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Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update November 1, 2023

On October 7, Hamas launched an unprovoked and unprecedented multi-pronged attack on Israel by land, air, and sea. JINSA has launched a webpage dedicated to its commentary, webinars, and media coverage about [Israel at War](#). Yesterday, JINSA hosted a [webinar](#) with JINSA Director of Foreign Policy Jonathan Ruhe, JINSA's Randi & Charles Wax Senior Fellow John Hannah, and Princeton Professor Dr. Bernard Haykel about the prospects for peace between Israel and Saudi Arabia after Hamas's 10/7 attack. An update with the latest information and analysis about the war is below, which JINSA will regularly produce.

Analysis

- During an October 31 JINSA [webinar](#) moderated by JINSA's Director of Foreign Policy Jonathan Ruhe about the prospects for Israeli-Saudi normalization after the October 7 attacks, Princeton Professor Dr. Bernard Haykel argued that the Saudi leadership's focus "is to build and develop their country and try to put out as many fires in the region as possible so that they can go on with the business of building their country" and that he does not "see normalization as over," only "delayed."
 - » JINSA's Randi and Charles Wax Senior Fellow John Hannah noted that Saudi Arabia "internally tried to maintain their big focus on holding major investment conferences, hosting major sporting events... focusing on Vision 2030... while hoping that the United States and the rest of the world can find a way to bring this to a resolution as quickly as possible."
 - » On October 31, White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby [told](#) reporters that Saudi Arabia remains interested in normalization.
 - Kirby stated, "without getting into specifics — we came away from those discussions confident that we have a path to get back towards normalization and that there is an interest on the Saudi side to pursue that," and though the war would complicate negotiations for normalization, "we are still committed to it and it is clear to us that the Saudis are still committed to it."
- The IDF's October 31 strike targeting Hamas infrastructure in Jabaliya in Gaza and subsequent building collapses—likely a consequence of caved — in Hamas underground tunnels — tragically highlight the deadly consequences of Hamas's cynical practice of hiding behind civilians to protect its military assets.

- » As JINSA Distinguished Fellow LTC Geoffrey S. Corn, USA (ret.) has [noted](#), “legal responsibility for civilian suffering cannot be validly assessed simply by asking which side dropped the bomb. In this conflict especially, that responsibility falls at the feet of Hamas — the side that not only deliberately attacks civilians, but uses its own civilians as camouflage and human shields.”
- The Houthi attacks against Israel and continued strikes against U.S. personnel in Iraq and Syria underscore the “ring of fire” that the Iranian regime has built around Israel, U.S. forces in the region, and America’s Arab partners. The Iranian regime is clearly looking to probe Israeli air defenses and America’s willingness to use strong military force to protect its personnel and help Israel defend itself.
 - » The ballistic missile that Israel’s Arrow air defense system shot down on October 31 was likely a more dangerous projectile than the cruise missiles and drones it had previously fired toward Israel and marked a significant escalation by the Houthis and their Iranian regime benefactors.
 - The guided-missile destroyer USS *Carney* and Saudi air defenses had shot down cruise missiles and drones on October 19, but it may be difficult for U.S. ships in the Red Sea to shoot down a ballistic missile because of its arching trajectory.
 - » In the wake of the Houthi attacks, the Israeli Navy has [deployed](#) missile boats to the Red Sea to better protect southern Israel.

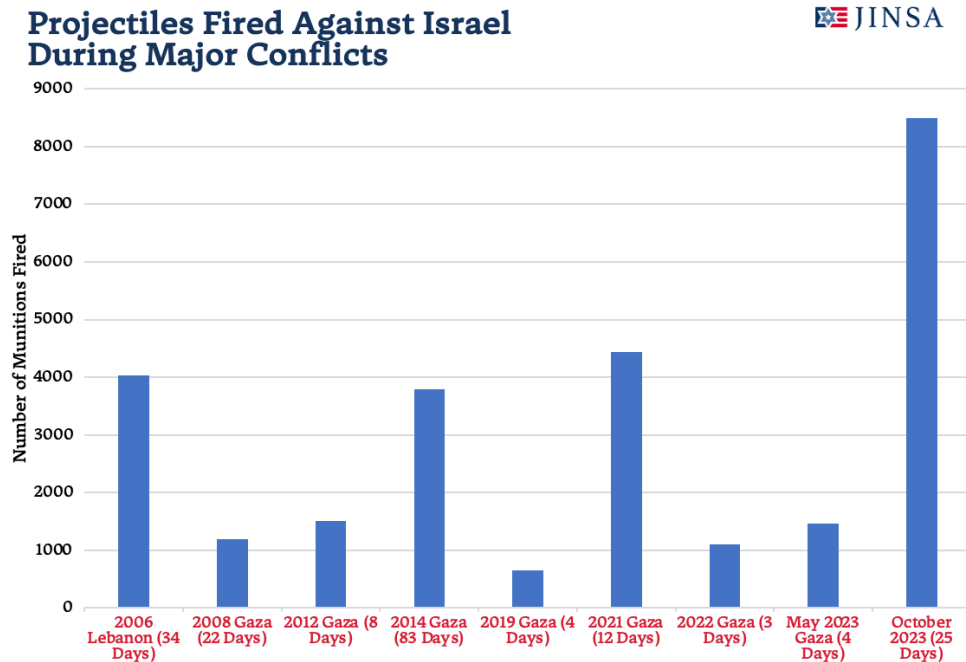
Last 48 Hours

Attacks Against Israel

- At least [8,500](#) rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles have been fired from Gaza during the war.
 - » Rockets [struck](#) Ashdod, wounding at least three, and [sirens sounded](#) in Bnei Brak, Givatayim, Ramat Gan, Jaffa, Holon, Bat Yam, Adanim, Givat Hashlosha, the Drom Hasharon Regional Center, Sdei Hemed, Neve Yarak, Neve Yamin, Kfar Saba, Kissufim, Herzliya, Ramat Hasharon, Petah Tikva, Tel Aviv, Ra’anana, Batzra, Givat Hen, Hod Hasharon, Elishama, Jaljulia, Sufa, Nir Yitzhak, Netiv Ha’asara, Rishon Lezion, and Ashkelon, as well as other locations in southern Israel.
 - » A barrage of rockets was [launched](#) toward Tel Aviv and other nearby areas in central Israel on October 31.
- Terrorists in Lebanon continued to attack northern Israel and also targeted an Israeli drone in the last 24 hours.
 - » Overnight on November 1, a surface-to-air missile was [launched](#) from southern Lebanon towards an IDF drone. Israel intercepted the missile before it could strike the drone.
 - » On October 31, militants in southern Lebanon [fired](#) several mortars toward the northern Israeli town of Arab al-Aramshe, inflicting no injuries or damage.
 - » On October 31, the IDF [said](#) that assailants in Lebanon fired toward army positions on the Israel-Lebanon border, and two mortars landed near Tel-Hai College.
- Late on October 31, the IDF said it [intercepted](#) an aerial threat south of Eilat, Israel. Earlier that day, as noted in [yesterday’s update](#), Israel used the Arrow air defense system for the

first time during the ongoing war to intercept a projectile headed toward Eilat from the Red Sea.

- » On November 1, the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen published a [video](#) purportedly showing its October 31 missile and drone launches toward Israel over the Red Sea.



IDF Operations

- In the last 24 hours, the IDF continued its ground operation in Gaza and conducted airstrikes against terrorist targets, eliminating key terrorist leaders.
 - » The IDF [announced](#) on November 1 that it struck several targets in Gaza overnight, including Hamas command centers, facilities belonging to other terror cells, and a building in Jabaliya where Hamas operatives had convened. The IDF also said its aircraft struck a car carrying an anti-tank guided missile in Gaza that was heading towards IDF positions in the northern Gaza Strip.
 - The IDF also [announced](#) that its ground forces had killed approximately fifty other terrorists and destroyed weapons caches and entrances to Hamas’s terror tunnel network.
 - » The IDF [announced](#) on October 31 that it carried out an airstrike in the Jabaliya refugee camp in Gaza that targeted and killed Hamas’s Central Jabaliya Battalion and that it killed Ibrahim Biari, the battalion’s commander. The Israeli airstrike collapsed Hamas terror tunnels at the camp as well as nearby buildings.
 - » Since the start of the war, the IDF claims that it has struck [11,000](#) terror targets.



Source: [Israel Defense Forces](#)

- The IDF stated that it launched strikes against targets in Lebanon in the last 24 hours.
 - » The IDF [struck](#) a target in southern Lebanon on November 1 in response to a surface-to-air missile launched from Lebanon toward an IDF drone.
 - » The IDF [announced](#) on October 31 that it struck a terror cell in southern Lebanon attempting to carry out an anti-tank guided missile attack and also struck another Hezbollah target in southern Lebanon.
 - » On October 31, the IDF [responded](#) to mortar fire toward Arab al-Aramshe with artillery shelling toward the source of the attack.
 - » The IDF [shelled](#) the source of the attack toward army positions and Tel Hai College, and it targeted Hezbollah “military infrastructure.”
- The IDF [arrested](#) forty-six wanted Palestinians in the West Bank overnight, including thirty with ties to Hamas.
- The IDF has [deployed](#) Saar-class missile boats in the Red Sea, according to the IDF, in response to the October 31 missile and drone attack launched by the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen.

Casualties and Hostages

- Over [1,400](#) people in Israel have been killed and at least [5,400](#) have been injured in the war.
 - » On October 31, an Israeli man was [injured](#) while driving on Route 31 near the town of Arad in southern Israel after missile shrapnel struck his vehicle.

- » [326](#) Israeli soldiers have been killed.
 - The IDF [announced](#) that two Israeli soldiers, Staff Sgt. Roei Wolf and Staff Sgt. Lavi Lipshitz, were killed in combat on Tuesday in northern Gaza.
 - Thirteen IDF soldiers have been [killed](#) during ground combat in Gaza so far.
- » Numerous foreign nationals have been killed in the war, including at least 36 [American](#) nationals, 24 [Thai](#) nationals, 35 [French](#) nationals, 17 [British](#) nationals, 10 [Nepalese](#) nationals, 7 [Argentinian](#) nationals, 16 [Russian](#) nationals, 4 [Romanian](#) nationals, 4 [Chinese](#) nationals, 3 [Brazilian](#) nationals, 3 [Belarusian](#) nationals, 3 [Chilean](#) nationals, 3 [Philippines](#) nationals, 2 [Ukrainian](#) nationals, 2 [Peruvian](#) nationals, 5 [Canadian](#) nationals, a [Cambodian](#) national, a [Colombian](#) national, an [Irish](#) national, an [Italian](#) national, a [Spanish](#) national, a [Swiss](#) national, a [Turkish](#) national, and an [Austrian](#) national.
- According to unverified figures from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry, 8,796 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza, and 22,219 have been [injured](#) during the war.
 - » On October 25, President Biden [cautioned](#) against trusting Gaza Health Ministry casualty figures, stating: “I have no notion that the Palestinians are telling the truth about how many people are killed ... I have no confidence in the number that the Palestinians are using.”
- According to the Palestinian Authority-run Palestinian Ministry of Health, at least 123 people have been [killed](#), and an additional 2,209 have been wounded in the West Bank.
- The IDF [claims](#) that it has killed at least 1,500 infiltrators from Gaza since the start of the war.
- According to the IDF’s latest press briefing, the families of 240 individuals have been notified that their loved ones were [taken hostage](#).
 - » On October 31, Hamas spokesman Abu Ubeida [announced](#) that due to mediation by “some countries,” Hamas would soon release some of the foreign nationals that the terrorist group currently holds hostage.
- Foreign nationals also remain missing, including at least 9 [Ukrainian](#) nationals, 3 [Canadian](#) nationals, 3 [Philippines](#) nationals, 2 [Austrian](#) nationals, 3 [Italian](#) nationals, 2 [Paraguayan](#) nationals, 5 [Peruvian](#) nationals, 2 [Sri Lankan](#) nationals, 2 [Tanzanian](#) nationals, a [Chilean](#) national, an [Azeri](#) national, and a [Nepalese](#) national.
 - » At least 12 [German](#) nationals, 17 [Thai](#) nationals, 15 [Argentinian](#) nationals, 12 [American](#) nationals, 6 [Russian](#) nationals, 6 [French](#) nationals, 4 [Portuguese](#) nationals, 3 [Romanian](#) nationals, 2 [Italian](#) nationals, and 2 [Mexican](#) nationals have been taken hostage.

Iranian Involvement and Response

- Iran-backed groups continued to launch attacks against U.S. personnel in Iraq and Syria.
 - » *Reuters* reported on October 31 that militants [attacked](#) the Ain al-Asad airbase in western Iraq with two armed drones. The drones reportedly did not cause any casualties or damage.
 - » Overnight, Iran-backed groups claimed to launch a [drone attack](#) against the facility in al-Tanf, Syria that hosts U.S. personnel.

- » Iran-backed groups have launched at least [twenty-seven attacks](#) against U.S. personnel, including sixteen in Iraq and eleven in Syria, according to Pentagon Press Secretary Brigadier General Pat Ryder.
- Iranian Foreign Minister Hossen Amir-Abdollahian [traveled](#) to Turkey on November 1, the Turkish Foreign Ministry announced, in order to discuss the ongoing war as well as Iranian-Turkish ties.
 - » At a joint press conference with Amir-Abdollahian, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan [called](#) for a regional meeting to discuss how to prevent the war from spreading and becoming one “that affects the region’s countries.”
 - Fidan called for the meeting to be held “as soon as possible.”
 - » Amir-Abdollahian [stated](#) at the press conference that “harsh consequences” would ensue if Israel continued its military operations in Gaza.
- On October 31, Amir-Abdollahian [traveled](#) to Doha, Qatar and [met](#) with Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani and Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh.
- On November 1, Ayatollah Khamenei [stated](#) during a speech that Muslim countries should boycott Israel and deprive it of food and oil, saying, “the path of oil and food exports to the Zionist regime should be stopped.”

U.S. and International Response

- In a 53-43 vote on October 31, the U.S. Senate [confirmed](#) Jacob Lew to be U.S. ambassador to Israel.
 - » The United States had been without a Senate-confirmed ambassador to Israel since Amb. Thomas Nides left the post in July.
- U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken will [visit](#) Israel on November 3, according to Israeli media sources.
- Secretary of State Blinken [spoke](#) by phone with Israeli President Isaac Herzog on October 31. According to a readout, Secretary Blinken “reiterated U.S. support for Israel’s right to defend itself against terrorism consistent with international humanitarian law and emphasized the need to take feasible precautions to minimize harm to civilians.”
 - » The readout further stated that Secretary Blinken and President Herzog “discussed efforts to safeguard U.S. citizens in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza; continue working tirelessly to bring hostages home; increase urgently the pace and volume of humanitarian assistance that is entering Gaza for distribution to Palestinian civilians; and prevent the conflict from spreading.”
- Pentagon Press Secretary Brigadier General Pat Ryder [announced](#) on October 31 that an additional 300 troops were being deployed to the Middle East in light of the recent uptick of attacks on U.S. troops and personnel in the region, totaling twenty-seven such attacks and six since the U.S. struck weapons depots in Syria linked to the IRGC last week.
 - » Ryder said the 300 troops are explosive ordnance disposal specialists and military communications specialists.
- FBI Director Christopher Wray [testified](#) before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security on October 31 about threats to the United States emanating from the war.

- » Wray stated that the FBI's assessment is that "the actions of Hamas and its allies will serve as an inspiration the likes of which we haven't seen since (the Islamic State group) launched its so-called caliphate several years ago."
- » Wray also testified that "we also cannot and do not discount the possibility that Hamas or another foreign terrorist organization may exploit the current conflict to conduct attacks here on our own soil" and that "our most immediate concern is that violent extremists, individuals or small groups, will draw inspiration from the events of the Middle East and carry out attacks against Americans going about their daily lives. That includes not just homegrown violent extremists inspired by a foreign terrorist organization but also domestic violent extremists targeting Jewish or Muslim communities."
- Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin [testified](#) before the Senate Appropriations Committee on October 31 to urge senators to pass the White House's supplemental aid package including aid for Israel, Ukraine, border security, the defense industrial base, and Taiwan.
 - » The [request](#) for Israel aid includes \$5.2 billion to increase the capacity of Israel's Iron Dome and other air defense systems, \$4.4 million to replenish DoD stocks provided to Israel, and \$1 billion to boost critical munitions production.
 - » During testimony before the Senate Appropriations Committee, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken [endorsed](#) control of Gaza by a "revitalized" Palestinian Authority should Israel remove Hamas from power, along with regional countries and international organizations.
 - » Secretary of Defense Austin [testified](#) that Hamas's October 7 attacks reminded him of atrocities committed by the Islamic State during his time as commander of U.S. Central Command.
 - » Secretary Austin [testified](#) that "our personnel have come under repeated attack in recent days by Iranian-backed militia groups. These attacks must stop," adding, "if Iranian-backed groups continue to attack U.S. forces, we will not hesitate to take further necessary measures to protect our people."
 - Austin later reiterated his warning, stating that "no government or group should try to widen this crisis."
 - » Protesters from the activist organization Code Pink [interrupted](#) the hearing, urging a "ceasefire now" and displaying the messages, "Free Gaza," "No more \$\$\$ 4 Israel," "Shame on you all," and "stop backing genocide."
- Israel's ties with South American countries, namely Bolivia and Chile, have become increasingly strained in recent days.
 - » *Reuters* [reported](#) on October 31 that Bolivia severed diplomatic ties with Israel and accused it of "crimes against humanity."
 - » On October 31, Chile [recalled](#) its ambassador to Israel, claiming it was conducting "unacceptable" human rights violations in Gaza.
- National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby [told reporters](#) on October 31 that Saudi Arabia still seeks an agreement to normalize relations with Israel once the Israel-Hamas war concludes.
 - » During meetings in Washington, D.C. this week, Saudi Defense Minister Khalid bin Salman discussed the war and provision of humanitarian aid to Gaza with U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan.

- » The White House said that the two “further emphasized the importance of working towards a sustainable peace between Israelis and Palestinians, building on the work that was already underway between Saudi Arabia and the United States over recent months.”
- » U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC) led a recent bipartisan congressional delegation to Saudi Arabia. Participants reportedly heard from Saudi officials that the kingdom is still interested in normalizing relations with Israel.
- United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres [issued](#) a statement on October 31 that he was “deeply alarmed by intensification of the conflict between Israel and Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups in Gaza. This includes the expansion of ground operations by the Israel Defense Forces accompanied by intense air strikes, and the continued rocket fire towards Israel from Gaza.”
 - » Guterres stated, “the level of humanitarian assistance that has been allowed into Gaza up to this point is completely inadequate and not commensurate with the needs of people in Gaza, compounding the humanitarian tragedy.”
 - » Guterres added, “I reiterate my call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and for unimpeded humanitarian access to be granted consistently, safely and to scale in order to meet the urgent needs created by the catastrophe unfolding in Gaza. I remain deeply concerned about the risk of a dangerous escalation beyond Gaza and urge all leaders to exercise utmost restraint to avoid a wider conflagration.”
- On October 31, the European Union (EU) foreign policy chief’s spokesperson [criticized](#) Israel for an alleged “upsurge of settler terrorism in the West Bank” that has “forced [Palestinians] out of their homes” and inflicted civilian casualties.
 - » The spokesperson’s statement said further, “Israel has the duty to protect civilians in the West Bank from extremist settler violence, to hold perpetrators accountable and ensure that the IDF intervenes. It is a legal obligation that must be fulfilled.”
 - » It also said, “this adds to an already tragic situation in Gaza, increasing the risk of dangerous escalation of the conflict, which must be avoided at all costs,” and “nearly 1,000 Palestinians have been forcibly displaced from their homes in the West Bank since the October 7 Hamas onslaught. This includes at least 98 Palestinian households, comprising over 800 people, driven out from 15 herding communities in Area C amid intensified settler violence and access restrictions.”
- On October 31, U.S. National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby [said](#) that the United States has “no indication” that Hamas has stolen the humanitarian aid entering Gaza.
 - » However, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the principal aid agency overseeing humanitarian assistance in Gaza, posted on X on October 16 that masked men had forcibly entered its facilities and [stolen](#) large quantities of fuel, medical supplies, and other unspecified resources.
 - UNRWA later deleted the post, but the Israeli Ministry of Defense corroborated the initial account and added that Hamas had stolen over 17,000 liters of fuel intended for humanitarian purposes.
- Starting on November 1, foreign passport holders that have been stuck in Gaza since the war began on October 7 are expected to be able to [leave](#) through the Rafah crossing into Egypt. Roughly 545 foreigners and dual nationals are expected to leave through Rafah. Egypt will also [reportedly open](#) the Rafah crossing, the only throughway between Egypt and Gaza, to wounded Palestinians to receive treatment in Egyptian hospitals.

- » On November 1, the first [ambulance](#) carrying wounded Palestinians from Gaza entered Egypt via the Rafah crossing.
 - Egypt had allowed roughly 200 trucks with aid to enter Gaza through the Rafah crossing, but no people had been allowed to leave.
- » Head of the Israeli National Security Council Tzachi Hanegbi expressed hope that Egypt would allow Palestinians to be treated in the Rafah and open field hospitals on the Egyptian side of the border.
- » According to Egyptian officials, eighty-one injured Palestinians will [enter](#) into Egypt on November 1 in order to receive medical care.
- Egypt has [stationed](#) at least twenty tanks and armored vehicles in close proximity to the Rafah crossing, according to photos taken by *Agence France-Presse* on October 31.
- Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar all [condemned](#) Israel’s airstrike in Jabaliya.
 - » Egypt called the strike “inhumane,” a “blatant violation of international law,” and denounced “indiscriminate attacks on civilians in and around hospitals, where they seek refuge.”
 - » Jordan condemned the strike “in the strongest terms” and also condemned violence by Israeli civilians against Palestinians in the West Bank.
 - » Saudi Arabia stressed its “complete rejection of the Israeli occupation forces’ repeated targeting of sites crowded with civilians” and said in a [statement that](#) “the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia condemns in the strongest terms possible the inhumane targeting by the Israeli occupation forces of the Jabaliya refugee camp in the besieged Gaza Strip, which caused the death and injury of a large number of innocent civilians.”
 - » Qatar [argued](#) that Israel’s strike targeting Hamas positions in Jabaliya and expanded attacks “undermine mediation and de-escalation efforts.”
 - It further called the Jabaliya strike a “new massacre against the defenseless Palestinian people.”
- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak [spoke](#) by phone on October 31.
 - » A U.K. readout [said](#), “[t]he Prime Minister reiterated the U.K.’s resolute backing for Israel’s right to defend itself against terrorism, while emphasizing the importance of taking all possible measures to minimize civilian casualties.”
 - » Sunak also urged “the long-term goal of a two-state solution” and stressed the need for all sides to eschew actions that would inflame tensions.
 - » Sunak also spoke with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and “said the U.K. would continue to support diplomatic action to protect Palestinian civilians, prevent wider escalation and secure a peaceful and lasting resolution to the crisis.”
- On October 31, a health food store and several food trucks in Montauk, New York were [defaced](#) with antisemitic graffiti, including swastikas and the phrase “Jews die” in German.
- On November 1, the Jewish Community of Vienna President Oskar Deutsch [posted](#) on X that a fire was set in the Jewish section of Vienna’s central cemetery and swastikas were sprayed on its walls.

- On October 30, French Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin [confirmed](#) that France had seen 819 antisemitic incidents since October 7, nearly double the total of antisemitic acts carried out in 2022.
 - » On October 31, multiple Jewish homes in Paris were [graffitied](#) with Stars of David, the latest in several such incidents across France.
- On November 1, Cornell University student Patrick Dai was [arrested](#) by local authorities after posting antisemitic death threats against Cornell’s Jewish population, including “from the river to the sea, palestine will be free! glory to hamas,” “sieg heil,” “all jews are sub human animals and must be killed as such,” “the zionist entity will be destroyed,” and “gonna (sic) shoot up [the Cornell University Hillel facility].”
 - » Dai admitted to posting the threats, according to the FBI.

Recent and Relevant JINSA Products About Israel at War

- Webinar: [Derailed or Delayed: Prospects for Israel-Saudi Normalization After 10/7](#) with JINSA Director of Foreign Policy Jonathan Ruhe, JINSA Randi and Charles Wax Senior Fellow John Hannah, and Princeton Professor Dr. Bernard Haykel, October 31, 2023
- Blaise Misztal, “[Israel’s Strategic Challenge](#),” *War on the Rocks*, October 30, 2023
- Ari Cicurel, “[United States Undermines Deterrent Value of Its Strikes Against Iran-linked Targets](#),” October 27, 2023
- Webinar: [Gaza Update](#) with JINSA Vice President for Policy Blaise Misztal, JINSA Distinguished Fellow IDF MG (ret.) Yaakov Amidror, and JINSA Senior Vice President for Israeli Affairs IDF MG (ret.) Yaacov Ayish, October 27, 2023
- John Hannah and Blaise Misztal, “[Israel-Hamas war: It’s not too late to salvage peace with Saudi Arabia](#),” *The Jerusalem Post*, October 26, 2023
- Gabriel Noronha [Testimony](#) before the House Financial Services Committee, “Understanding the Iranian Regime’s Access to Money Around the World and How They Use It to Support Terrorism,” October 26, 2023
- LTC Geoffrey Corn (ret.), “[The Disproportionate Confusion about Proportionality](#),” *Lawfire Blog*, October 26, 2023