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## Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update March 27, 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

- By abstaining from voting on United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2728, allowing it to pass, the Biden administration broke with its policy of repeatedly vetoing resolutions that did not condition a ceasefire on the release of the hostages. As JINSA's Ari Cicurel and Jacob Olidort argued in a [NatSec Brief](#), the Biden administration seemingly chose consensus at the United Nations Security Council over support for its partner.
  - » UNSCR 2728 called both for a ceasefire in Gaza and the release of the hostages but did not condemn Hamas or specifically condition the ceasefire on the release of hostages.
  - » Hamas has already seized on the resolution's passage as it seeks to leverage the mounting international criticism against Israel to achieve its objectives.
  - » Information warfare and the battle for public perception and legitimacy are key pillars of the strategy pursued by Hamas, and its Iranian backers, to prevail in the war. Emphasizing this reality, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei [posted](#) on X on March 27 that "the challenges and conflicts in the world today are media challenges. War is also a media war. Whoever has the strongest media in his hands will succeed in achieving the goals he seeks."
- Israel's Defense Minister Yoav Gallant's meetings with senior U.S. officials in Washington this week further brought to light inconsistencies in U.S. policy towards an Israeli offensive into Rafah. Secretary Blinken [told](#) Gallant that the United States supports "ensuring the defeat of Hamas, including in Rafah, while reiterating opposition to a major ground operation in Rafah."
  - » Though the United States has advocated for small-scale operations and targeted raids in Rafah, it is unlikely that tactical achievements conferred by this approach would lead to the strategic victory over Hamas's final remaining brigade that Israel seeks.

# Last 48 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.

### **Gaza**

- Sirens [sounded](#) in Sderot, [Ashkelon](#), [Zikim](#), and [Kibbutz Kissufim](#).
- On March 26, three rockets were [fired](#) at Sderot, all of which were intercepted.
- On March 26, *The New York Times* [reported](#) details that Amit Soussana, an Israeli whom Hamas had held captive, shared about sexual and other physical abuse that she suffered while held hostage.
- On March 26, the IDF published a video of its interrogation of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) operative, Nabeel Rajab Abed Shteivi, who [said](#), “Shifa [Hospital], or schools and places like that, are our [Hamas and PIJ’s] shelter.” He also said, “you might see someone who doesn’t look like a nurse but is dressed in nurse clothes walking around.”
  - » The IDF also interrogated Bakr Ahmed Bakr Qanita, a Hamas member, who said that the terrorist group possesses “certain places” in the hospital and stores weapons in the medical residency department. He claimed that Hamas and PIJ use hospitals to access water and electricity and also because of “the large population and the large displacement.”
- On March 25, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) [claimed responsibility](#) for a rocket fired toward Ashkelon which was intercepted by the Iron Dome.
- According to a March 25 [report](#) from Israel’s *Maariv* outlet, Hamas planned a second phase of the October 7 attack which involved an additional wave of fighters entering Israel that day and a number of fighters attempting to attack Tel Aviv and Dimona.
  - » The report alleges that Hamas planned to dispatch operatives to attack the southern Israeli town of Dimona, likely to target Israel’s primary nuclear research facility in Dimona, and Hatzetim Air Base in southern Israel.
  - » The report further states that Hamas leader in Gaza Yahya Sinwar believed that if Hamas operatives reached Tel Aviv and Dimona, unspecified terror organizations in the West Bank and Hezbollah in Lebanon would seize upon the opportunity and themselves attack Israel.
  - » According to the report, the second phase of fighters were given an order by Sinwar and other senior Hamas operatives to enter Israel around 12 pm local time on October 7, but encountered considerable resistance near the Nevatim military base and were unsuccessful at advancing further into Israeli territory.

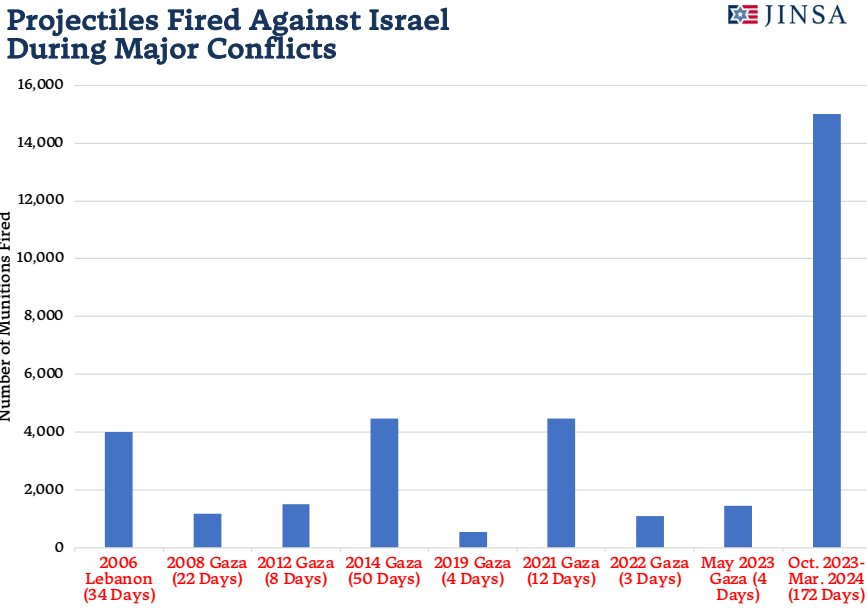
### **Lebanon**

- Rockets struck [Moshav Avivim](#), [Kiryat Shmona](#), and [Betzet](#), and sirens [sounded](#) in Katzrin, Mevuot Hermon Regional Council, Hatzor Haglilit, [Hanita](#), [Shlomi](#), and [Kiryat Shmona](#).
- On March 27, Israel’s Magen David Adom first responder organization [declared](#) a 25-year-old man dead after his body was recovered from a Kiryat Shmona building that had been struck by a rocket that Hezbollah fired. A man in his 30s, who was not injured, was also rescued from the building.

- On March 27, the IDF [said](#) at least 30 rockets were fired from Lebanon at Kiryat Shmona. Footage circulating online shows some of the rockets were intercepted by the Iron Dome, while local police say officers are handling several sites of rocket impacts in the city where property was damaged.
- On March 26, [Hezbollah fired](#) two rockets toward northern Israel, damaging a home in Betzet, an agricultural area, and electricity cables, as well as triggering sirens in Shlomi. No injuries were reported.
- On March 26, Hezbollah [claimed](#) it targeted an IDF base in the Golan Heights with a barrage of 50 Katyusha rockets. There were no reported injuries.
- On March 26, the IDF [said](#) projectiles, apparently anti-tank missiles, were fired from Lebanon at the military’s Mount Meron air traffic control base, but caused no injuries and “no harm to the unit’s capabilities.”
- On March 26, Hezbollah [fired](#) three rockets at Avivim, hitting a winery and causing a fire. The owner of the winery told Israel’s *Ynet* outlet that this was the fourth time the winery had been struck by projectiles fired from Lebanon.

**West Bank**

- On March 26, terrorists [ambushed](#) a vehicle on Route 60 near the town of Wadi Harmiya, laying a barricade of burning tires and an explosive device on the road and firing a firecracker at a vehicle as it slowed down. The attacker was shot and neutralized at the scene by the would-be victim.
- On March 25, the IDF and Shin Bet internal security service announced that they had [foiled](#) a plot by Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Division 4000 and its Quds Force to smuggle advanced weapons into the West Bank.
  - » Israeli forces captured 50 handguns, 33 M4 assault rifles, 25 hand grenades, 16 RPG-7 rockets, 15 RPG launchers, 15 kg of C4 fuel, 13 anti-tank shoulder missiles, 10 kg of Semtex, five Iranian anti-tank YM-2 model mines and fuses, four M203 grenade launchers, and two BTB15 cluster bombs.



## IDF Operations

### Gaza

- The IDF [said](#) on March 26 that it escalated airstrikes in the Gaza Strip during the previous day, striking over 60 locations, such as tunnels and buildings in which combatants gathered, to support ground forces. The IDF also detailed its ongoing operation in Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, during which it has killed gunmen and confiscated weapons, as well as operations against terrorists in the southern Gazan city of Khan Younis and central Gaza, during which the military has killed combatants, confiscated weapons, and destroyed terrorist infrastructure.
- On March 26, IDF Spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari [confirmed](#) that Marwan Issa, deputy commander of Hamas's military wing, was killed in an Israeli airstrike in Nuseirat on March 10. Hagari said that senior Hamas commander Ghazi Abu Tama'a was also killed in the strike.
- On March 26, Israel's President Isaac Herzog [argued](#), "at the end of the day, there's no choice, we have to keep fighting, we need to bring Sinwar dead or alive so we can see the hostages brought home ... This is the reality, and the world should take note: it all starts and ends with Sinwar."
- On March 25, the IDF [said](#) that it found weapons in Shifa Hospital's MRI center and its maternity ward, including under the floors and in the ceiling. The IDF also said that it killed numerous combatants while searching the area.
- On March 25, the IDF [said](#) that earlier rocket launches against Ashdod from Gaza "were carried out from a humanitarian zone in the Deir al-Balah area ... where a civilian population was residing" and that the IDF's counter-strike against the launch site "was carried out precisely while avoiding harm to civilians who had evacuated the area before the attack was carried out."
- On March 25, the IDF [detailed](#) developments in its new operation targeting Hamas in Khan Younis's Al-Amal neighborhood. The IDF said that it has killed dozens of gunmen during the operation, which the IDF commenced on March 24.
- On March 25, the IDF [provided](#) further information about its ongoing operation targeting terrorists in the Hamad Town complex in Khan Younis, during which soldiers have detained roughly 300 terrorists and eliminated roughly 100 gunmen. In addition, troops recovered Col. Jonathan Steinberg's weapon, whom terrorists killed on October 7.

### Lebanon

- On March 27, the IDF said that an overnight [strike](#) in southern Lebanon killed an unnamed key member of the Jamaa al-Islamiya terror group.
- On March 27, Israel's *i24 News* outlet noted the Hezbollah-affiliated *Al-Mayadeen* outlet's [reporting](#) that an Israeli airstrike against the "Islamic Medical Group" killed at least seven people, which unnamed security sources confirmed to Reuters. *i24 News* also noted that the IDF subsequently said that it carried out an airstrike against a building in the area of Al-Habaria in which a terrorist plotting attacks against Israel, who was affiliated with the "Islamic Medical Group," was hiding.
- On March 26, Lebanese media sources [reported](#) that Israel conducted an airstrike against al-Ain in Lebanon's central Baalbek region.
  - » Baalbek is a longtime Hezbollah stronghold. According to a [report](#) from *The Times of Israel*, the strike would represent the northernmost strike in Lebanon since the war

started and just the fifth by Israel in the Baalbek region—over 70 miles from the Israeli border—since the war began.

- On March 26, Lebanese media outlets [said](#) that the IDF carried out additional strikes in the Baalbek area, and the IDF [said](#) soon afterwards that it targeted a “military compound used by Hezbollah’s aerial unit.” The IDF also said that it conducted separate airstrikes that day against a Hezbollah weapons depot in Hanine and another site in Beit Yahoun in southern Lebanon.
- On March 26, the IDF [conducted](#) airstrikes against Hezbollah facilities in Ayta ash-Shab and Kafr Kila and an observation post in Maroun al-Ras in southern Lebanon.
- On March 26, the IDF [said](#) that it conducted airstrikes against buildings that Hezbollah used in Tayr Harfa and Dhayra in southern Lebanon as well as the sites from which Hezbollah fired projectiles toward the northern Israeli towns of Shlomi and Betzet.
- On March 25, an unnamed security source from Lebanon [said](#) to AFP that “a Hamas official was targeted by the Israeli drone attack [in Souairi near the border with Syria] on Sunday but escaped.” The strike killed a Syrian civilian who was in his vehicle, according to Lebanon’s state-run *National News Agency*.

## Syria

- On March 26, the U.K.-based NGO Syrian Observatory for Human Rights [reported](#) that airstrikes targeting a site in eastern Syria killed nine pro-Iranian fighters and injured another 20 while the fighters were in a “villa they were staying in, which served as a communications center.”
  - » *The Times of Israel* [reported](#) later that day that the Israeli Air Force launched the strikes near Deir Ezzor and al-Bukamal against “assets belonging to Iran’s Unit 4000, the Special Operations Division of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps’ (IRGC) Intelligence Organization, and the special operations unit of the IRGC’s Quds Force in Syria, known as Unit 18840, according to Israeli defense sources.”
    - The report also noted that on March 25, Israel’s Shin Bet internal security agency said that it interrupted attempts by the targeted Iranian units to smuggle weapons into the West Bank for use by Palestinian terrorists.
  - » Syrian state-run media [claimed](#) that seven soldiers were killed in the strikes.
  - » Iranian state-run media [reported](#) that an IRGC advisor was killed in the strikes, which it attributed to the United States. Pentagon Deputy Press Secretary Sabrina Singh [denied](#) U.S. involvement, stating, “we did not carry out air strikes in Syria last night.”

## West Bank

- On March 27, the IDF [said](#) three Palestinians were killed in an arrest raid in Jenin overnight. An IDF drone strike killed two gunmen, and the third was shot after he hurled explosive devices at IDF troops.
  - » The IDF destroyed a vehicle in Jenin that contained several primed explosive devices, detaining two suspects before detonating the car.
  - » The IDF also said that one additional wanted Palestinian was arrested in Jenin and that weapons were seized.
  - » According to Israel’s *Makor Rishon* outlet, around 3,600 terror suspects have been [arrested](#) in the West Bank since the start of the war, including 1,600 associated with Hamas.

- On March 26, the IDF [said](#) 14 wanted Palestinians were arrested in overnight raids across the West Bank.
  - » The IDF also seized two handguns, destroyed explosive devices in Beit Fajjar, and destroyed explosive devices in Balata.
- On March 25, IDF troops [raided](#) Beit Ummar after shots were fired at the nearby settlement of Karmeit Tzur, causing damage to a home. The IDF said troops seized a handgun and ammunition.
- On March 25, the IDF [referred](#) to footage of an IDF soldier slapping a Palestinian boy in a store in Hebron as a “very serious incident” that “is contrary to IDF values and protocols.” *The Times of Israel* noted that the soldier will likely be subject to disciplinary action.

#### *Humanitarian Efforts*

- On March 26, Hamas claimed that 12 people [drowned](#) in the Mediterranean Sea after trying to recover air-dropped humanitarian aid that had landed in the water.
- On March 25, U.S. Central Command [announced](#) that it airdropped 46,000 meals into northern Gaza that day.
- The U.K. defense ministry announced on March 25 that the Royal Air Force [airdropped](#) aid into Gaza for the first time that day, dropping over 10 metric tons of food and water.

#### *Ceasefire and Hostage Negotiations*

- On March 26, Majed al-Ansari, a spokesperson for Qatar’s Foreign Ministry, told reporters that negotiations in Doha, Qatar, about reaching a ceasefire and hostage deal were still [ongoing](#) and rejected Israeli claims that UNSCR 2728 had “an immediate impact” on the negotiations.
  - » A source with knowledge of the talks told Reuters that members of Israel’s Mossad remained in Doha for further discussions.
- After Israel’s Prime Minister Netanyahu’s office claimed that the passage of UNSCR 2728 caused Hamas to harden its negotiating posture, a U.S. official [told \*The Times of Israel\*](#) on March 26 that “this statement is inaccurate in almost every respect and unfair to the hostages and their families.” The official added, “the description of the Hamas response reflects news reports and not the actual substance of that response, which was prepared before the UN vote even took place.”
  - » On March 26, Israel [recalled](#) part of its delegation to negotiations in Doha, and Israel’s Prime Minister’s office released a statement that Hamas’s decision to reject a U.S.-brokered agreement was “clear proof it is not interested in continuing talks, and a sad testament to the damage caused by the UN Security Council resolution.”
  - » Reporting on March 26 [indicated](#) that Hamas had told negotiators that it would stick to its original negotiating position of seeking “a comprehensive ceasefire, withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, the return of the displaced, and a real exchange of prisoners.” Israel had already rejected these positions as nonstarters.
  - » During a visit to Iran on March 26, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh [claimed](#) that Israel is experiencing “unprecedented political isolation” following the passage of UNSCR 2728. He added, “although this resolution came late and there may be some gaps that need to

be filled, the resolution itself indicates that the Israeli occupation is experiencing unprecedented political isolation.”

- On March 25, Hamas praised the passage of UNSCR 2728 and released a [statement](#) indicating that it wanted to negotiate “a permanent ceasefire that leads to the withdrawal of all Zionist forces from the Gaza Strip, and the return of the displaced to the homes from which they left.” The statement added that it wanted “to engage in an immediate prisoner exchange process that leads to the release of prisoners on both sides.”

### *Casualties and Hostages*

- Over 1,200 people were [killed](#) in Israel, and 13,000 Israelis have been injured in the war.
  - » 596 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#).
    - 252 IDF soldiers have been [killed](#) during ground combat in Gaza so far.
    - As of March 15, 1,480 IDF soldiers have been [injured](#) during ground combat in Gaza, including 310 who have been severely injured.
  - » Numerous foreign nationals have been killed in the war, including at least 34 [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, at least 32,414 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza, and 74,787 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.”
  - » On March 21, Senator Josh Hawley (R-MO) [said](#) that during a virtual meeting that day with Senate Republicans, Israel’s Prime Minister Netanyahu assessed that the number of people killed in Gaza was approximately 28,000.
  - » Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [said](#) on March 10 that Israel has killed approximately 13,000 Hamas operatives over the course of the war.
- According to the Palestinian Authority-run Palestinian Ministry of Health, 453 people have been [killed](#), and at least 4,600 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 deceased hostage bodies.
  - » Israeli officials have confirmed the [deaths](#) of at least [34](#) of the 134 hostages captured on October 7, as well as two additional hostages who were abducted prior to October 7.
  - » Many of the hostages are foreign or dual nationals, including up to 5 [American](#) nationals, 6 [German](#) nationals, 13 [Thai](#) nationals, 4 [Portuguese](#) nationals, 3 [British](#) nationals, 2 [Italian](#) nationals, 4 [Romanian](#) nationals, and 2 [Mexican](#) nationals.
- On March 26, the Tikva Forum for Families of Hostages [announced](#) that hostage Uriel Baruch, 35, who was kidnapped on October 7, was killed in captivity and that his body continues to be held in Gaza.

### *Iranian Involvement and Response*

- On March 27, Iran’s Ayatollah Khamenei [posted](#) on X that “the challenges and conflicts in the world today are media challenges. War is also a media war. Whoever has the strongest media in his hands will succeed in achieving the goals he seeks.”
- On March 27, the Philippines indicated that the Iranian regime has [released](#) all 18 crew members who were aboard the Greek-owned *St. Nikolas* when Iran’s navy seized the oil tanker in the Gulf of Oman in January.
- On March 26, the Houthis claimed that they [launched](#) six drone and missile attacks against ships over the prior 72 hours in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, as well as targeted the southern Israeli city of Eilat. The Houthis stated that they attacked the *Maersk Saratoga*, *APL Detroit*, *Huang Pu*, and *Pretty Lady* after identifying them as either U.S. or British vessels.
- On March 26, when discussing the MV *Behshad*, an Iranian ship in the Gulf of Aden, U.S. Rear Admiral Marc Miguez, the commander of the Eisenhower Carrier Group, [stated](#) that “we assess that that ship ... has provided some sort of intelligence information on maritime ships.”

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

- While delivering a speech on March 26, President Biden was repeatedly [heckled](#) by protestors who shouted, “what about the health care in Gaza,” and “hospitals in Gaza are being bombed,” to which Biden replied, “everyone deserves healthcare,” and “they have a point. We need to get a lot more care into Gaza.”
- On March 26, former JINSA Distinguished Fellow and Israel’s Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer [praised](#) Prime Minister Netanyahu’s decision to cancel a planned trip to Washington by a delegation including Dermer to discuss operations in Rafah.
  - » Dermer told *Bloomberg*, citing the March 25 U.S. [abstention](#) on a UN Security Council resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire, “when I heard what was happening, I said, look, you’re going to have the wrong message, at the wrong time.”



- » Dermer further stated that Israel is in the “home stretch” of the war and that the United States should stand with Israel and “let us finish the job,” adding, “let’s get to a day after where can have a real peace process that can give hope not only to Israelis, but also to Palestinians.”
- According to a March 26 [report](#) from Israel’s *Makor Rishon* outlet, a recent Pew Research survey found that 49 percent of Muslim Americans feel that Hamas’s reasons for fighting Israel are valid and that 21 percent of Muslim Americans view the October 7 attack as [acceptable](#).
  - » The poll’s [results](#) also included that 22 percent of U.S. adults believe that Hamas’s reasons for fighting Israel are valid and that 9 percent of Americans between the ages of 18-29 feel that the October 7 attack was acceptable.
- A Bloomberg and Morning Consult [poll](#) of voters in seven key swing states [found](#) that 67 percent of Michigan respondents believe that Israel’s war with Hamas is somewhat or very important in determining which candidate they will support in the 2024 presidential election, slightly below the 70 percent average found across the seven swing states, including the six other swing states of Arizona, Pennsylvania, Georgia, Wisconsin, Nevada, and North Carolina.
- During a filmed [interview](#) with Israel’s *Israel Hayom* that was released on March 25, former President and current Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump claimed that “Israel has to get better with the promotional and with the public relations, because right now they’re in ruin. They’re being hurt very badly.” He added, “I would act very much the same way as [Israel] did [after October 7]. You would have to be crazy not to. Only a fool would not do that. That was a horrible attack.”
  - » Trump also noted that “Israel has to be very careful, because you’re losing a lot of the world, you’re losing a lot of support, you have to finish up, you have to get the job done.”
- On March 25, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken released a [statement](#) explaining that “the United States abstained on UN Security Council resolution 2728. This abstention, which comes on the heels of the Russian and Chinese veto of our comprehensive draft resolution in the Council, reaffirms the U.S. position that a ceasefire of any duration come as part of an agreement to release hostages in Gaza. While we do not agree with all provisions included in this text, adjustments made by the resolution’s sponsors over recent days are consistent with our principled position that any ceasefire text must be paired with text on the release of the hostages.”
- Israel’s Defense Minister Yoav Gallant arrived in Washington on March 25 and held meetings with top U.S. officials.
  - » On March 26, Gallant [met](#) with his counterpart, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin.
    - The two officials discussed “the importance of prioritizing civilian protection in the event of military operations in Rafah, the dire humanitarian situation across Gaza, and threats to regional security,” and Blinken urged Gallant to “expand entry points for humanitarian assistance and address distribution challenges inside of Gaza,” according to a Defense Department readout.
    - The readout added that the two men “reaffirmed the urgent need to secure the release of all hostages held captive by Hamas in Gaza” and that “Austin reiterated his support for a diplomatic solution to resolve tensions along the Israel-Lebanon border that will allow Israeli civilians to return to their homes in northern Israel as quickly and safely as possible.”

- Austin also “stressed that the United States and Israel have a moral imperative and a shared strategic interest in safeguarding civilians, noting that operations in Rafah should not proceed without a credible and implementable plan that ensures the safety of and humanitarian support for civilians sheltering there.”
- » On March 25, Israel’s Defense Minister Yoav Gallant met with Secretary of State Antony Blinken.
  - According to a State Department [readout](#), Blinken “reiterated the United States’ support for ensuring the defeat of Hamas, including in Rafah, while reiterating opposition to a major ground operation in Rafah that would further jeopardize the welfare of the more than 1.4 million Palestinian civilians sheltering there,” and “underscored that alternatives exist to a major ground invasion that would both better ensure Israel’s security and protect Palestinian civilians.”
- On March 25, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby [claimed](#) at a press conference that the Biden administration has “been consistent in our support for a ceasefire as part of a hostage deal.”
  - » When asked about Israel canceling its delegation to the United States to discuss the war, he added, “we’re kind of perplexed by this ... Number one, it’s a nonbinding resolution. So, there’s no impact at all on Israel and Israel’s ability to continue to go after Hamas. Number two, as I said in my opening statement, it does not represent a change at all in our policy. It’s very consistent with everything that we’ve been saying we want to get done here. And we get to decide what our policy is. The prime minister’s office seems to be indicating through public statements that we somehow changed here. We haven’t. And we get to decide what—what our policy is. It seems like the prime minister’s office is choosing to create a perception of daylight here when they don’t need to do that. So, again, no change in our policy.”
- On March 25, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield [reiterated](#) that “it’s a non-binding resolution, so there’s no impact at all on Israel’s ability to continue to go after Hamas.”
  - » She also [noted](#) that day that the United States abstained from UNSCR 2728 because it did not condemn Hamas. However, she added, “this resolution rightly acknowledges that, during the month of Ramadan, we must recommit to peace. Hamas can do that by accepting the deal on the table. A ceasefire can begin immediately with the release of the first hostage. And so, we must put pressure on Hamas to do just that.”
- On March 25, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller [indicated](#) that the Biden administration has deemed Israel to be in compliance with its policy of requiring nations that receive U.S. weapons to provide written assurances that they will use them in accordance with international law and not hinder U.S. humanitarian efforts.
  - » Miller noted that “we’ve had ongoing assessments about [Israel’s] compliance with international humanitarian law. ... We have not found them to be in violation of international humanitarian law, either when it comes to the conduct of the war or when it comes to the provision of humanitarian assistance. So we view their assurances through that ongoing work we have done.”
  - » He added, “these assurances are prospective, but of course our view of them is informed by our ongoing assessments of Israel’s conduct in the war in Gaza.”
- According to a March 25 report from *The Times of Israel*, U.S. Fifth Fleet Commander Vice Adm. George Wikoff was slated to arrive in Israel on March 26 to [meet](#) with his counterpart,

Vice Adm. David Saar Salama, and discuss the ongoing U.S. efforts to construct a pier on the coast of the Gaza Strip to permit greater aid flows.

- On March 25, the U.S. Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) released a statement announcing the [sanctioning](#) of “six entities, one individual and two tankers that are based or registered in Liberia, India, Vietnam, Lebanon, and Kuwait that have engaged in facilitating commodity shipments and financial transactions for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force (IRGC-QF), the Houthis, and [Hezbollah].”
- On March 26, Israel’s Foreign Minister Israel Katz sharply [criticized](#) Colombia’s President Gustavo Petro’s [comments](#) that day threatening to cut ties with Israel if it did not immediately agree to a ceasefire.
  - » Katz [posted](#) in Spanish on X, “the Hamas murderers who massacred and committed atrocious sexual crimes against babies, women and adults is a shame for the Colombian people. Israel will continue to protect its citizens and will not give in to any pressure or threats.”
- On March 25 and 26, Israeli leaders responded to the passage of UNSCR 2728.
  - » On March 26, Israel’s Foreign Minister Israel Katz [said](#) that the U.S. [abstention](#) from voting on the resolution was “a message, a no-good message, to anyone on Hamas’s side, that the US does not support Israel as much, and so we need to prove, militarily, that we will stand by our goals.”
  - » On March 25, Prime Minister Netanyahu’s office said in a [statement](#) that “the United States has abandoned its policy in the UN today. Just a few days ago, it supported a Security Council resolution that linked a call for a ceasefire to the release of hostages ... Regrettably, the United States did not veto the new resolution, which calls for a ceasefire that is not contingent on the release of hostages. This constitutes a clear departure from the consistent US position in the Security Council since the beginning of the war. Today’s resolution gives Hamas hope that international pressure will force Israel to accept a ceasefire without the release of our hostages, thus harming both the war effort and the effort to release the hostages ... In light of the change in the US position, Prime Minister Netanyahu decided that the delegation will remain in Israel.”
  - » On March 25, Israel’s Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, who was visiting the United States at the time, released a [video](#) stating that “we have no moral right to stop the war in Gaza until we return all the hostages to their homes. If we don’t reach a clear and absolute victory in Gaza, it could bring a war in the north closer.”
  - » On March 25, Israel’s Ambassador to the UN Gilad Erdan [argued](#), “on the one hand, the resolution says that taking civilians hostage is in violation of international law, yet on the other hand—despite the fact that you know Hamas won’t listen to your calls and release the hostages—you demand a ceasefire.”
    - He added, “not only isn’t helpful, but it undermines the effort to secure their release. It is harmful to these efforts because it gives Hamas terrorists hope to get a ceasefire without releasing the hostages.”
  - » On March 25, minister without portfolio Benny Gantz [claimed](#) that instead of canceling Israel’s delegation to the United States after the resolution’s passage, “it would have been good if the prime minister would travel to the US himself, and hold a direct dialogue with President Biden and senior officials.”

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

- On March 26, more than 2,000 tried to march towards the Embassy of Israel in Amman. Many of the protesters chanted slogans in support of Hamas. Jordanian anti-riot police beat and [arrested](#) dozens of the anti-Israel protesters.
- On March 26, the Calvert County State’s Attorney’s Office in Maryland [filed](#) hate-crime charges against three 13-year-olds who repeatedly harassed an unidentified peer using swastikas, Nazi salutes, and offensive statements. The three students, who attend Plum Point Middle School in Huntingtown, Maryland, refused to stop after multiple requests, prompting the victim to contact Maryland State Police.
- Jewish leaders in Michigan [criticized](#) the University of Michigan for its inaction after anti-Israel protesters disrupted its annual Honors Convocation event, and the student president of the campus’s Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) chapter reportedly posted a death threat online.
  - » On March 24, anti-Israel protesters [disrupted](#) the annual Honors Convocation ceremony at the University of Michigan, which recognizes students for their academic achievement. Dozens of anti-Israel protesters affiliated with SJP and other groups waved signs and chanted, “Ono, Ono, you can’t hide, you are funding genocide,” referring to the university’s president, Santa Ono. The university faced backlash for cutting the ceremony short and failing to discipline or remove the protesters involved.
  - » On March 22, Salma Hamamy, the [president](#) of the university’s student group Students Allied for Freedom and Equality (SAFE), the SJP chapter on campus, reportedly [posted](#) a threat on Instagram, writing, “Until my last breath, I will utter death to every single individual who supports the Zionist state. Death and more. Death and worse.”
- On March 24, students at Columbia University [hosted](#) an event called “Resistance 101,” in which speakers praised Hamas for its October 7 massacre and explicitly endorsed terrorism as a means to win back “every inch of Palestine.”
  - » One of the speakers was Khaled Barakat, a leader of the organization Samidoun, which distributed sweets in Berlin on October 7 to “celebrate the victory of the resistance.” Barakat, who is banned from entering Germany, has also said he “wish[ed] ISIS would fight the Zionists.”
    - Israel has [designated](#) Samidoun as a terrorist organization and contends that it was founded by members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a U.S.-designated terror group.

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