houthi media office, later said the Israeli strikes would not deter the rebels, and vowed that they would respond to the attack.

“The aggressive Zionist-American raids on civilian facilities will not affect our military operations against the Zionist enemy entity,” he said in a social media post.

Monday’s strikes came after a missile fired from Yemen on Sunday landed inside the perimeter of Ben Gurion Airport near Tel Aviv for the first time, in a grove of trees alongside an access road close to the airport’s main Terminal 3, several hundred yards from the facility’s control tower.

The missile gouged a wide crater in the ground near an airport parking lot, injuring six people, none of them seriously, and prompting most international airlines to suspend flights.

The Houthis claimed responsibility, saying they fired a “hypersonic ballistic missile” at Ben Gurion. The military has said that Iran, and the Houthis — which are supplied by Tehran — do not possess hypersonic missiles, and the missiles they have launched at the country are not maneuverable.

The Houthis “will work to impose a comprehensive air blockade on the Israeli enemy by repeatedly targeting airports, most notably... Ben Gurion Airport,” the terror group said in a statement. The success of such a blockade is highly unlikely, however, with Israel’s defensive systems expected to be able to tackle most incoming missiles.

Shortly before the Israeli strikes, media in Yemen reported strikes carried out by the United States near the capital, Sanaa. The Houthi-run Saba news agency said the US strikes included two on Arbaeen Street in the capital and the airport road, blaming them on “American aggression.”

Sixteen people were wounded, Saba cited the Iran-backed rebels’ Health Ministry as saying. The rebels’ Al-Masirah TV later reported another three strikes in Sanaa and seven in the northern governorate of Al-Jawf.

The Houthis — whose slogan calls for “Death to America, Death to Israel, [and] a Curse on the Jews” — began attacking Israel and maritime traffic in November 2023, a month after the October 7 Hamas massacre.

Since March 18, when the IDF resumed its offensive against Hamas in the Gaza Strip, the Houthis in Yemen have launched some 27 ballistic missiles and several drones at Israel.

The Houthis held their fire when a ceasefire was reached between Israel and Hamas in January 2025. By that point, they had fired over 40 ballistic missiles and dozens of attack drones and cruise missiles at Israel, including one that killed a civilian and wounded several others in Tel Aviv in July, prompting Israel’s first strike in Yemen.

The sirens warning of missile attacks have sent hundreds of thousands of Israelis rushing to shelters at all hours of the night and day, causing a number of injuries in the scramble during threats from the incoming missiles and also as a precaution against falling debris from intercepts, which have occasionally caused injuries, death, and damage.

Netanyahu on Sunday [vowed](#) a tough response against the Houthis, as well as their main backer, Iran, over the airport attack.

In a video published on Telegram, Netanyahu said Israel had “acted against” the Houthis in the past and “will act in the future.”

“It will not happen in one bang, but there will be many bangs,” he added, without elaborating.

On the social media platform X, Netanyahu said Israel would also respond to Iran at “a time and place of our choosing.”

Hours later, the Houthis threatened to launch more such strikes and warned airlines to cancel their flights to Israeli airports.



Vehicles drive past an anti-Israel banner showing numerous locations in Israel as a Yemeni dagger (jambiya) with writing in Farsi reading, ‘All targets are within range, Yemeni missiles for now!’ and in Hebrew, ‘All targets are within reach, we will choose,’ in Tehran, Iran, May 5, 2025.

(AP Photo/Vahid Salemi)

IRAN DENIAL

Iran on Monday [denied](#) supporting the attack on Ben Gurion Airport, calling it an “independent decision” by the Yemeni rebels taken in solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Reacting to Netanyahu’s threats, the Islamic Republic warned it would retaliate against any attack on its territory.

“Iran underlines (its) firm determination... to defend itself,” the Iranian foreign ministry said, warning Israel and the United States of “consequences.”

US strikes on Yemen’s Houthi rebels began under former president Joe Biden, but have intensified under his successor, Donald Trump

IDF 'COMPLETELY DISABLES' HOUTHI-CONTROLLED SANAA AIRPORT IN STRIKES ON YEMEN CAPITAL

Fighter jets also target power stations, cement factory, 2 days after missile fired by Iran-backed group hit Ben Gurion Airport; 3 said killed; Houthis vow to hit back

[THE TIMES OFF ISRAEL](#) [Emanuel Fabian](#) 6 May 2025



Footage posted to social media said to show Israeli strikes on Sanaa International Airport and other nearby targets in Yemen's Houthi-controlled capital, May 6, 2025.

(X; used in accordance with Clause 27a of the Copyright Law)

Israeli warplanes carried out a wave of airstrikes in Yemen on Tuesday afternoon, which the military said “completely disabled” Sanaa International Airport in the Houthi-controlled capital and hit other targets.

The strikes, for the second day in a row, came in response to the Iran-backed group’s repeated missile and drone attacks on Israel, including one missile that hit inside the grounds of Ben Gurion Airport on Sunday, the Israel Defense Forces said.

Dozens of Israeli Air Force aircraft were involved in the strikes on Yemen on Tuesday, including fighter jets, refuelers, and spy planes. The IDF said the fighter jets dropped 50 munitions on the targets.

Sanaa International Airport, which had been hit once by the IAF before, was “completely disabled” following strikes within 15 minutes that targeted its runways, aircraft, and infrastructure, the military said.

Footage posted online showed the Israeli strikes. Houthi media said three people were killed and 38 were wounded in the strikes.

An airport official told AFP: “Three planes out of seven belonging to Yemenia Airlines were destroyed at Sanaa airport, and Sanaa International Airport was completely destroyed.”

The IDF said that the airport was used by the Houthis “for transferring weapons and operatives, and is regularly operated by the Houthi regime for terror purposes.”

An hour before the strike on the airport, the IDF issued an unprecedented “urgent” warning to civilians. In a post to X, the IDF’s Arabic-language spokesman, Col. Avichay Adraee, said, “We call upon you to evacuate the airport area immediately and warn everyone in your vicinity of the need to evacuate this area immediately.”

Additionally, the IDF said it targeted several “central” power stations near Sanaa, which it said were used by the Houthis, along with a cement factory in the city of ‘Amran, north of the capital, which it claimed was used by the group to construct infrastructure and tunnels.

The strike on the concrete factory “constitutes a blow to the regime’s economy and its military buildup,” the army said.

Sitting in the IAF command bunker at the Kirya military headquarters during the strikes, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Israel Katz sent a warning to Iran.

“I have said many times that whoever attacks Israel — his blood will be on his own head,” Netanyahu said, noting his promise on Monday that there would be multiple “blows” in response to the previous day’s Houthi missile strike on Ben Gurion International Airport.

He said that the choice and timing of targets was meant to punish the Houthis, but also to send a message to Iran, “without whose approval and long-term support, the Houthis could not carry out the criminal missile attack against us.”

Katz said that Israel destroyed Sana’a’s airport in the strike. “Whoever hits us — we will hit sevenfold,” he pledged.

“It also sent a warning message to the head of the Iranian octopus,” Katz said. “You bear direct responsibility for every attack by the Houthi tentacle against Israel — and you will also bear the full consequences.”

The Houthis, meanwhile, promised to hit back.

The “aggression will not pass without a response and Yemen will not be discouraged from its stance in support of Gaza,” the Houthi political bureau said in a statement.

The head of Yemen’s Houthi Supreme Political Council, Mahdi al-Mashat, later said the group would continue its attacks. He advised Israelis to “remain in shelters because their government will not be able to

The Houthis also blamed both Israel and its ally the United States for the latest strikes. While Israel claimed responsibility, US officials have denied any involvement.



Israeli Air Force fighter jets takeoff for airstrikes against the Houthis in Yemen, May 5, 2025.

(Israel Defense Forces)

A day earlier, Israeli jets [targeted](#) another concrete factory the military said was used by the Houthis, along with infrastructure at the port of Hodeida.

Tuesday's sortie was the seventh Israeli strike in Yemen since the beginning of the war. The IDF had stopped responding to the Houthis' missile and drone fire on Israel after the US launched a major aerial campaign against the Iran-backed group in March, but resumed attacks on Monday following the Ben Gurion Airport attack.

Israeli warplanes first [hit](#) Sanaa International Airport in December, with the IDF saying at the time that "infrastructure used by the Houthi terror regime for its military activities" was targeted. An employee of the UN Humanitarian Air Service was [wounded](#) in that strike, which took place while World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus was in the airport waiting to depart.

Israeli officials have said that all of the IAF's strikes in Yemen were coordinated with the US, but were not joint operations.



Damaged control tower of Sanaa's international airport on December 27, 2024, following Israeli strikes at the site the previous day.
(Photo by Mohammed HUWAIS / AFP)

On Sunday, a Houthi missile landed inside the perimeter of Ben Gurion Airport near Tel Aviv for the first time, in a grove of trees alongside an access road close to the airport's main Terminal 3, several hundred yards from the facility's control tower.

The missile gouged a wide crater in the ground near an airport parking lot, and injured six people, none of them seriously, prompting most international airlines to suspend flights.

The Houthis said they would “work to impose a comprehensive air blockade on the Israeli enemy by repeatedly targeting airports, most notably... Ben Gurion Airport.”

The Houthis — whose slogan calls for “Death to America, Death to Israel, [and] a Curse on the Jews” — first began attacking Israel and maritime traffic in November 2023, a month after the October 7 Hamas massacre.



Security forces at the site where a Houthi missile fired from Yemen hit an area of Ben Gurion Airport, May 4, 2025 (Chaim Goldberg/Flash90)

The Houthis held their fire when a ceasefire was reached between Israel and Hamas in January 2025. By that point, they had fired over 40 ballistic missiles and dozens of attack drones and cruise missiles at Israel, including one that killed a civilian and wounded several others in Tel Aviv in July, prompting Israel's first strike in Yemen.

Since March 18, when the IDF resumed its offensive against Hamas in the Gaza Strip, the Houthis have launched some 27 ballistic missiles and several drones at Israel.

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AFP and Lazar Berman contributed to this report.

US DOWNGRADES BOMBERS DEPLOYED IN MIDDLE EAST AS TENSIONS WITH HOUTHIS AND IRAN RECEDE

After US deal with Houthis and ‘encouraging’ talks with Iran, Pentagon sends home B-2 stealth bombers from Indian Ocean airbase, replacing them with B-52s, officials say

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL by [Reuters](#) and [Tol Staff](#) 13 May 2025

The US military is replacing its B-2 bombers with another type of bomber at a base in the Indo-Pacific that was seen as being in an ideal location to operate in the Middle East, US officials told Reuters on Monday, as the American bombing campaign against Yemen’s Houthi rebel group came to an end with a ceasefire reached earlier this month.

The Pentagon deployed as many as [six B-2 bombers](#) in March to a US-British military base on the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia, making use of the aircraft during the month-long US bombing campaign in Yemen and as a deterrence against Iran during a period of tensions as the two countries began talks over Tehran’s nuclear program.

Experts say that this had put the B-2s, which have stealth technology and are equipped to carry the heaviest US bombs and nuclear weapons, in a position to operate in the Middle East.

Jerusalem’s marathon ‘sleep-in’ protestKeep Watching

The officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said the B-2 bombers were being replaced by B-52 bombers.

The Pentagon said it did not comment on force posture adjustments as a matter of policy.

The original deployment represented nearly a third of all the B-2 bombers in Washington’s arsenal. It was seen as highly unusual to see that many at one base abroad.



FILE: A US Air Force B-52 Stratofortress aircraft from Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, arrives at Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, on April 9, 2016. (Staff Sgt. Corey Hook/U.S. Air Force via AP)

Typically, so-called show of force missions involving the B-2 have seen two or three of the aircraft conduct operations in foreign territory, very rarely seeing as many as six in one place.

The B-2 bombers had been used to carry out strikes against the Iran-backed Houthi rebel group in Yemen, as the US executed dozens of bombing missions against the group beginning in mid-March, targeting the Houthis over their attacks on shipping in Mideast waters in support of Hamas in the war sparked by the terror group's October 7, 2023, attack on Israel.

After more than a month of intensive airstrikes, US President Donald Trump announced last week that a deal had been reached with the Houthis, with the group agreeing to halt attacks on US vessels in exchange for a reprieve from US strikes.

However, the deal still allows the Houthis to keep up their missile and drone attacks on Israel, which have continued near-daily since the agreement with the US was signed.

Also contributing to the lowering tensions in the region are the developments with the US-Iran nuclear talks, with both sides planning to continue weekly meetings

The [fourth round](#) of talks took place on Sunday, ahead of Trump's planned visit to the Middle East. Trump, who has threatened military action against Iran if diplomacy fails, has restored a "maximum pressure" campaign on Tehran since returning to the White House in January.

Both sides had reported progress in the previous three rounds, and on Sunday, Iran said the meeting was "difficult but useful," while a senior US official said Washington was "encouraged."

Tehran is willing to negotiate some curbs on its nuclear work in return for the lifting of sanctions, according to Iranian officials, but ending its enrichment program or surrendering its enriched uranium stockpile are among what the officials have called "Iran's red lines that could not be compromised" in the talks.

Western countries, including the United States, have long accused Iran of seeking to acquire nuclear weapons, while Tehran insists that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes.

Iran currently enriches uranium to 60 percent purity — far above the 3.67% limit set in the 2015 deal with the United States and other world powers, and a short technical step from the 90% needed for weapons-grade material. Tehran regularly threatens to destroy Israel, and its uranium enrichment level is far higher than necessary for civilian uses.

Israel is reportedly unhappy with the state of the talks, which were said to be developing into a largely similar framework to the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, which was signed by then-US president Barack Obama and was panned at the time by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as disastrous for Israel. Trump also maligned that accord before withdrawing from it in 2018.

Netanyahu, who is deeply skeptical of the Iran-US talks, has called for all of Tehran's nuclear facilities to be dismantled and for its ballistic missile program to be stopped as part of any credible deal.

Tehran has insisted that the talks be solely focused on the nuclear issue and the lifting of sanctions, ruling out negotiations on military capabilities.

IDF INTERCEPTS HOUTHI MISSILE FIRED FROM YEMEN, IN THIRD ATTACK IN FOUR DAYS

Sirens sound in Jerusalem area, southern West Bank settlements and communities near Red Sea, sending hundreds of thousands to shelters; no injuries or damage reported

By [Emanuel Fabian](#) 20May 2025

A ballistic missile launched at Israel by the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen was successfully intercepted by air defenses, the military said Sunday, in what has recently become an almost daily occurrence.

Sirens had sounded in the Jerusalem area, southern West Bank settlements, and communities near the Dead Sea. Preceding the sirens by about five minutes, an early warning was issued to residents, alerting civilians of the long-range missile attack via a push notification on their phones.

There were no immediate reports of injuries or damage. A chunk of the missile landed in the South Hebron Hills area of the West Bank.

It was the third attack in four days, and the fifth since last Sunday.

Earlier this month, a Houthi missile slipped through air defenses and [hit the grounds](#) of Ben Gurion Airport, injuring six people, none of them seriously.

A slew of international carriers promptly halted services to Israel, though some have since said they will resume operations.

Smoke in the area of Ben Gurion Airport after a ballistic missile was fired at Israel from Yemen on May 4, 2025 (Screen grab from social media used in accordance with Clause 27a of the Copyright Law)

Israel responded to that attack with [strikes on Sanaa airport](#), causing an estimated \$500 million worth of damage. On Saturday, some flights to the Yemeni airport resumed.

The Israeli Air Force has also struck the Houthi-controlled Hodeida and Salif ports in Yemen in response to the Iran-backed group's repeated attacks on Israel. The Houthis vowed to respond and have since continued their missile attacks on Israel.

The Houthis — whose slogan calls for “Death to America, Death to Israel, [and] a Curse on the Jews” — began attacking Israel and general maritime traffic in November 2023, a month after the October 7 Hamas massacre.

The Houthis held their fire when a ceasefire was reached between Israel and Hamas in January 2025.

By that point, they had fired over 40 ballistic missiles and dozens of attack drones and cruise missiles at Israel, including one that killed a civilian and wounded several others in Tel Aviv in July, prompting Israel's first strike in Yemen.

Since March 18, when the IDF resumed its offensive against Hamas in the Gaza Strip, the Houthis in Yemen have launched 39 ballistic missiles and at least 10 drones at Israel. Several of the missiles have fallen short.

ISRAELI NAVY CARRIES OUT YEMEN STRIKES FOR 1ST TIME, TARGETING HOUTHİ PORT

**Likely the farthest-ever confirmed offensive action by Israeli missile boats, 1,800 km away;
previous strikes carried out by air force; missile fired from Yemen at Israel falls short**

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Emanuel Fabian](#) 10 June 2025



Destruction at the port in Yemen's city of Hodeida
after Israel's military warplanes struck Houthi rebel-held positions, on May 6, 2025. (AFP)

In a first, Israeli Navy missile boats on Tuesday morning launched strikes against infrastructure at the Houthi-controlled port of Hodeida in western Yemen, the military said in a statement.

There were no immediate reports of casualties.

The Israel Defense Forces said the strikes from the sea came in response to recent Houthi ballistic missile and drone attacks on Israel, the latest carried out on Monday night.

The strikes on Tuesday likely marked the farthest-ever confirmed offensive action carried out by Israeli Navy missile boats. Hodeida is located some 1,800 kilometers (1,100 miles) from Israel.

It marked the eleventh Israeli strike on the Houthis since the start of the conflict, with the previous 10 all having been carried out by the Israeli Air Force.

Military officials have previously said that Navy vessels are used for certain strikes instead of the traditional fighter jets or drones, due to their constant availability at sea and because the attacks can be launched more discreetly.

Since the last Israeli airstrikes on the Houthis in Yemen on May 28, the Iran-backed group has fired seven ballistic missiles and at least one drone at Israel. A missile fired Monday night fell short before reaching Israel.



An Israeli Navy missile boat is seen off the coast of Eilat, October 31, 2023. (Israel Defense Forces)

In its statement, the IDF said the strike Tuesday morning “was intended to deepen the damage to the military use of the port, which has been targeted by the IDF over the past year and continues to be used for terror activity.”

The port was used by the Houthis to “transfer weapons and serves as yet another example of the Houthi terror regime’s cynical exploitation of civilian infrastructure to advance terror operations,” the IDF said.

On Monday, the IDF issued an evacuation warning for the port, along with the nearby Ras Isa and Salif ports. The latter two were not targeted on Tuesday.



افيخاي ادرعي

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#عاجل تحذير لكل المتواجدين في الموانئ البحرية التي يسيطر عليها النظام الحوثي الإرهابي
ميناء رأس عيسى
ميناء الحديدة
ميناء الصليف

● أمامكم تحذير هام وعاجل ●

نظرًا لقيام النظام الحوثي الإرهابي باستخدام الموانئ البحرية لصالح أنشطته الإرهابية نحث جميع المتواجدين في هذه الموانئ [Show more](#)



8:45 PM · Jun 9, 2025



Following the strike, Defense Minister Israel Katz warned the Iran-backed group against continuing its attacks on Israel.

“We have warned the Houthi terror organization that if they continue to shoot at Israel, they will face a powerful response and be under a naval and aerial blockade,” Katz said.

“This is what we did today, and we will continue to do so in the future,” he added.



A Yemeni youth carries a mock missile during an anti-Israel rally in solidarity with Palestinians and the Gaza Strip, in the Houthi-run capital Sanaa, May 16, 2025. (Mohammed Huwais/AFP)

The Houthis — whose slogan calls for “Death to America, Death to Israel, [and] a Curse on the Jews” — began attacking Israel and general maritime traffic in November 2023, a month after the October 7 Hamas massacre.

They held their fire when a ceasefire was reached between Israel and Hamas in January 2025.

By that point, they had fired over 40 ballistic missiles and dozens of attack drones and cruise missiles at Israel, including one that killed a civilian and wounded several others in Tel Aviv in July, prompting Israel’s first strike in Yemen.

Since March 18, when the IDF resumed its offensive against Hamas in the Gaza Strip, the Houthis in Yemen have launched 47 ballistic missiles and at least 11 drones at Israel. Several of the missiles have fallen short.

IRAN AXIS OF RESISTANCE' - 4

**IRAN HAS BEEN THE AGGRESSOR SINCE 1979.
THEY HAVE LAUNCHED ATTACKS AROUND THE WORLD**



[Ted Deutch, CEO of American Jewish Committee](#)



[@AJCCEO](#)

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Iran has been the aggressor since 1979.

They have launched attacks around the world. They orchestrated the 1983 Marine barracks bombing in Lebanon, killing 241 American service members and 58 French service members.

They were responsible for the 1994 AMIA Jewish Center bombing in Argentina, killing 85 and injuring over 300.

They provided the IEDs that killed over a thousand American service members in Iraq and Afghanistan and injured countless more.

They brutally took foreign nationals - including Americans - hostage. They created a ring of terror proxies around Israel to do the same evil things.

They built a nuclear program to destroy Israel, but Israel defended itself, declaring, "Never Again." Iran told us what they wanted to do. We needed to believe them. Tonight, it is clear that we do.

God Bless America Am Yisrael Chai

[2:49 AM · Jun 17, 2025](#)

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THE SHAPE-SHIFTING 'AXIS OF RESISTANCE'

How Iran and its networks adapt to external pressures

CHATHAM HOUSE Research paper Published 6 March 2025 ISBN: 978 1 78413 636 9 DOI: [10.55317/9781784136369](https://doi.org/10.55317/9781784136369)



Show authors <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2025/03/shape-shifting-axis-resistance/01-introduction>

Iran and its allied groups in the Middle East form a loose coalition often collectively referred to as the 'axis of resistance'. The axis suffered significant setbacks in 2024, amid conflict with Israel and other political turbulence, leading some observers to conclude that its members – which now, along with Iran, comprise Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen and parts of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) in Iraq – have been seriously weakened or are even on the verge of defeat. Notwithstanding the collapse of the Bashar al-Assad regime – also until recently a part of the axis – in Syria, however, our research shows that the axis has historically proven much more resilient than this view allows.

Groups such as the PMF, Hezbollah or the Houthis are not mere 'non-state actors', but are entrenched within state structures and wield significant power in their own right. Axis members have developed economic relationships with multiple entities and states, both regionally and globally; these networks allow the axis to withstand external threats and policy interventions such as military strikes and sanctions.

This research paper examines how the axis uses cross-border financial flows and energy trading to transcend the traditional institutional and geographic boundaries of the states its members operate in. The paper shows how Western policy interventions to date have been unsuccessful owing to two factors: a focus on targeting the axis's individual components; and a limited understanding of its regional and global networks. The paper proposes a new approach, centred on mapping the axis's full reach, careful engagement with individual 'brokers' within its networks, and enforcement of accountability by enabling civil society and reformists.

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Summary

[Hide contents](#)

- [Summary](#)
- [01 Introduction](#)
- [02 How the axis was formed and how it has evolved](#)
- [03 Uncovering the axis's economic support networks](#)
- [04 Challenges to the axis's public authority](#)
- [05 Policy conclusions](#)
- [About the authors](#)
- [Acknowledgments](#)

Summary

- Following Hamas's 7 October 2023 attack on Israel, the Israeli government launched a transnational war aimed at reshaping the Middle East by weakening Iran and its allied groups, collectively known as the 'axis of resistance', some of which had launched missile strikes against Israel in support of their Palestinian allies. The loose coalition – which now, along with Iran, comprises Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen and parts of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) in Iraq – faced unprecedented challenges in 2024. Hezbollah suffered significant setbacks, including the loss of most of its senior leadership, and the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria – also until recently a part of the axis – was toppled by a popular uprising.
- The setbacks faced by the axis in these conflicts have led some observers and policymakers in Western countries to conclude that Iran and its allies are severely weakened. However, our research uncovers a series of adaptable networks that have historically enabled Iran to navigate and overcome various shocks, ensuring its survival through strategic alliances. In 2024, the weakening of Hezbollah by Israeli military action and the overthrow of the Assad regime in Syria pushed Iran to rely more on allies in Iraq and Yemen. Iran sought to extend its relationships beyond the axis, enhancing its established ties with China and Russia, while also engaging more with former geopolitical adversaries in the Middle East, including the Gulf Arab countries. These developments underscored that the axis was more than just a collection of its constituent parts.
- Too often, Iran's external relations are viewed solely through the lens of military cooperation. To gain a comprehensive understanding of Iran's engagement in the Middle East, this research paper specifically examines how the axis manages financial flows and its energy trade to transcend the traditional institutional and geographic boundaries of states. The findings reveal that the axis employs a networked approach to circumvent direct sanctions and other international interventions, while fostering relationships across the region and beyond.
- This adaptability is enhanced in the evolving global order, where the decline of US hegemony has given rise to a multi-aligned world, marked not by rigid 'spheres of influence' or a stable multipolar

order of counter-balancing blocs, but by a more fluid and unstable set of relationships. This dynamic situation enables Iran to forge connections not only within the axis and like-minded states and groups, but also with traditional allies of the West.

- The resilience of groups linked to the axis lies in maintaining both domestic and regional power. They navigate networks that span formal and informal economies, allowing them to capture supply chains and access crucial resources. Groups such as the PMF, Hezbollah or the Houthis are not mere 'non-state actors', but are rather entrenched within state structures, and wield significant power in their own right. Iran and these groups have developed economic relationships with multiple entities and states, both regionally and globally, further enhancing their influence and adaptability. The fall of the Assad regime in Syria in 2024 shows that this resilience depends on each group maintaining some degree of domestic authority and transnational connectivity – the Assad regime had lost too much of both.
- The US, the UK and like-minded states have struggled to counter or contain the axis, as their approaches remain centred on country-specific policies and programming that correspond to the traditional institutional and geographic boundaries of the state. Western governments have often targeted individual components of the axis in isolation, failing to develop a strategic approach that appreciates the interconnectivity between these elements and their regional and global links. Many of their policy tools are outdated, originating from a time when US unipolarity allowed for a simpler binary of 'us vs them'. The rise of multi-alignment requires a new approach.
- Measures such as military strikes, securitized borders, economic sanctions and building of alternative institutions have not fundamentally altered these networks. Instead, sanctions have harmed local populations more than the countries' elites. Even political settlements that ended armed conflicts often entrenched corruption, benefiting network members and not ordinary citizens, who continued to suffer from higher prices and restricted access to basic goods.
- This paper argues that a more effective approach to countering Iran and its allies involves a long-term strategy, built for a more multi-aligned world order. This approach is based on three interlinked processes and policy responses:
 - First, mapping the axis to reveal the complex interplay between state and non-state actors, allies and adversaries that contribute to its adaptability across formal and informal economies. Notably, US and UK allies also participate, sometimes unknowingly, in these supply chains.
 - Second, engaging with Iran and its axis partners rather than sidelining them, acknowledging that these groups are deeply embedded in the political economy of their respective countries and the wider region. Effective strategies should involve engaging with network 'brokers' who can influence decision-makers within the axis. As Tehran and its allies are weakened, Western policymakers can leverage their networks to broker deals centred on mutual

benefits, regional stability and limiting economic practices that fragment the state or harm the population.

- Finally, enforcing accountability on Iran and its partners. Any agreement with Iran should offer graduated sanctions relief in exchange for verifiable limits on both nuclear enrichment, and regional military and economic activities. Critically, political settlements should develop robust accountability mechanisms to mitigate negative impacts on populations. Civil society and reformists provide better checks on the domestic power of Iran-affiliated groups in each country than an over-reliance on punitive sanctions.

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WHAT IS IRAN'S 'AXIS OF RESISTANCE'?

REUTERS April 13, 2024



[1/2] A cleric member of Basij paramilitary forces attends a rally in support of Palestinians, in Tehran, Iran, November 24, 2023. Majid Asgarpour/WANA (West Asia News Agency) via REUTERS/File Photo Purchase Licensing Rights

Iran said it launched dozens of attack drones at Israel on Saturday, in an assault that could trigger a major escalation between the regional archenemies.

Iran had vowed to [retaliate](#) against Israel for an airstrike on its embassy compound in Damascus, adding to concerns about the potential for further escalation of conflict in the Middle East.

Iran has so far played no direct role in the conflict that has spread through the region since the onset of the [Gaza war](#) six months ago, while backing groups that have taken part by attacking Israel, U.S. interests, and Red Sea shipping.

Netanyahu and his government use partial agreements as a cover for the political agenda, which is based on continuing the war of extermination and starvation.00:3200:45

Built up over years or decades of Iranian support, the groups describe themselves as the "Axis of Resistance" to Israel and U.S. influence in the Middle East.

The Axis includes not only Hamas, the Palestinian group that ignited the war by attacking Israel on Oct. 7, but also: the Hezbollah movement in Lebanon; the Houthi movement in Yemen; various Shi'ite armed groups in Iraq; and Syria.

LEBANON'S HEZBOLLAH

[Hezbollah](#), meaning "Party of God", was set up by Iran's Revolutionary Guards in 1982 with the aim of fighting Israeli forces that had invaded Lebanon that year. The heavily armed group, also an influential political player, shares Iran's Shi'ite Islamist ideology and is widely regarded as more powerful than the Lebanese state.

Hezbollah has served as a model for other Iranian-backed groups across the region, some of which it has advised or trained. The United States and other governments including U.S.-allied Gulf Arab countries list Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation.

The group has been mounting near-daily attacks on Israeli targets at the Lebanese-Israeli border since early October, prompting the heaviest exchanges of fire between the enemies since a full-scale war in 2006.

Hezbollah says its attacks have helped to stretch the Israeli army while also uprooting tens of thousands of Israelis who have fled homes near the border. Israeli air and artillery strikes have forced tens of thousands of Lebanese to flee.

Israeli security sources say Israel has killed some 240 Hezbollah fighters including top commanders in Lebanon since Oct. 7, in addition to a further 30 killed in Israeli strikes in Syria.

Overall, this equals Hezbollah's losses in the 2006 war.

A [U.S. envoy](#) has been engaged in efforts to prevent the violence from spiralling into an even bigger conflict.

YEMEN'S HOUTHIS

The [Houthi movement](#) established control over large parts of Yemen during a civil war that began in 2014 when it seized Sanaa and overthrew the government, which was backed by Saudi Arabia, the region's leading Sunni Muslim power and Iran's main rival for regional influence. The Houthis belong to the Zaydi sect of Shi'ite Islam and have long had friendly ties to Iran.

The Yemen war pitched them into conflict with Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies who, wary of Iran's broadening sway, intervened in the war in 2015 in support of the ousted government. Saudi Arabia has in recent years backed diplomatic efforts to end the war, last September [hosting Houthi negotiators](#) in Riyadh.

The Houthis announced on Oct. 31 they had entered the conflict by firing drones and [missiles towards Israel](#).

In November, they expanded their role by attacking shipping in the southern Red Sea, saying they were aiming at vessels belonging to Israelis or heading to Israeli ports - though some of the targeted ships had no known Israeli links.

The campaign prompted the United States and Britain in January to launch air strikes against Houthi targets in Yemen. The Houthis declared all U.S. and British ships and warships taking part in "the aggression" would be targets for its strikes.

The attacks have [disrupted international commerce](#) on the shortest shipping route between Europe and Asia, leading some shipping companies to reroute their vessels.

The United States believes [Iran's Revolutionary Guards](#) (IRGC) have been helping to plan and carry out the Houthi missile and drone attacks. Iran denies involvement.

Sources told Reuters in January that commanders from the IRGC and Hezbollah are on the ground in Yemen [helping to direct](#) and oversee Houthi attacks on Red Sea shipping. The Houthis denied any Hezbollah or Iranian involvement.

The United States returned the Houthis to its list of designated terrorist groups in response to the shipping attacks.

The Saudi-led coalition fighting the Houthis has long accused Iran of arming, training and funding the group. The Houthis deny being an Iranian proxy.

ISLAMIC RESISTANCE IN IRAQ

Shi'ite groups with ties to Iran emerged as powerful players in Iraq after the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, and developed militias with tens of thousands of fighters.

An umbrella group of Shi'ite Islamist armed factions called Islamic Resistance in Iraq began targeting U.S. forces stationed in Iraq and Syria in October, saying they aimed to respond to Israeli attacks on Palestinians in Gaza and to resist U.S. forces deployed in Iraq and the region.

The attacks stopped after a drone strike killed three U.S. soldiers in Jordan on Jan. 28, prompting heavy retaliatory U.S. airstrikes on Iran-linked targets in [Syria and Iraq](#).

Reuters reported in February that the head of Iran's Quds Force [asked the militias to lie low](#) to avoid U.S. strikes on their senior commanders, destruction of key infrastructure or even a direct retaliation against Iran.

On April 1, Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed responsibility for an aerial attack on [Eilat](#) in Israel.

Shi'ite armed groups fighting as part of Hashd al-Shaabi, or the Popular Mobilisation Forces, had played a leading role in Iraq in battling the ultra-hardline Sunni Islamist Islamic State group, which controlled swathes of Iraq and Syria between 2013 and 2017.

While members of these Shi'ite armed groups receive state salaries and are technically under the authority of the prime minister, they often operate outside the Iraqi military chain of command.

The groups that targeted U.S. forces included Kataib Hezbollah and the Nujaba group, both of which are closely linked to Iran's Revolutionary Guards. Their arsenal includes explosive drones, rockets and ballistic missiles.

The groups are designated terrorist organisations by the United States.

SYRIA

The Syrian government led by President Bashar al-Assad is part of the Axis of Resistance but has not played any direct role in the current conflict.

However, Syrian territory has been an arena of escalation.

This has included attacks by Iran-backed militias on U.S. forces in the east, Israeli airstrikes in Syria against Iranian personnel and members of Hezbollah, and occasional exchanges of fire between the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights and southwest Syria.

The Syrian government has for decades been a close ally of Iran, and Iran-backed forces have deployed across much of Syria since arriving more than a decade ago to aid Assad in the Syrian civil war. Tehran and Damascus says Iranian forces are in Syria in an advisory role at the government's invitation.

DOWN BUT NOT OUT: REASSESSING THE AXIS OF RESISTANCE

[THE CENTURY FOUNDATION](#) [Veena Ali-Khan](#) Fellow, and [Thanassis Cambanis](#) Senior Fellow and Director of Century International, March 19 2025



The events of the last year have upended many assumptions about the Axis of Resistance, the loosely defined network of Iran and its core partners. For as long as the Islamic Republic of Iran has sought to export revolution and project power in the Arab Middle East, surprisingly persistent debates have raged over core questions. Did Iran tightly command a network of proxies and dependents—or did it stand at the center of a loose network of like-minded groups and opportunistic fellow travelers? Did the almost-nuclear Axis of Resistance pose a strategic challenge to Israel, the United States, and Saudi Arabia—or was it a serious but limited military challenger capable of disrupting its enemies but not containing them? Were Iran and the Axis better than their competitors at urban warfare, more ideologically persuasive, and better at motivating allies and agents—or was their power overestimated by adversaries who read too much wider significance into the outcomes of the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the Lebanon–Israel war of 2006?

During the past year of regional warfare across the Middle East, Iran and its Axis of Resistance broke long-standing taboos that had limited escalation and avoided direct conflict between Iran and Israel. It turned out that Iran and its Axis partners had created a reputation that far exceeded their actual powers. Now, in the aftermath of a series of catastrophic defeats for the Axis of Resistance, their emboldened rivals—including Israel, the United States, and local competitors across the Middle East—risk a new mistake: dangerously underestimating the Iran-backed web of militias and hybrid actors.

This period of ongoing transformation is a time for questions and hypotheses rather than premature assessment. Iran's regime, Hezbollah, and Hamas are substantially weakened—but no one can yet say for sure just how weakened. Key Axis of Resistance groups will continue to play a regional role, and in their local spheres of influence might even continue to dominate rivals. The question is not whether these groups can be completely sidelined—they cannot. It's how much power they will wield.

This report tries to make sense of the new state of play. It marks a first step in a long reappraisal, which will continue as the Middle East's ongoing wave of regional conflict moves toward its next equilibrium. A

subsequent companion report, “The Axis of Resistance Returns to Its Local Roots,” will assess the main surviving Axis players that closely coordinate with Tehran, and their evolving strategies since October 7. This research into the Axis today challenges earlier assumptions—including the authors’ own—about the Axis’s capabilities. At the same time, it cautions against a simplistic wholesale dismissal of Iran and its partners. Before the United States or Israel declares Mission Accomplished, policymakers need to take a hard look at how entrenched and relevant the Axis of Resistance groups still remain.

Fresh analysis suggests some initial conclusions. The Axis had a limited regional reach, was unable to deter Israel—and cannot deter Israel now. At the same time, resistance militias retain substantial local firepower, which they can leverage for national or subnational power even with a diminished regional profile. Not all resistance actors are alike—some, like the Assad regime, appear gone forever, while others, like the Houthis of Yemen, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Hamas in Palestine, remain indisputably powerful in their domestic contexts. Finally, the season of untrammelled interstate competition, the revival of crude imperial mores, and the [maximalism of Israel and its partners](#)—intended to once and for all diffuse the challenge mounted by Iran’s alliance network—could actually trigger a revival of Axis ideology and grassroots power.¹

Military losses have transformed the Axis, revealed some of the exaggerations around its abilities, and significantly weakened its short-term potency. Yet the Axis retains economic and political might. For many policymakers who work on the Middle East, the [events of the last year](#) have made a mockery of the Axis—“[a house of cards](#)”—and proved its sponsor, Iran, to be a paper tiger.² But in reality, it is far too soon to write the obituary for the Axis of Resistance.

A BAD YEAR FOR THE AXIS

There is little debate that 2024 was devastating for the Axis of Resistance.

Israel broke Hezbollah’s military capacity and eviscerated its leadership with a combination of technological superiority, [remarkable intelligence penetration](#),³ and ruthlessness. Before the year was out, Israel had assassinated a who’s who of Axis leaders, including Hassan Nasrallah of Hezbollah, in Beirut, and Hamas leaders Yahya Sinwar in Gaza and Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran. Retaliatory strikes by Iran and the Houthis, from Yemen, cratered Israeli roads and rattled nerves, but did little significant damage. And finally, in December, Turkish-backed Islamist rebels in Syria deposed the regime of Bashar al-Assad, which, even as it had become something of a reputational liability for Iran, had remained a logistical linchpin for the Axis.

Still, after considerable reversals, the Axis commands tens or perhaps hundreds of thousands of fighters spread across the entire Middle East. These groups still have significant weapons and means of financing, some of which are acquired through channels that analysts are only beginning to understand. They retain local constituencies and continue to operate as states within states. They maintain their links to Iran, which, within limits, still coordinates their activity and aid. Less tangibly, an ideological vibrancy of opposition to Israel and the United States continues to animate the Axis—even as the depth of commitment to that ideology varies among Axis groups.

The administrations of Donald Trump and Benjamin Netanyahu appear intent on bulldozing forward on their [expansive Middle Eastern agendas](#)⁴ while treating the Axis of Resistance as a broken alliance whose leftover parts might need to be mopped up here and there, but which no longer pose a real threat. The United States and Israel make these assumptions at their own peril—and at the risk of security and stability throughout the region.

Instead, policymakers should seek to stop the Axis groups from wreaking more havoc by focusing on three lines of analysis: the new threats posed by these groups; their deep popular support; and the failures of rights, governance, and security that continue to make Axis groups relevant in Lebanon, Yemen, Palestine, Iraq, and elsewhere. With the traditional military options of the Axis hobbled, it will, in all likelihood, look for ways to inflict economic pain (think Red Sea shipping), target less-fortified U.S. allies in the Gulf, and ramp up other types of asymmetric attacks.

ROOTS OF “RESISTANCE”

This report defines the Axis of Resistance as the Iran-led alliance of states and sub-state or hybrid actors in the Middle East. The Axis is an open alliance; the groups it comprises, including Iran, declare their membership and share a common political-military project of opposing Israel and the United States. Some alliance members share additional projects or ideologies, including millenarian Shia eschatology, armed struggle against Israel, a global gray economy designed to subvert Western sanctions and financial institutions, or the regional production of weapons systems (in particular, drones and long-range missiles).

Notwithstanding these bonds and similarities, however, the Axis of Resistance is, at heart, an informal network—more than a centralized alliance—and is not known to be bound by formal treaties or agreements. The exact modality of connection between Axis groups and Iran—including how much assistance these groups receive from Iran, and how much autonomy they enjoy—has been the subject of much debate for many years. Researchers have nearly reached a consensus, however, that while these groups must closely coordinate with Iran, they also have a great degree of independence, and are at least as beholden to their local constituencies as they are to Iranian backers.

The Axis of Resistance, after the fall of Assad, includes Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis (also known as Ansar Allah) in Yemen, Hamas in Palestine, multiple Shia militias in Iraq, the Iranian state, and some Iranian sub-state or hybrid actors under the aegis of the Iranian state. Each of these groups established themselves for different reasons of local concern. Hamas is a descendant of the Muslim Brotherhood, established in 1987 as a Sunni Islamist movement to represent the national interests of the Palestinian people; it has, of course, evolved into much more. Iran helped establish Hezbollah as a Shia Islamist militia in 1982 to resist the Israeli invasion and occupation of Lebanon. The militant group succeeded in expelling Israeli occupiers in 2000, and has since grown into a much bigger entity, both entwined with the Lebanese state and functionally independent. In Yemen, the Houthis formed as a Shia Islamist movement in the 1990s to represent the country’s large and marginalized Shia minority. They later became a key player in Yemen’s ongoing civil war. Iraqi Shia Islamist affiliates like Kata’ib Hezbollah and Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba’ emerged during the American-led occupation after the 2003 invasion, but gained more power,

popularity, and relevance by joining Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units in the fight against the Islamic State from 2014.

From these diverse local contexts, these groups converged on a few common transnational aims, without ever giving up their local concerns, and in the process gained the support of Tehran.

The term "Axis of Resistance" emerged in the 2000s, perhaps as an opportunistic reaction to President George W. Bush's "Axis of Evil" coinage. Lebanese Hezbollah and Iran invoked "resistance" and "Islamic resistance" from their founding days, and seem to have quickly and comfortably adopted the "axis" moniker to showcase the idea of Iranian power. Hezbollah foregrounded its resistance identity at least all the way back to its foundational public statement of ideology, the [1985 "Open Letter"](#) published in the Lebanese newspaper *As-Safir*.⁵ Over the decades, the group has [lessened the public emphasis on jihad or the Islamic dimensions of its ideology](#), while consistently centering resistance against Israel and the United States.⁶ The Houthis foundational slogan, the *sarkha* doesn't explicitly use the word "resistance," but references the fight against Israel and the United States.⁷

The Axis gained more currency as a concept throughout the Middle East after the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel. In that war, Lebanon endured a punishing Israeli air campaign, but Hezbollah emerged with a stronger hand, and Nasrallah became one of the most popular and trusted leaders in the Arab world.

The Axis of Resistance moniker was much more than a catchy nickname or unifying credo. The "unity of fronts" doctrine held that all Axis members should attack or hold fire together.

But the Axis of Resistance moniker was much more than a catchy nickname or unifying credo. From around the time that the term came into use, Iran also began treating its members as part of a common project against U.S. and Israeli goals in the Middle East, best encapsulated in the "unity of fronts" doctrine that Tehran promoted with all its partners. The upshot of this doctrine was that all Axis members should attack or hold fire together, increasing their leverage against Israel and the United States.

As the Axis of Resistance grew stronger and added more members in the last two decades, it gained an aura of near invincibility. Analysts frequently assumed that Axis members had additional tricks up their sleeves, and if Israeli military excesses went too far, the groups would respond with damaging counterattacks, reveal new weaponry, or ensnare an overly stretched Israeli military in their web. Media outlets affiliated with the Axis of Resistance and key leaders of these groups [conveyed the impression](#) that they possessed the capability to launch a sweeping, multipronged assault on Israel—where they could catch Israel off guard, undermine its military superiority, and drain its American-supplied resources.⁸ This ability, they argued, meant the Axis could balance Western powers despite its apparent disadvantage in conventional military strength. The network's geographic spread—often referred to as the "Shia Crescent"—encircled Israel. The Axis presented access to Iranian-supplied weaponry, alongside burgeoning domestic production capabilities in certain regions, as [a critical factor capable of sharply tipping the balance of power in their favor](#)—a view supported by notable analysts.⁹

The aftermath of Hamas's October 7 attacks proved that much of this aura was overblown. Analysts, including the authors of this report, have had to reevaluate their pre-Gaza-war assumptions about Axis capabilities.

THE UNDERPERFORMING AXIS

The Hamas surprise attack on Israel on October 7, 2023 upended the existing norms of conflict in the region. Hamas exposed profound vulnerabilities in Israeli security. The Palestinian group massacred Israeli citizens and took hostages at scale, triggering Israel and the United States [to abandon any remaining restraints](#) in their approach to war.¹⁰

But as Israel laid waste to Gaza in response to the Hamas attacks, and then adventured beyond Israeli borders to fight other Axis groups, assassinate leaders at will, [and directly strike Tehran](#),¹¹ the Axis began to lose its sheen. Iran, it turned out, was not able to coordinate and control the Axis military capabilities—and many of the most vaunted deterrent capabilities versus Israel either collapsed under wartime pressure or had never existed. Internal fissures among Axis members proved a significant impediment to Iran's supposed "unity of fronts." A prime example of these fissures were the October 7 attacks themselves, which Hamas reportedly kept secret from Iran, in an apparent bid to draw the entire Axis into a defense of Hamas without prior agreement.

As the Gaza war unfolded, powerful forces like Lebanon's Hezbollah, Iraq's Kata'ib Hezbollah, the Houthis, and even the ailing Assad regime in Syria ended up prioritizing their own national or domestic interests over Iran's priorities or the Hamas–Israel war. And Iran's retaliatory missile strikes against Israel had, at most, limited strategic impact.

Hezbollah, vaunted as Iran's most capable and disciplined military partner, was also unable to check Israel's military aims. The day after Hamas's October 7 attack, Hezbollah entered the fray as part of the "unity of fronts" strategy, [launching a rocket at Israeli positions at Shebaa farms](#), a portion of Lebanese territory that Israel has long occupied.¹² Confident in its ability to set the rules of engagement and convinced that Israel, like itself, wanted to avoid spreading the Gaza war to Lebanon, Hezbollah miscalculated and severely underestimated Israel's resolve.

The Lebanese group initially demanded a truce in exchange for a cessation of its attacks. However, backed into a corner, [Hezbollah dropped that demand](#) and agreed to the Hezbollah–Israel truce in November.¹³

The fall of 2024 delivered blow after blow to the group. Israel infiltrated Hezbollah's supply chain, [booby-trapping thousands of pagers and walkie-talkies](#), injuring thousands and debilitating its communication network.¹⁴ The Hezbollah position dramatically deteriorated following [the assassination of longtime leader Hassan Nasrallah](#) in an Israeli airstrike on September 27.¹⁵ Just two days later, [Israel assassinated his successor, Hashem Safieddine](#).¹⁶ Then, on October 1, [Israeli forces crossed into southern Lebanon](#).¹⁷ Israel's relentless airstrikes also decimated Hezbollah's military infrastructure and obliterated much of its missile arsenal.

Hezbollah could not even effectively resist Israel's ongoing campaign to destroy Lebanese infrastructure and depopulate border areas. Today, Hezbollah has been reduced to its weakest condition since the late 1980s. Israel has repeatedly reneged on the November ceasefire agreement, with no apparent consequence, and now says it will [indefinitely occupy five hilltops in Lebanese territory](#).¹⁸

Other Axis threats of mayhem turned out to be exaggerated. The Axis lacked both the infrastructure and the technological know-how to sustain a prolonged, multifront campaign against Israel. Rather than operating as a cohesive, coordinated force, the network seemed bound more by rhetoric. Houthi leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi's threats to escalate to "much higher levels" and Kata'ib Hezbollah's fiery denunciations of Israeli airstrikes as "treacherous" made headlines, but delivered little in the way of tangible results.

But while the Houthis have caused problems for Israel and its partners, and have disrupted global shipping, they have not reversed the region's strategic balance of power. Though the Houthis occasionally launched surprise strikes that pierced Israel's Iron Dome, these attacks were sporadic and lacked strategic impact. Instead, Iraqi and Yemeni groups relied on symbolic acts—drone strikes and joint operations—that felt more like political theatre than military might.

Iraq's resistance factions threaten neither the Iraqi state nor U.S. reach. Syria's dictatorial dynasty, which styled itself a jewel in the crown of the Axis and the indispensable cornerstone in Iran's much ballyhooed and ultimately phantom "land bridge" and the Shia Crescent, evaporated in a single week in December.

A NEW STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE

The cascade that began on October 7 continues, and is likely to surge well into the second Trump term. Opportunists from Washington to Ankara to Tel Aviv to Riyadh entertain hopes of remaking a regional order in their favor. Their military ventures might smack of overreach, and certainly involve new lows in ethnic cleansing and war crimes—but they also reflect a sea change in the regional balance of power and order of battle. The upheaval has particularly spotlighted the fragility of Iran's military strategy.

Analysts thought that the Axis could not be fully dismantled, thanks to its horizontal structure. According to that thinking, [the network would seamlessly replace killed leaders](#), ensuring continuity.¹⁹ But after the United States assassinated Qassem Soleimani in January 2020, the Axis transitioned from a top-down, Iranian-driven hierarchy to a more horizontally integrated alliance. This shift was already underway before the assassination but gained momentum under the leadership of his successor, Esmail Qaani. Soleimani was the commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps' (IRGC) Quds Force, and had spent decades talent-spotting in the region, and cultivating personal relationships with every major Resistance leader. Perhaps the Axis never recovered the operational capacity that resided in those relationships. While Iran retained its role as the strategic architect, the new structure granted members greater autonomy and allowed them to forge independent ties with Tehran and one another.

Resistance leaders still seek, in their propaganda, to portray an ironclad alliance. But the Axis today is shaken—and shaky.

While Resistance leaders still seek, in their propaganda, to portray an ironclad alliance, the Axis today is shaken and shaky—a network still figuring out how to adapt. Israel’s campaign in Lebanon severely compromised Hezbollah’s military reach, disrupted the group’s command structure, neutralized Hezbollah’s supposed missile advantage, and almost certainly forced Tehran to rethink its total dependence on the Lebanese group to fight Israel. Hezbollah’s well-trained cadre of committed infantry fighters remains, but the balance of deterrence and threat has shifted in Israel’s favor. And Hezbollah’s collapse set the stage for the fall of Damascus—a critical hub for Iranian weapon transfers and coordination. Now, Syria is led by former members of the Sunni jihadist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, and from Iran’s perspective has flipped from being a linchpin in Tehran’s regional alliance structure to being a fiercely anti-Iran state.

SHIFTING REGIONAL CAST OF CHARACTERS

Regional dynamics since October 7 are transforming at a dizzying pace. The new state of play of the multiple overlapping power struggles in the Middle East is a radical departure from the past. Previous alliances persist, in broad strokes, but the relative strength of states and hybrid actors is quickly changing, and the fracturing of the Axis has left a power vacuum. Four major players—Saudi Arabia, Israel, Turkey, and the United States—are emerging as pivotal forces (for now) in a seismic regional realignment. This power shift is creating a high-stakes scramble for political and geostrategic gains.

Today’s Middle East features the Axis of Resistance in competition with another loose coalition that includes Saudi Arabia; the United Arab Emirates and their anti-Houthi proxies in Yemen; Israel; Jordan; Egypt; the Kurdish statelet in northeast Syria; and the United States. Other regional players are more fluid in their alliances. Turkey, Qatar, Iraq, the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government, the new leadership in Syria, and jihadist groups like the Islamic State and the al-Qaeda successor groups—none of these entities have fixed allegiances when it comes to the major regional competition.

The weak state system in the Middle East has encouraged a proliferation of powerful hybrid actors, which draw on state power but operate without many of the traditional constraints of states.²⁰ This sprawling cast of characters has begun shifting with greater speed and more confusion than ever before, in reaction to Trump’s shattering of international norms—a process that has accelerated and become strikingly unpredictable since he began his second term. Trump is putatively an isolationist, and has [entertained conflicting messages on Iran](#).²¹ On the one hand, he has professed a new openness to diplomacy.²² On the other hand, he has [officially renewed the American “maximum pressure” campaign on Iran](#) and seems just as capable of suddenly deciding he needs to crush Tehran.²³ A decision to go to war against Iran, despite its risks, could gain consensus among more Republicans, particularly because the United States is now more closely aligned with Israel than ever before. The catalyst for an American intervention might be a decision by Israel, not Washington. U.S. intelligence agencies [recently warned that Israel is likely to strike facilities that are crucial to Iran’s nuclear programs](#), and Israel has not given up on its broader goal of causing regime change.²⁴ A retaliatory strike from Tehran could [pull the United States into a conflagration it never intended to join](#).²⁵

The events of the last year have also upended the Levant, with unpredictable consequences. Hezbollah's defeat opened the way for the first Lebanese government since 2008 that does not give veto power to Hezbollah. Hezbollah had also been a protector of the Assad regime, and the Lebanese group's weakening paved the way for Assad's surrendering of power to a relatively small group of rebels backed by Turkey. The state of flux in Syria and Iran's actual and perceived weakness creates systemic instability. Prior to October 7, the perception of Iranian strength created some predictability, structure, and guardrails between Hezbollah and Israel, for example, as well as between the United States and Iraqi resistance factions. In other arenas, most notably Yemen and Syria, the perceived strength of Iran might have served to intensify rather than limit armed conflict. Today, Iran's limitations invite new and renewed challenges from states and sub-state players who seek a chance to advance their own causes and interests.

NEW RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Even Middle Eastern powers that were not directly involved in conflict with the Axis or its enemies have experienced major changes in risks and opportunities in the last year. Turkey, for example, [has emerged as the new dominant force in Syria](#).²⁶ Ankara could now serve as a vital conduit, facilitating Moscow and Tehran's efforts to reconnect with Damascus. Meanwhile, with Turkish allies in charge in Syria, Turkey's dependence on both Iran and Russia has waned considerably. Yet Ankara is likely to navigate these waters with care, avoiding outright provocation of Russia and Iran. This carefulness may involve granting Iran's allies limited room to maneuver—so long as Turkish economic interests remain firmly protected, [especially its desire to monopolize regional energy transit routes bridging the Middle East and Europe](#).²⁷

For its part, Saudi Arabia could capitalize on its growing edge over Iran, boldly advancing its bid for regional leadership. Even if Riyadh works to sideline Tehran, it will likely also continue to play a calculated game—sticking to its recalibrated foreign policy, emerging from 2019 onwards, [which aims to deepen economic and political ties with rival powers](#).²⁸ The turning point for Saudi Arabia came that year, when the billions it had spent on U.S. weapons failed to prevent an attack on the Kingdom's most critical oil sites—at the peak of Trump's first maximum pressure campaign. (The Houthis claimed the attack, [but Riyadh and Washington blamed Tehran](#).²⁹) The biggest source of distress from this incident for Saudi Arabia was the lack of immediate U.S. support. But Riyadh also drew a more general conclusion: [it could no longer rely on the United States as the guarantor of Gulf security](#).³⁰ Hence, Saudi Arabia [sought to contain regional conflicts](#) by prioritizing negotiations with Tehran and its allies, to distance itself from U.S.–Iranian tensions that could forestall its economic ambitions.³¹

Riyadh also drew a more general conclusion: it could no longer rely on the United States as the guarantor of Gulf security.

The Saudi strategy also extended to reestablishing diplomatic ties with Tehran, to reduce the risk of attacks on its economic interests if chaos spiraled out of control in the region.

Saudi Arabia, following this logic, is carefully maintaining communication channels with Iran and its allies, balancing diplomacy while relying on others—such as the United States and Israel—to adopt a more

aggressive posture against Tehran and its influence network. Riyadh recognizes that, despite its setbacks, Iran is here to stay and its geographic proximity places the Kingdom at the most risk. By offering the carrot of dialogue while quietly allowing the stick wielded by its partners, the Kingdom can watch Tehran's clout weaken over time without intervening. As one Saudi analyst aptly noted in an interview, this approach allows Riyadh to maintain plausible deniability while keeping its strategic ambitions firmly on track.³²

Saudi Arabia is also embracing its long-sought role as a mediator. The Kingdom hosted top American and Russian officials for talks on Ukraine, [signalling a huge shift in global diplomacy](#).³³ Its public float to mediate future Iran–U.S. negotiations over a new nuclear deal signals, to Trump, the Kingdom's value as an ally and strategically sets up Saudi Arabia as the most influential force in the Middle East. Riyadh is striving for a diplomatic win in one of these files. In exchange, the Kingdom hopes that the United States will step up its security commitments since, at this point, any attacks on Saudi Arabia by Axis-aligned groups would have more severe global repercussions. While the Kingdom is unlikely to replace other key regional diplomatic heavyweights, like Qatar and Oman, Riyadh's efforts to remain in Trump's good grace may indeed push Tehran to the side. The maneuver has already sparked concern in Iran, as evidenced by media reports that the government is decrying more aggressive Saudi posturing in Lebanon and Syria.³⁴

For the Emirates, these shifts could present a long-awaited opportunity. Securing U.S. backing for an offensive in Hodeida, Yemen, to dislodge the Houthis from the Red Sea—a long-standing Emirati goal previously thwarted by earlier U.S. administrations—might now finally be within reach. At the same time, regional actors are already forging stronger ties with Syria's new leadership while working to weaken Hezbollah's political control in Lebanon.

A picture of a man and a Hezbollah flag lie on a temporary grave, as graves of civilians and fighters are exhumed for relocation on December 4, 2024 in Tyre, Lebanon. Source: Ed Ram/Getty Images

THE LIMITS OF RESISTANCE IDEOLOGY

Western policy narratives, reflected most clearly in statements by Israeli and U.S. leaders, sometimes oversimplify the Axis of Resistance as a tightly controlled alliance of Iranian proxies that fight in lockstep at Tehran's orders, and share unifying ideologies—for the Shia members of the network, in *wilayat al-faqih* (the doctrine of absolute leadership by clerics), and, for all members, in a project of resisting Israel and the United States while seeking to liberate Palestine.³⁵

In reality, at fraught junctures, the alliance between Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, and Hamas has often been strained, and the parties have sometimes even clashed. While its members share a deep animosity toward Israel and the United States—and share the overarching goal of driving them out of the region—recent events have shown that most are more concerned about domestic priorities and survival.

Take the example of Kata'ib Hezbollah, an Iraqi Axis group that has a similar name to the famous Lebanese party but is a completely distinct entity with a mostly local agenda. As Israel broadened its assault on Gaza in the winter after the October 7 attacks, Kata'ib Hezbollah entered the fray on January 28, 2024 with [a drone attack on an American outpost in Jordan called Tower 22](#), killing three U.S. soldiers.³⁶ Yet after Iran

subsequently pleaded with Kata'ib Hezbollah to call a ceasefire, the Iraqi faction quickly opted for restraint, avoiding further moves that might have spiraled into a costly confrontation.

Other Axis members were even less involved after October 7. Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, despite owing his regime's survival to Iranian and Hezbollah support, [chose to stay completely on the sidelines of the conflict](#).³⁷ Even after Israeli airstrikes in Damascus destroyed key Iranian assets in April 2024, Assad [resisted Iranian calls for retaliation](#) and focused instead on his diplomatic promises to the Emirates.³⁸ Assad even reportedly facilitated Israeli strikes on Iranian targets inside Syria, apparently in [a bid to limit Iranian leverage over his regime](#).³⁹

The individual domestic concerns of Axis groups, which more often than not surpassed the broader goals of the Axis, were most evident in Hezbollah's decision to pursue a ceasefire deal with Israel. The move stemmed not from solidarity with the "Palestinian cause" but from a hard calculus of survival. The Lebanese group understood that prolonging the war could decimate its forces and alienate its local support base—a risk it couldn't afford to take. This stark pragmatism shows the limits of the Axis's unity, exposing a network that prioritizes self-preservation over ideological commitment when its survival is at stake.

Illicit financial networks have consolidated over time, affording the Axis groups a degree of financial autonomy.

However, while the Axis is less than an ironclad alliance, it is also more than a loose network of Iran-aligned groups. It relies on an intricate global web of financial systems to launder money, facilitate arms shipments, and sustain military operations across its ranks. While Israel, bolstered by U.S. support, has inflicted devastating blows to the Axis's military capabilities, Axis financial and logistical networks remain largely intact. These groups operate within an extensive shadow financial network that was initially created by Iran, but which has since taken on a life of its own. The IRGC uses sophisticated strategies that involve [transnational organized crime groups](#)—exploiting diaspora networks—and setting up sham businesses to launder money and sidestep international sanctions.⁴⁰ The Corps relies on [hawala](#), an informal money trader system, to clandestinely circulate funds without being detected by authorities.⁴¹ Such illicit financial networks have consolidated over time, and have afforded the Axis groups a degree of financial autonomy to sustain operations even when direct Iranian support is limited. These networks will certainly survive the loss of Axis military capabilities, and could even provide the basis for a revised form of transnational influence for the Axis.

OVERESTIMATED BUT STILL IMPORTANT

A subsequent Century International report, "The Axis of Resistance Returns to Its Local Roots," will examine in close detail the shifting capabilities and interests of the most powerful remaining Axis actors that still coordinate closely: the Iranian state, the Houthis in Yemen, and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

For as long as the Islamic Republic of Iran has sought to export revolution and project power in the Arab Middle East, surprisingly persistent debates have raged over core questions about the degree of Iran's control over its allies and partners, their collective military power, and their ability to coordinate politically,

ideologically, and tactically. Today, a clearer picture is emerging. Iran appears to stand at the center of a loose network of like-minded groups and opportunistic fellow travelers—not at the top of a hierarchical, tightly controlled alliance of proxies, allies and dependents. Despite Iran’s nuclear program and missile arsenal, its Axis did not prove a strategic match to Israel and the United States. It can disrupt regional competitors, but not contain or deter them. Previous battlefield successes—against U.S. forces in Iraq, Israeli forces in Lebanon, and Syrian revolutionaries—did not translate into regional capacity against Israel’s highly motivated and technologically advanced state military, which enjoyed untrammelled support from the United States.

Governments and analysts believed, prior to October 7, that Iran and its network possessed deterrent and strike capabilities that did not materialize. Further research might reveal the explanation for these overestimations of Axis power—whether the Axis lied to exaggerate its own power, or whether Israel penetrated and disrupted Axis capabilities that were real but too weakly defended.

Axis failures since October 7 should not obscure the capabilities it retains. The Axis maintains a flexible network for illicit finance, smuggling, and arms construction. Locally, Axis forces in Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, Yemen, and Iran retain determined fighters and considerable materiel. Axis forces couldn’t fight a coordinated regional war, but they can still exercise coercive power in their domestic arenas—and can still disrupt their more powerful adversaries using asymmetric spoiler tactics.

Israel’s ongoing campaign across the Middle East might soon veer into overreach. So too might the aspirations of local Axis opponents in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, all of which are trying to change the local balance of power and dominate Axis groups that were recently ascendant or untouchable. But these Axis groups, diminished though they may be on a regional level, still possess the power to repel or even dominate their local competitors. Similarly, constituencies of the failed Resistance project, like the remnants of the Assad regime, are contained right now, but will be able to contest power, or undermine their opponents, if they mobilize. The apparent defeat of the Axis could well be the prelude to a new phase of miscalculation and overreach that leads to another period of destabilizing conflict and state erosion in the Middle East.

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Header Image: Senior commanders of Iran’s Basij paramilitary force march in a parade of troops during military exercises on January 10 in Tehran, Iran. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Basij, a paramilitary group that has played a prominent role in suppressing protests, held military exercises in the Iranian capital. Source: Majid Saeedi/Getty Images

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ISRAEL SAID READY TO STRIKE IRAN, POSSIBLY WITHIN DAYS, EVEN AS NUKE TALKS SET TO RESUME

Israel may hit nuclear sites without US help, NBC says; Iran reportedly prepared to launch hundreds of missiles at Israel in response; Oman confirms parley planned for Sunday

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Tol Staff](#) and [Reuters](#) 12 June 2025,



An IAF Boeing 707 refueling plane and several F-35 and F-15 fighter jets carry out a drill just off the coast of Israel, August 15, 2024. (Israel Defense Forces)

US officials believe Israel is ready to carry out an attack on Iran and could launch military action against Iran's nuclear facilities in the coming days, reports suggested early Thursday, even as high-level talks aimed at a diplomatic deal over Tehran's nuclear activity remained on track for Sunday.

The reports, from US networks NBC and CBS, that Israel was moving toward a long-threatened military strike came hours after the US announced it would evacuate some personnel from the region amid fears they could be targeted by Iran in reprisal actions.

The moves came after US President Donald Trump indicated he was no longer as confident as he had been previously that his administration could reach a deal with Iran, after negotiations appeared to snag over Tehran's insistence that it be allowed to maintain low-level uranium enrichment.

A senior Iranian official told Reuters on Thursday that a "friendly" regional country had alerted Tehran over a potential military strike by Israel.

The official said tensions were intended to "influence Tehran to change its position about its nuclear rights" during talks with the United States set for Sunday in Oman, and vowed that Tehran would hold firm to its insistence on maintaining some enrichment.

Citing five unnamed sources familiar with the situation, [NBC News reported](#) that Israel was considering launching an attack on Iran within days and without the support of the US, which is still holding out hope for the talks.

According to the report, Israel was weighing the option of striking the Islamic Republic's nuclear infrastructure, fearing that Washington could agree to a deal that falls short of its demands regarding Iran ending all nuclear enrichment.

Sources told the news network that they were not aware of any plans in the US to aid Israel in its endeavor to strike Iran, directly or indirectly, in the form of aerial refueling or intelligence sharing.

But the sources said US officials were on alert.



A Russian-made S-300 air defense system is carried on a truck in front of a portrait of the Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei during an annual armed forces parade just outside Tehran, Iran, September 21, 2024. (Vahid Salemi/AP)

CBS News, [citing multiple sources](#), said US officials have been told Israel is “fully ready to launch an operation into Iran.”

Both reports cited worries that Iran could retaliate against US personnel stationed in neighboring Iraq as the reason the State Department and Pentagon authorized some US officials and their families to [leave the region](#) on Wednesday.

Iranian Defense Minister Aziz Nasirzadeh said on Wednesday that if Iran was subjected to strikes, it [would retaliate](#) by hitting US bases in the region.

Iran's military and government had also prepared a plan for an immediate counterstrike on Israel with hundreds of ballistic missiles, a senior Iranian official told [The New York Times](#).

In October, Iran launched hundreds of ballistic missiles at Israel, though much of the attack was thwarted by air defenses in Israel and with the help of regional allies and the US.

Retaliatory strikes by Israel later that month severely damaged Iran's air defense systems, and analysts have speculated that Israel prefers to launch military action before the Islamic Republic has time to rebuild its air defense array.



Missiles launched from Iran towards Israel are seen in the West Bank city of Nablus, October 1, 2024.(AP Photo/Majdi Mohammed)

Asked about the decision to move US personnel out of the region, Trump said Wednesday, “They are being moved out because it could be a dangerous place, and we’ll see what happens.”

“They can’t have a nuclear weapon. Very simple, they can’t have a nuclear weapon,” he added in response to a question about what could be done to lower tensions with Iran.

Trump has repeatedly threatened to strike Iran if stuttering talks over its nuclear program fail, and in an interview released earlier on Wednesday said he was growing “getting more and more less confident” that Tehran would agree to stop enriching uranium, a key American demand.

“They seem to be delaying, and I think that’s a shame. I’m less confident now than I would have been a couple of months ago. Something happened to them,” he said in the interview, which was recorded Monday.

Earlier Wednesday, a statement from the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center, a Mideast-based effort overseen by the British navy, issued a warning to ships in the region that it “has been made aware of increased tensions within the region which could lead to an escalation of military activity having a direct impact on mariners.”

Talks set for Sunday

Despite the rising tensions, Oman’s Foreign Minister Badr Albusaidi confirmed Thursday on X that Muscat will host a sixth round of nuclear talks between the US and Iran on Sunday.

A US official told Reuters that Special Envoy Steve Witkoff planned to meet Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in Oman on Sunday and discuss Iran’s response to the recent American proposal for a nuclear deal.

The talks seek to limit Iran’s nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of some of the crushing economic sanctions that the US has imposed on the Islamic Republic. Iran, which is sworn to Israel’s destruction,

insists its nuclear program is peaceful, although it has enriched uranium to levels that have no use for civilian purposes.

Speaking at a United Hatzalah gala in New York on Wednesday, Witkoff said he had spoken with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu earlier in the day and asserted that the Islamic Republic “must never be permitted to enrich uranium or develop any nuclear capability.”

“A nuclear Iran represents an existential threat to Israel, as does an Iran with a large amount of missiles,” he said. “That is as big an existential threat as the nuclear threat.”

“We must stand resolute and united against this danger and ensure that Iran never obtains the means to achieve its deadly ambitions, no matter what the cost,” he said to applause.

Iran’s mission to the UN posted on social media that “threats of overwhelming force won’t change the facts.”

“Iran is not seeking a nuclear weapon, and US militarism only fuels instability,” the Iranian mission wrote.

Nasirzadeh, the Iranian defense minister, separately told journalists Wednesday that he hoped talks with the US would yield results, though Tehran stood ready to respond.

“If conflict is imposed on us, the opponent’s casualties will certainly be more than ours, and in that case, America must leave the region, because all its bases are within our reach,” he said. “We have access to them, and we will target all of them in the host countries without hesitation.”

Security expert Michael Knights, of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, posited that the evacuation of staff was intended to let Iran know that it is not a sure thing that Washington will intervene to prevent Israel from launching an attack.

“It’s about trying to get Iran to respect the president’s wishes,” he said.

Agencies contributed to this report.

IRAN,

ADVERSARY ENTENTE TASK FORCE UPDATE, JUNE 11, 2025

ISW INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF WAR

Grace Mappes, Kelly Campa, Karolina Hird, and Daniel Shats, with Nicholas Carl
Grace Mappes, Kelly Campa, Karolina Hird, and Daniel Shats, with Nicholas Carl June 9 2025

The Institute for the Study of War (ISW) is launching a task force that will examine the strategic interactions between the United States' main adversaries: Russia, the People's Republic of China (PRC), Iran, and North Korea. The new Adversary Entente Task Force will produce weekly products providing assessments on major developments between these adversaries in order to more holistically examine the evolution of the Entente, assess prospects of cooperation, and determine exploitable vulnerabilities within these adversary relationships. Adversary Entente Task Force publications will supplement the regional expertise in ISW's existing Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, Iran Update, and China-Taiwan Weekly Update.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Iranian nuclear negotiations: Russian President Vladimir Putin offered to facilitate the United States-Iran nuclear negotiations. Putin likely seeks to portray Russia as a useful collaborator and partner that the United States needs to achieve certain global outcomes. It is far from clear, however, that Russia has the leverage to help secure a nuclear agreement.

Iranian military learning: The Iranian Supreme National Defense University published its first-ever analysis on military lessons from the Russia-Ukraine war. The analysis may reflect whatever consensus is forming in the Iranian military establishment. The analytical insights focus especially on strategic innovation, tactical and operational drone operations, electronic warfare, and ground combat.

PRC-Russian tensions: Russian intelligence has reportedly grown concerned about PRC espionage since the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine war. The FSB has reportedly concerned that the PRC seeks to exploit the Russian focus on fighting Ukraine, according to the *New York Times*. The PRC is specifically interested in recruiting spies and obtaining sensitive military information.

Russia-North Korea cooperation: Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu recently visited North Korea, highlighting the reality that the expanding Russian-North Korea ties are an enduring geopolitical shift rather than a temporary alignment of interests. Shoigu's visit, during which he met with Kim Jong Un is his second to North Korea in less than three months.

IRANIAN NUCLEAR NEGOTIATIONS

Russian President Vladimir Putin offered to facilitate the United States-Iran nuclear negotiations. Putin likely seeks to portray Russia as a useful collaborator and partner that the United States needs to achieve certain global outcomes. Putin held a phone call with US President

Donald Trump on June 4, during which they discussed the nuclear talks. Putin said that he "could be helpful" in quickly concluding negotiations with Iran and emphasized that Iran must make a "decision" "quickly," according to Trump.[1] Kremlin Presidential Aide Yuriy Ushakov claimed that Trump said during the call that the United States may need Russian help and would be grateful if Russia could work with Iran in the nuclear negotiations.[2] Russian Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Sergei Ryabkov met with Iranian Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali on June 5 and discussed the Iranian nuclear program, the United States-Iran talks, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors meeting that includes discussions on Iranian non-compliance with its nuclear commitments.[3] Ryabkov said on June 8 that Russia is actively seeking "negotiated solutions" regarding the nuclear negotiations.[4]

Russian officials have signaled in recent months that the Kremlin is interested in mediating the nuclear negotiations. *Bloomberg* reported on March 4, citing people familiar with the matter, that Russia agreed to assist the Trump Administration in communicating with Iran, and Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told *Bloomberg* that Russia is "ready to do everything in its power" to help the United States and Iran negotiate.[5] Ushakov claimed on March 4 in response to a question about the *Bloomberg* article that the United States and Russia agreed during negotiations in Riyadh on February 18 to hold separate talks about the Iranian nuclear program.[6]

Putin's offer comes as the nuclear negotiations are at an impasse and may collapse. Iran has consistently rejected the US demand that Iran halt all nuclear enrichment.[7] The United States and E3 proposed a resolution that formally declares Iran as noncompliant with its nuclear safeguarding obligations during the IAEA Board of Governors meeting on June 11.[8] The resolution sets conditions for the E3 to impose international snapback sanctions against Iran through a stipulation in the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JPCOA) agreement.[9] Iranian officials threatened in November 2024 to withdraw from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) if the United States acted "coercively" against Iran or if the E3 imposes snapback mechanisms, though Iran has long threatened to withdraw from the NPT outside the current situation.[10] Iran recently threatened to expand its nuclear program if the IAEA passes the E3 noncompliance resolution.[11]

Russia likely seeks its intervention in the nuclear talks to help reset United States-Russia relations on Russian terms while avoiding an escalation in the Middle East that could adversely impact Russian interests. Russia has historically opposed Iran's nuclear weapons program and views it as a threat to Russian security interests in the Middle East.[12] Russia sought to limit the Iranian nuclear program during JPCOA negotiations in 2014 and 2015, and Russian officials have since said that Iran should fulfill its obligations under the JPCOA and the NPT and that Russia opposes the emergence of nuclear weapons-enabled states.[13] Russia also likely aims to avoid the consequences that failing to reach a nuclear deal may have on regional security and the Russian war effort in Ukraine. Israeli officials reportedly threatened to conduct preemptive strikes against Iran should Trump signal that the nuclear negotiations have failed.[14] The advent of Iran entering an armed conflict with the United States or Israel would risk destabilizing Iran, which has becoming a close strategic partner to Russia, and possibly constrain the Iranian ability to supply Russia with weapons and components for its war in Ukraine,

especially for the long-range Shahed drones on which Russia is reliant for its increasingly large strike packages.[15] Russia may also seek to negotiate a deal in order to avoid the constraints that snapback sanctions may impose on Iran's ability to export drones and drone components for Russia's war against Ukraine.

Russia also lacks the bandwidth to support Iran militarily in the event of an escalation with Israel or the United States due to the war in Ukraine, and Russia likely seeks to avoid the reputational impacts of failing to assist a strategic partner. Russia is technically not obligated to provide military assistance to Iran in an armed conflict under the January 2025 Russian-Iranian strategic partnership agreement. Still, it has already proved itself an unreliable partner in its failure to prevent the fall of Bashar al Assad's regime in Syria in December 2024 and suffered a strategic political defeat in the region.[16] Russia likely hopes to avoid another situation in which its promise as a strategic partner is called into question.

Putin likely also hopes to intervene in the nuclear talks in order to present himself to Trump as the only possible mediator who can facilitate a satisfactory nuclear deal with Iran. Putin has been attempting to reset US-Russian relations on terms beneficial to Russia and detrimental to the United States since November 2024, as he continues efforts to delay and protract peace negotiations in Ukraine and extract concessions not related to the war from the West, including the United States.[17] Putin's agreement to intervene with Iran on behalf of the United States likely supports Putin's effort to portray himself as an agreeable and desirable negotiating partner to the United States and to create the impression that he is amenable to restoring bilateral relations despite making no indication of being willing to compromise.[18]

Putin may ultimately want a nuclear deal for the economic benefits that it may entail for Russia. The removal of international sanctions on Iran would likely lead to Russia expanding some economic cooperation with Iran as well as using the Iranian market as an additional means to bypass international sanctions against Russia. Furthermore, Iran would regain the ability to sell crude oil to customers across the globe rather than sending the vast majority of its crude exports to the People's Republic of China, as Iran does currently. Iran and Russia both depend heavily on the revenue that they derive from crude sales to the PRC. Russia may have an opportunity to expand its sales to the PRC if Iran begins exporting more crude elsewhere.

It is far from clear, however, that Russia has the leverage to help secure a United States-Iran nuclear agreement. Both Trump and Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei explicitly said that they will not compromise on their respective positions on Iran's ability to domestically enrich uranium.[19] Neither Trump nor Khamenei is likely to take steps that would undermine their publicly stated red lines. Putin will likely be unable to leverage Russia's strategic relations with Iran to compel Khamenei to act against Iranian interests, which reflects the strict limits of Russo-Iranian cooperation. Both Russia and Iran describe their partnership as mutually beneficial, but this does not require that either country act outside its best interests in order to assist the other. Iran and Russia's Comprehensive Strategic Partnership agreement notably lacks a mutual defense clause, for example. Iran may believe that Putin can convince Trump to back down

from his stipulation that Iran not conduct any nuclear enrichment on Iranian soil. Iran may also believe that a Russian-brokered settlement would result in a nuclear deal unfavorable to the United States and provide Iran with more latitude to continue its nuclear weapons program while avoiding snapback sanctions. Russia is unlikely to secure a deal at all, much less one explicitly favorable to either Iran or the United States so long as Khamenei and Trump remain firm on their respective nuclear enrichment terms.

Russia has notably not diverged from its unified position with the PRC on the nuclear negotiations, despite Putin's outreach to the US administration on this issue. Russia and the PRC have both consistently opposed stated US objectives in the nuclear talks by supporting Iran's "right" to enrich uranium, though neither state supports the development of an Iranian nuclear weapon.[20] Iranian Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister for Legal and International Affairs Kazem Gharibabadi met with the Chinese and Russian ambassadors to the United Nations on June 3 to likely encourage them to challenge efforts to impose snapback sanctions on Iran, and senior Russian officials have rallied around Iran to disparage the upcoming non-compliance resolution in the days since Gharibabadi's meeting.[21] Russian Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Vienna Mikhail Ulyanov criticized on June 8 the non-compliance resolution that the United States and the E3 will submit to the IAEA Board of Governors meeting between June 9 and 13.[22] Russian Ambassador to Iran Alexei Dedov confirmed to Iranian state media on June 8 that Russia supports a resolution to the negotiations on "terms acceptable to our friends in Tehran." [23] Ryabkov criticized on June 5 the upcoming IAEA Board of Governors meeting and condemned the upcoming "anti-Iranian initiatives" from IAEA member states.[24]

Iran's strategic economic and defense ties with Russia and the PRC may offer a modicum of future relief for Iran as the collapse of the talks appears more likely. Russia and the PRC are highly likely to continue to assist Iran in circumventing future sanctions and supporting the rebuilding of infrastructure destroyed in a potential Israeli strike. The imposition of snapback sanctions would require all UN member states, including Russia and the PRC, to impose full sanctions on Iran. It is highly doubtful that Russia and China will enforce such measures against Iran, however, given their historic efforts to help Iran evade previous sanctions.

Iran has relied on both Russia and the PRC to mitigate the effects of US sanctions on the Iranian economy and to maintain Iran's regional posture and material support for its Axis of Resistance. The PRC, for example, purchases around 90 percent of Iran's oil exports at a discount, which has been a key lifeline for Iran's economy amid heavy sanctions.[25] PRC-based entities have also provided military or dual-use products to Iran.[26] A recent report from the *Wall Street Journal* indicates that Iran recently ordered thousands of tons of ammonium perchlorate from PRC-based entities to replenish Iranian solid-fuel ballistic missile stockpiles after Israel destroyed Iranian solid-fuel production sites in October 2024.[27] The PRC government is almost certainly aware of the shipments, despite denials by government spokespeople, because Iran has reportedly negotiated with the PRC to acquire missile propellant. *Politico* cited unspecified diplomats in April 2023 who said that Iran was negotiating with both Russia and the PRC to acquire large quantities of ammonium perchlorate, which the diplomats said at the time could be used to produce missile propellant for missiles that Iran exports to Russia.[28]

Iran has simultaneously expanded economic cooperation with Russia since Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine in order to undermine the Western sanctions imposed on both countries. Economic cooperation between Russia and Iran is a critical component of the broader Russo-Iranian strategic partnership. Iran has been able to exploit the revenue from its weapons sales to Russia to generate revenue for the Iranian economy.[29] Russian foreign investment and trade with Iran, including in the energy sector, has provided critical support to the Iranian economy and will likely continue to do so.

Iranian officials likely recognize that Iran can rely upon Russian and PRC support if snapback sanctions are reinstated and in the case of an Israeli or US strike. The well-established mechanisms of Russian and PRC assistance to help Iran circumvent international sanctions may have in part influenced Iran's uncompromising stance in negotiations with the United States. Continued Russia-PRC support will not fully shield Iran from the impacts of reimposed UN Security Council (UNSC) sanctions or an Israeli or US strike on nuclear facilities or defense production sites, however.

Iran may more aggressively pursue cooperation with Russia and the PRC as sanctions and a possible Israeli strike loom. Iran has already taken some steps to rapidly increase cooperation with the PRC in particular after the imposition of the US maximum pressure campaign. Iran has increased oil exports to the PRC ahead of anticipated sanctions enforcement as part of the US maximum pressure campaign, which aims to reduce Iranian oil exports to zero.[30] US media reported that recent US sanctions on PRC independent refineries may be disrupting this oil trade, however, as Iranian crude oil exports to the PRC declined by about 26 percent in May compared to April.[31] Snapback sanctions or another bout of conflict with Israel may push Iran to more aggressively pursue cooperation with Russia and the PRC by necessity. Existing sanctions-evasion mechanisms that all three actors have employed in the past may be untenable under a stricter sanctions regime. The United States and international community must recognize that the factors that drive Iran-Russia-PRC cooperation are unlikely to fade under the economic impacts of international sanctions and concern over possible military action.

IRANIAN MILITARY LEARNING

Iran's Supreme National Defense University (SDNU) recently published its first-ever analysis on the military lessons that Iran can learn from Russia's war in Ukraine.* The analysis is from the Spring 2025 edition of a strategic defense studies journal and covers the war from 2022 to the end of 2023. The SDNU is a subordinate entity to the Iranian Armed Forces General Staff and offers an advanced education in military doctrine, strategy, and management.[32] Many of Iran's senior-most military officers teach at the SDNU and co-author papers with doctoral students. The SDNU publishes a variety of defense and security-related journals and, given its direct subordination to the Iranian armed forces and close collaboration with senior military thinkers in Iran, its academic output is generally a reflection of whatever preliminary consensus is forming in the wider Iranian military establishment. The insights in this publication can be taken as the first instance of codification of the military establishment's consensus on lessons from Ukraine.

The publication's author begins by contextualizing the SDNU's stance on the war in Ukraine and amplifies several well-known and long-standing Russian information operations about the causes of the war in Ukraine, citing NATO's alleged eastward expansion and Russian security concerns, the need for a new "multipolar" world order with a weakened United States and Western coalition, and shifting regional power dynamics. The author also somewhat downplays Iran's own involvement in the war on Russia's behalf, noting that "Western pressure on Iran will continue to prevent Iran from playing an active role alongside Russia." The publication then concludes with a series of lessons learned for the Iranian military in thirteen different realms: command and leadership; structure and methods; organization; training; ground operations; naval operations; air operations; missile operations; cyber and electronic warfare; internal security; external security; internal consequences; and external consequences.

Iran has shifted its doctrinal emphasis over the last decade to focus on a more offensive strategy, premised on transforming the Iranian fighting force for external operations and expanding Iran's offensive arsenal.[33] The war in Ukraine offers several valuable lessons that would support Iran's wider offensive pivot. The SDNU analysis distills four insights that are particularly notable given current conditions and developments in Ukraine: strategic-level innovation; tactical and operational-level drone operations; electronic warfare (EW) lessons; and lessons for the ground war.

Strategic-level innovation:

The author of the paper is clear about the role of rapid technological and tactical innovation in Ukraine. They note that in conditions of pervasive attrition, "whichever side can innovate more will ultimately prevail," and highlight the fact that battlefield conditions impact technological development by accelerating the innovation cycle. ISW has previously assessed that the war in Ukraine can be characterized in part by an extremely rapid battlefield technological-tactical innovation loop, which can drive major changes across the thousand-plus-kilometer long frontline in two to three weeks.[34] The technological-tactical innovation cycle will be critical in all future conflicts, including any in which Iran becomes involved (such as a potential war with a technologically-savvy adversary, such as Israel). Russia and Ukraine are displaying the role of this strategic-level innovation in the way that Russia deploys Iranian-provided drones and the way in which Ukraine innovates and iterates defenses against Iranian drones.[35] The author also emphasizes the outsized role that Ukraine's civil society (namely start-ups and non-governmental organizations [NGOs]) has played in stimulating and supporting defense innovation—something with which Ukraine has succeeded but Russia has struggled.[36] Iranian civil society may struggle to undertake similar technological and tactical support functions for the Iranian military, however, due to the Iranian regimes' control over Iranian domestic society.

Tactical and operational-level drone innovation and operation:

The publication pays much attention to the proliferation of drones on the battlefield in Ukraine, which is an understandable focus given Tehran's view that drones are a key feature of its national security and defense strategy and given the prominent role that Iranian drones are currently playing on the battlefield in Ukraine.[37] The author notes that the integration of ground, aerial, and naval drones into broader weapons

systems and offensive capabilities “is critical” and advocates that Iran networks (merges and combines) drone and missile capabilities. The author also highlights the combined use of commercial and non-commercial drones—a frequent feature of the battlefield in Ukraine as both sides are widely fielding both cheap dual-use drones and more exquisite and expensive drones to accomplish a wide range of battlefield effects.[38] Drone operation is a critical component of Iran’s wider military doctrine, and lessons from Ukraine will allow Tehran to bolster its drone-use theory for future conflicts.[39] The publication does overestimate the proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled drones in Ukraine, however. Neither Ukraine nor Russia have been able to field AI drones at scale as of June 2025, so the author’s prediction of a fully automated and robotic battlefield is not yet a reality and likely will not be in the immediate to medium-term.[40]

Electronic warfare (EW) lessons:

The SDNU publication devotes an entire section of recommendations to the realm of cyber and electronic warfare. EW innovation in particular has been a core component of the war in Ukraine, with both sides investing heavily in EW development and generating unprecedented new EW capabilities.[41] The author emphasizes the importance of creating specialized EW structures and of maximizing training for EW specialists, as well as the need to generally improve the performance of launched projectiles such as drones and missiles in the face of adversary EW. The author may be drawing lessons from Russia’s successful defense against Ukraine’s 2023 counteroffensive, wherein Russian EW capabilities greatly hindered Ukrainian communications and ground maneuverability.[42] Iran sees EW as a critical component of its wider hybrid warfare toolkit, so these tactical EW lessons will be important to Iran’s planning for future conflicts.[43] Israeli media speculated in August 2024 that Russia had transferred several EW systems to Iran, but these reports remain unconfirmed as of June 2025.[44]

The ground war:

The author makes several notable recommendations for ground operations that elucidate where Iran is looking to Ukraine for military inspiration. The publication highlights several facts that are commonplace in Ukraine—for example, the need to ensure troop and equipment mobility throughout the battlespace, and the need to avoid massing armor and equipment in dense, easy-to target-areas where drones or artillery strikes can inflict maximal damage. The author also makes the suggestion to “network” drones and artillery in combat alongside other navigation systems, potentially a reflection of the fact that both Russia and Ukraine have come to use a combination of artillery fires and tactical drone strikes to recreate some of the tactical effects of traditional counterbattery operations in a way that increases the survivability of towed artillery systems.[45]

Iran has already displayed a propensity to implement tactical lessons from Ukraine into aspects of its offensive doctrine. Iran’s Artesh Ground Forces unveiled three new tactical drones on May 22, the technical specifics of which suggest that Iran is already looking to institutionalize some tactical lessons from Ukraine into its domestic drone arsenal.[46] The newly unveiled Homa drone, for example, appears to be hardened in some fashion against EW disruptions, suggesting that Artesh is attuned to the role of EW in

anti-drone defenses.[47] The newly unveiled Shahin-1 high-speed first person-view (FPV) drone is meant to strike stationary and mobile targets, which may be a reflection of Ukraine's use of similar small and quick-moving FPV drones to inflict damage on moving Russian armor and stationary Russian air defense radars. On a more strategic level, Iran's April and October 2024 attacks on Israel stand as clear evidence of Iran's integration of lessons learned from observing Russia's use of multilayered missile and drone strikes on Ukraine.[48] These two strikes were generally unsuccessful, however, and Iran is likely to struggle implementing lessons from Ukraine effectively and at scale throughout its military due to a variety of bureaucratic and organizational challenges.

Iran may also be learning rhetorical lessons from Russia's nuclear brinksmanship operations, which the Kremlin has employed and honed against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine. The SNDU publication remarked on Russia's use of "nuclear threat rhetoric against enemies" and warned of an increase in nuclear competition and escalation as a result. The Kremlin has frequently invoked nuclear threats in order to influence the battlefield situation and to discourage partner support for Ukraine.[49] Iran, by contrast, is at least publicly committed to Supreme Leader Khamenei's fatwa that forbids nuclear weapons under Islamic law, which has historically amounted to somewhat of a taboo on public discussions of nuclear weaponization.[50] Conversations about reversing this edict, as well as more full-throated domestic discussions of Iran's nuclear aspirations, have become far more common recently, however.[51] Iran may be learning from the success that Russia has had in weaponizing nuclear rhetoric to achieve both battlefield and policy outcomes (such as dissuading Western support for Ukraine) and is attempting to recreate some of these rhetorical effects by normalizing nuclear discussions at home.

North Korea-Russia relations

Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu's recent visit to North Korea highlights the fact that North Korea's substantial material support for Russia's war likely represents an enduring geopolitical shift rather than a temporary alignment of interests. Shoigu met with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Pyongyang on June 4. He thanked Kim for the contribution of North Korean troops in repelling Ukrainian forces from Russia's Kursk Oblast, reportedly saying that they "defended the precious part of the Russian territory as their own motherland, fighting shoulder to shoulder with Russian soldiers in the same trench." [52] Kim, in turn, told Shoigu that North Korea would "unconditionally support" Russia in its war in Ukraine and in international affairs.[53] The press service of the Russian Security Council said that the purpose of the meeting was to "discuss implementation of certain provisions of the Russia-North Korea treaty on comprehensive strategic partnership, and efforts to perpetuate the memory of Korean warriors, who helped to liberate the Kursk Region." [54] This is Shoigu's second meeting with Kim in less than three months. Official readouts from their previous meeting on March 21 were vague, likely because Russia and North Korea had not yet publicly confirmed that North Korean troops were fighting in Russia.[55]

Russia and North Korea are signaling that their strengthening relationship and military cooperation are an enduring partnership based on their June 2024 treaty. Shoigu met with North Korean Minister of State

Security Ri Chang-dae on May 29 as part of the multilateral 13th International Meeting of High Representatives for Security issues in Moscow.[56] Shoigu said after the meeting that Moscow-Pyongyang relations were “developing quite vigorously” and that the 2024 treaty is “a full-fledged agreement, which is not only on paper, but also on the battlefield, where our Korean brothers are fighting in the trenches shoulder to shoulder, back to back.” Shoigu also said that North Korea’s international isolation was wrong. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stated in September 2024 that Russia no longer opposes North Korea’s nuclear weapons program.[57]

Russia is openly partnering with North Korea and involving it in its efforts to create a new multilateral world order in opposition to the United States. Shoigu’s comments and Kim’s pronouncement that North Korea would “unconditionally” support Russia in “crucial international political issues,” including Ukraine, both clearly signal that the two countries intend to pursue close collaboration even now that North Korea’s fighting in Kursk appears to be over. North Korean State Security Minister Ri pledged during his meeting with Shoigu that North Korea would help Russia build a multipolar world, and reportedly also discussed cooperation on intelligence sharing.[58]

The Russia-North Korea agreement, which Kim and Russian President Vladimir Putin signed in June 2024, is the legal pretext for North Korea’s intervention in Kursk and, in part, the basis for Russia’s increased military, economic, and technological aid to North Korea. The treaty obligates each country to immediately provide military aid to the other if it is invaded, “in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter” and their own laws. It also calls for bilateral cooperation to strengthen defense, advance cooperation in science and technology, including “peaceful atomic energy” and AI, and opposition to “unilateral compulsory measures,” such as US sanctions.[59]

An international investigation and Ukrainian intelligence found that Russia has provided North Korea with military technology, including at least one Pantsir surface-to-air missile system and Shahed drones, as repayment for North Korean military aid to Russia, in violation of UN sanctions. The Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team (MSMT) released its inaugural report on May 29 detailing unlawful arms transfers between Russia and North Korea in 2024. The MSMT is a group of 11 UN member states established in October 2024 to monitor compliance with North Korea-related sanctions, replacing the UN Panel of Experts that ended after Russia vetoed a 2024 UN Resolution to extend its mandate. The MSMT report cited intelligence from an unspecified participating state that Russia used cargo aircraft to provide North Korea with short-range air defense systems and advanced EW systems, including jamming equipment, and also transferred “operational knowledge” on how to use these systems. A member state said that Russia has transferred at least one Pantsir-class mobile air defense system to North Korea. The Pantsir is designed to target aerial targets, including fixed and rotary wing-aircraft, cruise missiles, precision munitions, and drones, and presents North Korea with more advanced air defense options than it previously had. The MSMT report also noted that Russia gave North Korea data feedback on the performance of its ballistic missiles, enabling technical improvements in missile guidance. These arms transfers are a clear violation of the UN arms embargo on North Korea.[60] The MSMT report found that Russia also far exceeded an UN-imposed cap on refined oil exports to North Korea, supplying North Korea

with over a million barrels of oil from March to October 2024, according to estimates from satellite imagery, emphasizing Russia's economic support for North Korea. A North Korean foreign ministry official denounced the MSMT report as a fabrication, a "political provocation," and a violation of North Korea's sovereignty, according to KCNA.[61]

Ukraine's Main Military Intelligence Directorate (GUR) Head Kyrylo Budanov noted in an interview on June 7 that Russia is transferring knowledge and technology to North Korea for the manufacture of Iranian-origin Shahed drones. North Korea may use this manufacturing capability to build Shaheds and Shahed analogues either for Russia or for its own military. Shahed drones would enable North Korea to strike targets anywhere in South Korea, possibly in volumes large enough to overwhelm South Korean air defenses, which Budanov emphasized would change the military balance on the Korean peninsula.[62] Russia frequently uses Shaheds in high volumes to overwhelm Ukrainian air defense systems.

Russia-PRC intelligence community tensions:

Russian intelligence has reportedly been concerned about increased PRC espionage efforts since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.[63] The *New York Times* reported on June 7 that it reviewed an internal planning document obtained from the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB)'s Department for Counterintelligence Operations indicating that the FSB has been concerned that the PRC would exploit Russia's focus on Ukraine to increase intelligence operations aimed at recruiting spies, acquiring Russian military technology, and gaining insight into Western military weapons encountered on the battlefield. The report noted that it could not independently verify the document but that six Western intelligence agencies assessed that the document is authentic, and the *New York Times* assessed that the document was likely written in late 2023 or early 2024. The report noted that Russia created a new "Entente-4" counterintelligence program immediately before the February 2022 invasion to counter PRC spies and that the PRC had stepped up its efforts to recruit Russian officials, experts, journalists, and businesspeople closer to Russian power verticals since the start of Russia's war in Ukraine. The FSB document reportedly indicated that Russia had increased its counterespionage of PRC social media application WeChat and that the FSB sought to balance countering the PRC's intelligence in Russia with Russia's growing cooperation with the PRC. Russia and the PRC notably signed on Deepening Cooperation, Entering a New Era" in March 2023 and have increased bilateral cooperation since, including overt support of Russia's war in Ukraine.[64] PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Lin Jian responded to a question about the article that he is not aware of the article and that Sino-Russian relations are not directed against or affected by any third party.[65]

IRAN UPDATE SPECIAL EDITION: ISRAELI STRIKES ON IRAN, JUNE 13, 2025

ISW iNSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF WAR Andie Parry, Nicholas Carl, and Annika Ganzeveld

ISW Press

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The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) will be publishing multiple updates over the next 24 hours from June 12-13, 2025, to provide insights into the ongoing strike on Iran's nuclear facilities, military infrastructure, and key military and nuclear program leadership. We will continue to produce Iran Update special editions until the strikes conclude. We will prioritize covering Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities in response to the attacks that threaten US forces and interests.

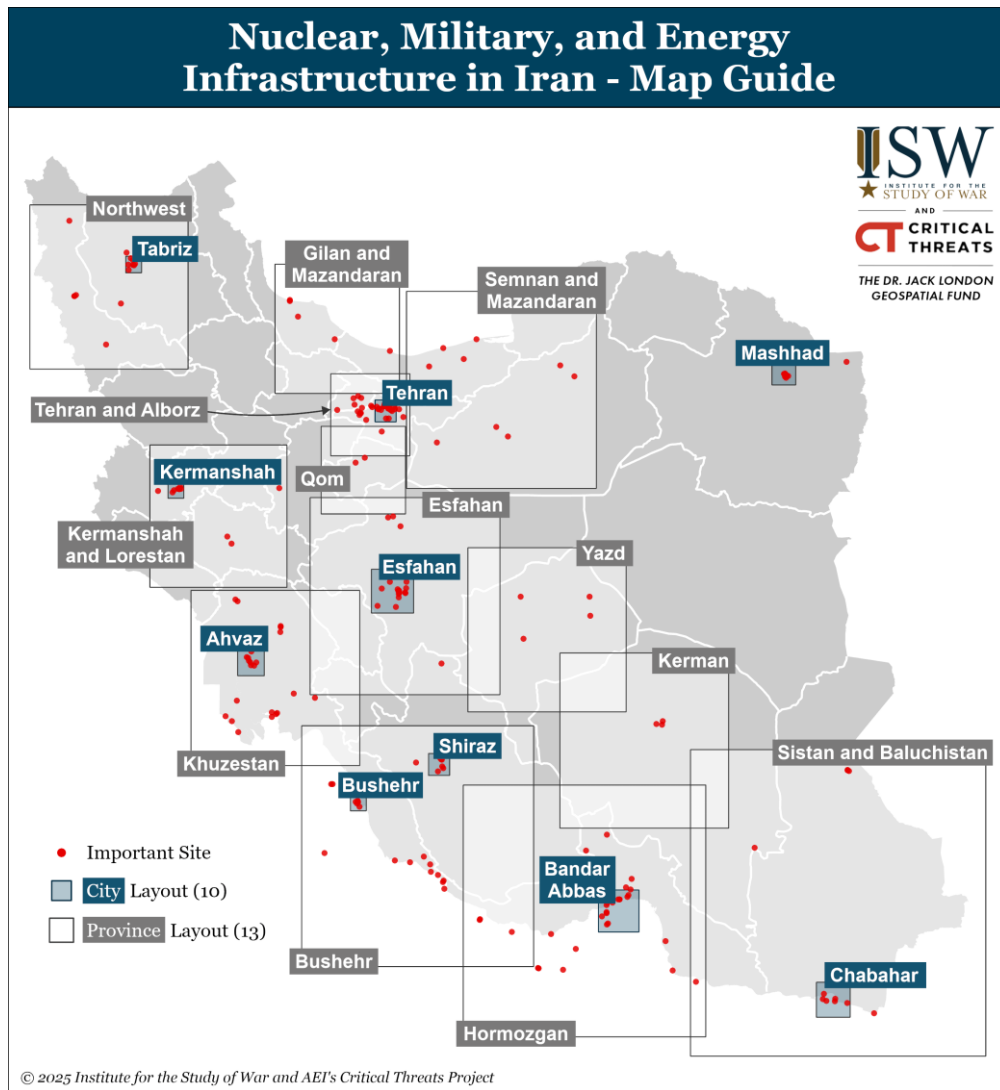
This update is the second of at least three CTP-ISW Iran Updates over the next 24 hours that will cover the Iran-Israel war. The recent Israeli strikes are a rapidly evolving situation, and no single individual or organization will have complete information at this time, including the states involved. Some of the information that is available in the open-source will be contradictory or inaccurate. CTP-ISW will continually refine our assessments over the coming days and weeks, as we work to understand the situation. CTP-ISW will issue corrections and clearly articulate when we refine an earlier understanding of events.

Many sources will misinterpret information in the coming hours. Social media users posted footage that showed dozens of bright streaks in the sky during the October 2024 Iranian ballistic missile attack on Israel and claimed that all of the streaks were ballistic missiles, for example. It later emerged that some of the streaks were ballistic missile interceptors, not missiles.

CTP-ISW will only publish high-confidence information. Our maps and the update below include information including "anti-aircraft fire," reported and confirmed explosions, and reported and confirmed airstrikes. Some users online may misinterpret anti-aircraft fire as evidence of an airstrike. Some air defense systems have long ranges that make it difficult to assess if the air defense fire's point of origin is the actual target or if the air defense systems are protecting a more distant site. Likewise, the sounds of explosions may not denote an airstrike because some sources may misinterpret the sounds of missile launches or other kinetic activity.



Note: The above map depicts Israeli strikes on Iran as of June 13.



Note: The above map depicts significant nuclear, military, and energy infrastructure in Iran. This map does NOT depict the locations that Israel has targeted or struck.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei published a brief and generic statement following the Israeli strikes, condemning the attacks and vowing to retaliate.

Israel conducted covert operations targeting Iranian ballistic missile launchers, which likely hampered Iran's ability to retaliate with ballistic missiles in the immediate aftermath of the strikes. Israel reportedly built a secret one-way attack drone base in Iran, which it used to strike Iranian ballistic missile launchers near Tehran on June 12.

In addition to striking nuclear and military infrastructure, Israel has conducted a decapitation campaign targeting Iranian military leadership.

Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei published a brief and generic statement following the Israeli strikes, condemning the attacks and vowing to retaliate.[1] Khamenei provided no specificity regarding an Iranian retaliation.

Israel conducted covert operations targeting Iranian ballistic missile launchers, which likely hampered Iran's ability to retaliate with ballistic missiles in the immediate aftermath of the strikes. Israel reportedly built a secret one-way attack drone base in Iran, which it used to strike Iranian ballistic missile launchers near Tehran on June 12.[2] The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Air Force likewise struck Iranian ballistic missile sites.[3] Iran responded to the Israeli air campaign by launching over 100 drones at Israel from Iran about six hours after the initial Israeli strikes.[4] Local Syrian sources reported that Iranian missiles landed in Syria, but CTP-ISW cannot confirm whether the sources saw Iranian missiles or fallen interceptor missiles.[5] Iranian leaders' likely decision to not use ballistic missiles in their response was likely not voluntary and rather a result of Israel's covert drone operations that disabled a significant number of Iranian ballistic missile launchers. Iran claimed on June 11 that it had finalized plans for an "immediate counterstrike" against Israel that would involve hundreds of ballistic missiles, but may have only been able to enact part of its plan due to degraded capabilities.[6]

Iranian leaders likely learned lessons about the limits of drone attacks on Israel from its two large-scale direct attacks on Israel in April and October 2024, which makes it unlikely that Iran would choose to only use drones to retaliate against Israel.[7] Iran launched hundreds of ballistic and cruise missiles and one-way attack drones targeting Israel in April 2024, but US and partner defenses intercepted the vast majority of the slow-moving drones.[8] Iran had likely sought to use cruise missiles and drones to overwhelm and defeat Israeli air defenses while the ballistic missiles destroyed targets in the April attack, but the theory failed.[9] Iran learned from the April 2024 attack and employed only ballistic and cruise missiles in its somewhat more successful October 2024 attack targeting Israeli military sites.[10] It is therefore unlikely that Iran would decide to only use drones to attack Israel in response to the recent Israeli airstrikes, given that it has learned that drones are less effective against Israel than large amounts of ballistic and cruise missiles. Israeli media stated that the IDF intercepted all Iranian drones targeting Israel on June 13, which underscores how Israel's attacks on Iranian ballistic missile launchers likely caused Iran to have to conduct an underwhelming immediate retaliation against Israel.[11]

In addition to striking nuclear and military infrastructure, Israel has conducted a decapitation campaign targeting Iranian military leadership. Israeli strikes have killed the following individuals as well as several other military officials and prominent nuclear scientists:

Armed Forces General Staff (AFGS) Chief Major General Mohammad Bagheri

Khatam ol Anbia Central Headquarters Commander Major General Gholam Ali Rashid

Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Commander Major General Hossein Salami

IRGC Aerospace Force Commander Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajji Zadeh

Former Supreme National Security Council Secretary Rear Admiral Ali Shamkhani[12]

These individuals have been highly influential voices in the Iranian military establishment for decades. They played pivotal roles in Iranian strategy across the Middle East, especially as it grew more aggressive after around 2014-16.[13] The AFGS is the seniormost Iranian military body and is responsible for military policy

and strategic guidance. The Khatam ol Anbia Central Headquarters is the highest Iranian operational headquarters and is thus responsible for joint and wartime operations, performing a role similar to a US combatant command. The sudden loss of these individuals appears to have caused significant disruption within the Iranian military decision-making network, which may have contributed to the lack of a meaningful Iranian response so far.

This disruption is temporary, however, as Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei has already appointed these individuals' successors. Khamenei appointed Major General Abdol Rahim Mousavi as AFGS chief, Major General Ali Shadmani as Khatam ol Anbia Central Headquarters commander, and Major General Mohammad Pak Pour as IRGC commander.[14] It is unclear who replaced Hajji Zadeh or has filled the positions that these individuals previously held. CTP-ISW will provide further information on these individuals in the following updates.

Israeli airstrikes have been confirmed by geospatial imagery at the following locations:

Jahan Koudak Tower, Tehran Province[15]

Qasr-e Shirin, Kermanshah Province[16]

An unspecified Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) base in Sardasht, West Azerbaijan Province[17]

Azgol neighborhood of Tehran[18]

Farmanieh neighborhood of Tehran[19]

Sobashi air defense radar, Hamedan Province[20]

Natanz Enrichment Complex Underground Area, Esfahan Province[21]

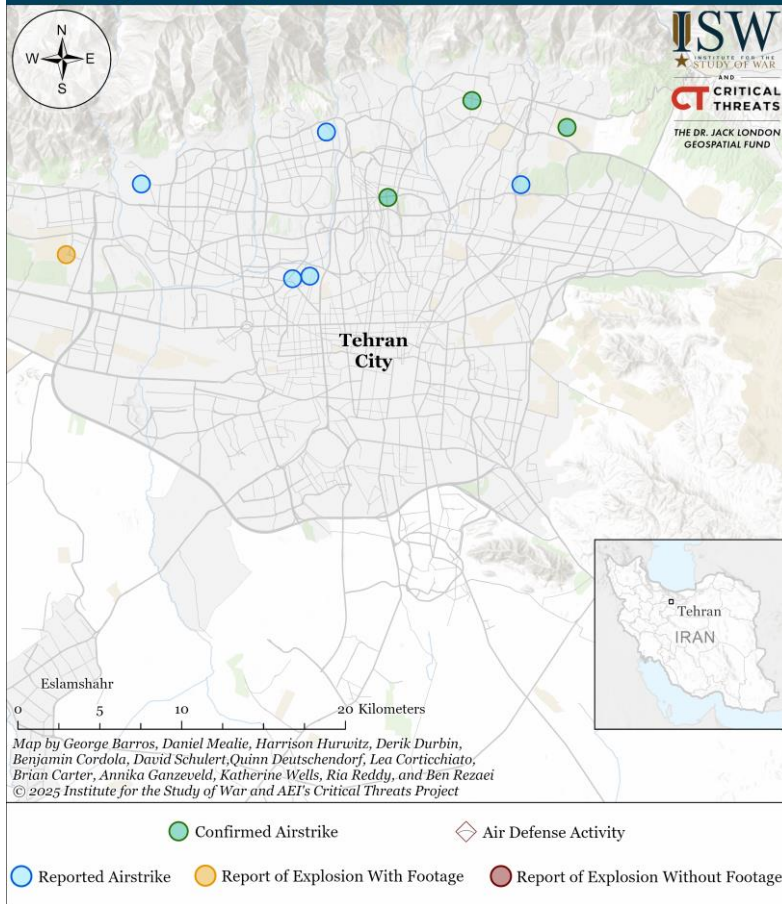
Piranshahr Military Base, West Azerbaijan Province[22]

Kermanshah Underground Facility, Kermanshah Province[23]

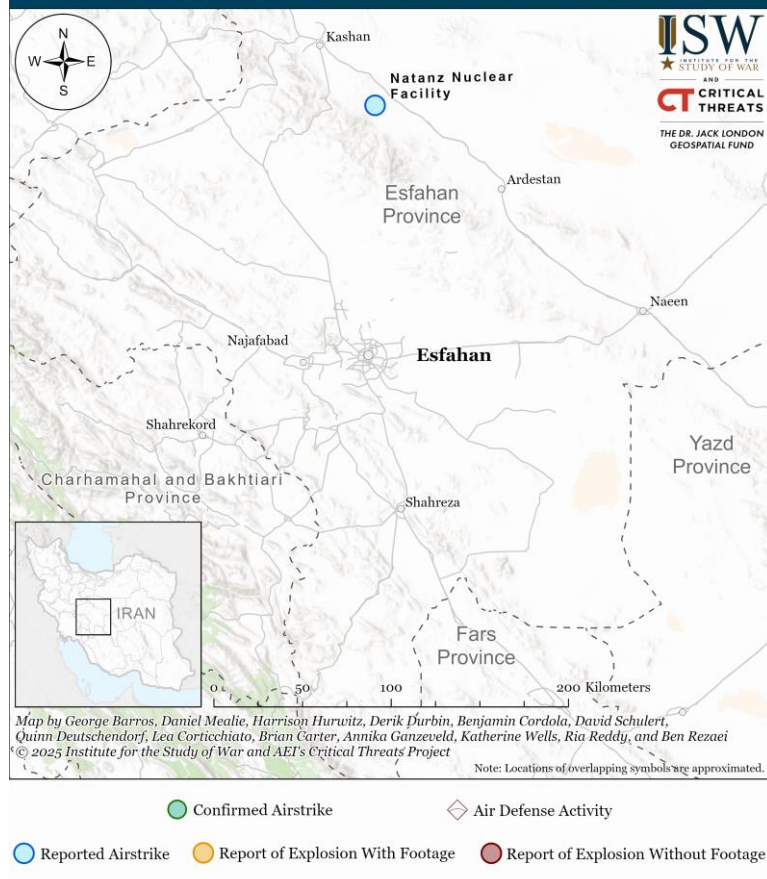
Air defense base, Tehran Province[24]

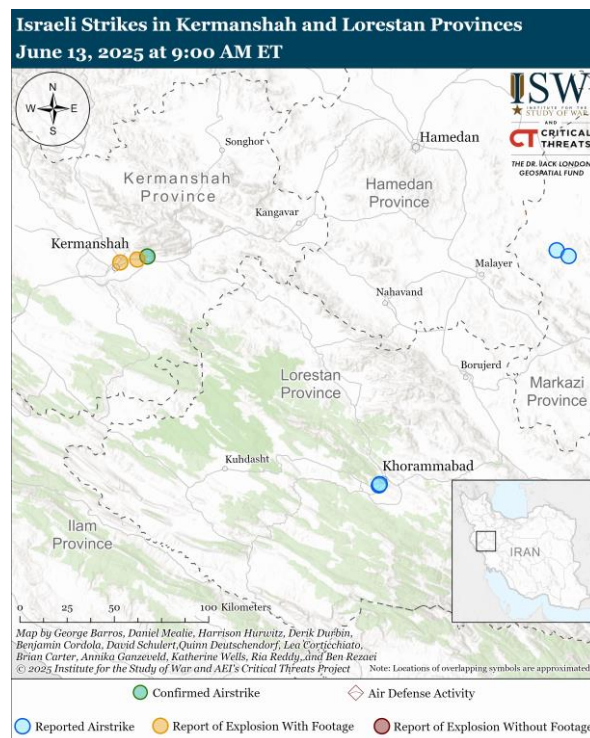
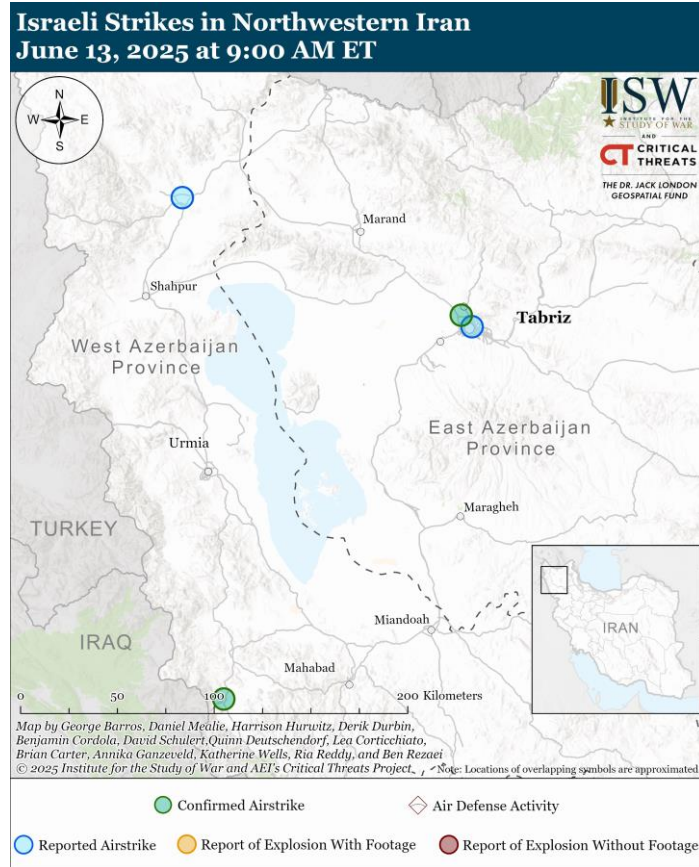
Tabriz Air Base, East Azerbaijan Province[25]

Israeli Strikes in Tehran City June 13, 2025 at 9:00 AM ET



Israeli Strikes in Esfahan Province June 12, 2025 at 9:00 AM ET





Israeli airstrikes were reported at the following locations. These strikes have not been confirmed by geospatial imagery:

Unspecified IRGC missile launch sites in Tabriz, East Azerbaijan Province[26]

IRGC sites in Ahvaz, Khuzestan Province[27]

Khondab, Markazi Province[28]

Arak Heavy Water Reactor Facility, Markazi Province[29]

Qom City, Qom Province[30]

Khorramabad, Lorestan Province[31]

Ilam City, Ilam Province[32]

Chitgar, Tehran Province[33]

Shahid Chamran, Tehran Province[34]

Kamraniyeh, West Azerbaijan Province[35]

Saadat Abad, Tehran Province[36]

Orchid Housing Complex in Sattarkhan, Tehran Province[37]

Shahid Daghayeghi, Tehran Province[38]

Shahraara, Tehran Province[39]

Garmdareh, Tehran Province[40]

CTP-ISW has observed footage of explosions at the following locations:

IRGC Ground Forces 29th Nabi Akram Division ammunition depot, Kermanshah Province[41]

IRGC Aerospace Force Headquarters, Tehran Province[42]

Artesh Air Force 1st Combat Assault Group fuel depot at Kermanshah Airport, Kermanshah Province[43]

CTP-ISW will not be covering the new Israeli operation in the Gaza Strip. We have reprioritized our Middle East coverage to focus on Iran's nuclear program, Iranian domestic security, and Iranian efforts to rebuild its networks into the Levant, including the Palestinian Territories. Given that Israel and its partners have destroyed Hamas' military organization and severed the group's ability to resupply itself, we are now focused on how Iran seeks to rebuild its lines of communication with Hezbollah and Hamas through Syria.

The Iran Update provides insights into Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities abroad that undermine regional stability and threaten US forces and interests. It also covers events and trends that affect the stability and decision-making of the Iranian regime. The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) provides these updates regularly based on regional events.

CTP-ISW defines the “Axis of Resistance” as the unconventional alliance that Iran has cultivated in the Middle East since the Islamic Republic came to power in 1979. This transnational coalition is comprised of state, semi-state, and non-state actors that cooperate to secure their collective interests. Tehran considers itself to be both part of the alliance and its leader. Iran furnishes these groups with varying levels of financial, military, and political support in exchange for some degree of influence or control over their actions. Some are traditional proxies that are highly responsive to Iranian direction, while others are partners over which Iran exerts more limited influence. Members of the Axis of Resistance are united by their grand strategic objectives, which include eroding and eventually expelling American influence from the Middle East, destroying the Israeli state, or both. Pursuing these objectives and supporting the Axis of Resistance to those ends have become cornerstones of Iranian regional strategy.

We do not report in detail on war crimes because these activities are well-covered in Western media and do not directly affect the military operations we are assessing and forecasting. We utterly condemn violations of the laws of armed conflict and the Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity even though we do not describe them in these reports.

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[1] www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1404/03/23/3334063

IRAN UPDATE SPECIAL REPORT, JUNE 17, 2025, EVENING EDITION

The Critical Threats Project (CTP) at the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) are publishing multiple updates daily to provide analysis on the war with Iran. We have prioritized covering Iranian and Iranian-sponsored activities and the threats that they pose to US and partner interests.

ISW (Institute for the Study of War) Kelly Campa, Avery Borens, Nidal Morrison, Carolyn Moorman, Ben Schmida, Ria Reddy, and Annika Ganzeveld June 17 2025

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The IAEA confirmed that Israeli strikes have impacted underground infrastructure at the Natanz nuclear site. This came after the IAEA reported that Israeli strikes have likely damaged or destroyed thousands of centrifuges at Natanz.
- Israel has continued striking Iranian military targets, which has likely degraded Iranian missile forces significantly. This degradation is reflected in the decreasing volume of Iranian missile fire at Israel.
- Israel has continued striking energy infrastructure and regime sites connected to domestic surveillance and repression. These strikes could reduce the ability of the regime to control the population and, in turn, destabilize it.
- US President Donald Trump called for Iran's "unconditional surrender." This came as the United States sent additional forces to the Middle East and could reportedly meet with senior Iranian officials in the coming days to discuss a resolution to the war.
- Iran has prepared to fire missiles at US forces if the United States strikes Iran, according to the *New York Times*. The outlet reported that Iran would first attack US positions in Iraq and then in other unspecified Arab countries, presumably those around the Persian Gulf.
- Iranian-backed militias have agreed to attack US forces in Iraq if the United States strikes Iran. These militias are the same ones that conducted around 200 attacks targeting US positions in Iraq and Syria from October 2023 to November 2024.
- A senior Houthi official said that the Houthis "will intervene to support Iran against Israel." The Houthis could support Iran by firing projectiles at US and Israeli targets or resuming attacks targeting international shipping.

CTP-ISW has recorded 197 reported or confirmed Israeli airstrikes on Iran since the start of the Israeli air campaign on June 12.

CTP-ISW has recorded 39 reported or confirmed Iranian ballistic missile or interceptor impacts on Israel since the start of the Israeli air campaign on June 12.



The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) has likely degraded Iran's ability to conduct ballistic missile attacks.[1] The IDF reported on June 17 that it has destroyed “about half” of Iran’s ballistic missile launchers, which the IDF stated is equivalent to over 200 launchers.[2] The IDF reported on June 16 that it had destroyed a third (120 launchers) of Iran’s missile launchers, which suggests that the IDF destroyed around 80 launchers between June 16 and 17.[3] The IDF also estimated on June 17 that it had destroyed between 35 and 45 percent of Iran’s ballistic missile stockpile.[4] The IDF released footage of strikes targeting Iranian ballistic missile storage and launch sites in western Iran on June 17.[5] Iran’s missile barrages in the recent conflict are much smaller compared to its barrages in its October 2024 attack on Israel, which likely reflects the IDF’s degradation of Iranian ballistic missile capabilities. Iran launched around 200 ballistic missiles in two waves in October 2024, whereas Iran used 30 to 40 missiles per barrage on June 16. Iran used 20 missiles in its largest barrage and two missiles in its smallest barrage on June 17, moreover.[6]

Iran has conducted three ballistic missile attacks targeting Israel since CTP-ISW's 6:00 AM ET data cutoff on June 17. Iran launched two ballistic missiles targeting central Israel in its sixth barrage since June 16.[7] Israeli air defenses intercepted one of the missiles, and the other missile landed in an open area, according to an Israeli military correspondent.[8] Iran reportedly launched three missiles targeting southern Israel in its seventh barrage and two ballistic missiles targeting northern Israel in its eighth barrage. Neither attack caused damage or injuries.[9] The sharp decline in the size of Iranian missile barrages is likely the result of the IDF's destruction of Iranian missile launches and storage facilities, as noted above.

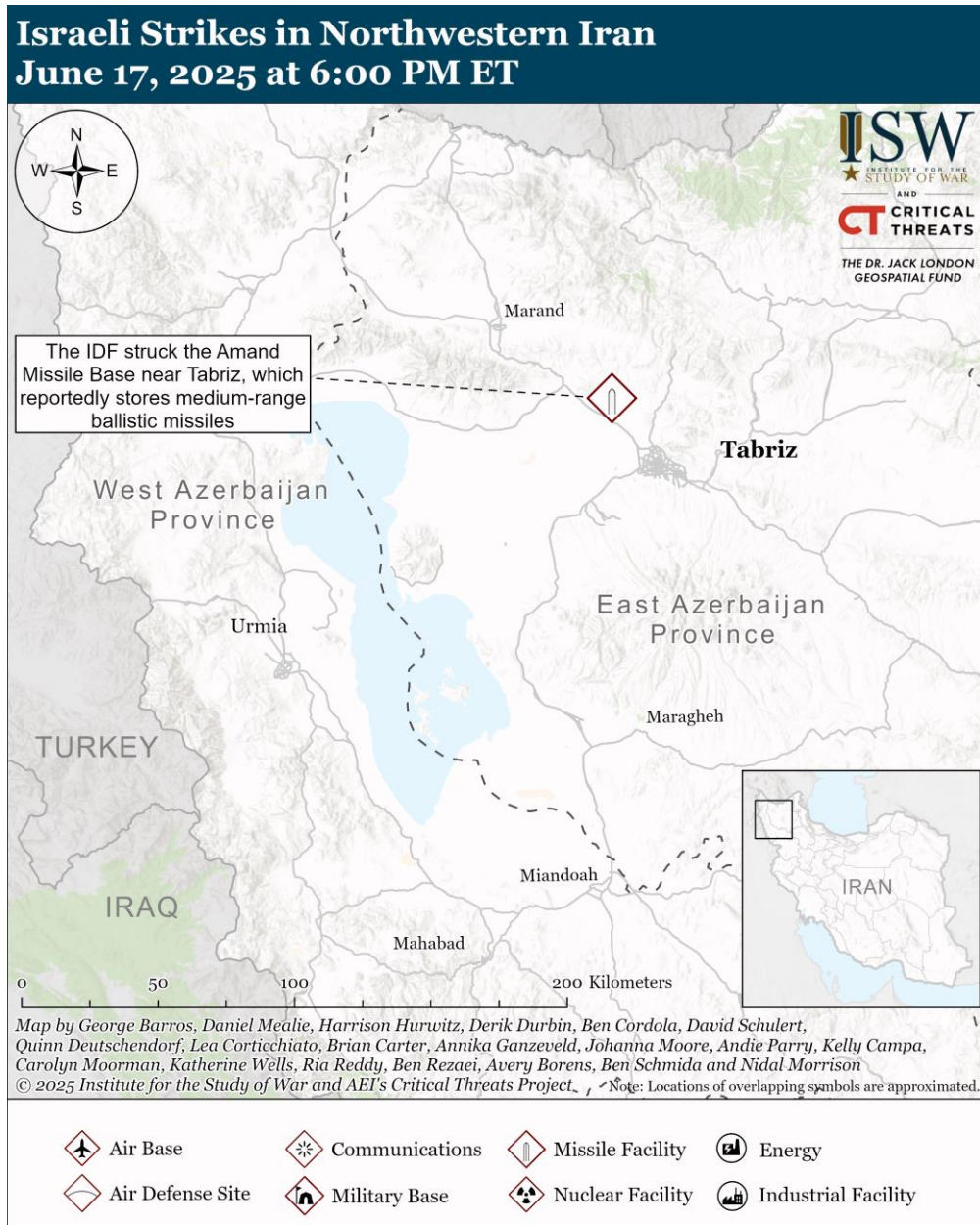
The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirmed on June 17 that Israeli airstrikes directly impacted the underground enrichment facilities at the Natanz Enrichment Complex in Esfahan.[10] A US weapons expert identified three explosive impacts above the underground enrichment facilities at Natanz on June 17.[11] The IAEA previously reported on June 16 that Israeli airstrikes had not directly impacted the underground facilities at Natanz but had likely damaged or destroyed several thousand centrifuges due to damage to energy infrastructure at the site.[12] Israeli airstrikes damaged electrical substations and support buildings critical to the power supply at the facility.[13] There have been several unverified reports of additional airstrikes at Natanz since June 16.[14] It is unclear what damage, if any, these strikes inflicted on the complex. The IAEA stated that there has been no change to the status of the Esfahan Nuclear Technology Center or Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant.[15]



The IDF targeted missile bases in Tehran and East Azerbaijan provinces. The IDF struck the Tehrani Moghaddam Missile Base near Tehran on June 15.[16] A nuclear weapons analyst posted satellite imagery captured on June 17 that shows significant damage at the base.[17] The Tehrani Moghaddam base is reportedly one of Iran's most sensitive and strategically important military sites.[18] The site is named after Hassan Tehrani Moghaddam, who is considered the father of Iran's ballistic missile program and played a key role in developing Iran's medium- and long-range missiles.[19]



Iranian opposition media separately posted a video of smoke rising from the Amand Missile Base near Tabriz in northwestern Iran.[20] The IRGC Aerospace Force reportedly stores Ghadr medium-range ballistic missiles at this base.[21] The IDF previously struck a number of buildings at the Amand base on June 14.[22]

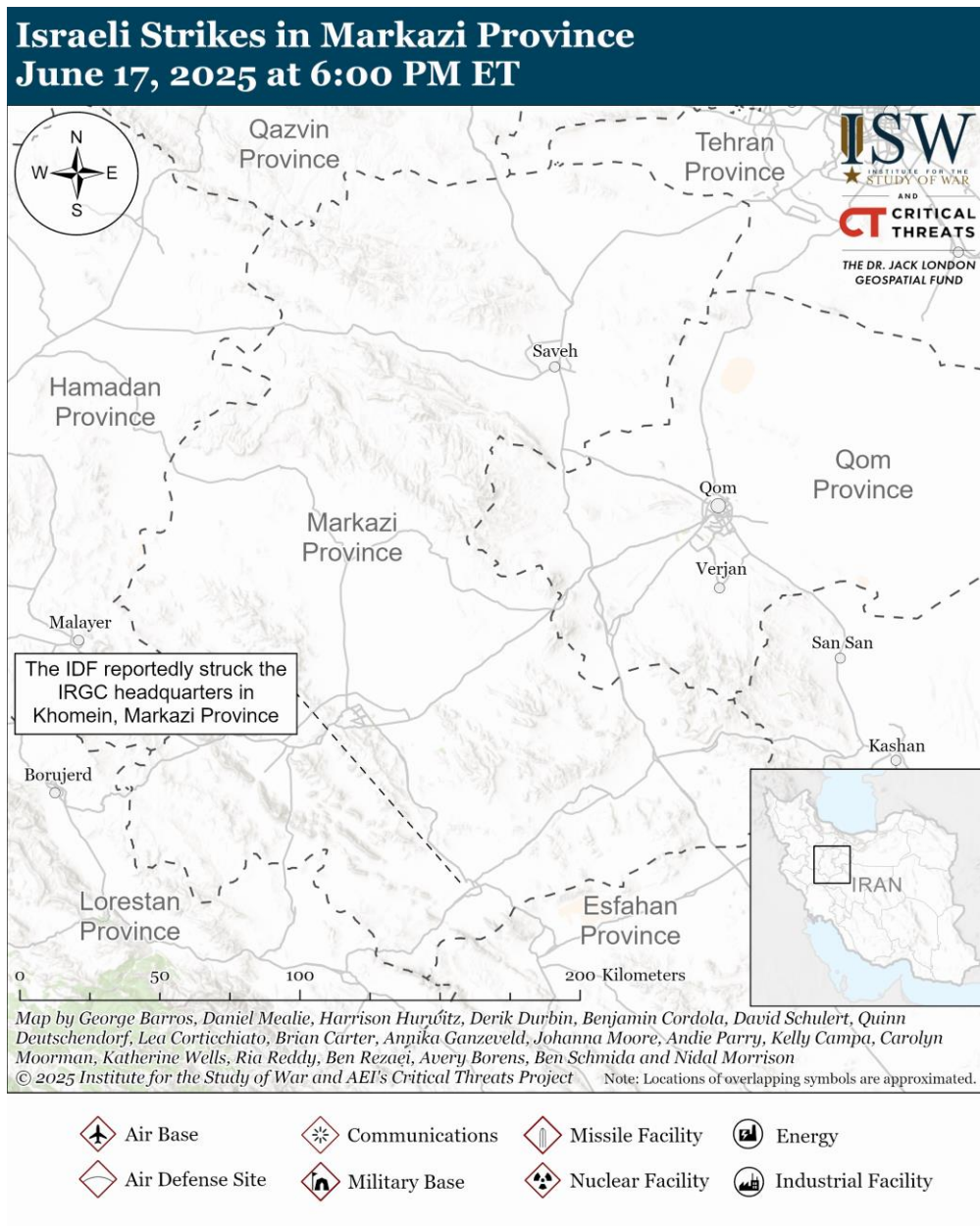


The IDF targeted several Iranian military sites in Esfahan Province in central Iran on June

17.[23] The IDF stated that it conducted a “massive wave” of strikes targeting ballistic missile launch and storage facilities in Esfahan Province.[24] The IDF reportedly struck the Artesh Air Force 8th Tactical Airbase in Esfahan, which houses F-14A/AM, F-7/FT-7N, and PC-7 aircraft.[25] The IDF previously struck this airbase in April 2024 following Iran’s drone and missile attack on Israel.[26] The 8th Tactical Airbase is strategically located near key Iranian nuclear and defense sites.[27] The IDF separately struck an Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) missile base and the IRGC Ground Forces 8th Najaf-e Ashraf Armored Division’s Ashura Barracks in Najafabad, Esfahan Province.[28] The IDF also struck the IRGC Shahid Kharrazi Barracks and Iran Aircraft Manufacturing Industrial Company (HESA) near Shahin Shahr, north of Esfahan.[29] HESA manufactures Ababil and Shahed-series drones.[30]



There are unverified reports that the IDF struck the IRGC headquarters in Khomein, Markazi Province, on June 17.[31] The IDF previously struck the Hazrat-e Masoumeh air defense site in Markazi Province on June 13 and 16. This air defense site is responsible for defending the Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant and is located roughly 16 kilometers east of Fordow.[32]



Israeli airstrikes have continued to degrade Iran's air defense capabilities. The IDF has destroyed over 70 Iranian air defense systems since June 12.[33] The IDF destroyed over 40 air defense systems in the first 24 hours of its air campaign, which enabled Israel to establish air superiority over western Iran and Tehran.[34] The IDF has since destroyed another 30 air defense systems.[35] The IDF stated that the destruction of Iranian air defense systems will allow Israeli Air Force (IAF) fighter jets and drones to operate deeper within Iran.[36] The IAF conducted its deepest strike in Iran thus far on June 16, when the IAF targeted an Artesh airbase in Mashhad, Khorasan Razavi Province.[37] Some Iranian air defense systems remain intact and have reportedly activated in response to Israeli airstrikes.[38] It is unclear whether these systems have successfully intercepted Israeli missiles or airstrikes.

The IDF continued to target Iranian energy infrastructure and infrastructure related to internal security on June 17. Israeli strikes reportedly targeted oil refineries in Tehran and Esfahan provinces.[39] CTP-ISW assessed on June 15 that Israeli strikes on Iranian energy infrastructure will likely worsen Iran's ongoing energy crisis and cause more widespread and frequent electricity shortages and outages.

Frustration over energy shortages could trigger internal unrest.[40] The IDF also expanded its air campaign to target a Basij headquarters in Esfahan Province on June 17.[41] The Basij is a paramilitary organization that recruits and organizes regime loyalists and uses them to produce and disseminate propaganda, suppress internal dissent, and conduct civil defense operations. An outlet controlled by the Iranian Armed Forces General Staff published an article on June 15 calling for the deployment of the Basij across Iran to promote internal security and regime stability.[42]

The IDF targeted the Shahid Meisami Group in Karaj, Alborz Province, as CTP-ISW reported in its June 16 morning update.[43] The United States sanctioned the Shahid Meisami Group in December 2020 for testing and producing chemical agents for use as incapacitation agents.[44] Iran has previously used pharmaceutical-based agents to suppress internal dissent.[45]

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the Iranian people during an interview with Iranian opposition media on June 16.[46] Netanyahu stated that "a light has been lit—carry it to freedom." He added that "your hour of freedom is near—it's happening now." Netanyahu similarly addressed the Iranian people in a speech on June 12 and said that "I believe the day of your liberation is near." [47]

Iran struck the Israeli Military Intelligence School in Camp Moshe Dayan in Tel Aviv with ballistic missiles on June 17, as CTP-ISW reported in its June 17 morning update.[48] A video of the strike showed nearby Israeli air defense systems attempting to intercept the missiles before four ballistic missiles struck in the vicinity of the school.[49] Two of the missiles landed in agricultural fields while a third struck a wastewater treatment plant.[50] One missile struck a warehouse in the Military Intelligence School, damaging the warehouse and starting a fire.[51] No casualties have been reported at the time of this writing.

The Israeli Navy intercepted several drones heading toward Israel on June 17.[52] The navy released a video of a Saar 6-class Corvette intercepting a drone.[53] The vessel has reportedly intercepted approximately 20 drones since the start of the Israeli air campaign against Iran on June 12.[54]

US President Donald Trump called for Iran's "unconditional surrender" in a social media post on June 17 amid reports about a possible meeting between US and Iranian officials to discuss an end to the Israel-Iran war.[55] Trump told reporters on June 17 that he wants a "real end" to the war that would involve Iran "giving up entirely" on nuclear weapons.[56] Axios reported on June 17 that the Trump administration has discussed holding a meeting in the coming days between US Special Envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff and Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Abbas Araghchi.[57] An unspecified US official confirmed that such a meeting is "under consideration" but has not yet been finalized.[58] Witkoff and Araghchi would reportedly discuss reaching a diplomatic agreement that would involve a US-Iran nuclear deal and an Israel-Iran ceasefire at the proposed meeting, according to Axios.[59] Trump stated during the G7 Summit in Alberta that his administration was talking to Iranian officials by phone but said it would be "better to talk in person." [60] Trump said that Iran "want[s] to make a deal." [61] The Axios report did not give any indication that Iran has changed its negotiating posture and would be willing to give up its

right to enrich uranium on Iranian soil. An unspecified senior Iranian official denied that Iran has indicated that it seeks to end the conflict.[62] Unspecified Israeli officials emphasized to Axios that Israel has not yet achieved its objectives of destroying Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile programs and is not interested in a ceasefire.[63]

The United States is moving additional assets to the Middle East to “enhance [the United States’] defensive posture” in the region.[64] US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth announced on June 16 that he directed US Central Command (CENTCOM) to move additional assets to its area of responsibility in recent days.[65] An unspecified US official told Reuters on June 17 that the United States is deploying F-16, F-22, and F-35 fighter jets to the Middle East as part of a “defensive” deployment.[66] A senior US Department of Defense official told USA Today that US air refueling tankers are also moving to the Middle East from Europe.[67] Flight tracking data on June 17 confirmed that at least 17 US refueling tankers had begun moving toward the Middle East from Europe.[68] The defense official said that the aircraft are heading to the Middle East to protect US forces there.[69] An unspecified US official characterized the aircraft movement as a “show of force.”[70] Three US officials also told Reuters that the United States is extending the deployment of some warplanes in the Middle East.[71] An unspecified US official said that the United States has also moved 21 US-based refuelers to Europe to backfill those sent to the Middle East.[72] Flight tracking data from June 15 showed over 31 US Air Force refueling tankers, including KC-135s and KC-46s, leaving the United States toward Europe.[73] Two US officials told Reuters that these deployments are intended to “provide options” for Trump.[74] The USS *Nimitz* carrier strike group is also en route to the Middle East from the South China Sea.[75]

Trump called on Iranians to “immediately evacuate Tehran” on June 16.[76] **The IDF later reportedly conducted several strikes targeting sites in the city.** Trump told reporters that he wanted “people to be safe.”[77] The IDF previously issued an evacuation order on June 16 to 300,000 Iranians in a neighborhood in central Tehran.[78] The IDF reportedly conducted several strikes in Tehran overnight on June 16 and 17 and during the day on June 17.[79] The targets of most of these strikes are currently unclear. A France 24 correspondent based in Tehran reported a large explosion at Parchin in eastern Tehran on June 16.[80] The IDF previously struck the Parchin military complex on June 12 and 15.[81] Iran has used the site to develop and manufacture explosive materials and advanced munitions, including ballistic missiles.[82] Several social media users in Tehran posted videos of smoke billowing from the Shahrin oil depot.[83] Some sources suggested that Israel conducted a new strike on the oil depot.[84] It is possible that the fire has continued to burn since the IDF struck the depot on June 14, however.[85]

Unspecified US officials told the *New York Times* on June 17 that US intelligence shows that Iran has prepared missiles and equipment to strike US bases in the region if the United States joins Israel’s air campaign against Iran.[86] Two Iranian officials said that Iran would first attack US bases in Iraq and then target US bases in other unspecified Arab countries.[87] The US officials noted that the Houthis would “almost certainly” resume attacks against international shipping in the Red Sea if the United States attacks Iran.[88] Other unspecified US officials said that Iran could also lay mines in the Strait of Hormuz to close the strait.[89] Former Iranian Armed Forces General Staff Chief Major General Mohammad

Bagheri warned before the start of the Israeli air campaign that Iran would disrupt international shipping if the “US military makes a mistake.”[90] The Trump administration reportedly told unspecified Middle Eastern allies that it does not intend to join the war against Iran unless Iran targets US citizens.[91] Axios, citing two sources from countries that received the US message, reported that the United States sent a similar message to allies before Israel launched its air campaign against Iran on June 12.[92]

Iranian-backed Iraqi militias Kataib Hezbollah, Kataib Sayyid al Shuhada, Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba, and Ansar Allah al Awfia announced on June 17 that they had developed a “joint plan” to target US forces if the United States joins the Israeli air campaign against Iran.[93] These militias are part of the Islamic Resistance of Iraq, which is a coalition of Iranian-backed militias that consistently conducted attacks targeting US forces in Iraq and Syria between October 2023 and January 2024.[94] This announcement follows reports that US forces recently intercepted several missiles near al Shaddadi, Hasakah Province, Syria.[95] It is unclear whether the missiles were targeting US forces or another target, such as Israel. The missiles were reportedly launched from Iraq.[96] No group has claimed responsibility for the attack. An official from Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Harakat Hezbollah al Nujaba warned on June 16 that the “resistance” will not stand “idly by” as Israel strikes Iran.[97] Iranian-backed Iraqi militias may target the United States even if it does not directly participate in or approve Israeli attacks on Iran because Iran and its proxies believe that the United States approves of Israeli actions in the region.

Several Iranian-backed Iraqi actors have called on the Iraqi federal government to expel US forces from the country, claiming that the United States is using its presence in Iraq to facilitate Israeli attacks against Iran. A member of Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Asaib Ahl al Haq’s Sadiqoun bloc called for expelling “foreign forces” that use Iraqi airspace to target Iran.[98] The leader of Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Sayyid al Shuhada, Abu Alaa al Walai, accused the United States of turning off Iraqi radar systems to protect Israeli fighter jets as they travel to Iran.[99] A Kataib Sayyid al Shuhada-linked parliamentarian described the US-Iraq security agreement as a pretext for enabling Israeli incursions into Iraqi airspace.[100] A member of Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah’s Hoquq Movement also urged the Iraqi government to cancel its security agreement with the United States.[101] The United States and Iraq agreed in September 2024 that hundreds of US-led international coalition forces would withdraw from Iraq by September 2025 and that remaining forces would withdraw by the end of 2026.[102] The removal of US forces from Iraq and Syria is a long-standing objective of Iran and Iranian-backed Iraqi militias. Iranian-backed Iraqi militias could use allegations that the United States uses its presence in Iraq to enable Israeli actions in the region to pressure the Iraqi government to expel US forces from Iraq or to justify attacks against US forces.

Iraqi media reported that hundreds of Kataib Hezbollah members protested in solidarity with Iran in Baghdad on June 16.[103] Shia Coordination Framework leaders had called on Iraqis to demonstrate in support of Iran.[104] The Shia Coordination Framework is a loose coalition of Shia political parties, some of which Iran backs.

Houthi Political Bureau member Mohammad al Bukhaiti told Qatari media on June 17 that the Houthis are coordinating their attacks with Iran and will continue to “intervene to support Iran against Israel.”^[105] Bukhaiti’s comments come after the Houthis announced on June 15 that they attacked Israel in coordination with Iran.^[106] This attack marked the first time that a member of the Axis of Resistance has claimed to conduct a joint attack with Iran on Israel since the start of the Israeli air campaign on June 12.^[107] The Houthis have attacked Israel with several drones and ballistic missiles since June 12.^[108] Houthi attacks are not an inflection or new constraint on air defense bandwidth for Israel because the Houthis have regularly targeted Israel with drones and missiles since November 2024.^[109] These attacks do further constrain Israeli air defense bandwidth when combined with Iranian attacks, however.

IDF SAYS IT PARTLY DESTROYED NATANZ NUCLEAR FACILITY, IRAN SAYS NO JUMP IN RADIATION

Israeli defense officials believe damage to major facility is significant, while other enrichment facility at Fordo, nuclear sites in Isfahan, Busheir reportedly not targeted

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL [Emanuel Fabian Agencies](#) 13 June 2025

Iran's Natanz facility for uranium enrichment was hit by [Israeli airstrikes](#) targeting the Islamic Republic's nuclear program early Friday, with Israeli defense officials assessing the damage was significant.

According to the military, the Israeli Air Force strikes destroyed the underground section of the site, which housed "a multi-level enrichment hall housing centrifuges, electrical rooms, and other supporting infrastructure."

The strikes also destroyed "critical infrastructure enabling the site's continued operation and advancement of the Iranian regime's nuclear weapons project."

Natanz is Iran's largest uranium enrichment site, which the IDF says has been "working toward the development of nuclear weapons" for years, and "contains the infrastructure required for enrichment to a military-grade level."

Footage circulating online earlier showed [heavy strikes](#) at the site, which, in addition to its underground site, also includes an above-ground pilot enrichment plant.

Iran's atomic energy authorities said the attack "damaged several parts of the facility," but that no increase in radiation levels or chemical contamination had been observed at Natanz.



This image grab taken from footage broadcast by Iran's IRINN news on June 13, 2025 shows what the television described as smoke billowing from explosions in Natanz after Israel announced it had carried out strikes on Iranian nuclear and military sites (IRINN / AFP)

In a statement citing local authorities, the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency said that Iran's only nuclear power plant in the southern port city of Bushehr had not been targeted.

IAEA chief Rafael Grossi, in a statement to a meeting of the watchdog's board of governors, said the other main enrichment center in Iran, Fordo, was not hit, and neither was another nuclear facility in Isfahan, citing Iranian authorities.

Grossi said he was ready to travel to Iran to assess the situation there.

"I call on all parties to exercise maximum restraint to avoid further escalation. I reiterate that any military action that jeopardizes the safety and security of nuclear facilities risks grave consequences for the people of Iran, the region, and beyond," Grossi said in his statement.

"I have indicated to the respective authorities my readiness to travel at the earliest to assess the situation and ensure safety, security and non-proliferation in Iran."

Iran is enriching to up to 60 percent purity, close to the roughly 90% of weapons grade, at the pilot plant, but it is producing smaller quantities of that material there than at Fordo, a site dug into a mountain that military experts have said would be difficult for Israel to destroy through bombardment.



This satellite photo from Planet Labs PBC shows Iran's Natanz nuclear site, on April 14, 2023. (Planet Labs PBC via AP)

"Despite the current military actions and heightened tensions, it is clear that the only sustainable path forward — for Iran, for Israel, the entire region, and the international community — is one grounded in dialogue and diplomacy to ensure peace, stability, and cooperation," Grossi said.

Jerusalem said Friday it had engaged in a "precise, preemptive strike" against Iran overnight, declaring an imminent threat from its nuclear program and announcing a domestic state of emergency as citizens braced for retaliation. Top officials warned of a potential prolonged conflict, noting that Tehran had the power to inflict significant pain upon Israel.

NEWS UPDATE

THE WAR BETWEEN ISRAEL AND IRAN CONTINUES

[israelAM](#) June 16 2025

The war between Israel and Iran continues, with Israeli jets striking military and strategic targets including nuclear facilities, ballistic missile launchers and storage facilities, strategic oil and gas facilities and top military commanders, and Iran firing over 350 ballistic missiles and drones at Israeli major population centers. Israel has made it clear that its attacks are not directed against the Iranian people, only against the regime.

[Interestingly, the name “Rising Lion”, which is what the military operation is called, is also an allusion to the Iranian flag under the Shah, which featured a lion. This could be the Iranian people’s best chance to overthrow the evil regime and win their freedom back.]

While over 90% of the Iranian missiles and drones have been intercepted, the few missiles that have gotten through have caused 24 deaths and several hundred injured (most lightly). Israeli jets have been specifically targeting missile launchers, which has prevented Iran from launching more than 30 – 50 missiles at a time. Iran is thought to have between 2 to 3 thousand ballistic missiles capable of reaching Israel. The IDF has reportedly destroyed one third of Iran’s launchers.

Last night, an airstrike in Tehran eliminated Mohammad Kazemi, head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ intelligence unit, and his deputy, Mohammad Hassan Mohaqiq. Kazemi was responsible for internal surveillance, espionage and neutralizing opponents of the regime. Mohaqiq played a key role in the regime’s terrorist operations against Israel, the West and countries in the Middle East.

New satellite images released today showed damage to several of Iran’s nuclear facilities, including Natanz and Fordow. The Fordow facility, a centerpiece of Iran’s nuclear program, is considered one of the most difficult targets for Israel to neutralize due to its location inside a mountain and the multiple layers of reinforced concrete protecting it.

Jordan said that it would shoot down or intercept missiles and drones flying over their airspace. Hezbollah announced that it would not take any action in the current conflict. Britain, Germany and France have been supportive of Israel’s right to defend itself against the Iranian nuclear threat.

President Trump has warned Iran not to attack the U.S. in any way, anywhere in the world, or face an overwhelming U.S. military response. He has called on Iran to come back to the negotiating table rather than continue to face more destruction. Last night’s Iranian missile attack against Tel Aviv caused damage to the US Embassy compound in the city. Ambassador Mike Huckabee announced the embassy’s response to the attack stating, “Our US Embassy in Israel & Consulate will officially remain closed today as shelter in place still in effect. Some minor damage from concussions of Iranian missile hits near Embassy Branch in Tel Aviv, but no injuries to US personnel.”

'NOWHERE FEELS SAFE': IRANIANS ON LIFE UNDER ISRAELI ATTACKS

BBC PERSIAN Edited by Alexandra Fouché 15 June 2025



Image source, Reuters

"Stuck". That is the word most people who have spoken to the BBC use to describe life in Iran right now.

After three days of Israeli attacks, "everyone is trying to escape" Tehran "one way or another," one resident told BBC News Persian.

On Sunday, long queues formed at petrol stations across the city. Many people tried to leave for remote areas, away from any possible Israeli target, but could not even get out of the province because of heavy traffic.

"Tehran isn't safe, clearly," one resident said. "We get no alarms or warnings from officials about Israeli attacks. We just hear the blasts and hope our place isn't hit. But where can we go? Nowhere feels safe."

- [Follow live: The latest on Iran-Israel war](#)

One person who managed to move from Tehran to another province said: "I don't think I've fully processed that I'm living in an active war zone, and I'm not sure when I'll reach acceptance."

"This is not my war. I'm not rooting for either side, I just want to survive along with my family."

Since Friday, Israel has hit Iran with its biggest wave of air strikes in years.

It led to retaliation from Iran, which has launched missile attacks on Israel.

At least 19 people have been killed in Israel since Friday, authorities said. Iran's health ministry said on Sunday that Israeli strikes had killed 224 people across the country since Friday.

One Iranian told the BBC she has not been able to sleep for two nights: "I've gone through really tough situations."

She said the current situation reminds her of bombings and going to shelters during the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s, when she was a child.

"The difference is that back then, at least when an attack happened, we heard the air raid siren or at least warnings before it happened. But now, during this bombing or any air raid, there's no sirens or warnings."

Younger people, born after the war, do not know what it was like, BBC News Persian's Ghoncheh Habibi-azad said.

One woman in Tehran said she has considered leaving the city to escape the attacks.

"We've all wanted to go to smaller cities or villages, anywhere we can go, but each of us has loved ones who can't leave, and we're thinking of them," she said. "What we're experiencing is not fair to any of us, the people of Iran."

"We're all trying to get through these days in fear, exhaustion, and a lot of stress, this is extremely hard and painful."

Another resident in the capital said: "I can't just leave Tehran. I can't leave my elderly parents who can't travel far and long and leave the city myself. Besides, I need to show up to work. What can I do now?"



People queued in cars in Tehran to get petrol on Sunday

Image source, EPA-EFE

The internet has been unstable, so it is very hard to keep in touch with people inside the country.

Many of those living outside the country are sending messages to loved ones, hoping for a reply.

Some people have also received warnings from the Israel military asking all Iranians to leave areas near military sites. People in Tehran seem most worried about this.

"How are we supposed to know where a military site is and where isn't?" one said.

Separately, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a message to Iranians on the second day of the attacks: "The time has come" for Iranians to unite "by standing up for your freedom".

However, people in the country have so far chosen to stay safe and there is little evidence that Netanyahu's call has resonated on the ground, BBC News Persian's Daryoush Karimi said.

Inside Iran, what perhaps shocked people the most was the destruction of residential buildings, even more than the attacks on nuclear facilities and airbases, BBC News Persian's Pouyan Kalani said.

Many Iranians had not witnessed scenes like that since the end of the Iran-Iraq war - especially not on the streets of the capital.

Many of those in Tehran and elsewhere, recall the confusion of Friday: what exactly was happening; how widespread was it; and how could they protect themselves and their families?

IRAN LAUNCHES MISSILES AT ISRAEL, AND SOME HIT TEL AVIV, AS ISRAEL ATTACKS IRANIAN NUCLEAR SITES AND COMMANDERS

[CBS NEWS](#) Joe Walsh, Haley Ott, Tucker Reals, Kerry Breen, June 14, 2025

Warning sirens sounded across Israel on Friday as Iran fired dozens of ballistic missiles in a retaliatory attack after Israel launched overnight airstrikes. A second round of missiles targeted Israel a few hours later. Some made it through Israel's missile defense system, causing damage and injuries, though the full extent of the damage is not yet clear.

A little after 4:30 a.m. Saturday local time, the Israel Defense Forces [wrote](#) on social media that "Israelis are currently running for shelter in northern Israel as sirens sound due to another missile launch from Iran." It was not immediately clear if this marked a third round of missiles or was still part of the second wave.

In the first round, about 100 missiles were fired from Iran in two salvos, officials said. Israel has a robust missile defense system known as the [Iron Dome](#), which intercepted most of the missiles, the IDF said. The IDF reported a limited number of hits on structures, some from interception failures.



An explosion is seen during a missile attack in Tel Aviv, Israel, Friday, June 13, 2025. Tomer Neuberg / AP

Video and photos show a number of buildings damaged or on fire. The IDF reported that 21 people had been injured and two were in serious condition.

Dozens more missiles came in the next wave, and again the IDF said some, but not all, were intercepted. "Search and Rescue forces are currently operating in a number of locations across the country in which reports of fallen projectiles were received," the military said.

A U.S. official and a White House official confirmed to CBS News that the United States helped Israel intercept Iranian missiles.

During the strikes, U.S. troops at two bases in the Middle East were ordered into bunkers. Troops at Union III in the Green Zone in Baghdad, Iraq, and Al-Tanf Garrison in Syria spent about an hour in the bunkers, BS News confirmed.

The retaliatory action from Iran came after Israel launched over 200 airstrikes on Iran, continuing a [major operation](#) that began overnight, IDF spokesman Brig. Gen. Effie Defrin said Friday. Israel's airstrikes are continuing, Defrin said.

Iran's U.N. ambassador said Friday that 78 people were killed and more than 320 were injured in Israeli attacks.

Israel first launched airstrikes on Iran early Friday and announced its operation was targeting Iranian nuclear facilities, scientists and senior military commanders.

Tehran responded by launching more than 100 drones at Israel on Friday morning, Israel's military said. Defrin said earlier Friday that Israel's air defenses had worked to "intercept the threats." Later Friday, an Israeli military official told reporters that while the threat wasn't over, Israel had managed to intercept many of Iran's UAVs.

"Throughout the day, we once again demonstrated our ability to remove threats in a coordinated, precise and daring manner," Defrin said Friday night local time.



Israeli Iron Dome air defense system fires to intercept missiles over Tel Aviv, Israel, Friday, June 13, 2025. Leo Correa / AP

In a televised statement on Friday, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said the Iranian Armed Forces would respond fiercely to the strikes and leave Israel "helpless."

Shortly after the statement, the IDF confirmed that its fighter jets had "completed a strike on the Iranian regime's nuclear site in the Isfahan area." Isfahan is in central Iran. The strike "dismantled a facility for producing metallic uranium, infrastructure for reconverting enriched uranium, laboratories and additional infrastructure," the IDF said.

U.S. NOT INVOLVED IN ISRAEL'S STRIKES, RUBIO SAYS

The U.S. was not involved in Israel's strikes, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said, adding a warning that "Iran should not target U.S. interests or personnel."

The State Department [informed multiple U.S.-allied governments](#) in the region Thursday in advance of the Israeli strikes and intelligence operations in Iran, four sources told CBS News. Rubio personally reached out to a number of them, sources said.

The main message conveyed by the Trump administration in those messages was that this was not a U.S. operation and did not involve U.S. assets, and that the U.S. preferred diplomacy to military force.

President [Trump said in a post Friday morning](#) on his Truth Social platform that he had given Iran "chance after chance" to make a deal with the U.S. on its nuclear program, but that despite his warnings to Tehran that the alternative would be "much worse" than anything seen before, "they just couldn't get it done."

"There has already been great death and destruction, but there is still time to make this slaughter, with the next already planned attacks being even more brutal, come to an end," Mr. Trump said. "Iran must make a deal, before there is nothing left."

In a later post on Friday, Mr. Trump said he "gave Iran a 60 day ultimatum to 'make a deal.' They should have done it! Today is day 61. I told them what to do, but they just couldn't get there. Now they have, perhaps, a second chance!"

Israel has intercepted virtually every Iranian weapon launched in previous large-scale attacks by the Islamic republic. The retaliatory action by Iran was long anticipated and well planned for, Defrin said.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said Friday on Iranian TV that the country would "strongly take action" against Israel in response to the attacks, promising "a severe, wise and strong answer."

"The Iranian nation and the country's officials will not remain silent in the face of this crime, and the legitimate and powerful response of the Islamic Republic of Iran will make the enemy regret its foolish act," he said.

ISRAEL SAYS IT DESTROYED IRAN'S AIR DEFENSES, KILLED TOP COMMANDERS

Earlier Friday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that the IDF had begun "Operation Rising Lion," with a massive wave of airstrikes against dozens of Iranian nuclear sites, military commanders and research scientists, saying the goal was to "roll back the Iranian threat to Israel's very survival."

Like Netanyahu, Defrin, the IDF spokesman, called the attack on Iran preemptive in a video statement delivered Friday, saying Israeli intelligence had uncovered an Iranian "plan to destroy Israel that has taken shape in recent years." He said that plan involved Iran "racing towards a nuclear bomb," working to double or triple its ballistic missile stockpile, and continuing to "finance, arm, and operate its proxies throughout the Middle East against the State of Israel."

"I can confirm that the senior security leadership of the Iranian regime has been eliminated in the strike: the Iranian Chief of Staff, [Mohammad] Bagheri; the Commander of the Revolutionary Guards, [Hossein] Salami; and the Head of the Emergency Command, [Gholamali] Rashid," Defrin said, adding that other commanders had been killed and that Israeli would provide further updates. He said Israel had "targeted and struck the Iranian regime's aerial defense arrays."

Mehmet Yaren Bozgun/Anadolu via Getty Imageshe IDF said its operation would continue for days, but that the first wave consisted of 200 Israeli fighter jets dropping "over 330 different munitions," to hit more than 100 targets in Iran.

"The breadth and scale of these strikes — against senior Iranian officials and other military facilities in addition to nuclear sites — suggest this operation is intended to not just dissuade Iran from pursuing nuclear weapons, but also cripple any potential military response and even to destabilize the regime," Matthew Savill, director of Military Sciences at the Royal United Services Institute, a British military think tank, said in a statement.

"Israel has once again demonstrated its considerable conventional military superiority, and the size of the force allegedly assembled for this series of attacks represents the overwhelming bulk of their longer-range strike aircraft. They have the ability to conduct multiple such rounds of strikes, but operating for an extended duration over this considerable range will stretch even the Israeli Air Force," Savill said.

Firefighters extinguish a fire in a building that was destroyed in an Israeli attack on June 13, 2025 in Tehran,

Savill said Iran's response "might be delayed or split into multiple phases, but their main weapon will be ballistic missiles, which have the best chance of inflicting damage on Israel, whereas drone and cruise missile attacks will face more extensive Israeli defenses. Israel operations have therefore targeted air defenses and ballistic missile sites to forestall this."

Savill said that if Iran "believes the U.S. or others were involved" in the Israeli strike, then their retaliation could include targeting the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet, based in Bahrain, and American air facilities in Qatar, "though both would widen the conflict to drag in others."

NATO CHIEF URGES DE-ESCALATION, SAYS NUCLEAR CLASH "NOT CLOSE"

Iranian state media said the Israeli strikes had hit several cities, including in the capital of Tehran and the city of Natanz, a key center for Iran's uranium enrichment program. The IDF said it struck Iran's uranium enrichment site in the Natanz area.

"The underground area of the site was damaged," the IDF said in a statement. "This area contains a multi-story enrichment hall with centrifuges, electrical rooms, and additional supporting infrastructure. In addition, critical infrastructure enabling the site's continuous operation and the Iranian regime's ongoing efforts to obtain nuclear weapons were targeted."

The United Nations' nuclear watchdog agency, the IAEA, [said in a series of social media posts](#) that its director-general, Rafael Grossi, had been in contact with Iranian authorities on Friday, who told him the

country's highly sensitive and highly secured Fordo nuclear site "has not been impacted" by the Israeli strikes. Later Friday, Reuters reported that two explosions had been heard near the site and that state media said Iranian air defenses had shot down an Israeli drone near the facility.

The IAEA also said Iran's "Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant had not been targeted and that no increase in radiation levels has been observed at the Natanz site."

On Friday, during a visit to Sweden, NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte told reporters that "this was a unilateral action by Israel. So I think it is crucial for many allies, including the United States, to work as we speak to de-escalate."

Despite the ongoing attacks, Rutte said he believed the region was "not close" to a possible nuclear conflict.

While there have been no claims that Iran has yet built a nuclear weapon, Israel is believed to have multiple warheads, though it has never formally confirmed nor denied its status as a nuclear-armed nation.

Iranian officials quickly threatened retaliation to the attack, with Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei saying Israel "should await a harsh response."

The IDF said in a statement before Iran's retaliatory strikes that it had prepared for "a campaign on the frontline and on the home front."

Netanyahu said Israel's strikes against Iran, "will continue for as many days as it takes to remove this threat."

Shortly after Israel's strikes, the U.S. Embassy in Israel ordered American personnel to shelter in place.

A day beforehand, the Trump administration [ordered](#) non-emergency U.S. personnel to leave Iraq and allowed U.S. military family members to leave the Middle East voluntarily.

RISK OF AN ESCALATING REGIONAL CONFLICT

Israel has carried out strikes against Iranian proxies in recent years, while Iran has backed foes of Israel, including the militant group Hamas.

In April of last year, Iran [launched missiles and drones](#) at Israel after a strike on Iran's consulate [in Damascus](#) was widely attributed to Israel, but the Israeli military intercepted the vast majority of the weapons.

Six months later, Iran [launched more](#) missiles at Israel, which retaliated with strikes on Iranian sites.

Friday's back-and-forth could escalate to be among the most severe clashes between Israel and Iran, which have been adversaries for decades. Mr. Trump warned earlier in the week that the strikes could snowball into a "massive" conflict.

Fareh Al-Muslimi, a research fellow at the Chatham House think tank, said in a statement Friday that the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen could play a role in the Iranian response to Israel.

"With Iran currently weakened and humiliated, this marks the first time the Houthis will be called upon to repay decades of Iranian investment and support," Al-Muslimi predicted. "Following the [killing of Hassan Nasrallah](#) in Lebanon and the [collapse of the Assad regime](#) in Syria, the Houthis have effectively become Iran's first line of defense against Israel — an increasingly central role."

Al-Muslimi said the Houthi response could extend beyond retaliatory strikes on Israel itself.

"Strikes in the Red Sea will likely resume, the ceasefire with the United States may unravel, and we shouldn't be surprised if Saudi Arabia and the UAE are dragged back into direct conflict in Yemen," Al-Muslimi said. "Attacks by the Houthis on U.S. military bases in the Gulf, the Horn of Africa, and naval forces at sea are also highly plausible."

Fabian Hinz, an air warfare expert at London's International Institute of Strategic Studies, told the Associated Press that Iran's current capabilities are potentially "more threatening to the U.S. military than to Israel."

Iran has a "huge arsenal" of shorter-range missiles, Hinz said, and there are a number of U.S. military bases in the region. He said Iran also has "lots of anti-ship capabilities."

"Think of the Iranian shipping threat as similar in quality to the Houthi threat, but much larger in quantity," Hinz told the AP.

ISRAELI ATTACK CASTS DOUBT ON FATE OF U.S.-IRAN NUCLEAR TALKS

The Israeli strikes and Iranian counterattack came amid efforts by President Trump to strike a new deal with Iran to limit the country's nuclear ambitions — an idea Israel has long been dubious of.

The U.S. and Iran were set to hold talks Sunday, multiple U.S. officials told CBS News. There was no immediate comment from any high-ranking Iranian officials that those plans would change after Israel's attack, but some reports in Iranian media outlets indicated Iran would likely no longer participate in the negotiations.

"With Israel's actions, the sixth round of negotiations with the United States will probably not be held," Iranian lawmaker Aladdin Boroujerdi, a member of parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, said, according to Iranian media.

Michal Ben-Gal, Seyed Bathaei, Jennifer Jacobs, Olivia Gazis and Eleanor Watson contributed to this report.

[Margaret Brennan](#) contributed to this report.

Crisis in the Middle East [More](#)



[Airspace closed over multiple Middle East countries, Tel Aviv airport shut down](#)



[Alert raised for Americans across Mideast as Israel poised to strike Iran](#)



[U.S. allies sanction Israeli cabinet members "for inciting violence"](#)



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- [Benjamin Netanyahu](#)

[Joe Walsh](#)

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WHAT ARE IRAN'S NUCLEAR AND MISSILE CAPABILITIES?

Iran's nuclear program and missile arsenal—particularly reports of a growing enriched uranium stockpile—garnered increased international scrutiny before becoming the primary targets of an attack by Israel in June.

COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS [Mariel Ferragamo](#), [Jonathan Masters](#), and [Will Merrow](#)

June 16, 2025

INTRODUCTION

Many foreign policy experts warn that if Iran were to acquire nuclear weapons, it would be broadly destabilizing for the Middle East and nearby regions. A first-order concern is that Iran's possession of nuclear weapons would pose a major, perhaps existential threat to Israel—a worry that drove Israel to [launch a full-scale attack](#) on Iran's nuclear and military facilities in June 2025. Other foreign policy experts say Iran would be assuring its own demise if it were to launch a nuclear strike on Israel, a close U.S. defense partner and possessor of its own nuclear weapons arsenal, which is undeclared. Either way, there would be a dangerous potential for miscalculation that could result in a nuclear exchange, analysts say. An additional concern is that Iran's possession of a nuclear weapon could spur other regional rivals, including Saudi Arabia, to pursue their own program.

International scrutiny of Iran's nuclear and missile programs intensified in late 2024 following a historic exchange of direct military strikes between Iran and Israel, as well as the reelection of Donald Trump as U.S. president. The first Trump administration pulled the United States from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and imposed a severe sanctions regime on the country. Now, a second Trump administration has agreed to resume talks with Tehran for the first time since it withdrew from the accord seven years ago, but talks so far have been slow to culminate in any concrete proposals, with compromise between the two countries over uranium enrichment still seeming far from reach. In June 2025, the UN nuclear watchdog declared Iran was not complying with its nuclear nonproliferation obligations.

DOES IRAN HAVE A NUCLEAR WEAPON?

Iran does not yet have a nuclear weapon, but it has a long history of engaging in secret nuclear weapons research in violation of its international commitments. Western analysts say the country has the knowledge and infrastructure to produce a nuclear weapon in fairly short order should its leaders decide to do so.

The United States, Israel, and other Middle Eastern partners regard Iran as a primary threat to their interests in the region, and view its potential acquisition of nuclear weapons as a game-changing scenario to be steadfastly prevented—[by force if necessary](#).

Iran has had a civilian nuclear energy program for more than fifty years, long maintaining its strictly nonmilitary aims. "Iran has repeatedly said its nuclear program only serves peaceful purposes. Nuclear weapons have no place in our nuclear doctrine," a [government spokesperson said](#) in April 2024. Yet in

recent months, Iranian officials have been talking publicly about the [possible need](#) for nuclear weapons, which some experts have said is a concerning shift.

Revelations in the early 2000s about the country's secret nuclear sites and research raised alarms in world capitals about its clandestine pursuit of a nuclear weapon. Iran's nuclear program has since been the subject of intense international debate and diplomacy, which culminated in a [2015 nuclear agreement](#).

The United States unilaterally withdrew from that agreement in 2018; since then, international monitors say that Iran has greatly expanded its nuclear activities, again heightening concerns about its "breaking out" to develop a nuclear weapon. In recent months, amid Israel's conflicts against Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran, many observers have questioned whether it would strike Iran to prevent or delay its acquisition of a nuclear weapon. Israel has demonstrated some willingness to take such actions in the past, striking nuclear reactor sites in both Iraq (1981) and Syria (2007).

WHY HAVE IRAN'S NUCLEAR CAPABILITIES COME UNDER SCRUTINY AGAIN RECENTLY?

In October 2024, Israel conducted its largest-ever direct attack on Iran, targeting its air defenses and missile production facilities. Some U.S. and Israeli media reports indicated that Israel also destroyed a building at the Parchin military complex outside of Tehran, where scientists could have been conducting clandestine nuclear weapons-related research. The air strikes were a retaliation for Iran's massive ballistic attack on Israel earlier in the month.

Then, in February 2025, U.S. intelligence concluded that Israel was considering striking Iran's nuclear facilities sometime this year. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pledged to "[finish the job](#)" in retaliation for Iran's attacks on Israel. In June, Israel launched Operation Rising Lion targeting critical nuclear and military infrastructure across Iran, [including Natanz](#), the country's main nuclear enrichment site. Israel has also targeted Fordow, an Iranian uranium enrichment facility. But analysts say Israel lacks the bunker-busting capability needed to effectively damage and destroy the facility given that it is located approximately 260 to 300 feet below ground. As of mid-June, it is unclear the extent to which these bombings have damaged Iran's nuclear program.

Prior to Israel's strike, U.S. intelligence officials [said](#): "We assess that the Supreme Leader has not made a decision to resume the nuclear weapons program that Iran suspended in 2003." By March 2025, Trump and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi announced the two sides would hold bilateral talks in Oman over Iran's nuclear program. Iran had largely refused nuclear talks with U.S. officials ever since Trump pulled out of the 2015 nuclear deal, though they did hold indirect talks with the Joe Biden administration in Oman in 2023. The 2025 discussions come at a pivotal time, given that the October strike has left Iran vulnerable without air defenses around its main nuclear sites.

Trump has given mixed messages on his approach; he has promised "maximum pressure" sanctions while also voicing aims to make a deal with Tehran that will be "[stronger](#)" than the 2015 deal. Several months of talks have yet to produce concrete results. Iran also claims U.S. negotiators have not adequately addressed its longtime demand for sanctions relief.

Urgency surrounding the talks ramped up in May, however, when the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) released a report stating that Iran's cache of near-weapons grade enriched uranium had surged by about 50 percent in the prior three months. The surge puts Iran a step away from having enough enriched uranium for ten nuclear weapons, the IAEA found. Iran maintains its enrichment program is peaceful.

The IAEA, meanwhile, has also said that Iran continues to be "less than satisfactory" in "a number of respects" regarding its nuclear cooperation. "But one thing is certain," Rafael Grossi, the head of the UN nuclear body, said. "The [Iranian] programme runs wide and deep."

The IAEA censured Iran in June, [reportedly in light of](#) the report's revelations. Iran denounced the declaration vowing to establish a new uranium enrichment facility.

Milestones in Iran's Nuclear Activity

1958: Iran joins the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)
 1960
 1967: U.S. provides Iran with research reactor as part of "Atoms for Peace" program
 1970: Iran ratifies the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
 1970
 1979: Iranian revolution brings anti-Western Islamist government to power
 1980
 1984: U.S. designates Iran a state sponsor of terrorism and imposes broad sanctions
 2000
 2002: Secret Iranian nuclear facilities uncovered near cities of Natanz and Arak
 2003: Iran's supreme leader issues fatwa banning development of nuclear weapons
 2006: IAEA refers Iran to United Nations for noncompliance; Iran enriches uranium for first time; UN Security Council (UNSC) imposes first nuclear sanctions against Iran
 2009: Secret Iranian nuclear facility uncovered at Fordow, near the city of Qom
 2010
 2010: UNSC expands Iran sanctions, including ban on nuclear-capable ballistic missiles
 2013: Iran and world powers (P5+1) agree on initial plan to limit Iran's nuclear program
 2015: Iran nuclear agreement is adopted
 2016: IAEA verifies Iran is meeting its nuclear commitments, triggering sanctions relief
 2018: U.S. withdraws from Iran nuclear agreement; Iran continues compliance
 2019: Iran says it will no longer comply with agreement's restrictions
 2020
 2020: Iran reveals its military-run space program
 2021: Multilateral talks continue about the potential restoration of the Iran nuclear deal
 2022: Talks of reviving the deal stall as Iran continues advancing its nuclear program
 2025: President Trump and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi announce plans for new bilateral talks over Iran's nuclear program
 Source: CFR research

HOW LONG WOULD IT TAKE IRAN TO DEVELOP A NUCLEAR WEAPON?

Analysts have said that Iran could produce enough [fissile material](#) for a weapon in a few months. Others say they could produce such material in just a week or two, although many acknowledge that it would likely take longer for it to manufacture a nuclear weapon.

One of the goals of the now-defunct 2015 nuclear agreement was to place limits on Iran's nuclear activity so that it would take the country at least a year to produce a weapon, giving world governments a fair amount of warning to respond.

However, following the U.S. withdrawal from the deal in 2018, Iran has [expanded its nuclear enrichment activities](#) and limited international inspections of its nuclear facilities, the last of which occurred in 2021. In June 2024, U.S. Secretary of State [Antony Blinken said](#) that Iran could produce the fissile material necessary for a weapon in “one or two weeks.”

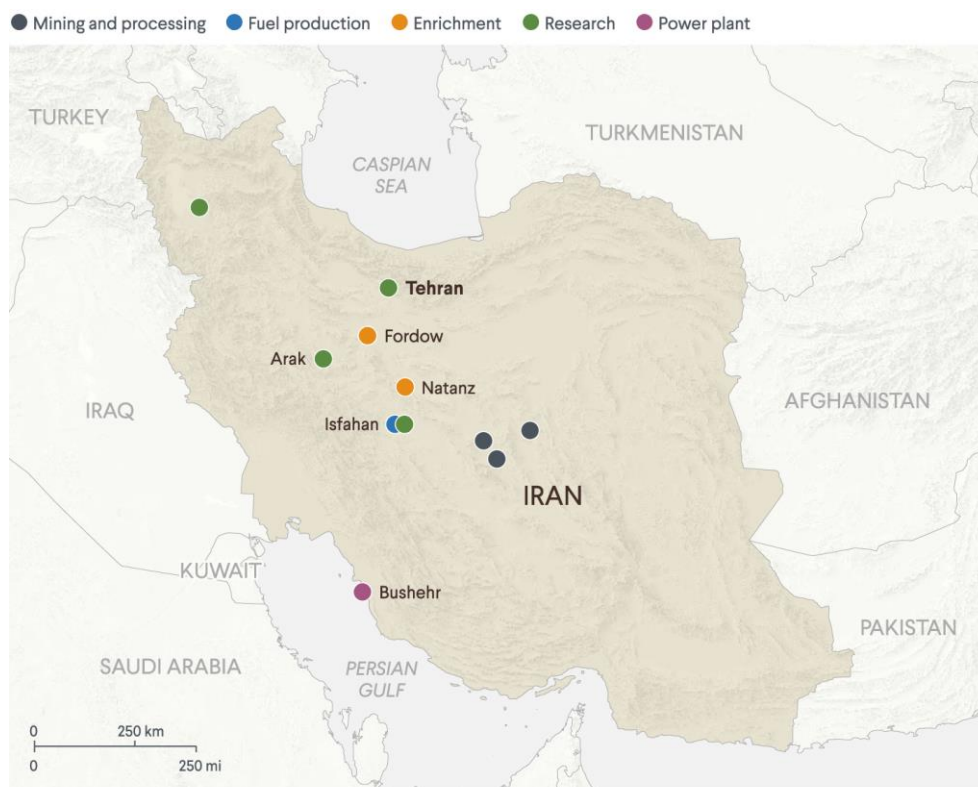
In December 2024, Grossi told Reuters that Tehran was “dramatically” ramping up uranium enrichment to up to 60 percent, close to the roughly 90 percent weapons-grade threshold. By February 2025, [U.S. intelligence indicated](#) that a covert team of scientists in Iran was orchestrating a faster, though cruder, approach to creating an atomic weapon.

WHERE ARE IRAN’S NUCLEAR FACILITIES?

Iran is engaged in nuclear-related activities at more than a dozen locations across the country. Its largest enrichment facility is at Natanz, while its sole nuclear power plant is at Bushehr, on the Persian Gulf coast.

Another IAEA report released in May 2025 concluded that Iran had also carried out [undeclared nuclear activities](#) at three previously unknown bases: Lavisian-Shian, Turqzabad, and Varamin.

Iran’s Nuclear Facilities



Notes: Locations are approximate. Facilities are as of October 2024. In May 2025, the International Atomic Energy Agency released a report finding that Iran had previously conducted undeclared nuclear activities at three additional sites, which are not shown on the map.

Source: Nuclear Threat Initiative and James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies

WHAT ARE IRAN’S MISSILE CAPABILITIES?

As demonstrated in its air strikes against Israel in 2024, Iran has varied air power capabilities, including deep and diverse arsenals of cruise and ballistic missiles, as well as drones. U.S. intelligence analysts say

that Iran has the largest ballistic missile inventory in the Middle East. (Ballistic missiles take a parabolic path through the atmosphere, traveling much faster than drones and cruise missiles, and are generally harder to intercept.)

Iran's longest-range missiles are reportedly capable of striking targets of up to 2,000 kilometers (roughly 1,240 miles) away, perhaps further, covering all of the Middle East and parts of Europe. Larger conventional warheads could kill or injure hundreds of people in a dense urban environment, weapons experts say. For instance, Israel and Russia have used bombs with similar payloads in the Gaza Strip and Ukraine, respectively, which have reportedly left craters more than twelve meters (forty feet) in diameter.

What Iran's Air Strikes Can Reach



Sources: Center for Strategic and International Studies; CFR research.

Iran's two strikes on Israel in 2024 were its first attempts to hit Israeli targets with weapons fired from Iran. Tehran reportedly telegraphed its intentions days ahead of the first strike in April, which consisted of drones, cruise missiles, and ballistic missiles. Israel and its partners also had hours to track and respond to the slower-moving attack drones and missiles. However, the [second strike](#) in October was launched without warning and consisted of mostly ballistic missiles, which can reach their intended targets in minutes.

U.S. and Israeli officials have said that both of Iran's air strikes were largely neutralized by defensive systems or otherwise failed to do much damage, but some projectiles did get through. One [satellite imagery analysis](#) of the October strike indicated that more than thirty Iranian missiles hit an air base in southern Israel, suggesting that Israel either decided not to defend these particular strikes, or that the defenses failed. Analysts warn that future strikes could be larger and more difficult to intercept, particularly if Iran uses more of its [most advanced weapons](#), such as the Fattah-1 and Kheybar Shekan missiles.

WHAT IF IRAN ACQUIRES A NUCLEAR WEAPON?

Many foreign policy experts warn that a nuclear-armed Iran would be an acute threat to Israel and pose a major challenge to the interests of the United States and its partners in the Middle East. Some regional analysts fear that a nuclear-armed Iran would likely be emboldened to pursue a more aggressive foreign policy, not only in the region but via its growing military and economic partnerships with [U.S. rivals China and Russia](#). Iran has recently provided Russia with various weapon systems, including [drones](#) and shorter-range [ballistic missiles](#), to help supplement its forces battling against Ukraine.

There is also concern that Iran's acquisition of these weapons will incentivize other countries in the region, particularly Saudi Arabia, to pursue them as well, which could catalyze a dangerous nuclear arms race.

"If in the not-too-distant future the clerical regime [in Iran] can test a nuclear weapon, then it will overnight diminish any power that Israel and America have in the region," wrote [Reuel Marc Gerecht and CFR's Ray Takeyh](#) in October 2024. "The United States has never attacked a nuclear-armed state. It's a good guess that Israel... will not attack a nuclear-armed state."

The IAEA's Grossi [warned](#) in the wake of the May report on Iran's enrichment surge that an Israeli strike could solidify Iran's resolve to build its own nuclear weapon or withdraw from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

U.S. officials have said Washington will demand that Tehran dismantle its entire nuclear program and not just agree to restrictions on its ability to build a weapon (as it did in 2015). However, many nuclear experts have said that Iran would staunchly oppose this kind of arrangement, especially as its nuclear program is one of its last points of geopolitical leverage now that many of its proxies [have been stifled](#).

Esther Sun contributed to this article.

IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM HAS BEEN HIT HARD, BUT WON'T BE KNOCKED OUT IF FORDO REMAINS

**Trump is convening his national security team to decide whether to take out key enrichment facility;
but even if he opts against it, Israel still has options**

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL [Lazar Berman](#) 17 June 2025

Taking the podium at his first press conference since deciding to strike Iran's nuclear program, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday read out Israel's achievements in Operation Rising Lion. The list is impressive. Israeli forces have taken out Iran's military leadership, hit hundreds of ballistic missiles and dozens of launchers, wiped out half of Iran's UAVs, and established air superiority in western Iran.

On the nuclear front, Netanyahu also has much he can point to. Israel has killed 10 senior nuclear scientists, and promises to reach more. It has caused extensive damage to key nuclear sites as well. But – as Israel has learned in Gaza – impressive tactical achievements do not automatically amount to operational success, and damage to some core elements of Iran's nuclear program does not necessarily mean Israel has set it back very far.

"The blow is not yet critical," said Raz Zimmt, director of the Iran and the Shiite Axis research program at the Institute for National Security Studies in Tel Aviv.

SUCCESS ABOVEGROUND

By design, at the outset, the campaign had to place a significant emphasis on targets not directly connected with Iran's nuclear program.

What was in effect an aerial breaching operation focused on taking out enemy air defenses in its first stage to allow the air force to operate freely in much of Iran's skies.

Another focus was on ballistic missile stores and launchers, to curtail the damage Iran could inflict on Israel. As of Tuesday, the IDF said, it had destroyed some 40 percent of Iran's ballistic missile launchers.

"We probably haven't done too badly there," said Amidror. "They promised to fire six times as much."

While those efforts continue, the operation is, at its core, about Iran's nuclear program, and Israel has already made strides in its goal of seriously damaging it.



A plume of heavy smoke and fire rises from an oil refinery in southern Tehran, Iran, after it was hit in an overnight Israeli strike, on June 15, 2025. (ATTA KENARE / AFP)

It is very likely that all the roughly 15,000 centrifuges operating at Iran's biggest uranium enrichment plant at Natanz, including those underground, were badly damaged or destroyed, whether directly or indirectly, due to a power cut caused by an Israeli strike, [the IAEA has said](#).

Israel bombed Natanz early Friday during the first wave of major strikes that started its shock campaign against Iranian military and nuclear sites, in a move it says was needed to thwart an immediate existential nuclear threat.

It also targeted the Isfahan uranium conversion facility, which turns raw mined uranium into uranium hexafluoride (UF₆), a feed gas for centrifuges.

IAEA chief Rafael Grossi elaborated on the damage to four buildings at Isfahan: "The central chemical laboratory, a uranium conversion plant, the Tehran reactor fuel manufacturing plant and the UF₄ [uranium tetrafluoride] to EU [enriched uranium] metal processing facility, which was under construction."

However, the job at Isfahan is far from complete.

"What is not as successful is that there just does not appear to be any damage to any of the underground facilities," Jeffrey Lewis, a nonproliferation scholar at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, told The Times of Israel.

Initially describing it as an "emergency" facility built underground to protect it from potential air attacks, Iran later indicated Fordo was an enrichment plant capable of housing about 3,000 centrifuges.

"There is very limited, if any, damage registered [there]," said Grossi.

An Israeli military official speaking on condition of anonymity told Reuters that the Israeli Air Force has not targeted the Fordo facility, but said that it still might happen.

Israel's ambassador in Washington was more emphatic. "This entire operation... really has to be completed with the elimination of Fordo," Yechiel Leiter told Fox News on Friday.

"If you leave infrastructure like Fordo in place," Lewis cautioned, "there's just really no point."

DELAY

Israel's goal, despite what Netanyahu might say, is not the total, permanent annihilation of Iran's nuclear program.

It's actually much more modest, and attainable — a tighter nuclear agreement between Iran and Western powers, an Israeli official told The Times of Israel.

Israel is aiming to "cause enough damage [to the nuclear program] to revert to diplomacy and get a good agreement," the official said.

If that is not possible, the hope is to push back the program for several years.

That has not yet been accomplished, Zimmt cautioned.

"For now, it's half a year or a year, but definitely not more than that," he said.

"It's still concerning that you have highly enriched uranium stock likely still present at Isfahan underground, as well as the Fordo enrichment facility," said Andrea Stricker, deputy director of the Nonproliferation Program at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

"As long as Iran retains the ability to make weapons from uranium, there is more work ahead," she said.

THE TRUMP FACTOR

The most straightforward way to knock out a nuclear facility is from the air. But Fordo sits up to 90 meters under a mountain, rendering that task nearly impossible.

Israel's conventional munitions can't come even close. The BLU-109s it likely used to kill Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah — who was hiding 20 meters underground — can only penetrate 2-3 meters of reinforced concrete. It took dozens of such bombs dropped in rapid succession to reach Nasrallah.



People check a damaged building at the site of an Israeli airstrike in Choueifat, southeast of Beirut, September 28, 2024. (AP Photo/Hussein Malla)

The only munition that can reach Fordo's underground facility is the American 30,000-pound GBU-57 Massive Ordnance Penetrator. It is believed to be able to penetrate about 200 feet (61 meters) below the surface before exploding, and the bombs can be dropped one after another, effectively drilling deeper and deeper with each successive blast.

Israel doesn't have the option of buying it from Washington, as the only plane that can carry it is the US B-2 bomber.

So if Fordo is to be attacked from the air, it will take a decision from US President Donald Trump to jump into the fray.

The president seems undecided, but increasingly open to the possibility.



A US Air Force B-2 Spirit stealth bomber performs a flyover

at the Talladega Superspeedway in Talladega, Alabama, October 25, 2015. (Mark Almond/AP)

Trump was slated to convene his national security team on Tuesday to make a decision on US involvement, Axios [reported](#), citing three US officials.

He is “seriously considering” launching a US strike, according to the outlet.

If Vice President J.D. Vance and the isolationist wing of his coalition win the day, Israel still has options. Israel could theoretically use a small nuclear weapon to destroy Fordo. But the first battlefield use of a nuclear bomb since 1945 would undermine Israel’s legitimacy in its campaign to prevent Iran from attaining such a weapon.



Members of the IAF’s Shaldag unit carry out a raid against an Iranian missile factory near Masyaf, Syria, September 8, 2024. (Israel Defense Forces)

It could also carry out a commando raid, similar to the special forces operation that destroyed Syria’s underground missile production facility at Masyaf in September 2024.

Leiter seemed to tease that possibility in an interview with ABC News.

“We have a number of contingencies... which will enable us to deal with Fordo,” he said. “Not everything is a matter of, you know, taking to the skies and bombing from afar.”

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

HOW ISRAEL USED SPIES, SMUGGLED DRONES AND AI TO STUN AND HOBBLE IRAN

The opening salvo of the Israel-Iran war was the ‘culmination of years of work,’ Israeli intelligence and military officials say, sharing a glimpse behind the scenes

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Julia Frankel](#) and [SAM MEDNICK](#) 17 June 2025



Smoke rises up after an explosion in Tehran, Iran, June 13, 2025. (Vahid Salemi/AP)

AP — Israel stunned and hobbled Iran last week when it pulled off an intelligence and military operation years in the making that struck high-level targets with precision.

Guided by spies and artificial intelligence, the Israeli military unleashed a nighttime fusillade of warplanes and armed drones smuggled into Iran to quickly incapacitate many of its air defenses and missile systems. With greater freedom to fly over Iran, Israel bombarded key nuclear sites and killed top generals and scientists. By the time Iran mustered a response hours later, its ability to retaliate — already weakened by past Israeli strikes — was greatly diminished.

This account is based on conversations with 10 current and former Israeli intelligence and military officials, some of whom spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss clandestine operations.

It was not possible to independently verify some of their claims. But the former head of research at Israel's spy agency, the Mossad, confirmed the basic contours of the attack, saying she had inside knowledge of how it was planned and executed.

“This attack is the culmination of years of work by the Mossad to target Iran's nuclear program,” said Sima Shine, the former Mossad research director who is now an analyst at the Institute for National Security Studies.

Israel's element of surprise was enhanced by Iranian officials' apparent assumption that Israel wouldn't attack while talks over its rapidly advancing nuclear program were ongoing with the US.

A sixth round of talks had been planned for last Sunday in Oman, but Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu activated Operation Rising Lion on Friday – after his country first notified US President Donald Trump.



This handout photo released by Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) official Sepah News Telegram channel on June 13, 2025 shows smoke billowing from a site reportedly targeted by an Israeli strike in the Iranian capital Tehran early in the morning. (SEPAH NEWS / AFP)

Netanyahu has for years said neutralizing Iran's nuclear program was vital for Israel's security, and Israel had previously taken steps to set back Iran's ability to enrich uranium to weapons grade. But Netanyahu said a more aggressive attack proved necessary, as Iran kept advancing its enrichment program despite US diplomatic efforts and warnings from UN watchdogs.

Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has repeatedly called for Israel's destruction. Iran's political leaders say their nuclear program is for peaceful purposes, though it is the only country without nuclear weapons to enrich uranium close to weapons-grade levels, past the point of having any civilian use.

SMUGGLING DRONES INTO IRAN

The Mossad and the military worked together for at least three years to lay the operational groundwork, according to a former intelligence officer who said he had knowledge of the attack. This person spoke on condition of anonymity, given the sensitivity of the subject.

The attack built off knowledge Israel gained during a wave of airstrikes –retaliation for an Iranian missile barrage on Israel — last October, which “highlighted the weakness of Iranian air defenses,” said Naysan Rafati, an Iran analyst at the International Crisis Group.

To further diminish Iranian air defenses and missile systems at the start of last week's attack, Mossad agents had [smuggled precision weapons](#) into Iran that were prepositioned to strike from close range, according to two current security officials who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the missions.

Those weapons included small, armed drones, which agents snuck into the country in vehicles, according to the former intelligence officer.



Iranian Red Crescent volunteers gathered in front of a building destroyed in an Israeli strike in Tehran, June 14, 2025. (Iranian Red Crescent / AFP)

Mossad agents stationed weapons close to Iranian surface-to-air missile sites, Shine said. The agency works with a mix of people, both locals and Israelis, she said.

USING AI AND HUMAN INTELLIGENCE TO SELECT TARGETS

To analyze information gathered from various sources, Israel used the latest artificial-intelligence, or AI, technology, said an intelligence officer involved with selecting individuals and sites to target. He said AI was used to help Israelis quickly sift through troves of data they had obtained. That effort began last October, according to the officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media; it was one month before Netanyahu said he had ordered the attack plans.

An investigation by The Associated Press earlier this year asserted that the Israeli military uses US-made AI models in war to sift through intelligence and intercept communications to learn the movements of its enemies, both in the wars with Hamas in Gaza and with Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The intelligence officer involved in identifying the possible targets said options were first put into various groups, such as leadership, military, civilian and infrastructure. Targets were chosen if they were determined to be a threat to Israel, such as being deeply associated with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, a paramilitary force that controls Iran's ballistic missiles.

The officer was tasked with putting together a list of Iranian generals, including details on where they worked and spent their free time.

Among the high-level military officials killed since Friday's attack were Gen. Hossein Salami, the head of Iran's Revolutionary Guard, and Gen. Mohammed Bagheri, the chief of staff of Iran's armed forces.



People hold up pictures of slain Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) commanders (L to R) Hossein Salami, Mohammad Bagheri, Gholam Ali Rashid, and Amir Ali Hajizadeh, who were killed by recent Israeli strikes, as they attend a rally in solidarity with the government against Israel's attacks and to mark Eid al-Ghadir, when according to Shiite Muslim belief the Islamic prophet Mohamed designated his nephew and companion Ali ibn Abi Talib as his successor, at Enghelab (Revolution) Square in Tehran on June 14, 2025. (Atta KENARE / AFP)

In addition to AI, the Mossad relied on spies to identify top nuclear scientists and members of the IRGC, according to one security official. At least eight members of the Guard, including the head of its missile program, were killed in a single Israeli strike on an underground bunker.

TARGETING IRANIAN VEHICLES

Another facet of the attack was to strike Iranian vehicles used to transport and launch missiles.

Shine said the strategy was similar to a Ukrainian operation earlier this month in Russia. In that operation, nearly a third of Moscow's strategic bomber fleet was destroyed or damaged with cheaply made drones snuck into Russian territory, according to Ukrainian officials.

In an interview with Iranian state-run television, the country's police chief, Gen. Ahmadreza Radan, said, "Several vehicles carrying mini-drones and some tactical drones have been discovered." He added: "A number of traitors are trying to engage the country's air defense by flying some mini-drones."

HOW FAR BACK DOES THIS GO?

The Mossad is believed to have carried out numerous covert attacks on the Iranian nuclear program over the years, including cyberattacks and the killing of Iranian nuclear scientists. But it rarely acknowledges such operations.

In the 2000s, Iranian centrifuges used for enriching uranium were destroyed by the so-called [Stuxnet computer virus](#), believed to be an Israeli and American creation.

In 2018, Israel stole an [archive of Iranian nuclear research](#) that included tens of thousands of pages of records, said Yossi Kuperwasser, a retired general and former military intelligence researcher who now directs the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security.

In July 2024, Israel killed a senior leader of Hamas, [Ismail Haniyeh](#), with a bomb in a bedroom of a government guesthouse in Tehran.

Israel's blistering attack last week on the heart of Iran's nuclear and military structure didn't come out of nowhere, said retired Israeli Brig. Gen. Amir Avivi, who heads the Israel Defense and Security Forum think tank.

It was the result of "Israeli intelligence working extensively for years in Iran and establishing a very strong robust presence," he said.

MOST POPULAR



- 1 [Sources close to Khamenei warn of growing risk he could miscalculate](#)



- 2 [Iran fires two overnight missile barrages at Israel; Khamenei: 'The battle begins'](#)



3 [The US bunker-buster bomb that could destroy Iran's Fordo nuclear facility](#)



4 [Israel running low on Arrow interceptors, US burning through its systems too – WSJ](#)



5 [Israel kills Iran's new war chief days after taking out predecessor, as strikes continue](#)



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- 6 [Trump demands Iran's 'unconditional surrender,' says US won't kill Khamenei 'for now'](#)



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PM: ISRAEL WILL 'HIT ALL NUCLEAR FACILITIES,' HAS DESTROYED HALF OF IRAN'S LAUNCHERS

In rare Hebrew interview, Netanyahu says campaign 'ahead of schedule' and that IDF can strike Fordo without US if needed; also states offensive will aid hostages' return as ' Hamas relies on Iran'

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [Nava Freiberg](#)



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visits the scene where a ballistic missile fired from Iran hit and caused damage at the Soroka Medical Center in Beersheba on June 19, 2025. (Marc Israel Sellem/Flash90)

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated Thursday evening that Israel is “ahead of schedule” in its military campaign against Iran, exceeding prior expectations and poised for further success.

In a rare Hebrew-language interview with the Kan public broadcaster, Netanyahu said Israel has destroyed at least half of Iran’s missile launchers, eliminated key military leaders, is targeting paramilitary forces and will hit all of Iran’s nuclear sites — including the heavily fortified Fordo nuclear facility.

“We are ahead of the schedule we set, both in terms of timing and results,” the premier said, nearly a week after Israel launched what it says is a preemptive campaign to neutralize an existential nuclear threat from Iran.

“The work has been outstanding,” Netanyahu said, explaining that he decided on the plan when a series of IDF operations left Iran’s strongest proxy, Hezbollah, “on its knees” toward the end of last year, and it became clear that Iran “was racing toward a nuclear capability.”

“The elimination of [former Hezbollah head Hassan] Nasrallah,” along with Israel’s gains against the Hamas terror group, “broke the Iranian axis. What does [Iran] have left?... This operation has been in planning for many months,” the prime minister added.

Addressing concerns over Israel’s reportedly depleted stock of Arrow missile interceptors, Netanyahu said the US was resupplying them and emphasized that “We’re striking [Iran’s] launchers. It doesn’t matter so much how many rockets they have. What matters is how many launchers they have — and we’re already getting there. I think we’ve already passed the halfway mark of their launchers.”



Israeli air defense systems fire to intercept missiles during an Iranian attack over Tel Aviv, Israel, June 18, 2025. (AP/Leo Correa)

A day earlier, the IDF had said around 40% of launchers were destroyed.

Netanyahu praised Israeli resilience under fire, comparing the home front to British society during the Blitz, the WWII German bombing campaign against Great Britain.

‘MORE TO COME’

Addressing whether Israel is concerned about any “non-conventional” Iranian missiles or weaponry, Netanyahu said the IDF is “systematically” targeting Iran’s full range of weapons systems, including any non-conventional arms.

Netanyahu still would not say whether [assassinating Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khomeini](#) is on the table. He repeated his stance that regime change lies with the “Iranian people alone,” but added, “We’re also striking government targets, symbols of the regime. You’ve seen it — the [broadcast station](#) and others. And there’s more to come.”

“We are doing everything necessary — and there will still be much more,” the premier continued, saying Israel is also targeting the Basij paramilitary militia of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, known for suppressing dissent in Iran.

“We’re also striking the Basij... this kind of internal police force of a million people. We’ve inflicted heavy damage, and we will continue to strike their targets,” Netanyahu said.



Members of Iranian paramilitary forces (Basij) march with weapons and flags during an anti-Israeli rally in Tehran, Iran, January 10, 2025. (Photo by AFP)

The Basij consists mostly of volunteers and is used for internal security, regime enforcement, and suppression of dissent. Khamenei deployed the IRGC and the Basij militia to quell national protests in 1999, 2009, and 2022.

Defense Minister Israel Katz [said on Wednesday](#) that Israeli Air Force fighter jets “destroyed the headquarters of the Iranian regime’s internal security, the main arm of the Iranian dictator’s oppression,” but Iranian media said that ordinary Iranian police, not the Basij, were targeted in the attack.

Asked whether Israel can destroy the underground Fordo facility without assistance from the United States, Netanyahu said, “We will achieve all our objectives and hit all of their nuclear facilities. We have the capability to do that.”

Fordo is buried under a mountain and widely considered to be out of reach of all but America’s “bunker-buster” bombs.

Earlier Thursday, an Israeli official told The Times of Israel that Israel expects the US will decide on whether or not to join the offensive against Iran within the next 24-48 hours, though a White House spokesperson later said Trump would decide “within two weeks.”

Whether US President Donald Trump “wants to join or not — that’s entirely his decision,” Netanyahu added. President Donald Trump speaks with reporters as a flag pole is installed on the South Lawn of the White House, June 18, 2025, in Washington. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)

“He’ll do what’s good for the United States, and I’ll do what’s good for the State of Israel,” said Netanyahu, while adding that “as the saying goes — every contribution is welcome.”

Pressed by Kan’s Ayala Hasson on Trump’s backing for a strike despite his earlier support for diplomacy, Netanyahu replied, “I’m not going to get into my discussions with the president of the United States.”

“I speak with him almost daily — very good conversations,” Netanyahu said, adding “there will be a time” to reveal what was said between the leaders, but “let’s not call on the historical archive to release itself just yet.”

With or without the US

Netanyahu said the “one thing” he can say is that “the United States recognized our right to defend ourselves from an existential threat,” and that unlike Trump’s predecessor Joe Biden, the incumbent US president at no point “tried to stop us.”

Advertisement

Netanyahu accused Biden of trying to block earlier operations against Iranian proxies: “He imposed an embargo, said: ‘Don’t enter Gaza, don’t go into Rafah.’” The premier stated that he resisted Biden’s warnings, which Netanyahu said set a precedent for how he’ll act if Israel faces similar pressure during the Iran war.

“I told him, ‘Joe, I have no choice. You’re the president of the United States, I’m the prime minister of the Jewish state — we’re going in.’ So first of all, there’s already a precedent: Even if a US president tries to stop us — he won’t,” said Netanyahu.

“By the way, this time, he didn’t try to stop us,” added the premier in reference to this Trump.

Netanyahu also declared that during internal discussions about the operation over the last six months, other senior Israeli officials fretted over not receiving “a green light from the Americans.”

“You know what my answer was? We’re not asking for a green light. Either way, we’re going to do this, because we have no choice. We will not allow 3,500 years of Jewish history to come to an end because of this deranged ayatollah,” said Netanyahu, appearing to reference Khamenei.

Netanyahu added that Israel was prepared for the cost of the conflict: “We were told towers will fall in a war with Iran. But any outcome, no matter how difficult, is not the destruction of millions. Not the destruction of Jewish history. That’s why I had no doubt.”

“Whatever the outcome is — even the worst-case scenario — we don’t dwell on predictions. Despite...the pain of losing precious civilians, we’re talking here about the possible destruction of millions...of Jewish history, of the people of Israel, God forbid...There was no other option.”

Turning to the war in the Gaza Strip, Netanyahu argued that the conflict with Iran helps advance the return of the remaining hostages held by Hamas in the territory.



A column of fire and smoke erupts following Israeli strikes of areas east of the Tuffah neighborhood in eastern Gaza City on June 18, 2025. (Bashar TALEB / AFP)

The “only real thing” preventing an end to the Gaza war is the hostages, according to the premier, who said the operation against the Islamic Republic helps secure the captives’ return since “Hamas relies on Iran.” Netanyahu would not provide Hasson with even a rough timeframe for the campaign against Iran, declaring simply that it will be over “by the end of the operation.”

AS ISRAEL ATTACKS, WHAT IS LIFE LIKE FOR JEWS IN IRAN?

FORWARD [Hannah Feuer](#) June 18, 2025

Iran is an Islamic state known for its hostility to Israel. The country is also home to a longstanding Jewish community, with at least a dozen active synagogues in the capital city of Tehran, mikvahs, kosher butchers, a Jewish library, and even a Jewish newspaper.

As Israel and Iran exchange missile attacks, what explains this contradiction between seemingly robust Iranian Jewish life and the mass exodus of Jews from the country after 1979? Lior Sternfeld, associate professor of history and Jewish studies at Penn State University, and author of *Between Iran and Zion: Jewish Histories of Twentieth-Century Iran*, explains.

HOW MANY JEWS LIVE IN IRAN, AND WHAT RIGHTS DO THEY HAVE?

Estimates range from 9,000 to 20,000 Jews currently living in Iran. According to Sternfeld, the most credible approximation is 15,000, which is the number most Jews living in Iran cite. More than half of the Jewish population lives in Tehran, with the second most in the city of Shiraz.

Jews in Iran enjoy a sizable number of Jewish cultural and religious institutions and can practice their religion freely, Sternfeld said.

Jews even have required governmental representation. The Iranian Parliament, or the Majles, has a reserved seat for a Jewish member enshrined in the constitution, alongside reserved seats for other religious minorities: two seats for Armenians, one for Zoroastrians, and one for Assyrians. The current Jewish representative is Homayoun Sameh, who was [elected](#) in 2020.

Still, as with other lawmakers, there are limits on how freely the Jewish representative can critique the government.

“Practicing religion is not a problem. Iranian Jews have a harder time practicing other civil rights that are more connected to the political situation than religious freedoms,” Sternfeld said.

Iran also enforces Sharia law, which treats Muslims and non-Muslims differently in civil and legal matters. Non-Muslims in Iran cannot hold senior government roles, serve as military commanders or work as judges. The testimony of a Jew in court does not carry the same weight as that of a Muslim, and there are different penalties for murder depending on the religion of the perpetrator and victim.

Sternfeld emphasized that these limitations are not necessarily specifically targeted at Jews, but rather all non-Muslims.

“It’s not just Jews being singled out,” he said. “It’s all recognized religious minorities.”

Iranian Jews are allowed to travel abroad, though technically not to Israel — Iranian passports bear the message that “the holder of this passport is not entitled to travel to occupied Palestine.” Many visit Israel anyway via third countries such as Turkey.

So why do Jews in Iran stay? According to Sternfeld, many Iranian Jews feel deeply rooted in the country, with family ties stretching back thousands of years.

“Iranian Jews are Iranians, right? This is their home,” Sternfeld said. “They can leave if they want. They choose to be there.”

FROM KING AHASUERUS TO THE AYATOLLAH

Jews have a long history in Persia, dating back to biblical times. Most notably, the story of Purim is set in Persia, with King Ahasuerus ruling over the Persian Empire — and deciding not to issue a decree to kill all his Jewish subjects after Queen Esther saved the day.

Modern times have had their own share of dramatic turns for Persian Jews, if not quite as storybook. The Pahlavi dynasty, beginning in 1925, marked a golden age for the Jews of Persia. Reza Shah Pahlavi prohibited the mass conversion of Jews to Islam, allowed Jews to hold government jobs, and permitted Hebrew to be taught in Jewish schools. The Shah even prayed in a synagogue he visited in the Jewish community of Isfahan, which many interpreted as a symbolic gesture of solidarity. Pahlavi also declared in 1935 that Persia would be henceforth known as Iran — the name its citizens had long used internally.

In 1948, Iran had a Jewish population of about 150,000 people. After the founding of Israel, many Jews left to make [aliyah](#). According to Sternfeld, around 20,000 Jews left Iran between 1948 and 1953 — primarily from the poorest segments of society — drawn by the economic opportunities that Israel offered.

In 1953, a U.S.-backed coup overthrew Iranian Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh, enabling Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi to consolidate power. Over time, resentment grew over the Shah’s tightening grip and his perceived alignment with Western powers.

These tensions culminated in the 1979 Iranian Revolution, which toppled the Shah and led to the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Khomeini issued a *fatwa*, or legal decree, in 1979 declaring protection for Iran’s Jewish community. He forbade attacks against Iran’s Jews, drawing a distinction between them and what he called “godless, bloodsucking Zionists.”

Iran’s Jews continued to flee, fearing instability and Islamic takeover. The 1979 execution of [Habib Elghanian](#), a prominent Iranian Jewish businessperson, on charges that included “contacts with Israel and Zionism,” further entrenched fears that Jews would be targeted. An estimated 60,000 Iranian Jews left the country in the decade that followed.

Still, according to Sternfeld, antisemitism wasn’t Jews’ only motive for fleeing.

“This time, they didn’t immigrate as Jews. They immigrated as Iranians,” Sternfeld said. “They moved because of the chaos, because of the political instability, because of fears of what the new revolutionary government might do — fears that were infused by the Iran-Iraq War. So there were many factors that played a role in it.”

Today, the vast majority of Iranian Jews reside in Israel or the United States, with the largest U.S. community living in Los Angeles.

Related

- [At an Iranian Jewish hangout, retirees wonder if regime change is in the cards](#)

HOW DO JEWS LIVING IN IRAN FEEL ABOUT THE CURRENT CONFLICT?

Following Israel's recent airstrikes on Iran, Homayoun Sameh — the sole Jewish representative in Iran's parliament — [told state-run media](#) that the attacks on Iran proved the Jewish state to be a "savage, child-killing regime." He urged Iran to respond in a manner that would be "unforgettable."

Other Jewish leaders in Iran also issued statements. "The Zionists' brutality, which is far from any human morality and has caused the martyrdom of a number of our beloved compatriots, including innocent children, has hurt all of our hearts," the Jewish Association and Community of Isfahan told state-run media.

But according to Sternfeld, it's difficult to say how Iranian Jews truly feel about the conflict, given fears of retaliation for open support of Israel. Most likely, he said, opinions vary.

"We shouldn't assume that they would automatically support Israel if they could," he said.

What is clear, Sternfeld said, is growing fear among Iranian Jews — both of escalating antisemitism and of further bombings.

"It's just overwhelming," he said. "They are terrified."

RELATED

- [How Iran's Jews Survive in Mullahs' World](#)

Hannah Feuer joined the *Forward* as a general assignment reporter in May 2025 after two years as a culture reporter at *Seven Days*, an independent weekly in Burlington, Vermont. Originally from the Washington, D.C., area, she is a 2023 graduate of Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism.

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ITS COUNTRY AT WAR WITH ISRAEL, IRAN'S JEWISH COMMUNITY WALKS A DELICATE TIGHTROPE

The millennia-old community of some 15,000, the Mideast's largest outside Israel, condemns Israel's preemptive strikes on the Islamic regime.

Experts say it's not only for show

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL [Zev Stub](#) 20 June 2025



Iranian Jews hold an anti-Israel gathering at a Tehran Synagogue in support of Palestinians in Gaza on October 30, 2023, shortly after war between Israel and Hamas was sparked by the Hamas-led atrocities of October 7, 2023. (Atta Kenare / AFP)

While there is no evidence that there have been any antisemitic attacks against Iran's 2,700-year-old Jewish community since Israel began its preemptive assault on the Islamic Republic's nuclear and military sites early on June 13, there are fears that this could change as the fighting continues, sources familiar with the community tell The Times of Israel.

"The Jewish community is probably going to face greater scrutiny than it usually does, but I don't think they are in significantly more danger than before the war," said Lior Sternfeld, author of "Between Iran and Zion: Jewish Histories of Twentieth-Century Iran" and a teacher of modern Iranian history in the Department of History and the Jewish Studies Program at Penn State University.

"But there is a fear among the Jewish community that things are going to get worse," Sternfeld said.

Since fighting began early last Friday, hundreds of strikes by Israel's Air Force have hit Iranian assets, the IDF has said. At least 639 people have been killed and 1,329 others wounded, according to the Washington-based group Human Rights Activists on Thursday morning. It says that of those dead, it identified 263 civilians and 154 security force personnel.

Iran has not given regular death toll figures during the conflict and has minimized casualty numbers in the past. Its last update, issued Monday, put the death toll at 224 people killed and 1,277 wounded.

Reports in the Hebrew press indicate that Iran's Jews are less concerned about a crackdown by the regime than about fears of violence by vigilante mobs seeking revenge for the Israeli attacks. However, it is not clear how likely that scenario is.

"There are many Iranian Jews in Israel who say things like that," said Avi Davidi, an expert on Iranian affairs and editor-in-chief of The Times of Israel's Persian-language site.

"They hear about their aunt being afraid to go outside, and they take it as a generalization reflecting the entire community. There is a war, and there is a general threat, but there is no evidence of a specific threat to the Jews right now," he said.

Jews in Iran say they enjoy a large degree of religious freedom and security, with religious ceremonies and rituals protected by the state.



Iranian Jews pray at the tomb of Harav Oursharga, one of the holiest Jewish sites in Iran, in the city of Yazd, 420 miles south of the capital Tehran, November 20, 2014. (AP/Ebrahim Noroozi)

SCRAMBLED MESSAGES

Contact between Iran's Jewish community and the outside world is generally sparse, easily leading to misunderstanding, experts say. Communication lines are often tapped, and direct contact with Israel is strictly prohibited by the Iranian regime, so much of what is known is filtered through "official" Iranian channels. That makes it difficult to gauge the community's real sentiments.

In recent days, several of the country's Jewish communities have published sharp statements condemning Israel. On Sunday, the Jewish community in Isfahan, with an estimated 1,500 Jews, [said](#) "the Zionists' brutality is far from any human morality" in a statement published in reports on the state-run Islamic Republic News Agency.



Iranian Jews, including Chief Rabbi Younes Hamami Lalehzar (2nd right), hold an anti-Israel gathering in Tehran in support of Palestinians in Gaza on October 30, 2023. (Atta Kenare / AFP)

"We are confident that the Islamic Republic of Iran, proud and honorable, will give a crushing and regretful response to the Zionist regime and will make it regret its shameful actions," the statement said.

A similar statement by the Tehran Jewish Association "strongly condemns the Zionist regime's brutal aggression on the sacred soil of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the martyrdom of a group of military commanders, nuclear scientists, and our beloved compatriots."

While some believe that such statements are merely parroting the regime's agenda and belie the

"While it is true that the regime expects such statements, they are at least partially based on real perceptions of the community and their Iranian identity within the conflict," Sternfeld said. "If they were simply saying what they felt would save them from the regime, we would have seen many more Jews leaving Iran. To fully understand the broader context is a much longer conversation."



Lior Sternfeld, teacher of modern Iranian history

in the Department of History and the Jewish Studies Program at Penn State University (Courtesy)

The Iranian regime clearly distinguishes between Zionism and the Jewish religion, and local Jews say they enjoy full religious freedom and security.

The country's chief Rabbi Yehuda Gerami has [stated](#) that Israel's government "doesn't care about Judaism at all," and hailed Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani, killed in a US drone strike, as a national hero.

In March, a video [emerged](#) of Gerami reading from the Book of Esther and dancing with students at the Tomb of Mordechai and Esther in the city of Hamadan for the holiday of Purim.

The tradition that the heroes of the Purim story are buried in Hamadan, said to be the ancient city of Shushan, is not generally believed outside the Iranian community.



Iranian Jews dance at the Tomb of Mordechai and Esther in Hamadan, Iran, March 13, 2025.

(X video screenshot: used in accordance with Clause 27a of the Copyright Law)

The size of Iran's Jewish community is subject to debate. Many scholars put the number of Jews between 8,000 and 10,000, primarily in Tehran, Isfahan and Shiraz — all of which have been hit by Israeli strikes. Sternfeld said he prefers the Iranian chief rabbi's estimate of 15,000.

Prior to the Islamic Revolution in 1979, there were some 100,000 Jews in the country. Iran still has the second-largest Jewish population of any country in the Middle East, after Israel.

About 25 synagogues are believed to remain in the country, as well as several kosher restaurants, an old-age home, a cemetery, and a Jewish library.



Iranian Jews enter the Molla Agha Baba Synagogue in the city of Yazd, 420 miles south of the capital Tehran, November 20, 2014. (AP/Ebrahim Noroozi)

Jews are subject to several legal limitations, including being barred from holding significant government positions. There is a single seat in Iran's parliament, the Majlis, reserved for a Jewish representative.

Last November, a Jewish Iranian man, Arvin Nathaniel Ghahremani, was [executed](#) in the western city of Kermanshah, convicted of murder after he killed a Muslim while defending himself against a knife attack in a 2022 brawl. The Norway-based Iran Human Rights group said at the time that the legal case against him had "significant flaws."



Graves of two Iranian Jewish men who were killed during the Islamic revolution in 1979 (L) and during the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88) at Beheshtieh Jewish cemetery in southern Tehran on January 9, 2015.

(Behrouz Mehri/AFP)

But against the odds, Iran's Jewish community continues to persist.

"The country can never be empty of Jews," said Yasmin Shalom Mottahedeh, an activist who left Iran in the 1980s. "It's a community that has survived since the Babylonian exile after the destruction of the First Temple. Jews have had the opportunity to leave, but those who are there have chosen to stay for a reason."

ARAB COUNTRIES WHO DO NOT ALLOW PALESTINIANS TO BECOME CITIZENS

ChatGPT said: (12 June 2025)

LEBANON

- Legal Status: Classified as “foreigners of a special category” under Decree 319 (2 Aug 1962); most remain stateless—even generations born in Lebanon—and denied nationality
- Legal Restrictions: Palestinians cannot acquire citizenship, barred from owning property (2001), limited in ~30 professions, rely on UNRWA for services .
- Political Rationale: To preserve sectarian balance (Palestinians are mostly Sunni) and uphold the Right of Return

EGYPT

- Nationality Law: Nationality Law 154/2004 allowed descent from Egyptian mothers regardless of father—but explicitly excluded Palestinians by Arab League directive
- Current Status: Children born to Egyptian mothers and Palestinian fathers remain ineligible for citizenship; naturalization only by rare ministerial decree

SYRIA

- Legal Framework: Under Law No. 276/1969 on Syrian nationality, citizenship follows paternal lineage; Palestinians, even if Syria-born, are not Syrian
- Formal Recognition: Travel and identity documents are provided per Law 1311 (1963) and Passport Instructions Law No. 18/2014
- Rights: Can access education, work, healthcare, and own a business, but cannot vote, stand for office, own more than one home, or purchase arable land

JORDAN

- Historical Citizenship: West Bank Palestinians before 31 July 1988 automatically got citizenship under Jordanian Nationality Law No. 6/1954.
- 1988 Disengagement: The Disengagement Regulations categorized all West Bank Palestinians as Palestinian citizens, not Jordanian; Gaza Palestinians were excluded
- Revocation Issues: Citizenship withdrawn from those unable to prove continuous West Bank residency through Israeli-issued permits—seen as legally vague by HRW.

KUWAIT

- Citizenship Policy: Highly restrictive and discretionary, controlled by ruling family; Palestinians were targeted after the 1990–91 Gulf War and most expelled
- Current Status: Naturalization is nearly impossible; Palestinians live under the kafala system with temporary visas and work permits

GULF STATES & SAUDI ARABIA (UAE, QATAR, BAHRAIN, OMAN, SAUDI ARABIA)

- Residency Only: Palestinians are treated as temporary migrants under the kafala sponsorship system. No permanent residency, naturalization, property rights, political participation, or path to citizenship politics.stackexchange.com+1ecdhr.org+1.

WHY THESE POLICIES EXIST

1. Right of Return: Naturalization is viewed as undermining UNGA Resolution 194, which enshrines the Palestinians' right to return.
2. Arab League Directive: A 1957 policy discouraged naturalization to preserve Palestinian national identity.
3. Domestic Politics: Maintaining sectarian or demographic balance in countries like Lebanon and Jordan, and preventing a de facto second Palestinian homeland.

ChatGPT said:

IR Iran and Citizenship for Palestinians

SUMMARY:

Iran does not automatically grant citizenship to Palestinians, but it does not have explicit legal barriers against it either—unlike many Arab states. However, in practice, very few Palestinians obtain Iranian citizenship, and most remain in Iran under refugee or temporary residency status.

Legal Framework

- Iran's Nationality Law of 1929 (amended in 2006 and 2020) governs citizenship.
- Citizenship is primarily based on paternal descent and birth on Iranian soil under certain conditions.
- There is no specific exclusion of Palestinians, unlike in many Arab League countries (e.g., Lebanon, Egypt).

◆ STATUS OF PALESTINIANS IN IRAN

- Iran is not a major host of Palestinian refugees; only a small number reside there—mostly students, members of Palestinian political factions, or families of diplomats and fighters.
- Iran has hosted members of Palestinian resistance groups (e.g., Hamas, Islamic Jihad), who often enjoy political asylum or special privileges, but not full citizenship.

◆ Naturalization Possibility

- Technically possible for Palestinians to apply for Iranian citizenship under general naturalization laws:
 - 5 years legal residence.
 - Knowledge of Persian.
 - Clean criminal record.
 - Financial self-sufficiency.
- In practice, citizenship is rarely granted, especially to refugees or stateless persons.

◆ Ideological Position

- Iran strongly supports the Palestinian cause and opposes Israel, but this does not translate into granting citizenship.
- Iran prefers to maintain Palestinians' political identity as stateless refugees to emphasize their right of return and resist normalization with Israel.

◆ Conclusion

Iran does not have a blanket ban on granting citizenship to Palestinians, but neither does it facilitate it. Palestinians in Iran remain mostly as guests, political refugees, or residents without a clear path to naturalization.

PART 11 VIDEOS

WHY ISRAEL STILL CAN'T DEFEAT HAMAS[AiTelly](#) 30 May 2025 8min 18 sec

We are honestly using using this to Stay Safe from Scammers and Viruses.

After the October 7 massacre, Israel unleashed a fierce and sustained military campaign against Hamas in Gaza.

The goal was clear: revenge and the dismantling of the militant group.

But despite the relentless bombardment, Hamas is still fighting.

Here's how their strategy has shifted.

Hamas has moved away from traditional battlefield tactics and embraced a decentralized, insurgent style of warfare.

With many of its top commanders killed and its command centers destroyed, the group now relies on small, autonomous units operating independently.

These compartmentalized cells are much harder for Israeli forces to detect and eliminate, allowing for a more agile and unpredictable approach.

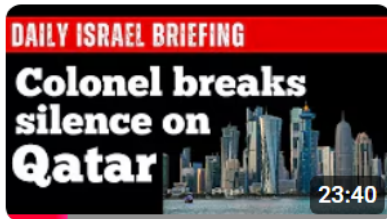
Guerrilla tactics have become the new standard—ambushes, sniper fire, IED attacks, and hit-and-run raids are now their primary methods of engagement.

Rather than engaging in direct confrontations, these units use Gaza's dense urban landscape to strike Israeli forces and quickly disappear before a counterattack can be launched.

This decentralized structure not only keeps operations going but also ensures that even if senior leaders are lost, the group can continue to wage its fight on multiple fronts

YOU TUBE IDSF DAILY BRIEFING LIST BY DATE FROM NOVEMBER 2024

[IDSF DAILY WAR BRIEFING](#) (Examples)



Colonel breaks silence on Qatar - February 18 IDSF Daily Briefing

IDSF - Israel's Defense and Security Forum • 6.7K views • 19 hours ago



Israel leaving Gaza and Lebanon? IDF General answers - February 17 IDSF Daily Briefing

IDSF - Israel's Defense and Security Forum • 8.3K views • 1 day ago



Ethnic Cleansing in Gaza?? - February 13 IDSF Daily Briefing

IDSF - Israel's Defense and Security Forum • 4.6K views • 5 days ago



Will Egypt and Jordan take in Gaza refugees? - February 12 IDSF Daily Briefing

IDSF - Israel's Defense and Security Forum • 15K views • 6 days ago



GAZA IN JEWISH HISTORY

[Henry Abramson](#) 9 Oct 2023 16min 3sec

A brief overview of Gaza in Jewish history, from the Bronze Age to the present day.

Sequels to this video:

"Why do Some People Hate Jews?"  [• Why do Some People Hate Jews?](#)

"What is Islamic Antisemitism?"  [• What is Islamic Antisemitism? EDUCATI...](#)

HOW ISRAEL AND PALESTINE BECAME ENEMIES FLASHBACK WITH PALKI SHARMA

[Firstpost](#) 21 October 2023 12min 6sec

Palestine is often considered the most unsolvable diplomatic issue in modern times. It's a conflict rooted in religion, race and most importantly, land. But how did this conflict begin? How and why did Jews decide to establish their homeland in Arab territory? Palki Sharma .

WHY ARE JEWS TARGETED? THE ORIGINS OF ANTISEMITISM | FLASHBACK WITH PALKI SHARMA

[Firstpost](#) 28 October 2023 11min 17sec

Since the Israel-Hamas war broke out, antisemitism has been on the rise. It is often called the "oldest hatred" in the world. How and when did this hatred begin? Why does it persist even today? Watch the full story on Flashback with Palki Sharma.

DAY 573 - BEN-GURION'S ANGUISH UPON THE FOUNDING OF ISRAEL

[The Times of Israel](#) 1 May 2025 32min 59sec

Senior analyst Haviv Rettig Gur joins host Amanda Borschel-Dan for today's episode on Israel's Independence Day. Today, we will step back in time and attempt to get into prime minister David Ben-Gurion's state of mind as the Jewish state is declared in 1948. We speak about the divided nation -- even as it was fighting for its mere survival against enemies on all fronts. To understand how Ben-Gurion was thinking on that fateful May 14, 1948, we turn to two newly released images of his handwritten diary, which reveal the first prime minister's anxieties as the newly born country headed to war against invading Arab neighbors. We then discuss how a mere few weeks after the Declaration of Independence, one of the most painful episodes in Israeli history occurred -- the Altalena Affair. Rettig Gur explains this social turning point. Finally, Rettig Gur expounds on the current Israeli moment and compares it to the prescient anxiety felt by Ben-Gurion and the profound test of leadership he faced so soon after the founding of the state.

WHO OWNS THE GAZA STRIP?

[UNPACKED](#) 7 Aug 2024 21min 15sec

Since October 7, 2023, Gaza has been at the heart of a brutal war between Israel and Hamas. But this tiny 25-mile strip's troubled history started long before the current hostilities. After Israel captured Gaza during the 1967 Six-Day War, its fate took a turbulent turn, eventually falling under Hamas' control. Now governed by Hamas, Gaza has witnessed immense suffering and resilience in the face of decades of conflict. Who will control Gaza next? It's uncertain. But understanding the deep, historical roots of this conflict is crucial to solving it.

WHAT IS HAMAS? | EXPLAINED

[Unpacked](#) 19 October 2023 15min 22sec

THE ENTIRE HISTORY OF HAMAS

Task and Purpose 13 Dec 2023 20min 44sec

Where did the terror organization called Hamas first come from? What is the true origins of Hamas? They are an off shoot break off faction from the Muslim brotherhood who also broke off from a charity organization created in the 1960s. Then in 1973 a Palestinian Cleric named Sheikh Ahmed Yassin helped establish an islamic charity organization called Mujama al-Islamiya also known as the Islamic Center. This group is the precursor to Hamas. Yassin was a refugee of the Arab-Israeli War. A childhood sports accident left him wheelchair bound. Yassin's charity group registered with Israel in 1978 as a non profit Non Government Organization.

Although the name wouldn't officially be used until January 1988 when they published their charter outlining their reason for existing, calling for armed resistance to establish a Palestinian state and the destruction of Israel. Hamas envisioned a Palestinian state that would cover all of the territory that had previously belonged to the British Mandate for Palestine from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. In 1989, the Israeli government arrested Sheikh Yassin was arrested and sentenced him to life in prison for ordering the killing of Palestinians who had allegedly collaborated to help the Israeli army.

In the summer of 1991 they organized into newly formed armed militia units called the Al-Qassam brigades. At the same time, an engineering graduate named Yahya Ayyash joined Hamas and put his engineering skills to work for the group building bombs. Nicknamed "the Engineer" , Hamas first used Kamikaze bombings in April 1993. They condemned the 1993 Oslo Accords and rejected the deal. This agreement created the Palestinian Authority that was intended to be an interim self-governing body with the responsibility of managing certain aspects of civil governance in parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The expectation was that the Palestinian Authority would eventually be replaced by a democratically elected government. The idea was to help Palestinians reach self determination for their government. The expectation was that final negotiations would eventually address core issues like where the exact borders would be drawn, the status of Jerusalem, and the establishment of a sovereign and independent Palestinian state.

The terror organization got the vast majority of its funding from Iran. Israel has had success in fighting the group over the years militarily but it's been a difficult group to destroy entirely.

Written by: Chris Cappy & Diego Aceituno Edited by: Michael Michaelides

WHO OWNS THE GAZA STRIP?

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Who will control Gaza next? It's uncertain. But understanding the deep, historical roots of this conflict is crucial to solving it.

WHY THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT IS SO HARD TO RESOLVE | MAPPED OUT

[DW News](#) 4 Nov 2023 14min 9sec

Amid the latest escalation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict following the terrorist attacks on Israel by Hamas and Israel's subsequent bombardment of the Gaza Strip, one possible answer that keeps resurfacing is what's known as the two-state solution. The decades-long conflict has displaced hundreds of thousands of people and negotiators have failed time and again to break the deadlock. We take a look at the two-state solution and other ideas that have been proposed by experts and the international community and explore: what makes the conflict so complex?

HOW HAMAS DESIGNED GAZA HOSTAGE RELEASES TO SHOCK ISRAEL

[The Wall Street Journal](#) 27 Feb 2025 5min 45sec

Israel claims to have killed around 10,000 Hamas militants and much of the group's leadership including Yahya Sinwar after 15 months of war. But Hamas wants to show it is still in control of Gaza. As the first stage of the Israel-Hamas cease-fire comes to an end, WSJ analyzed how Hamas used images, props and symbolism during hostage releases to try to convey an image of enduring power.

RELEASE OF FIRST PHASE OF ISRAEL-HAMAS CEASEFIRE BEGINS

[DW News](#) 25 Feb 2025 6min 12sec

Hamas militants have handed over two Israeli hostages. Another hostage release is due to take place shortly. The two hostages were displayed by Hamas in Rafah a short while ago before being transferred to the Red Cross. The hostages have since crossed into Israeli territory. Four more hostages are due to be released in the Gaza town of Nuseirat. The six to be freed today are the last living hostages eligible for release under the first phase of the Hamas-Israeli ceasefire deal. Some 600 Palestinian prisoners and detainees held in Israeli jails are due to be freed in return.

FIRST PHASE OF GAZA CEASEFIRE IS ABOUT TO END, WHAT COMES NEXT IS UNCERTAIN AS ISRAEL & HAMAS SPAR

[CRUX](#) 27 Feb 2025 7min 29sec

The first phase of the ceasefire that paused 15 months of war between Israel and Hamas, is going to end on March 1. Six rounds of hostage and prisoner release exchanges took place before Benjamin Netanyahu decided to delay the release of over 600 Palestinian prisoners, citing Hamas's "humiliating ceremonies" during the release of Israeli hostages. Hamas has criticized the move as a pretext to undermine the peace process. As tensions escalate, the risk of renewed conflict grows

WITH THE GAZA CEASEFIRE IN LIMBO, ISRAEL TRIES TO IMPOSE AN ALTERNATIVE PLAN ON HAMAS

[FRANCE 24](#) 3 March 2025 5min 36sec

Israel this week introduced what it said was a new U.S. ceasefire plan — different from the one it agreed to in January — and is trying to force Hamas to accept it by imposing a siege on the Gaza Strip. Netanyahu's remarks came a day after the first phase of the negotiated ceasefire ended, with no clarity on what would come next since the agreement's second phase has not yet been hammered out. Here is our correspondent's analysis from Jerusalem.

ISRAEL FREEZES GAZA AID – HAMAS REJECTS HOSTAGE DEAL

[TBN Israel](#) 2 Mar 2024 32min 4sec

TBN Israel's Yair Pinto reports on the latest developments as Israel halts aid deliveries to Gaza at the start of Ramadan, in coordination with the U.S. The move comes after Hamas rejected the "Witkoff Outline", which would have extended the ceasefire in exchange for the release of half the remaining hostages.

RESIGN!" BBC NEWS CHIEF WATCHED GAZA DOCUMENTARY WEEKS BEFORE BROADCAST BUT DIDN'T QUESTION IT "

[TalkTV](#) 27 Feb 2025 17min 44sec

The BBC's most senior news boss watched the controversial Gaza documentary weeks before it was broadcast, it has emerged.

Deborah Turness, the chief executive of BBC News and Current Affairs, reportedly sat through a screening three weeks before the airing of Gaza: How to Survive a War Zone.

The corporation apologised for "serious flaws" in the making of the programme and added it has no plans to broadcast the documentary again or return it to iPlayer.

The broadcaster removed the documentary after it emerged that the child narrator is the son of Ayman Alyazouri, who has worked as Hamas's deputy minister of agriculture.

Talk's Kevin O'Sullivan discusses the story with Defund the BBC campaigner Rebecca Ryan. Click here for more from Talk <https://talk.tv>

BBC APOLOGIZES FOR ‘SERIOUS FLAWS’ IN DOCUMENTARY NARRATED BY HAMAS OFFICIAL’S SON

UK public broadcaster says ‘mistakes’ in ‘Gaza: How To Survive A Warzone’ were ‘significant and damaging’; says it’s checking no money went to the terror group; mother was paid

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) [AFP](#) and [Tol Staff](#) 28 February 2025,

The BBC apologized on Thursday for “serious flaws” in the making of a Gaza documentary after it emerged that the child narrator was the son of Hamas’s former deputy minister of agriculture.

The BBC removed its documentary, “Gaza: How To Survive A Warzone,” from its platform after a backlash and launched an immediate review into the “mistakes,” which it called “significant and damaging.”

The BBC said in a press release that the review had identified “serious flaws in the making of this program,” which was produced by UK company Hoyo Films.

The broadcaster said that it shared the blame for the “unacceptable” flaws with the production company. “BBC News takes full responsibility for these and the impact that these have had on the Corporation’s reputation. We apologize,” it added.

The independent production company was asked in writing “a number of times” during the making of the documentary about any potential connections the narrator might have with Hamas.

“Since transmission, they have acknowledged that they knew that the boy’s father was a deputy agriculture minister in the Hamas government; they have also acknowledged that they never told the BBC this fact,” said the press release.

“It was then the BBC’s own failing that we did not uncover that fact and the documentary was aired.”

MINISTER SEEKS ‘CAST-IRON’ GUARANTEES NO FUNDS WENT TO HAMAS

The production company also revealed that they paid the boy’s mother “a limited sum of money” for the narration.

The BBC is seeking additional assurance that no money was paid directly or indirectly to the Hamas terror group.

At a press conference in Washington alongside US President Donald Trump, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer was asked whether he still has trust in the BBC in light of the revelations about the program.

“I’ve been concerned about the program in question and the secretary of state had a meeting with the BBC,” Karmar responded.

UK culture minister Lisa Nandy told parliament earlier Thursday that she had demanded “cast-iron” guarantees that Hamas did not receive any money for the documentary after the opposition Conservative party brought an urgent question and called for a public inquiry.

“I also held discussions with the BBC director general earlier this week, at my request, in order to seek urgent answers about the checks and due diligence that should have been carried out,” she added.

The revelations sparked an angry response and led to protests outside the BBC’s London headquarters. A spokesperson for Campaign Against Antisemitism (CAA) said: “The BBC’s bias and lack of accountability have led it to a new low, where it is a mouthpiece for terrorists and their supporters.”

The Telegraph also [reported](#) Tuesday that the Arabic words for “Jew” and “Jews” were translated to “Israelis” or “Israeli forces,” and all mentions of “Jihad” were translated to “battle” or “resistance.”

The broadcaster is now working to determine whether any disciplinary action is warranted “in relation to shortcomings in the making of this program.”

“This will include issues around the use of language, translation and continuity that have also been raised with the BBC,” it said.

The BBC’s decision to remove the documentary from its catch-up service also led to criticism, with more than 500 TV and film workers — including former England soccer player Gary Lineker — sending an open letter calling the move “politically-motivated censorship.”

“This film is an essential piece of journalism, offering an all-too-rare perspective on the lived experiences of Palestinian children living in unimaginable circumstances, which amplifies voices so often silenced,” said the letter.

The documentary was initially broadcast on February 17.

TRUMP’S PLAN TO TAKE OVER GAZA IS A NIGHTMARE

[RealLifeLore](#) 28 Feb 2025 48min 28sec

ARAB GAZA PLAN CALLS HAMAS ‘OBSTACLE’? TRUMP REJECTS EGYPT’S PROPOSAL, ISRAEL SAYS ‘IT FAILS

[CRUX](#) 5 March 2025 12 min 12 sec

The Donald Trump-led US administration rejected a plan for the reconstruction of Gaza endorsed by Arab leaders on March 4. The White House said that the US president stands by his vision of the war-torn enclave. Trump’s plan includes expelling the territory’s Palestinian residents and transforming it into a “riviera” owned by the US.

US AND ISRAEL HAVE REJECTED GAZA RECONSTRUCTION PLAN ENDORSED BY ARAB LEADERS

[WION Originals](#) 5 March 2025 4 min 20sec

The United States and Israel have rejected Egypt’s Gaza reconstruction plan, which was endorsed by Arab leaders. The plan includes clearing rubble, rebuilding homes, and restoring essential services over the next five years. It also proposes a governing body excluding Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. How will this impact Gaza’s future?

WHAT HAPPENS INSIDE GAZA’S SECRET TUNNELS?

[Unpacked](#) 5 February 2025 18min 15sec

Beneath the streets of Gaza lies a vast tunnel network. Once a lifeline for families, Hamas’ tunnels now enable terror while shielding fighters underground, leaving civilians exposed above.

Redefining modern warfare, Gaza’s underground network holds the key to understanding Israel and Hamas’ unprecedented standoff.

Chapters [00:00](#) Intro [00:51](#) Original intentions of the tunnels [03:31](#) Becoming a source of terror
[05:26](#) Israel's failed attempts to neutralize the tunnels [07:04](#) Hamas investments in and dangers of
the tunnels [10:55](#) Israel & Egypt's further attempts to neutralize the tunnels
[12:56](#) Where does the money come from? [14:26](#) The tunnels as a military base & concealment
[15:49](#) Palestinians used as human shields [17:44](#) Gaza War

WHAT IS LIFE LIKE FOR PALESTINIANS IN GAZA?

[Unpacked](#) 17 July 2024 26min 40sec

Life for Palestinians in Gaza under Hamas has been extremely difficult. Palestinian civilians lack basic water, sanitation, and electricity infrastructures, as well as access to upward economic mobility and the rights to freedom of speech and self-expression. The constant suffering from rampant political and economic corruption has left civilians in Gaza with a sense of despair and a longing for a change in leadership.

Chapters: [00:00](#) Intro [00:37](#) Brief history of the Gaza Strip [01:52](#) The First Intifada and economics [03:54](#) The Oslo Accords and the Second Intifada [05:03](#) The Disengagement and Palestinian elections in Gaza [06:18](#) The Hamas Charter and Hamas rule in Gaza [07:46](#) Egyptian and Israeli blockade [09:05](#) Hamas tunnels in Gaza [10:32](#) Water infrastructure in Gaza [12:30](#) Debt and economic corruption [13:58](#) Hamas leadership's extravagant lifestyle [14:55](#) Hamas executions of Palestinians [16:17](#) March, 2019 Gazan protests against Hamas, [#WeWantToLive](#) [17:58](#) Lack of basic human rights in Gaza [20:25](#) Palestinian perspectives of the 2023 Israel-Hamas War [21:47](#) The Christian minority in Gaza [22:43](#) Hamas prevents Gazans from fleeing [23:46](#) What do Palestinians want when the war ends?

WHO OWNS THE GAZA STRIP?

[Unpacked](#) 7 August 2024 211min 15sec

Since October 7, 2023, Gaza has been at the heart of a brutal war between Israel and Hamas. But this tiny 25-mile strip's troubled history started long before the current hostilities. After Israel captured Gaza during the 1967 Six-Day War, its fate took a turbulent turn, eventually falling under Hamas' control. Now governed by Hamas, Gaza has witnessed immense suffering and resilience in the face of decades of conflict. Who will control Gaza next? It's uncertain. But understanding the deep, historical roots of this conflict is crucial to solving it.

Chapters:

[00:00](#) Intro [00:40](#) Israeli position after the 1967 6 Day War [03:19](#) Israel-Egypt peace treaty [03:51](#) The question of Palestinian statehood [04:55](#) The question of Israeli citizenship for Palestinians [05:56](#) Incentives to leave Gaza and deportations to Jordan [06:48](#) Economy and freedom of movement in Gaza [08:35](#) The 1st Intifada [10:10](#) The Oslo Accords [10:48](#) Opposition to the Oslo Accords [12:11](#) The 2nd Intifada [13:13](#) Jewish communities in Gaza [13:40](#) The Israeli Disengagement [14:45](#) Hamas victory in Gaza elections [16:40](#) Hamas terror attacks on Israel [17:08](#) Hamas tunnels in Gaza [18:11](#) October 7, 2023 [19:07](#) Israel's war in Gaza [19:45](#) The plight of Palestinians and Israelis [20:01](#) Calls for an Israeli return to Gaza [20:25](#) What's next for Gaza?

INSIDE A GAZA TUNNEL WHERE ISRAEL SAYS HAMAS KEPT HOSTAGES

[The Wall Street Journal](#) 7 Feb 2024 1min 57sec

The Israeli military said a tunnel network that served as a long-term hideout for senior Hamas officials in the southern Gaza city of Khan Yunis was used to hold hostages taken from Israel on Oct 7. WSJ's Dov Lieber provides an inside look at the Hamas tunnels that were used as a prison for hostages.

Chapters: [0:00](#) Tunnels in Khan Yunis [0:18](#) Tour of the prison [1:27](#) What this prison could mean

WHY THE MAZE OF TUNNELS UNDER GAZA IS KEY TO THE ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

[The Wall Street Journal](#) 25 Oct 2023 5min 43sec

Israel is gearing up for a possible ground offensive of Gaza. Underneath the Palestinian enclave sits a labyrinth of tunnels used by Hamas as a key military asset. These tunnels were used by Hamas militants in Israel's seven-week war on Gaza in 2014 allowing for Hamas to hide weapons, equipment and troops. WSJ's Rory Jones – who visited them in 2014 – explains how they pose a unique challenge to Israel and could make urban combat costly for both Israeli soldiers and Palestinian civilians.

Chapters: [0:00](#) Hamas's underground tunnels [0:47](#) The tunnels' design and function [2:45](#) Challenges in combating the tunnels [4:25](#) Israeli hostages in tunnels

IDF BOMBS 1.2 KM TUNNEL IN GAZA| HAMAS TERRORISTS KILLED WHILE PLANTING EXPLOSIVES| WATCH FIERCE OP

[TIMES NOW](#) 14 Apr 2025 3min 1 sec

IDF troops destroyed an underground tunnel 1.2 kilometers long and 20 meters deep in northern Gaza. Additionally, the Israeli air force also struck several terrorists an IDF drone identified planting explosives near the troops. Watch this video for more information.

ISRAEL, PALESTINE AND HAMAS EXPLAINED IN TWO MINUTES

[CHANNEL 4 NEWS](#) 2min 18sec 12 Oct 2023

What is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and what does Hamas want? Here's everything you need to know.

IDF BOMBS GAZA HOSPITALS HIDING HAMAS TERROR DENS IN KHAN YOUNIS? FIERCE 2ND STRIKE IN 48 HRS

[TIMES NOW](#) 3min 3sec 15 April 2025

Israeli forces bombed another Gaza hospital in 48 hours. Israeli strike targeted the back gate of Al-Kuwait Specialized Hospital in Al-Mawasi, west of Khan Yunis. This comes days after Israeli missiles hit a building inside a main Gaza hospital, destroying the emergency and reception department and damaging other structures. Watch this video for more information.

ISRAEL'S KILLER PUNCH: IDF COMPLETELY DESTROYS HAMAS DEIR AL-BALAH COMMAND CENTRE IN TARGETED STRIKE

[TIMES NOW](#) 4Min 16sec 2025 14 April 2025

Israeli Forces hit Hamas Command Centre in Deir al-Balah. IDF destroys crucial hub for delusional Hamas militants. Killer targeted strike forces Hamas to duck, run for cover. The destroyed site was a meeting point for Hamas leaders. Hamas plotted attacks against Israel from the compound. A look at how sinister Hamas is writhing in pain...Hamas has failed to renew its military capabilities. No resumption of rocket production or tunneling work. Hamas' October 7, 2023 attack triggered the Gaza war...Palestinian militants see no path to a win, time to give up?

IRAN THREATENS IRAQI CHRISTIANS AMID NUCLEAR TALKS

[CBN NEWS](#) 16 Apr 2025 21m 55sec

Many in Israel watching the US-Iran nuclear talks with concern, wondering if the Trump Administration will insist on dismantling Iran's nuclear program or just limiting it, but US Envoy Steve Witkoff now says Iran must eliminate its nuclear enrichment and weaponization program; Iran is threatening tens of thousands of Christians in northern Iraq; Chris Mitchell talks about the apparently changing statements by Witkoff on Iran's nuclear program, the US military buildup in the Middle East, what Israeli analysts say about the stakes in the US-Iran nuclear talks, the danger faced by the Christians in Iraq, and the consequences of Iran potentially taking over northern Iraq; as the US military enforces the Trump Administration's goal of deterrence through strength, Congressman Chip Roy tells CBN News it's important to make sure the Pentagon spends its money wisely; President Trump threatens to revoke Harvard's tax-exempt status over antisemitism on campus; actor and author Kirk Cameron talks to CBN's Studio 5 about his children's program, "Iggy and Mr. Kirk;" and Franklin Graham praises President Trump's Easter message on the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

THESE ISRAELI HOSTAGES STILL ALIVE IN GAZA? HAMAS TO FREE THEM AFTER SECRET TALKS WITH TRUMP'S TEAM?

[TIMES NOW](#) 10 Mar 2025

Israel believes 24 hostages are still alive in the Strip-22 Israelis, one Thai and one Nepali. All of them are young men who were kidnapped on October 7, 2023, when Hamas stormed Israel to kill some 1,200 people and abduct 251. The group includes four active-duty soldiers and several people who had been working security at the Nova music festival. Watch this video for more information.

WILL ISRAEL RESUME ITS WAR ON GAZA? | INSIDE STORY

[Al Jazeera English](#)

Al Jazeera is funded in whole or in part by the Qatari government. [Wikipedia](#)

Palestinians in Gaza were supposed to enter the holy month of Ramadan, as the second phase of the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas got underway.

But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government now wants to renegotiate the terms. Israel is pressuring Hamas to extend the first phase of the ceasefire, in exchange for releasing half of the remaining 59 captives.

And it has again cut off aid and supplies to Gaza.

Hamas is accusing Israel of carrying out a coup against the existing deal and is urging the international community to act.

So can the ceasefire be salvaged? Presenter: Rob Matheson

ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR: ISRAELI GOVERNMENT DESCRIBES HOSTAGE CONDITIONS AMID RELEASE DEBACLE

[LiveNOW from FOX](#) 6 Mar 2025 8min 11sec

President Donald Trump on Wednesday issued what he called a “last warning” to Hamas to release all remaining hostages held in Gaza, directing a sharply worded message after the White House confirmed that he had recently dispatched an envoy for unprecedented direct talks with the militant group. In a statement on his Truth Social platform soon after meeting at the White House with eight former hostages, Trump added that he was “sending Israel everything it needs to finish the job.” “Release all of the Hostages now, not later, and immediately return all of the dead bodies of the people you murdered, or it is OVER for you,” Trump said. “Only sick and twisted people keep bodies, and you are sick and twisted!”

HAMAS THREATENS TO KILL HOSTAGES IN CHILLING VIDEO

[SkyNews Australia](#) 7 Mar 2025 5min 3sec

Hamas has warned that any Israeli military escalation could lead to the killing of hostages.

In a video speech released on Thursday, spokesperson Abu Obeida said Hamas is prepared for all possibilities, including renewed fighting.

Following the Saturday ceasefire end, Israel imposed a total blockade on Gaza, demanding hostage releases without negotiations.

On Wednesday, it was revealed the US secretly engaged with Hamas to secure the release of American hostages. President Trump later warned of “hell to pay” if Hamas did not comply.

GAZA FOOD PRICES SOAR AFTER ISRAEL HALTS DELIVERIES AND IS CUTTING OF ELECTRICITY

[DW NEWS](#) 9 Mar 2025 11MIN 48 Sec

Israel has announced that it is cutting off electricity supplies to Gaza — expanding its blockade of the territory. Last week Israel cut off the entry of goods, after the first phase of its ceasefire with Hamas expired. Israel says it is pressuring Hamas to release more hostages before negotiating the second phase of the ceasefire deal, which is supposed to bring a lasting truce.

Chapter Breakdown [00:00](#) Israel cuts off Gaza's electricity [3:03](#) Amande Bazerolle, Doctors Without Borders, in Gaza, on how Israel cutting off Gaza's electricity supply will also impact Gaza's water plants [7:42](#) Shaina Low, Norwegian Refugee Council, on Israel's siege on Gaza, and how starvation of Palestinians should not be used as a weapon of war

HAMAS HITLER CONNECTION REVEALED

[CBN NEWS](#) 8 Mar 2025 7min 36sec

Wikipedia • The Holocaust, known in Hebrew as the Shoah, was the genocide of European Jews during World War II. Between 1941 and 1945, Nazi Germany and its collaborators systematically murdered some six million Jews across German-occupied Europe, around two-thirds of Europe's Jewish population.

"There is a straight line from the Holocaust to the radical Islamist war against the Jews that is happening today and frankly, a straight line against Judeo-Christian values." Canadian Israeli film producer and author Raphael Shore explains.

JERUSALEM UPS PRESSURE ON HAMAS; U.S. THREATENS IRAN, EITHER DIPLOMACY OR WAR TV7 ISRAEL NEWS 10.03

[TV7 Israel News](#) 10Mar 2025 12min

- 1) Israel ramps up pressure on the Islamist Hamas terror group – as it instructs the IDF to prepare for any development.
- 2) The Iranian-proxy Ansar-Allah threatens Israel with an ultimatum over the Gaza Strip.
- 3) U.S. president Donald Trump warns Iran that it must choose between diplomacy and war.

BREAKING: ISRAEL'S NEXT MOVE: CEASEFIRE AT A STANDSTILL - WILL WAR RESUME?

[TBN Israel](#) 9 Mar 2025 29min 31sec

TBN Israel's Yair Pinto reports on Israel's new counter-offensive strategy as Hamas rejects the latest U.S. proposal for a hostage deal. With ceasefire talks stuck, Israel is increasing pressure on Hamas—including airstrikes, tactical raids, and the possibility of a renewed ground invasion into Gaza.

WHAT ISRAEL'S UNRWA BAN WOULD MEAN FOR PALESTINIANS |

[DW News](#) 28 Jan 2025

Israel is cutting all contact with the United Nations Palestinian relief agency, UNRWA. The government says the organization is a security threat and has previously accused some of its staff of having links to Hamas.

[00:00](#) Israel insists UNRWA ban will go ahead [04:37](#) Kelly Petillo, European Council on Foreign Relations

[09:26](#) Palestinian refugees streaming back to north Gaza [10:08](#) Jonathan Crickx, UNICEF

ISRAELI SPOKESMAN ACCUSES UNRWA OF BEING 'INFILTRATED BY HAMAS' | ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

[Sky News](#) 29 Oct 2024 5min 39sec

Israel insists aid will still be delivered into Gaza despite the country's parliament voting to ban the UN Palestinian aid agency UNRWA. Speaking to Sky News, Israeli government spokesman David Mercer accused the United Nations Relief and Works Agency of providing a "pro-terrorist education" in Gaza. Israel's parliament voted on Monday to effectively ban the UNRWA from operating in the country.

UNRWA: THE LEGAL CASES

[UKLFI Charitable Trust](#) 10 Mar 2025 1 hour 59sec

This is a recording of a UKLFI Charitable Trust webinar on UNRWA: The Legal Cases, with Olivia Flasch and Natasha Hausdorff, which took place on Monday 10th March 2025.

UNRWA is at the centre of an escalating legal and political storm. From serious allegations of infiltration by terrorists and complicity in terrorism to its perpetuation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through its unique definition of refugees, the agency is facing more scrutiny than ever.

In October 2024, the Israeli parliament passed legislation by overwhelming majorities which terminated the agreement between Israel and UNRWA, and prohibits any activity by UNRWA in Israel and any contact between the Israeli government and UNRWA.

This legislation prompted the UN General Assembly to request yet another advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on Israel's obligations towards UNRWA and other international organisations. Meanwhile, legal claims against UNRWA, its staff and supporting organisations are mounting in various national jurisdictions, claiming that they are liable for the atrocities of 7 October 2023 and the imprisonment of hostages, and challenging or seeking to avoid UN immunities.

What are the legal implications of these developments? How might they reshape the future of UNRWA, the UN and the Middle East? This webinar will examine the latest legal actions and unpack the key legal issues.

Transcript Follow along using the transcript.

KNESSET BANS UNRWA AS IDF CAPTURES HUNDREDS OF HAMAS TERRORISTS

[CBN News](#) 29 Oct 2024 2mi n 32sec

JERUSALEM, Israel – Just days after Israel hit key military infrastructure sites inside Iran, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is warning more strikes may be on the way. Iran is also considering retaliation after Israel's attack called Operation Days of Repentance.

At the opening session of the Knesset on Monday, Netanyahu vowed to prevent Iran from getting nuclear weapons.

He stated, "Stopping the Iranian nuclear program is at the forefront of our minds."

Read the full story from CBN Israel's Chris Mitchell: <https://cbn.com/news/israel/idf-captu...>

ISRAELI BAN ON UN'S PALESTINIAN AID AGENCY UNRWA COMES INTO EFFECT •

[FRANCE 24 English](#) 30 Jan 2025 12min 38sec

Israel on Thursday formally banned the main United Nations aid agency for Palestinian refugees from operating on its territory, despite heavy diplomatic backlash. Humanitarian officials warn the move could have a disastrous impact on aid delivery and jeopardise regional stability in the long term. FRANCE 24's Sharon Gaffney speaks to Omar Shakir, Israel and Palestine Director at Human Rights Watch, about what the ban on UNRWA means for the Palestinian population.

UNPACKING UNRWA: HISTORY AND FUNDING, ANTI-ISRAEL BIAS IN EDUCATION & THE PALESTINIAN PERSPECTIVE

[AZM4Israel](#) 18 Feb 2021 1 hour 10min 59sec
Introduction by Ellen Hershtkin, Past National President of Hadassah

Moderated by Lauri Regan, AZM Project Chair.

Featuring: Asaf Romirowsky PhD, Executive Director of Scholars for Peace in the Middle East, Marcus Sheff, CEO of IMPACT-se, and Bassem Eid, Palestinian human-rights activist, political analyst and journalist. Hosted by AZM Antisemitism, Anti-Zionism and Holocaust Denial Project

WHY ISRAEL AND IRAN ARE ENEMIES | MAPPED OUT

[DW News](#) 1 Dec 2023 13min 24sec

On April 13, 2024, Iran launched missiles and drones toward Israel, vowing retaliation for a deadly strike on the Iranian consulate in Syria, reportedly by Israeli forces. It was the Islamic Republic's first direct attack on its bitter enemy. Prior to the strikes, Iran and Israel had been engaged in a years-long shadow war — and attacks by the Iran-backed militant Islamist group Hamas on Israel in October 2023 had moved the conflict to a whole new level. What are the roots of the Iranian-Israeli conflict? And what role does Israel's number one ally, the US, play in it?

Chapters: [0:00](#) Intro [1:15](#) What the Iranian regime's threat to destroy Israel actually means [7:01](#) How Israel is responding to Iran's threats [10:25](#) US, Saudi Arabia, the bigger picture

FREE PALESTINE? NO THANKS! (THE ISRAELI PERSPECTIVE)

Français / Español / русский / Deutsch / عربي

[travelingisrael.com](#) 12 Oct 2023 28min 19sec

[0:00](#) - Intro [1:50](#) - Ethnic cleansing [4:00](#) - The Palestinian narrative [4:26](#) - The Israeli narrative [5:10](#) - The history of the Land of Israel [21:52](#) The problem [27:22](#) – Peace

Show transcript

EX-BRITISH COMMANDER DESTROYS THE 'GENOCIDE' LIE ABOUT GAZA WITH PROOF

[Stand Tall Israel](#) 12 March 2025 34min 43sec

🚩 The Truth EXPOSED! 🚩 Former British Army Commander Richard Kemp DESTROYS the false narrative that Israel is committing "genocide" in Gaza. With firsthand experience on the battlefield, he reveals what the media won't tell you about the IDF's moral standards, Hamas' war tactics, and how Israel is held to an impossible double standard. 🔴 What You'll Learn in This Video: ✅ Why Israel's military ethics surpass those of most Western armies. ✅ How Hamas uses civilians as human shields—and why the world ignores it. ✅ The media's role in spreading misinformation about Gaza. ✅ Firsthand accounts of IDF soldiers risking their own lives to protect Palestinian civilians. 🌐 This video will change how you see the Israel-Gaza conflict! 🔥 FACTS THE MEDIA WON'T TELL YOU: 💠 Israel follows the laws of war better than any army. 💠 The IDF warns civilians before striking terrorist targets. 💠 Hamas forces civilians to stay in danger zones to maximize casualties. 💠 The UN & media ignore Hamas war crimes—but obsess over Israel. 🗣️ Don't let propaganda win. Share this video to spread the truth

HISTORY OF ISRAEL PART 1 FROM THE RISE OF ZIONISM TO WORLD WAR II

[Historycentral](#) 19 Jan 2020 8min 54sec

HISTORY OF ISRAEL: PART 1 presents the story of the creation of the Jewish State from the beginning of modern Zionism to World War II, highlighting the major events that took place during this momentous period. PART I is designed as an introduction to a 20+ part series chronicling the history of Israel. The narrative opens with the destruction of the Second Temple, followed by the nearly 2000 year exodus of the Jewish in the people from the land. Then, in the 1800s, nationalism began to stir throughout Europe motivated Jewish writers, such as Moshe Hess, Rabbi Alkalai, and Leon Pinsker to explore the idea that a return to the Land of Israel could provide a solution for the Jews of Europe. The narrative then traces the first modern return to the Land, through the Bilu movement, and then recounts the transformation brought about by Theodore Herzl, through his founding of the modern Zionist movement. The video then moves on to the early steps of the Zionist movement through World War I, when the British issued the Balfour Declaration and establish the British Mandate for Palestine, and the formation of Jewish institutions, including Hebrew University and the Technion. The growth of Jewish settlement throughout the land is represented, as well. History of Israel: Part 1 also depicts the first resistance of the Arabs of the mandate to the Jewish settlement, including the riots of 1929, which resulted in the Hebron Massacre. As this video nears its end, Hitler's rise to power in Germany results in much larger immigration to Palestine, which in turn sparks an Arab revolt. That revolt, while put down by the British, brings about the White Paper, which severely restricted Jewish immigration.

MOSSAD: ISRAEL'S SECRET WARRIORS | EP 4 | FULL DOCUMENTARY

[criminals and crime fighters](#) 23 Dec 2022 49min 3sec

Mossad against the Egyptian regime: What will the Mossad do?

In 1962, the Egyptian regime launched its new missile program, which poses a threat to Israel and the Mossad. So, the Mossad and its secret warriors have to intervene. But the main threat is that the Egyptian missiles can reach and harm Israel and the Mossad. However, in 1965, the missile program was put on hold.

The Jews are being persecuted again, 27 years after the Holocaust, and the Mossad has to do something to prevent it. But what?

PALESTINIANS PROTEST HAMAS, HUCKABEE SUPPORTS ISRAEL

[CBN NewsWatch](#) - March 26, 2025 22min 29sec

Palestinian protests break out against Hamas in Gaza; Mike Huckabee, President Trump's nominee to be Ambassador to Israel, tells the Senate in his confirmation hearing that America and Israel share a spiritual link, because both are "the people of the book," that a Palestinian state is not realistic, that Iran is much a danger to the US as it is to Israel, and more; Chris Mitchell talks about the Palestinian protest against Hamas, the possibility of a revolt against Hamas, how Israel views Huckabee's nomination, the idea that Iran is a threat to the US as well as Israel could be used as one reason for US cooperation with Israel in a strike on Iran, and if Huckabee's "people of the Book" view resonates with the Israeli public and government; how antisemitism has been growing in a country that has long been a safe haven for Jews – Australia; Senators grills US intelligence officials over the leak of military plans from a group text; and our Studio 5 conversation with Rebecca St James an

PALESTINIANS PROTEST AGAINST HAMAS AND WAR

[LiveNOW from FOX](#) 29 March 2025 15min 20sec

Thousands of Palestinians took part in anti-war protests this week, with many chanting against Hamas in a rare display of public anger against the militant group. LiveNOW's Austin Westfall discuss the latest in the Middle East with Alon Burstein, Tufts University visiting assistant professor.

IDF EQUIPS POWERFUL AI WEAPON AGAINST HAMAS; INTENSIFIES GAZA WAR

[TBN Israel](#) 29 April 2025 21min 24sec

TBN Israel's Yair Pinto reports on the Israel-Hamas War. Pinto reports that Israel had intensified its campaign to eliminate Hamas with a new battle plan combining ground operations, AI warfare, and financial pressure. From Gaza to Cairo and Tehran, we break down the strategic shifts, the hostage negotiations, and how Hamas is still managing to resist despite heavy losses. Plus, a look at how Israeli currency fuels terror — and the AI systems now being used to stop it. Stay up-to-date with the latest developments here on TBN Israel.

MASSIVE FIRES RAGE NEAR JERUSALEM; EVACUATIONS UNDERWAY

[TBN Israel](#) 30 April 2025 36min 14sec

Join TBN Israel LIVE as Yair Pinto and Mati Shoshani report on a massive wildfire burning between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv along Route 1 highway. This is a developing story. Stay up-to-date with the latest developments here on TBN Israel.

Israel is rebuilding, and you can be part of it! 🌱 After devastating wildfires destroyed over 57,000 acres of forests, it's time to restore the land. Join us as we share how you can help plant new life and bring hope back to Israel. Be part of this powerful renewal! 📌 <https://www.tbn.org/rebuildisrael>

HAMAS BACKERS TORCH JERUSALEM? ARSON CALL VIRAL AS ISRAEL BATTLES WILDFIRES AMID GAZA WAR | REPORT

[Times Of India](#) 30 April 2025 3min 58sec

Massive wildfires near Jerusalem have triggered suspicions of sabotage after pro-Hamas messages on social media called for deliberate arson targeting Israeli forests and settlements. The Israeli government has declared a national emergency, with the army deployed for fire control and evacuations. At least three people have been arrested for suspected arson. Fires are spreading rapidly through central Israel due to extreme heat and high winds, leading to highway closures, mass evacuations, and dozens suffering from smoke inhalation. The situation remains volatile amid escalating regional tensions.

ISRAEL NOW ! 🔥 MASSIVE WILDFIRES FORCES THOUSANDS EVACUATED & ROAD CLOSURES NEAR JERUSALEM

[STORM-HQ](#) 30 April 2025 8 min 1sec

Massive wildfires erupted west of Jerusalem, fueled by strong winds and extreme heat, prompting large-scale evacuations.

Communities near Eshtaol Forest, including Neve Shalom and Mevo Horon, were among the hardest hit. Key highways were closed, hindering firefighting efforts and emergency responses.

DAY 593 - THE 'RAFAH MODEL': HOW THE IDF IS NOW OPERATING IN GAZA

[The Times of Israel](#) 21May 2025 21min 25 sec

Two Israeli soldiers were killed in Gaza over the past two days. Fabian describes the situations that led to the deaths of Staff Sgt. Danilo Mocanu, 20, and Sgt. Yosef Yehuda Chirak, 22.

Even as Israel has begun to allow humanitarian aid trucks into the Gaza Strip, the United Nations humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher warned that 14,000 babies in Gaza could die within 48 hours. Yesterday, the United Nations received permission from Israel for 93 aid trucks to enter the Gaza Strip, but questions remain over how it will get to the Gazans who need it -- and not be usurped by Hamas.

Gaza's Hamas-run civil defense agency said IDF strikes killed at least 19 people overnight, as Israel faces mounting international pressure over its military offensive. Dozens of others have been reported dead in

unverifiable numbers in the past several days since the operation ramped up on Saturday. IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir warned in a video statement on Tuesday that the IDF is prepared to capture more territory in the Gaza Strip if Hamas does not agree to release the remaining hostages it is keeping in captivity. We hear what appears to be the IDF's operational strategy during Operation Gideon's Chariots.

HILLEL NEUER ON SKY NEWS: SHOCKING DEMAND FOR LIES ABOUT ISRAEL IN THE MEDI

UN Watch 22 May 2025 5min 50sec

UN Watch Executive Director Hillel Neuer appeared live on Sky News Australia to discuss the impact of misinformation from the UN and the world's media following the horrific murder of two staff members from the Israeli Embassy in Washington, D.C.

NETANYAHU ANNOUNCES PLAN FOR HAMAS-FREE 'STERILE ZONES' IN GAZA

[DW News](#) 23 May 13min 42sec

Israel's military has intensified its offensive in northern Gaza. Hospital workers in Gaza say at least 23 Palestinians were killed by Israeli strikes on Friday. Dozens more were injured.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has come under heavy criticism from international allies as the humanitarian crisis worsens in Gaza. But he says he has a three-part plan to address food shortages, which would include a so-called 'Sterile Zone' free of Hamas where Palestinians could move and receive aid. This plan has received heavy international criticism.

DAY 592 - FURY AS POLITICIAN CLAIMS ISRAEL KILLS GAZAN BABIES 'AS A HOBBY'

[The Times of Israel](#) 20 May 2025 29min 15sec

The leaders of the United Kingdom, France and Canada issued a joint statement Monday condemning Israel's handling of the humanitarian situation in Gaza and calling on the Jewish state to immediately halt military action in the enclave and allow in more aid, threatening "further concrete actions in response" if Jerusalem refuses. Likewise, an additional 19 countries issued a joint statement urging Israel to "allow a full resumption of aid into Gaza immediately" after the partial lifting of its blockade on the territory. Horovitz describes what he says is a new, troubling sign in this round of global condemnations.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has defended his decision to allow limited humanitarian aid to enter the Gaza Strip, saying that pressure on Israel had been "approaching a red line." The step was necessary to press ahead with the expanded military offensive against Hamas, he said to his political allies, and had to begin despite the fact that IDF-secured distribution centers designed to keep the supplies out of the hands of the terror group were not yet ready. How has his coalition taken the news?

In comments that have roiled Israel, Yair Golan, head of the opposition party The Democrats, issued a scathing denunciation of the government and the war in Gaza, saying that Israel was killing children in Gaza "as a hobby." Later attempting to fend off widespread criticism over his comment, The Democrats chairman praised IDF fighters as "heroes" fighting on behalf of a "corrupt" government. Horovitz weighs in on what may have brought Golan to make these explosive statements.

EUROPEAN LEADERS PLAY DEFENSE FOR HAMAS (AND SPELL THEIR OWN DEMISE) | ISRAEL UNDIPLOMATIC

[JNS TV](#) 1 May 2025 34min 55sec

In this episode of “Israel Undiplomatic,” former Israeli Ambassador to the UK Mark Regev and veteran journalist and political commentator Ruthie Blum—both former advisers in the Israeli Prime Minister’s Office—tackle the harsh condemnations of Israel by three of its Western allies—Britain, France, and Canada. With Gaza still under Hamas control and hostages yet to be released, the hosts argue that these countries are wrong on the facts and enabling terror. Their statements, they say, give political cover to Hamas at a critical moment in Israel’s war effort and undermine the West’s shared battle against jihadist barbarism.

Regev and Blum also debate whether Israel’s decision to resume humanitarian aid to Gaza is a strategic necessity or a dangerous concession. They call out the United Nations’ bias, expose media manipulation surrounding the Gaza crisis and weigh in on reports of Israel preparing for a military strike on Iran. The hosts challenge the assumption that global pressure will bring peace—arguing instead that military pressure on Hamas is the only language that yields results.

Packed with insight and fierce debate, this episode takes on Western hypocrisy, defends Israel’s moral clarity and explains why the fight against Hamas is a frontline battle for the entire free world.

DAY 598 - HOW THE IDF PLANS TO SEIZE 75% OF GAZA IN 2 MONTHS

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) 26 May 2025 26min 42sec

Military reporter Emanuel Fabian joins host Amanda Borschel-Dan for today's episode.

Currently, the IDF holds about 40% of the Gaza Strip. In a briefing yesterday, Fabian learned that the new plan is to almost double those holdings within two months. As of yet, the groundwork is still being laid ahead of a massive ground operation with over 200 airstrikes carried out in the past 48 hours. Fabian explains the procedure the IDF uses to order civilian evacuations ahead of the planned influx of IDF soldiers on the ground.

The first distribution point operated by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation begins operations in the Strip today. This comes as its CEO Jake Wood resigned suddenly last night, saying it was “clear that it is not possible to implement this plan while also strictly adhering to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence.” We hear how the mechanism is being implemented.

Israeli troops stationed at an army post near the Gaza border community of Kissufim on the morning of October 7, 2023, rushed to defend the kibbutz as Hamas terrorists began their terror onslaught. The forces, along with the kibbutz’s civil defense squad, managed to fight back against many of the terrorists, preventing them from rampaging throughout the entire community. Fabian takes us through the timeline of the battles from October 7-12, when the final terrorist was eliminated at the kibbutz.

ON DAY 600 A GUIDED TOUR OF THE IDF'S WAR OF 7 FRONTS

[THE TIMES OF ISRAEL](#) 28 May 2025 32min 45 sec

Military reporter Emanuel Fabian joins host Amanda Borschel-Dan for today's episode.

On this 600th day since the Hamas onslaught on southern Israel on October 7, 2023, we do a zoomed-out update on all seven fronts of the war and where they stand today.

Fabian begins the program by updating us on new humanitarian aid operations in the **Gaza Strip** and chaos on Tuesday as Gazans temporarily overtook a Gaza Humanitarian Foundation disbursement center near Rafah.

We turn to the **West Bank** where Israeli forces raided foreign exchange stores in Ramallah and Nablus on Tuesday, accusing their parent company of "connections with terrorist organizations," according to an army closure notice. Fabian delves into other -- as yet -- unrealized fears regarding the West Bank.

We reported this morning that **Israel and Syria** are in direct contact and have, in recent weeks, held face-to-face meetings aimed at calming tensions and preventing conflict in the border region between the two longtime foes. Fabian weighs in on the evolution of the over 19 months of war there.

Although there were early drones and missiles coming from Iran-backed militias in **Iraq**, recent news indicates negotiations to release Elizabeth Tsurkov, the Israeli-Russian researcher who was taken hostage in Iraq two years ago, are at advanced stages. For the past six months, the militias have not targeted Israel, explains Fabian.

However, even as we were recording today's episode, the Israel Air Force retaliated against the Iran-backed **Houthis'** relentless ballistic missiles and struck the Houthis-held Sanaa airport. Again.

Since November 27, 2024, there has been a negotiated ceasefire with the **Lebanon-based Hezbollah** terrorist army. But all is not quiet and, as Fabian explains, Israel will likely remain in fighting form along the border -- permanently.

And finally, the great unknown: reports from The New York Times indicate that **US** officials are worried that Israel could decide to carry out strikes on Iran's nuclear program without much warning. Fabian reviews what we know.

Check out The Times of Israel's ongoing liveblog for more updates.

**IDF IS WINNING BATTLES
BUT WHAT HAPPENS TO GAZA
IF ISRAEL CAN'T MAKE HAMAS GIVEN IN JUST YET?**

[TIMES NOW](#) 29 May 2025 4min 1sec

Evil Hamas is down in the dumps. Israel is going all out to isolate Hamas and destroy its leadership as a strategy to free the hostages and erase the Hamas threat. The plan is comprehensive, integrating military, diplomatic, and psychological pressure to secure Israel's goals. Growing pockets of public protest have emerged against the Hamas terror group in Gaza... But what if Hamas refuses to blink? Here's all you need to know...

[#idf](#) [#israel](#) [#hamas](#) [#gaza](#) [#gazawar](#) [#israelhamaswar](#) [#gazastrip](#) [#war](#) [#middleeast](#) [#palestine](#) [#defence](#) [#military](#) [#hostages](#)

THE WAR AGAINST THE JEWS COMES TO WASHINGTON: DOUGLAS MURRAY & RUTH WISSE REFLECT ON THE DC ATTACK

Tikvah 26 May 2025 1 hour 10min 30sec

On the night of May 21, 2025, Yaron Lischinsky and Sarah Milgrim were murdered in a brazen anti-Semitic terror attack in the heart of the nation's capital.

These two young staffers at the Israeli embassy—a soon-to-be-engaged couple—were gunned down by an attacker who shouted "Free, Free Palestine" after he opened fire. And yet it is incumbent on the Jewish community to remember that the explosion of anti-Israel sentiment we have witnessed these past 19 months is part of something much larger. It is but one front in what Professor Ruth Wisse has called an ideological "war against the Jews" waged by the enemies of the free world on multiple fronts—from the tunnels of Gaza to the halls of the U.N., from the digital public square to the streets of Washington, D.C.

To reflect on how this latest salvo in the war on Jewish civilization turned deadly on American soil, we were joined by writer and journalist Douglas Murray and Professor Wisse for a special Tikvah briefing.

In conversation with Jonathan Silver, Murray and Wisse discussed the causes and meaning of this act of political violence, and examined what we must do—as Jews and as American patriots—in response.

[00:00](#) Opening Reflections on the Murder of Yaron and Sarah [03:26](#) Jews as a Minority by Choice [08:27](#) The Surge in False and Anti-Semitic Rhetoric [15:14](#) Anti-Semitism as Political Strategy [24:30](#) Is America in Decline? [34:44](#) Dual Loyalty or Double Loyalty? [42:50](#) The Failure of Holocaust Education [49:01](#) Violence as Politically Legitimate [51:05](#) Left or Right: Where Will the Threat to Jews Come From? [56:02](#) How to Respond to Anti-Zionists [1:01:47](#) Chanting vs. Thinking: A Culture Shift [1:04:27](#) What to Read and What to Remember

HAMAS HOODWINKS UN, WEST IN AID AND NEGOTIATIONS


JNS TV 27 May 2025 34min 20sec

In this episode, JNS senior contributing editor Ruthie Blum and former Israeli Ambassador to the UK Mark Regev expose how the United Nations is being manipulated to prolong Hamas's rule over Gaza.

Regev and Blum, both former advisers to the Israeli Prime Minister, uncover how Hamas has embedded itself within the very humanitarian infrastructure meant to aid civilians. The episode dismantles the myth of independent UN relief operations, revealing how international aid is being used as a lifeline to a terror regime on the brink. The hosts argue that by insisting on returning to the old UN-led system, global institutions are actively working to preserve Hamas's grip on Gaza rather than dismantle it.

The conversation covers the latest developments in Gaza, the hostage crisis and U.S.-Israel diplomacy. They examine the Biden and Trump administrations' diverging Middle East strategies, particularly a controversial hostage deal and ceasefire plan reportedly backed by Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff. The episode also draws a critical parallel with Iran - another collapsing regime given a lifeline by Western hesitation and naivety. Topics covered:

- How Hamas controls UN aid networks in Gaza
- Why the UN is resisting new U.S.-Israel aid models
- The hostage negotiations and ceasefire controversy
- Iran's strategic weakness and nuclear threat
- What's really at stake for Israel's security and regional future

 Have questions? Email us at undiplomatic@jns.org Chapters [00:00](#) Aid Distribution in Gaza: A New Approach [05:52](#) Hamas's Control and Political Implications [11:46](#) Negotiations and Hostage Situations [17:46](#) Iran's Weakness and Nuclear Threats [29:57](#) Public Sentiment and Future Prospects

WHY IS IRAN TERRIFIED OF U.S. "MOTHER OF ALL BOMBS"

[THE MILITARY SHOW](#) 12 Feb 2025 19min 13sec

The Mother of All Bombs—just the name alone is enough to strike fear. But why is Iran particularly terrified of this devastating weapon? In this video, we break down the sheer power of the MOAB, its psychological impact, and why it sends a chilling message to Iran. Join us as we uncover the true force behind one of the deadliest bombs ever built.

THE TERRIFYING EFFICIENCY OF DRONE WARFARE

[WENDOVER PRODUCTIONS](#) 8 Aug 2024 22min 1sec

10 MILITARY DRONES IN THE WORLD 2025 | THE ULTIMATE UAV's

[VIBORA](#) 28 March 2025 7min 58ec

Drones are changing the future of warfare! From stealth surveillance to precision airstrikes, military UAVs (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles) are dominating the battlefield. In this video, we rank the 10 best military drones in the world, showcasing their firepower, speed, and advanced technology.

TOP 5 BEST MILITARY DRONES IN 2025 | UCAV SHOWDOWN

[ARMORY UNVEILED](#) 17 May 2025 6min37sec

Welcome to our in-depth breakdown of the Top 5 Best Military Drones in 2025 — the cutting-edge unmanned aerial vehicles that are reshaping the future of warfare. From ISR missions to precision airstrikes, these UCAVs are game-changers on the modern battlefield. In this video we cover:


RU Kronshtadt Orion – Russia's first indigenous MALE drone

CN CAIG Wing Loong II – China's cost-effective MQ-9 rival

TR TAI Anka – Turkey's high-end multi-role workhorse

TR Bayraktar TB2 – The combat-proven "people's drone"

US MQ-9 Reaper – The gold standard in UCAV technology

 Key Features Compared: Payload & weaponry Endurance & range Combat records Export success and global usage Unique tech and tactical value

WHAT THE U.N. AND HAMAS DON'T WANT YOU TO KNOW:

[ISRAEL DEFENSE FORCES](#) 29 May 2025 2min 32sec

ISRAEL STRIKES IRAN'S NUCLEAR INFRASTRUCTURE | JERUSALEM DATELINE - JUNE 13, 2025

[CBN News](#) 13 June 2025 19min 4sec

Israel takes their first strike at Iran following the conclusion of the United States' deadline for Iran to disband their nuclear ambitions. Now the world awaits to see what happens next.

ISRAEL CONTINUES STRIKES ON IRAN, INCLUDING KEY NUCLEAR SITE

[BBC News](#) 14 June 2025 9min 46sec

Israel's military says it is "still striking" different parts of Iran, with more than 150 targets hit in the past 24 hours.

In Tehran, missiles and air defence systems were among the targets, she adds, while a nuclear site in Isfahan was also hit.

Iranian state media reports 60 people were killed in one strike in Tehran, 20 of whom were children.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says his country will strike "every site and every target of the ayatollah regime" in Iran.

At least two people have been killed in Israel after an Iranian missile, as part of retaliatory strikes, destroyed several homes in Rishon LeZion outside Tel Aviv.

ISRAEL ATTACKS IRAN, KILLING TOP MILITARY LEADERS, SCIENTISTS; HITS NUKE SITES IN EXPANDING CONFLICT

[Democracy Now!](#) 13 June 2025 16.0min

Israel has launched a large-scale military attack on Iran, killing top military officials, nuclear scientists and civilians in the deadliest attack on the country in decades. Iran has launched drones at Israel in response. The unprovoked attack, which Israel described as a "preemptive strike," comes just days before scheduled nuclear talks between Iran and the United States. Iranian-born analyst Trita Parsi says the Trump administration appears to have been coordinating with Israel for "negotiating leverage" in an attempt to force Iran to "capitulate" on nuclear disarmament.

Whether this gambit will succeed remains to be seen, though Parsi and Israeli journalist Gideon Levy say Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is betting it does not. Netanyahu has long indicated a willingness to wage war with Iran and likely hopes to draw the United States into a major regional conflict. "This was the project of his life," says Levy.

ISRAEL'S SPY AGENCY SHOWS HOW THEY ATTACKED IRAN FROM WITHIN

[CNN](#) 13 June 2025 10Min 42 Sec

Israel has launched unprecedented strikes on Iran, targeting its nuclear program and military leaders. Israel's spy agency, Mossad, released video of operatives inside Iran before the strikes.

ISRAEL'S OPERATION RISING LION WIPES OUT IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM

[The Military Show](#) 14 June 2025 19min 19sec

Israel launched a wide-scale aerial assault on Iran beginning late on June 12, targeting key nuclear and military sites across the country. Operation Rising Lion struck the Natanz nuclear facility, military assets in Piranshahr and Tehran, and killed high-ranking officials including Generals Bagheri and Salami.

By the evening of June 13, the IDF confirmed dozens of coordinated strikes, describing them as preemptive and precise. The attacks were supported by covert ground operations reportedly conducted by Mossad, aimed at disabling Iran's air defenses. Hours later, Iran retaliated by launching over 100 drones toward Israel. The situation remains fluid as military action continues.

DOUGLAS MURRAY ACCEPTS UN WATCH'S 2025 MORAL COURAGE AWARD

[UN Watch](#) 13 Jun 2025

Douglas Murray is one of the most talented writers, debaters and political commentators of this generation. Author of the 2022 New York Times instant bestseller "The War on the West," Murray serves as an editor for The Spectator and has written seven thought-provoking books on a range of social issues. Murray is known for his unwavering moral clarity on the challenges facing the West and his deep engagement with Israel and the problem of antisemitism. In his new book coming out next week, "On Democracies and

Death Cults: Israel, Hamas and the Future of the West,” Murray ties together these vital themes for our challenging times, arguing that the West’s very future is at stake. Since October 7th, through his on-the-ground reporting in Israel, Gaza and Lebanon, and in numerous appearances in debates and in the media, Murray has emerged as one of the world’s most brilliant, fearless and influential defenders of Israel. UN Watch is proud to honor Douglas Murray with its 2025 Moral Courage Award.

IRAN MISSILES CAUSE MULTIPLE CASUALTIES IN ISRAEL AS ISRAELI STRIKES HIT TEHRAN OIL DEPOT

[BBC News](#) 15 June 2025 13min 10sec

Tensions continue to escalate between Israel and Iran, as the two sides launched attacks on each other overnight.

Iran has fired missiles at central and north Israel while the Israeli military confirms it has carried out a number of strikes against Iranian nuclear infrastructure sites.

At least four people have been killed in the strikes on Israel, Israeli emergency services say, with more than 100 people injured.

Tehran's oil ministry says the Shahrn oil depot in the capital was hit by Israeli strikes.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian is threatening a "more severe" response if Israel doesn't stand down.

HOW ISRAELI COMMANDOS HIT DEEP IN IRAN

[Cappy Army](#) 15 June 2025 21min 20sec

Israel attacked Iran with a Mossad intelligence agent behind enemy lines missile and drone attack. It's similar to operation spider web but this is operation rising lion. F-35 and F-15 and F-16 fighter jets over 200 of them struck Iran's nuclear facilities and oil production capabilities. Then Iran struck back with a ballistic missile attack that Israel and America tried to intercept.

TOP 10 INSANE WEAPONS ISRAEL IS DEPLOYING FOR 2026

[IRONSIGHT MEDIA](#) 28 May 2025 11min 11sec 2025

Israel is redefining modern warfare in 2026 with a next-gen arsenal of cutting-edge weapons. From AI-powered drone swarms and laser defense systems to stealth missiles and space-based surveillance satellites, this video breaks down the Top 10 most advanced Israeli weapons shaping the future of global conflict. Discover how systems like the Iron Beam, Ofek-16, Sky Shield, and Python-5 are transforming Israel's military edge—and what it means for the battlefield of tomorrow. 🔔 Subscribe for more military tech deep-dives. 👍 Like and share if you learned something new. 💬 Tell us in the comments: Which Israeli weapon do you think is the most game-changing?

EVERY TYPE OF MISSILE EXPLAINED IN 12 MINUTES

[Military Summary in 10 Minutes](#) 7 Aug 11min 52sec

In this video, we break down the fascinating world of missiles, covering every major type in just 12 minutes. From surface-to-air and air-to-air to cruise and ballistic missiles, you'll get a clear, concise overview of how each type works, their unique characteristics, and the roles they play in modern warfare. Whether you're curious about how intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) function or what makes a cruise missile so precise, this video offers a quick and comprehensive guide.

— TIMESTAMPS — [0:00](#) Ballistic missile [0:36](#) Antiballistic missile [1:07](#) ICBM [1:50](#) Tactical ballistic missile [2:30](#) Cruise missile [3:26](#) Anti-Ship Missile [4:03](#) Anti-Tank Missile [4:47](#) Man-Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS) [5:34](#) Surface-to-Air Missile [6:15](#) Surface to Surface Missile [6:51](#) Air-to-air missile [7:23](#) Air-to-surface missile [8:01](#) Sea-to-sea missile [8:37](#) Solid propulsion [9:25](#) Liquid propulsion [10:07](#) Ramjet missile [10:42](#) Scramjet missile [11:15](#) Cryogenic missile

ISRAEL BUNKER BUSTER BOMB ON IRAN NUCLEAR SITES EXPLAINED

[AiTelly](#) 17 June 2025 12min 33sec

This is one of the Most Daring missions when the Israeli infiltrated into the Heart of Iran Ground operations were well planed a Couple of Months back.

They can be divided into Several stages First is the Launching of Spike Missiles to take out the Anti Air defence system.

The Second is the Setting up of Drones Bases inside Iran to Strike the Formidable S 300 Defence System.

The third is bombarding these Key Nuclear Sites with Bunker Buster Bombs namely Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan.

These Nuclear Bunkers are Heavily Fortified located deep under with Almost 20 Storey High

Which damage the surroundings layer but did Little damae to the underground Nuclear Facilites For this the Israel need the US built GBU 57 to be delivered by the

B2 Spirit Bomber that can penetrate more than 8 Storeys underneath the Earth all in the Video Ahead.

INSIDE ISRAEL IRON BEAM LASER WEAPON SYSTEM: HEZBOLLAH MONSTER DRONES TURN INTO DUST IN MINUTES

[TIMES NOW](#) 29 May 2025 5min 26sec

Battered and bruised, Hezbollah is still coming to terms with the heavy blows dealt by Israel. The government of Lebanon is now attempting to assert its authority across the nation, particularly in the southern region close to the Israeli border, following the conclusion of the 14-month conflict between Israel and Hezbollah that ended in late November with a ceasefire mediated by the US.

Israel's strikes paralyzed Hezbollah.

On the military level, the Iran-backed group is more deterred than ever.

It wants to rebound, but time is a luxury it might not be able to afford...

Now, the Israeli military has stated it neutralized numerous drones deployed by Hezbollah last year, utilizing a newly developed laser interception technology.

Here's all you need to know...

[#israel](#) [#hezbollah](#) [#lebanon](#) [#lebanonwar](#) [#israelhezbollahwar](#) [#ironbeam](#) [#idf](#) [#war](#)
[#defence](#) [#military](#) [#middleeast](#) [#defense](#) [#iran](#)

WHAT IS IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM FOR AND HOW DAMAGED IS IT?

[DW News](#) 14 June 2025 16min 2 sec

Israel says the death toll has reached three and dozens more injured after Iran launched early-morning strikes. South of Tel Aviv, a residential building was hit by several rockets. Multiple explosions were seen in the sky above Tel Aviv overnight as Israeli air defense systems intercepted multiple missiles.

ALL-OUT WAR: HOW FAR WILL ISRAEL AND IRAN GO?

[FRANCE 24 English](#) 16 June 2025 45min 27sec

Israel's actually done it: striking Iran in a bid to destroy its capacity to build nuclear weapons. Jerusalem sees a window of opportunity, and with Tehran's proxies in Syria, Lebanon and Gaza are either gone or debilitated, the Israelis also targeting the senior leadership around Ayatollah Khamenei. What's the ultimate goal, military superiority or regime change? Iran may be reeling but it's still fighting back, successfully targeting Israel's largest oil refinery in Haifa. A long war ahead?

[#Israel](#) [#Iran](#) [#Gaza](#) Read more about this story in our article: <https://f24.my/BFI.m.y>

HOW ISRAEL STRIKES IRAN NUCLEAR SITES

[AiTelly](#) 13 June 2025 11min 16sec

On June 13th, 2025, Israel launched a series of large-scale precision strikes targeting Iran's nuclear and military infrastructure. The operation was codenamed Rising Lion.

After months of research, we've mapped out these secret Iranian nuclear sites—some hidden deep underground, others in plain sight. Each location reveals part of the bigger picture.

But more importantly, we need to understand why Israel is so determined to halt Iran's nuclear enrichment. According to Israeli intelligence, Iran's centrifuge may be just days away from producing a nuclear bomb.

Not to forget the detail Process of how they are made .

We'll also break down Israel's strategy, and examine the targeted sites, and uncover the real reasons behind this dramatic escalation all in the Video Ahead.