



Ari Cicurel  
*Assistant Director of Foreign Policy*

Yoni Tobin  
*Policy Analyst*

Zachary Schildcrout  
*Policy Analyst*

Anna Schafel  
*Programs and Outreach Associate*

# Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update February 26, 2024

JINSA's [Israel at War](#) webpage is a dedicated resource for analysis, commentary, webinars, and media coverage about the 10/7 attacks and the ensuing Israel-Hamas conflict. JINSA will release the Swords of Iron Update on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. An update with the latest information and analysis about the war is below.

## Analysis

- Reports indicated that [progress](#) had been made toward reaching a hostage and temporary ceasefire deal, with Hamas possibly [removing](#) its requirement that an agreement require a full ceasefire and a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza.
  - » If true, these developments would indicate that Israeli operations to clear out Hamas terrorists and infrastructure in Rafah—Hamas's last stronghold in Gaza—have also furthered Israel's goal of recovering the hostages by increasing pressure on Hamas.
- The projectile fire against Israel from Lebanon over the weekend, which triggered sirens in more than two dozen Israeli towns and [wounded](#) one person, highlights the ongoing threat posed by the Iran-backed terrorist group Hezbollah, which possesses an arsenal of roughly 150,000 projectiles, some precision-guided, and has driven more than 80,000 Israelis from their homes in the north.
  - » Hezbollah has insisted that it will not cease its attacks against Israel until fighting in Gaza ends, underscoring the difficulty of dampening Israel-Hezbollah tensions through [diplomacy](#) given Israel's stringent opposition to a permanent ceasefire against Hamas.
- The February 26 resignation of Palestinian Authority (PA) Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh appears to be the first step toward a new, "[technocratic](#)" PA government intended to catalyze further international backing for the creation of a Palestinian state. However, Shtayyeh's claim in his resignation announcement that moving forward with Palestinian governance requires "national unity talks" suggests that the new government will include Hamas, which Israel has already rejected as unacceptable.
  - » The Biden administration has repeatedly [called](#) for a "revitalized" PA to govern Gaza after the war, and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told PA President Mahmoud Abbas on January 10 that the United States supports "tangible steps" towards the creation of a Palestinian state.

# Last 72 Hours

## *Attacks Against Israel*

- At least 15,000 rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles have been fired at Israel from all fronts combined during the war, according to JINSA data.
- According to a February 23 [report](#) from Israel's *Channel 12* citing government security data, Israeli authorities have foiled over 650 terrorist attack plots since the beginning of the war, an average of over 100 foiled plots a month.
  - » 199 terrorist attacks have taken place during the war, per the *Channel 12* report.
- On February 23, Israeli police [arrested](#) a 16-year-old resident of Jerusalem's Shu'afat neighborhood who allegedly planned to commit a terrorist attack. In a letter, the suspect wrote that the planned attack was "in response to what the occupation's army is doing in beloved Gaza."

## **Gaza**

- On February 25, IDF spokesperson Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari [wrote](#) an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* arguing that Hamas's strategy shifted from brutally massacring civilians in Israel on October 7, while filming the atrocities, to using Gazan civilians as human shields.
  - » He criticized Hamas for donning civilian clothes in combat, impeding Palestinians' ability to escape combat areas, and fighting from among civilian infrastructure in the hope "that international law and public sympathy will provide a shield for their military activities."
  - » Hagari noted that the IDF follows international law and fights "this war with a heavy heart, aware of the tragic loss of civilian lives on both sides." He insisted further that "our mission is to dismantle Hamas and bring our hostages home—not to destroy Gaza or displace its people," and "our strategy remains consistent and clear: Ensure that Oct. 7 never happens again."

## **Lebanon**

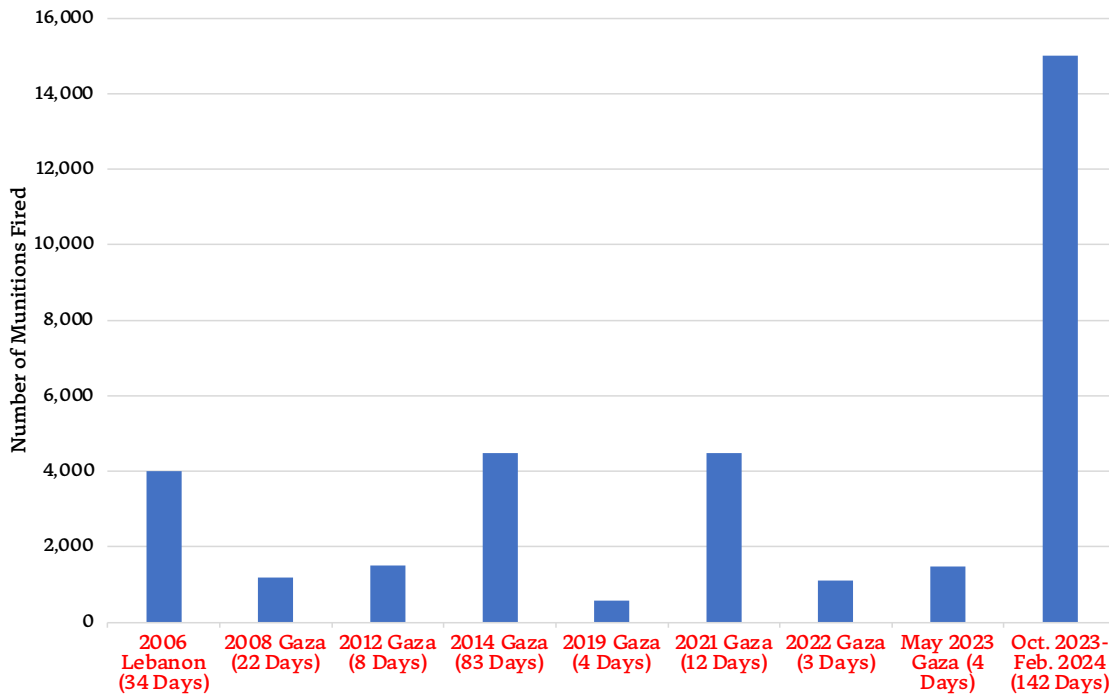
- Rockets struck [Shtula](#), and sirens sounded in [Alon Tavor](#), [Manara](#), [Misgav Am](#), [Kfar Giladi](#), [Margaliot](#), [Tel Hai](#), [Arab al-Aramshe](#), [Hanita](#), [Mount Dov](#), [Majdal-Shams](#), [Mas'ade](#), [Neve Ativ](#), [Nimrod](#), [Avivim](#), [Baram](#), [Yir'on](#), [Shtula](#), [Adamit](#), [Dishon](#), [Dalton](#), [Iftach](#), [Alma](#), [Rehaniya](#), [Ramot Naftali](#), [Malkia](#), [Dafna](#), [Kibbutz Dan](#), [HaGoshrim](#), [Snir](#), [Ghajar](#), [Kiryat Shmona](#), and [Sde Nehemia](#).
- On February 26, a rocket [fired](#) from Lebanon struck a chicken coop on a farm in the northern Israeli town of Shtula, lightly injuring one person.
- On February 26, an IDF drone was [shot down](#) by a Hezbollah surface-to-air missile. Another Hezbollah missile launched towards a separate IDF drone that day was intercepted by Israel's aerial defenses.
- On February 25, Hezbollah operatives [fired](#) four rockets toward the Galilee Panhandle region of northern Israel, which [landed](#) in open areas near the town of Margaliot. No injuries were reported.
- On February 24, multiple rockets fired from Lebanon were [intercepted](#) over the northern Israeli city of Kiryat Shmona. That day, several rockets [fired](#) from Lebanon landed in open areas near the Israeli town of Hanita. No injuries were reported in either incident.
- On February 24, rockets were [fired](#) from Lebanon toward Arab al-Aramshe, Hanita, and the Mount Dov area.

- On February 24, an IDF fighter jet [downed](#) a suspicious aerial target—likely a drone—that was heading from southern Lebanon towards Israeli airspace.

### West Bank

- On February 25, the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades [said](#), “with God’s help and strength, our fighters fought fierce clashes today at dawn with the occupation [Israeli] forces storming the city of Qalqilya with machine guns and explosive devices.”
  - » *Mwatan*, an Egyptian outlet, reported that according to local Palestinian civilians, the IDF raided “homes in many neighborhoods of the city, especially in the Al-Dhahr neighborhood and Education Street, and closed and besieged the southern Dawoud neighborhood.”
- On February 24, terrorists [opened fire](#) on the entrance to the IDF’s Nahal Brigade base near the town of Arad, injuring one soldier. No suspects were apprehended in the incident.
- On February 24, terrorists [fired](#) shots toward the town of Karmeit Tzur. No injuries were reported.

## Projectiles Fired Against Israel During Major Conflicts



### IDF Operations

#### Gaza

- On February 26, the IDF [said](#) that in the past day more than 30 Hamas gunmen were killed in Gaza City’s Zeitoun neighborhood in an ongoing operation, and an additional 10 were killed in central Gaza.

- Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [told](#) *CBS News* on February 25 that once Israel begins its military operation in the southern Gazan city of Rafah, it will be “weeks away” from “total victory.”
  - » Netanyahu stated, “once we begin the Rafah operation, the intense phase of the fighting is weeks away from completion, not months, weeks away from completion. And that is— we've already destroyed 18 of the 24 Hamas terrorist battalions. So we have, and four of them are concentrated in Rafah. We can't leave the last Hamas stronghold without taking care of it, obviously, we have to do it.”
  - » Netanyahu further stated, “total victory is our goal, and total victory is within reach. Not months away, weeks away once we begin the operation.”
  - » Netanyahu added that “if we have a deal, it'll be delayed somewhat. But it'll happen. If we don't have a deal, we'll do it anyway. It has to be done. Because total victory is our goal, and total victory is within reach. Not months away, weeks away once we begin the operation.”
  - » When asked about plans to ensure the safety of civilians in Rafah, Netanyahu said, “I'm going from here to a meeting with the General Staff where they're going to show me this dual plan. A plan to evacuate, and a plan to dismantle those remaining battalions ... there's room for them to go north of Rafah, to the places that we've already finished fighting in.”
- The IDF [said](#) on February 25 that it finished a “precise and limited operation” at Nasser Hospital in the southern Gazan city of Khan Younis, during which it detained 200 individuals who belong to terrorist groups, who were implicated in the October 7 massacre, or who are connected to the hostages.
  - » The IDF provided the hospital with a generator and said, “all the vital systems of the hospital continued to operate on an uninterruptible power supply (UPS) throughout the operational activity.” The IDF added that it “coordinated the entry of professional officials to examine the electricity problem in the hospital.”
  - » In addition, the IDF noted that it facilitated the transfer of severely ill patients to other medical areas “at the request of the hospital staff and in cooperation with the international community.” The IDF added further, “the IDF will continue to operate in accordance with international law against the Hamas terrorist organization, which systematically operates from hospitals and civilian infrastructure.”
- On February 25, the IDF [published](#) a video of the Egoz commando unit battling terrorists in Khan Younis. The footage showed gun battles and the discovery of a weapons cache.
- On February 25, the IDF [said](#) that it arrested numerous members of terrorist groups who were attempting to conceal their location by embedding among civilians leaving combat zones in Khan Younis. In addition, the military said that the Givati and Nahal Brigades continued operations in Khan Younis and central Gaza, respectively, and that the IDF is also operating in Gaza City's Zeitoun neighborhood.
- On February 25, the IDF's Givati Brigade [intensified](#) its operations targeting Hamas operatives in Abasan al-Jadida and Abasan al-Kabira, towns east of Khan Younis.
  - » Troops killed dozens of terrorists and captured weapons caches, including assault rifles, sniper rifles, grenades, and explosive devices. Soldiers located a rocket launcher and a projectile hidden in the refrigerator of a medical laboratory during the operation.

- Citing Israel's *Ynet* news outlet, *The Times of Israel* [reported](#) on February 24 that Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu instructed the Foreign and Justice Ministry to prepare a document to be submitted to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) that day. The document reportedly addressed how Israel is complying with the court's January provisional orders that Israel:
  - » "Prevent and punish the direct and public incitement to commit genocide";
  - » "Enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip"; and
  - » "Prevent the destruction and ensure the preservation of evidence" relevant to genocide allegations.
- On February 24, the IDF [published](#) a video of airstrikes and tank fire targeting Hamas combatants in Khan Younis, whom the Paratroopers Brigade identified with drones. Troops in the brigade also discovered a Hamas weapons depot containing explosives.
- The IDF [said](#) on February 24 that 7th Armored Brigade troops discovered a tunnel shaft and weapons near a senior Hamas intelligence officer's home in Khan Younis. The weapons, mortars, were found in United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) bags. Brigade troops also used an Iron Sting guided mortar to kill eight Hamas combatants, according to the IDF.
- On February 24, the IDF [said](#) that it eliminated several Hamas combatants during the past day in ongoing intense battles in Khan Younis, Gaza City's Zeitoun neighborhood, and central Gaza.
- According to a *New York Times* [report](#) from February 23, citing an unnamed Israeli intelligence official, the IDF assesses that at least 5,000 combatants are still in the northern Gaza Strip. The Nahal Brigade's chief of staff Col. Nochi Mandel said, "Hamas hasn't been completely defeated in northern Gaza. We've done a lot of work, but there's still more to do."
- On February 23, the IDF [published](#) a video documenting Maglan commando unit troops killing a Hamas gunman with a grenade in Khan Younis after they used a drone to identify him.

## Lebanon

- On February 26, the IDF [said](#) it struck several sites belonging to Hezbollah's air defense unit in the Beqaa Valley near the city of Baalbek in northeast Lebanon—the deepest confirmed Israeli strikes in Lebanon in years. The IDF had [said](#) earlier that day that it was "striking Hezbollah terror targets deep inside Lebanon."
- Israel's Defense Minister Yoav Gallant [stated](#) on February 25 that even in the event of a "temporary truce in Gaza," the IDF would increase strikes against Hezbollah and "continue until the full withdrawal of Hezbollah [from the border] and the return of the residents [of northern Israeli towns] to their homes."
  - » Approximately 80,000 Israelis were evacuated from their homes in northern Israel in the early weeks of the war and have not yet been permitted to return.
  - » Gallant further noted, "the goal is simple — to push Hezbollah back to where it should be. Either by agreement, or we will do it by force."
- On February 25, the IDF [struck](#) Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon, including a Hezbollah cell in the town of Blida and two nearby facilities, in response to earlier rocket and drone attacks.

- On February 24, the IDF [struck](#) Hezbollah sites in southern Lebanon, including a weapons depot in Matmoura, a command center in Baraachit, and rocket launching sites in Jabal Blat. The IDF also [struck](#) buildings used by the terror group in Rab-el Thalathine, Ayta ash-Shab, and Blida.
  - » The IDF also artillery [shelled](#) targets in Lebanon in response to rockets fired from those sites.
- The IDF said on February 24 that it had [struck](#) several Hezbollah positions in southern Lebanon overnight, including shelling Hanine and Marawhin with artillery to “remove threats.”
- On February 23, the IDF [said](#) that it used fighter jets to strike Hezbollah targets in Labbouneh and Kafr Kila, among numerous additional Hezbollah positions in southern Lebanon. The IDF also said that it launched tank fire to “remove a threat” near Ayta ash-Shab.
- The IDF [said](#) on February 23 that the Israeli Navy missile boat fleet has been conducting “extensive” drills to prepare for a potential war on the northern front in the maritime domain. The navy simulated intercepting drone attacks, aerial rescues, and refueling missile boats.
- Citing Israel’s *Channel 12*, *The Times of Israel* [reported](#) on February 23 that Israel’s Foreign Minister Israel Katz wrote in a letter to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), “the Security Council must also call on the Lebanese government to fully implement its decisions, take responsibility and prevent attacks from its territory against Israel, and ensure that the area up to the Litani River is free of military presence, assets or weapons.”
  - » He also wrote, “Israel reaffirms its fundamental right to do whatever it needs within international law to protect its citizens from these heinous violations.” In addition, Katz noted that Iran’s weapons shipments to Hezbollah violate UNSC Resolution 1701.

## Syria

- On February 25, the U.K.-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights [claimed](#) that two Hezbollah operatives were killed in an Israeli airstrike in Qusayr.

## West Bank

- On February 26, the IDF, Israel’s internal security agency Shin Bet, and Israel Border Police [conducted](#) extensive raids overnight across the West Bank.
  - » Israeli forces arrested 22 terror suspects, including 11 Hamas operatives, and seized 100,000 NIS (roughly \$27,500) and terrorist propaganda materials.
  - » According to Israel’s *i24 News*, approximately 3,250 terror suspects—including over 1,350 associated with Hamas—have been arrested in counterterrorism operations since the start of the war.

## Humanitarian Efforts

- The office of Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [said](#) in a statement on February 26 that it has shown the war cabinet plans for evacuating Palestinian civilians from areas with heavy combat as well as plans for ground combat in the southern Gazan city of Rafah.
  - » The statement also said, “the plan for providing humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip in a manner that will prevent the looting that has occurred in the northern Strip and other areas was approved.”

- Speaking before the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on February 26, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres [claimed](#) that an Israeli operation in Gaza “would put the final nail in the coffin of our aid programs.”
  - » He added, “the [Human Rights] Council’s lack of unity on Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and on Israel’s military operations in Gaza following the horrific terror attacks by Hamas on 7 October, has severely—perhaps fatally—undermined its authority,” he says. “The council needs serious reform to its composition and working methods.”
- A February 26 report in Israel’s *i24 News* [indicated](#) that armed gunmen have been seizing humanitarian aid trucks entering Gaza. According to the report, which cites Israeli security sources, the seizures have been “occurring for several weeks, with loaded trucks being taken over almost immediately upon entry.”
- On February 23, Israel’s Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) [said](#) that during the war thus far, 13,834 trucks with 254,210 tons of supplies have entered Gaza, including 8,021 trucks carrying 167,080 tons of food.

### *Ceasefire and Hostage Negotiations*

- On February 25, U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan [told](#) *CNN* that “representatives of Israel, the United States, Egypt and Qatar met in Paris and came to an understanding among the four of them about what the basic contours of a hostage deal for a temporary ceasefire would look like.” He added, “it is still under negotiation in terms of hammering out the details of it. There will have to be indirect discussions by Qatar and Egypt with Hamas because ultimately they will have to agree to release the hostages.”
- On February 24, head of Israel’s National Security Council Tzachi Hanegbi [said](#) to Israel’s *Channel 12*, “from what I’ve heard in the last few hours, it will be possible to make progress” in the wake of hostage negotiations in Paris.
  - » He also said, “any framework must deal with [the return] of all the hostages,” which “can in no way be interpreted” as mandating the war’s conclusion. Hanegbi added that “the Americans are with us, all in” vis-a-vis the goal of destroying Hamas.
  - » Hanegbi said that the IDF will operate in Rafah once it can ensure the safety of civilians and that President Biden told Prime Minister Netanyahu that the United States “won’t oppose an action in Rafah” if Israel adequately addresses humanitarian concerns.
  - » Hanegbi indicated that Hamas can surrender, “but that option will apparently be at the crescendo, at the very end.” He said further that discussions about sending Hamas leaders to exile can only take place once the group surrenders.
  - » Regarding the possibility of a future Palestinian state, Hanegbi said, “we will never allow foreign sovereignty in Judea and Samaria [the West Bank]” because of Israel’s security imperatives. He also said, “Israel will not pay the price of a Palestinian state for a deal with the Saudis.”
- According to a February 25 *Times of Israel* report, an Israeli delegation [traveled](#) to Qatar that day to participate in hostage negotiations, though in a “minimal role.” Talks reportedly will focus on delineating which hostages held by Hamas and which Palestinian prisoners held in Israel’s prisons would be released in a deal.
- On February 25, Israel’s *Ynet* [quoted](#) an Israeli official as saying that “the direction [of talks] is positive.” The official added that it is “impossible to know” what Hamas thinks of the latest hostage deal outline and that such a deal will take time to finalize.

- According to a February 24 [report](#) by Saudi Arabia's *A-Sharq*, Hamas has decreased the number of Palestinian security prisoners it is demanding that Israel release as part of a hostage deal and is no longer demanding that Israel completely withdraw from Gaza. The report also indicated that Hamas would be willing to accept an initial six-week ceasefire instead of its previous demand for a full ceasefire.
  - » However, the report also indicated that Hamas has demanded that Israeli forces withdraw from major population areas and permit displaced Gazans to return home.
- According to [reports](#) from February 23, the Israeli war coalition has permitted the Israeli delegates in Paris for hostage negotiations to exhibit greater leeway for matters such as humanitarian assistance, the ratio of Palestinian prisoners released per hostage held in Gaza, the length of any concomitant truce, and eventual rehabilitation of Gaza. However, the coalition reportedly instructed the delegates not to show any flexibility in rejecting Hamas's demand for a permanent ceasefire.

### *Post-War Planning*

- On February 26, Palestinian Authority (PA) Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh announced the [resignation](#) of his government.
  - » Shtayyeh said in his [announcement](#) that Palestinian governance will “require new governmental and political arrangements that take into account the emerging reality in the Gaza Strip, the national unity talks, and the urgent need for an inter-Palestinian consensus,” says Shtayyeh.
  - » In addition, it will require “the extension of the Authority’s authority over the entire land, Palestine.”
  - » U.A.E.-based *Asharq News* [reported](#) that a new government may be formed by the end of the week.
- In response to Prime Minister Netanyahu’s plan for post-war Gaza, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby [told](#) reporters that “the Palestinian people should have a voice and a vote ... through a revitalized Palestinian Authority” and that the United States does not “believe in a reduction of the size of Gaza ... we don’t want to see any forcible displacement of Palestinians outside Gaza and, of course, we don’t want to see Gaza dominated or ruled or governed over by Hamas.”
  - » Netanyahu has rejected the idea of including the PA in post-war Gaza, and his plan calls for installing local officials who are unaffiliated with Hamas to administer services in the territory.
- On February 23, a senior Hamas official [told](#) reporters in Beirut that “when it comes to the day after in the Gaza Strip, Netanyahu is presenting ideas which he knows fully well will never succeed.”

### *Casualties and Hostages*

- Over 1,200 people were [killed](#) in Israel, and 13,000 Israelis have been [injured](#) in the war.
  - » 580 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#).
  - » 240 IDF soldiers have been [killed](#) during ground combat in Gaza so far.



- The IDF announced the [deaths](#) of Staff Sgt. Ido Eli Zrihen, 20, from Jerusalem; [Staff Sgt. Narya Belete](#), 21, from Shavei Shomron in the West Bank; and [Maj. Eyal Shuminov](#), 24, from Karmiel.
- The IDF [announced](#) that Sgt. Oz Daniel, 19, from Kfar Saba, who was previously thought to have been taken hostage alive by Hamas, was killed on October 7 and his body abducted by the terrorist group.
- The IDF [announced](#) on February 26 that five soldiers were seriously injured that day in fighting across Gaza, including two injured in battle in northern Gaza and three injured in fighting in southern Gaza.
- » Numerous foreign nationals have been killed in the war, including at least 33 [American](#) nationals, 34 [Thai](#) nationals, 39 [French](#) nationals, 19 [Russian](#) nationals, 12 [British](#) nationals, 10 [Nepalese](#) nationals, 9 [Argentinian](#) nationals, 6 [Canadian](#) nationals, 4 [Philippines](#) nationals, 4 [Austrian](#) nationals, 4 [Romanian](#) nationals, 4 [Portuguese](#) nationals, 4 [Chinese](#) nationals, 3 [Brazilian](#) nationals, 3 [Belarusian](#) nationals, 3 [Italian](#) nationals, 3 [Peruvian](#) nationals, a [Cambodian](#) national, a [Chilean](#) national, an [Irish](#) national, a [Spanish](#) national, an [Australian](#) national, an [Azeri](#) national, a [Honduran](#) national, a [Swiss](#) national, a [Tanzanian](#) national, and a [Turkish](#) national.
- According to unverified figures from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry, 29,782 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza, and 70,043 have been [injured](#) during the war.
  - » On October 25, 2023, 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.”
  - » The IDF [said](#) on February 19 that it has killed approximately 12,000 Hamas operatives over the course of the war.
- According to the Palestinian Authority-run Palestinian Ministry of Health, over 400 people have been [killed](#), and an additional 4,440 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.
- So far, [105](#) hostages in Gaza have been released, [three](#) have been rescued by the IDF, [seven](#) have been [found](#) dead, three have been [mistakenly](#) killed by the IDF, and one was [killed](#) during an IDF attempt to rescue him.
  - » 81 Israeli hostages have been released.
  - » 46 hostages with foreign nationalities—some also holding Israeli citizenship—have been released.
    - Thus far, 23 [Thai](#) nationals, 6 [Argentinian](#) nationals, 5 [German](#) nationals, 3 [French](#) nationals, 4 [Russian](#) nationals, 1 [Dutch](#) national, 1 [Filipino](#) national, 1 [Mexican](#) national, 1 [Uruguayan](#) national, and 1 [American](#) national have been released.
    - Hamas has released [36 children](#) and still holds two as hostages.
- Israel has said that terrorists in Gaza currently [hold](#) 134 hostages, and according to IDF spokesman Rear Adm Daniel Hagari, the IDF has [notified](#) the families of 31 of the 136 hostages that their loved ones died, including two who were abducted prior to October 7.

- » Many of the hostages are foreign or dual nationals, including up to 8 [American](#) nationals, 6 [German](#) nationals, 13 [Thai](#) nationals, 4 [Portuguese](#) nationals, 3 [British](#) nationals, 2 [Italian](#) nationals, 4 [Romanian](#) nationals, and 2 [Mexican](#) nationals.

#### *Iranian Involvement and Response*

- A February 26 [report](#) in the Israeli news site *Globes* indicated that four underwater communications cables between Saudi Arabia and Djibouti have been [damaged](#) and rendered inoperable in recent months, presumably because of Iran-backed Houthi attacks.
- On February 25, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani [condemned](#) U.S. and U.K. strikes against the Houthis on February 24, arguing that "with such attacks, America and Britain seek to escalate tensions and crises in the region, and expand the scope of war and instability."
- On February 24, the Houthis launched multiple attacks that were likely targeting the MV *Torm Thor*, a U.S.-flagged, owned, and operated chemical/oil product tanker sailing in the Gulf of Aden.
  - » At approximately 11:45 p.m. local time, the Houthis [launched](#) one anti-ship ballistic missile that was likely targeting the *Torm Thor*. The missile hit the water and caused no damage or injuries.
  - » Earlier at roughly 5 p.m. local time, the Houthis [launched](#) one anti-ship ballistic missile that was likely targeting the *Torm Thor*. The USS *Mason* later shot the missile down.
- On February 24 at roughly 9 p.m. local time, U.S. forces [shot down](#) two one-way attack drones flying over the southern Red Sea. A third drone crashed into the Red Sea.

#### *U.S. and International Response*

- On February 25, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said in a [statement](#) that "the United States will not hesitate to take action, as needed, to defend lives and the free flow of commerce in one of the world's most critical waterways. We will continue to make clear to the Houthis that they will bear the consequences if they do not stop their illegal attacks, which harm Middle Eastern economies, cause environmental damage, and disrupt the delivery of humanitarian aid to Yemen and other countries."
- On February 24 at approximately 11:50 p.m. local time, the United States, alongside the United Kingdom and with support from Australia, Bahrain, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, and New Zealand, struck 18 Houthi targets in Yemen. According to a [statement](#) from U.S. Central Command, "the targets included Houthi underground weapons storage facilities, missile storage facilities, one-way attack unmanned aerial systems, air defense systems, radars, and a helicopter."
- According to a February 24 [Axios report](#), the United States asked Israel to stop targeting Hamas police officers who are escorting aid convoys in Gaza, cautioning that a "total breakdown of law and order" is exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in the territory. The *Axios* report indicated that Israel rejected the request.
- On February 23, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken [said](#), "we're disappointed in the [announcement](#) [of new Israeli settlement homes in the West Bank]. It's been longstanding U.S. policy under Republican and Democratic administrations alike that new settlements are counterproductive to reaching an enduring peace. They're also inconsistent with

international law. Our administration maintains a firm opposition to settlement expansion. And in our judgment, this only weakens—it doesn't strengthen—Israel's security.”

- » Blinken's announcement that settlements are “inconsistent with international law” [reversed](#) a Trump administration policy not to prejudge the [legal status](#) of settlements.
- On February 23 between 12:30 p.m. and 7:15 p.m. local time, the United States [struck](#) seven Houthi anti-ship cruise missiles in Yemen that were prepared to target ships in the Red Sea.
- On February 24, Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni [said](#) in an [interview](#) with Italy's *Giornale* that “if Russia had not invaded Ukraine, in all likelihood Hamas would not have launched such an attack against Israel. It was inevitable that such a serious violation of international law, moreover at the hands of a permanent member of the UN Security Council, would have cascading consequences on other areas of the world, from the Middle East to the Balkans, up to Africa.”
- On February 24, European Union Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell [posted](#) on X that “the announcement by Israeli Minister Smotrich to build 3,300 new units in illegal West Bank settlements is inflammatory and dangerous. Settlements make Israelis and Palestinians less safe, fuel tensions, obstruct peace efforts, and constitute a grave breach of international law.”
- On February 23, a group of UN experts released a [statement](#) calling for an arms embargo on Israel because “any transfer of weapons or ammunition to Israel that would be used in Gaza is likely to violate international humanitarian law and must cease immediately.”
- On February 23, Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva doubled down on his claims that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza by [posting](#) on X that “what the Israeli government is doing is not war, it is genocide.” He also wrote that “children and women are being murdered.”
- On February 23, U.K. Ambassador to Israel Simon Walters [posted](#) on X that “the announcement of plans to build over 3000 new settlement homes in the occupied West Bank is deeply concerning. UK policy is clear. Settlements are illegal under international law and make it harder still to progress towards a solution of this conflict.”

### *Rising Antisemitism, Islamophobia, Protests, and Attacks*

- On February 25, an active duty U.S. Air Force airman [set himself on fire](#) outside of the Embassy of Israel in Washington, D.C. and shouted, “free Palestine.” He later [died](#) from his injuries.
- On February 25, at a Sao Paulo rally in support of Brazil's former President Jair Bolsonaro, which approximately 185,000 people attended, Bolsonaro [waved](#) an Israeli flag, and attendees were seen with Israeli flags and signs in support of Israel.
- Israel's Department of Internal Police Investigations [opened](#) an investigation after a video showed a mounted police officer using the reins of his horse to hit a protester at a February 24 anti-government protest in Tel Aviv.
- On February 23, a French source [told](#) the *Times of Israel* that France's international security service, the DGSI, believes that Russia's security service, the FSB, was behind the 60 Stars of David that had been graffitied in Paris and its surrounding suburbs last fall.

## Recent and Relevant JINSA Products About Israel at War

- Webinar: [Gaza Update 2/22](#), with IDF MG (ret.) Yaakov Amidror and John Hannah, February 22, 2024
- Ari Cicurel, [Unnecessary U.S. Investigation into Israeli Operations](#), February 16, 2024
- Zac Schildcrout, [Urging Israeli Restraint Against Hamas Might Enable Group's Survival](#), February 14, 2024