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## Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update March 6, 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 indicating that U.S. officials have pressured Israel to increase humanitarian aid into Gaza and have floated a short ceasefire deal lasting several days could cause further tensions between the U.S. and Israeli governments. Any ceasefire agreement that does not include the release of hostages would reward Hamas without forcing it to give anything in return.
  - » Meetings between senior Biden administration officials—including Vice President Harris, Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin—and Israel's Minister without portfolio Benny Gantz may also signal a widening rift between the U.S. government and Prime Minister Netanyahu. Netanyahu did not sanction Gantz's trip and was reportedly [enraged](#) by it.

### 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.
- On March 6, a 64-year-old man was [stabbed](#) in northeast Jerusalem. The victim, who was taken to the hospital, is in good-to-moderate condition. Police are investigating the circumstances of the attack.

#### **Gaza**

- Sirens [sounded](#) in Sderot.
- Israel's *Arutz Sheva* outlet [reported](#) on March 6, citing Israel's *Kan* outlet, that leader of the investigations department in the IDF Intelligence Corps Brigadier General Amit Sa'ar intended to send a letter to the prime minister and security cabinet after Simchat Torah—which fell on October 7—warning that intelligence suggested that Iran, Hamas, and

Hezbollah sought to attack Israel, but the October 7 massacre occurred before the letter was delivered.

- » Saar also reportedly noted in the letter that “senior officials in Iran believed that the time for attacking Israel and causing it critical damage had finally arrived.”
- According to a March 6 [report](#) from Israel’s *Ynet* outlet citing a Hamas police source, Hamas’s police is operating in most of northern Gaza as it was prior to the war.
  - » The source stated, “we have regained control over most areas in northern Gaza. We don’t have police forces to carry out arrests and we can’t patrol in uniforms, so we switched to working in plainclothes, with the same work structure as before the war.”
- On March 5, Israel’s *Maariv* outlet [reported](#), citing *Sky News Arabia*, that Hamas’s top leaders outside Gaza were enraged by Hamas’s leader in Gaza Yahya Sinwar’s decision to launch the October 7 attack, which reportedly caught other senior Hamas leaders off guard. The report also alleged that Sinwar did not expect a strong military response from Israel following the attack.
  - » The original report, which cited sources close to Sinwar, claimed that only Sinwar, his brother Muhammad, Hamas military wing leader Mohammed Deif, and Deif’s deputy Marwan Issa made the decision to launch the attack, and did so without consulting other Hamas leaders.
  - » According to the report, Sinwar intended for the attack to deter Israel from conducting operations in Gaza and free Hamas operatives from Israel’s prisons.
  - » A source cited in the report stated that Sinwar “did not expect” the strong military response from Israel and that if he had known what would follow the attack, “he would never have planned [October 7] this way.”
- Israel’s *Ynet* outlet [reported](#) on March 4, citing the U.K.’s *Asharq Al-Awsat*, that Hamas’s leaders “have adopted special communication protocols which they primarily use to connect with bodies abroad” because of the interruption of phone and internet in Gaza amid the war and to avoid detection by Israeli intelligence.
- The report also said that Hamas’s military wing installed “underground phone exchanges connected to old phone lines at certain points above ground. These posts were maintained monthly and periodically checked in attempts to prevent infiltration.”
- On March 4, a United Nations (UN) team headed by UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten released a report about sexual violence committed during the October 7 massacre after visiting Israel from January 29 to February 14. The report [said](#), “credible circumstantial information, which may be indicative of some forms of sexual violence, including genital mutilation, sexualized torture, or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, was also gathered.”
  - » The report also said, “the mission team found clear and convincing information that some hostages taken to Gaza have been subjected to various forms of conflict-related sexual violence and has reasonable grounds to believe that such violence may be ongoing” and called for a “fully-fledged investigation.”
  - » The investigators also said that they gleaned information from civil society and interviewees about “sexual violence against Palestinian men and women in [Israeli] detention settings, during house raids and at checkpoints” following the October 7 massacre, and they shared the allegations with Israel’s Ministry of Justice and Military Advocate General. The ministry said it had received no such complaints.

- » While presenting the report on March 4, Patten [said](#) that there is reason to believe that “rape and gang rape” happened on October 7 at the Supernova music festival, Kibbutz Re’im, and the nearby Route 232, at a minimum.
  - She also said that the majority of the victims were “first subjected to rape and then killed” and mentioned “two incidents of the rape of women’s corpses.” Patten added that “brutal mass murders” occurred at the Supernova festival, and some victims were “fully or partially undressed, bound, and shot.”
- Israel’s Foreign Minister Israel Katz [said](#) in a March 4 statement, “I ordered our ambassador to the UN, Gilad Erdan, to return to Israel for immediate consultations regarding the attempt to keep quiet the serious UN report on the mass rapes committed by Hamas and its helpers on October 7.”
  - » He added, “despite the authority granted to him, the UN secretary general did not order the convening of the Security Council in light of the findings, in order to declare Hamas a terrorist organization and impose sanctions on its supporters.”
  - » Katz also [wrote](#) on X on March 4, “The latest @UN report starkly details Hamas's atrocities on October 7th, including mass murders, rapes, and systematic sexual offenses. Yet, silence from the Chairman. It's time for action, @antonioguterres. Hamas must be globally recognized as a terrorist entity, its supporting nations labeled as terrorism sponsors. @UNRWA's removal from Gaza is imperative, and the immediate release of hostages must be prioritized.”
  - » Katz later [argued](#) on X on March 5 that UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was “acting to soften the serious report that he himself ordered on the sexual offenses of Hamas, trying to keep Hamas from being held responsible and not ordering that the Security Council be immediately convened to discuss the report and recognize Hamas as a terror group, with all the sanctions entailed, while calling for an unconditional release of all hostages.”
    - He also said that Israel will not permit the Secretary-General “and his friends to deny the report,” and he said that Guterres is “bringing the organization down a notch by ignoring the terrible crimes against humanity committed against Jews and Israelis while constantly being involved in attempts to discredit Israel and its right to self-defense.”
- According to recordings of phone calls that the IDF [released](#) on March 4, United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) teacher and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) operative Mamdouh al-Qali said, “I’m inside, I’m inside with the Jews” during the October 7 massacre. Another UNRWA teacher and Hamas operative, Yousef al-Hawajara, said that day, “we have female hostages. I captured one.”
  - » During his phone conversation, al-Qali [said](#) that he will return home “when I die.”
  - » Al-Hawajara also said, “we will enter Al-Aqsa Mosque,” and that in Israel, he “saw the sights ... they shot them in the eyes ... they did actions for liberations, God willing.” He also boasted that he found “one thousand shekels” in Israel.
  - » Addressing the IDF’s decision to release the recordings, IDF Spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari [said](#) that the decision was made to “remind and not forget.” He also said, “the massacre committed by Hamas on October 7 is the most documented massacre in history. Hamas terrorists filmed their own cruelty. As time goes by, more and more testimonies are revealed, more intelligence every day.”

- » He added, “you can hear how the terrorists entered Israeli territory, participated in the massacre, and terror, and captured ‘sabaya,’” or sex slaves.
- » Noting further details of the recordings, Hagari said, “in the conversation, the terrorist on the other side of the line describes a woman as a noble mare,” and “on October 7, Hamas treated young women with cruelty and brutality, kidnapped them from their homes, and treated them like animals.”
- » He said further, “how they refer to the hostages as ‘sabaya’ and a ‘noble mare’ keeps us awake at night, and requires the world to shout, as it did for the Yazidi women [victims of ISIS],” and he noted that testimony from released hostages allows Israel to “learn about the dangers the hostages are exposed to, especially the women and children.”
- On March 3, Israel’s *Ynet* outlet [detailed](#) the IDF’s discovery of Hamas military commander Mohammed Deif’s “expansive military infrastructure that has provided and bolstered Hamas’ militant forces.” The report said that the military has destroyed approximately 60, and discovered an additional roughly 20, facilities for constructing ammunition.

### Lebanon

- Rockets [struck](#) Kiryat Shmona and [Zar’it](#), and sirens [sounded](#) in Shomera, [Kiryat Shmona](#), [Metula](#), [Lehavot Habashan](#), [Gonen](#), [Shlomi](#), [Betzet](#), [Liman](#), [Hanita](#), [Matzuva](#), [Rosh HaNikra](#), [Adamit](#), [Ya’ara](#), [Arab al-Aramshe](#), [Even Menachem](#), [Eilon](#), [Zar’it](#), [Gornot HaGalil](#), and the [Achziv Miluot Industrial Zone](#). Suspected drone infiltration alarms [sounded](#) in Shamir, Sdeh Nechemia, Amir, Neot Mordechai, Lehavot Habashan, Kfar Szold, Kfar Blum, and Gonen.
- On March 5, around 30 rockets were [fired](#) from Lebanon at Kiryat Shmona, at least 10 of which were intercepted by the Iron Dome. No injuries were reported.
- On March 5, Hezbollah [claimed credit](#) for a projectile strike that it said targeted soldiers near the northern Israeli town of Zar’it. The IDF confirmed that one rocket was fired in the incident. No injuries were reported.
- On March 5, Hezbollah [fired](#) two anti-tank missiles at an IDF base near Biranit, causing no injuries.
- On March 4, at least 10 rockets were [fired](#) from Lebanon at the Western Galilee, several of which were intercepted by the Iron Dome.
  - » One of the rockets [landed](#) near a utility pole, causing damage that knocked out power in several communities in northern Israel.

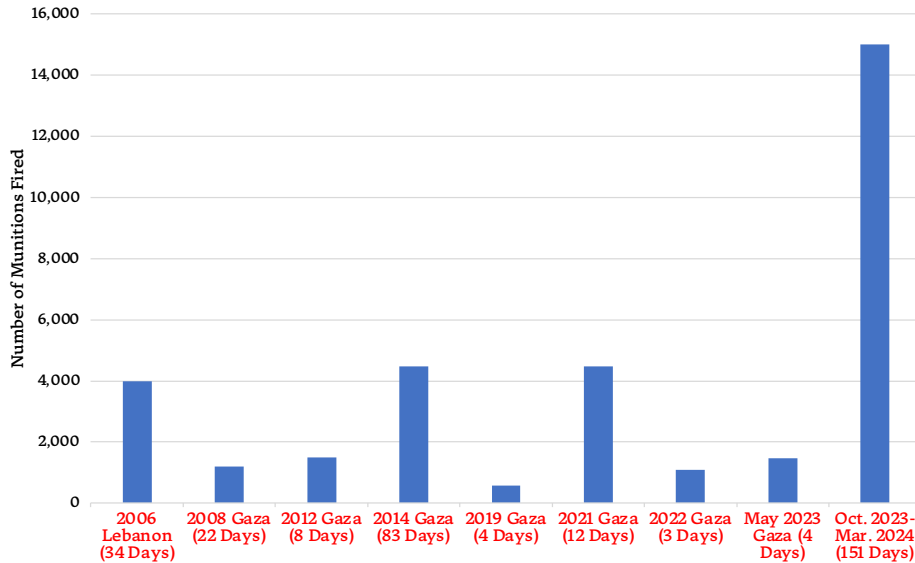
### West Bank

- The IDF [said](#) that the seriously wounded victim in a March 5 stabbing attack in the northern West Bank is an IDF soldier.

### Red Sea

- *The Times of Israel* [reported](#) on March 4 that according to a report from Israel’s Finance Ministry, the Houthis’ attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea do not substantially affect trade to Israel and have not significantly worsened inflation.

## Projectiles Fired Against Israel During Major Conflicts



### IDF Operations

- On March 6, the IDF [detailed](#) its continuing operations against Hamas throughout Gaza, including an airstrike against two terrorists who massacred people on October 7 in Nir Yitzhak and another against three commanders of Hamas’s elite Nukhba forces, both in unspecified locations.
  - » The IDF also said that it conducted strikes against Hamas targets in Beit Hanoun in northern Gaza and that soldiers eliminated Hamas combatants in central Gaza and Khan Younis in southern Gaza.
- On March 5, the IDF [said](#) that its elite LOTAR counter-terror unit discovered weapons stored near a Khan Younis school in which civilians were sheltering. According to the IDF, the LOTAR troops discovered an additional weapons stash nearby, and they searched other Hamas sites in close proximity, including apartments.
- On March 5, Prime Minister Netanyahu’s office [released a statement](#) saying that it would not reduce the number of worshippers allowed at Temple Mount during Ramadan, amid calls to do so from National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir. According to the statement, “In the first week of Ramadan, the number of worshippers allowed to enter the Temple Mount will be as in previous years ... Every week there will be a situational assessment around security and safety, and a decision will be made accordingly ... Ramadan is holy for Muslims, and the sanctity of the holiday will be preserved this year, as it is every year.”

### Gaza

- According to a March 5 [report](#) from Israel’s *Channel 12*, on February 24, IDF Chief of Staff Lt Gen Herzi Halevi approved operational plans to go after Hamas in the southern Gazan city of Rafah and in areas in central Gaza, and that the plans are pending decisions by political leadership.
  - » The report stated that there has been “coordination with Egypt” regarding prospective “solutions” to deal with the evacuation of civilians from Rafah.

- The IDF's Nahal Brigade [eliminated](#) approximately 20 gunmen on March 5, including by utilizing sniper fire, tank shelling, and calling in airstrikes, in central Gaza.
- On March 5, the IDF [conducted airstrikes](#) against over 50 Hamas targets across Gaza Strip, including weapons depots, rocket launching posts, terror tunnel shafts, and other Hamas installations.
- On March 5, the IDF's 98th Division continued [operating](#) in the Hamad Town area of the southern Gazan city of Khan Younis, raiding Hamas facilities and capturing dozens of terror operatives over the previous 24 hours. Troops also uncovered large weapons caches.
  - » Soldiers also captured dozens of Hamas and PIJ terrorists who attempted to camouflage and flee with civilians during IDF evacuations of combat zones in the area.
- The IDF announced on March 5 that it [completed](#) sealing and eliminating the largest-ever Hamas tunnel found in Gaza, which was discovered in December.
  - » Combat engineers used explosives to blow up part of the tunnel, of which around 2.5 miles were discovered, and the IDF also pumped concrete into tunnel passages to seal the tunnel off.
  - » The IDF discovered the tunnel, which had a shaft just several hundred meters from the Erez Crossing along the Israel-Gaza border, in mid-December. The tunnel had a depth of approximately 165 feet in some places.
  - » The tunnel was large enough for vehicles to pass through, and the IDF uncovered videos of senior Hamas commander Muhammad Sinwar driving through the tunnel.
    - According to an IDF commander, the tunnel was likely “intended for vehicle-borne raids against civilians in the Gaza border communities.”

## Lebanon

- According to the office of Israel's Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, Gallant [told](#) U.S. envoy Amos Hochstein during the latter's visit to Israel that “we are committed to the diplomatic process. However, Hezbollah's aggression is bringing us closer to a critical point in the decision-making regarding our military activities in Lebanon.”
  - » A readout noted that the two discussed Hezbollah's relentless projectile attacks and also discussed ongoing negotiations toward an agreement to compel Hezbollah's evacuation from the Israel-Lebanon border to end fighting and permit Israel's evacuated northern residents to return home.
- On March 5, the IDF [conducted airstrikes](#) against several Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon in response to earlier projectile attacks, including a command center, rocket launching posts, military facilities, and a Hezbollah compound.
- On March 5, the IDF [said](#) that it targeted the Hezbollah site in the southern Lebanese town of Taybeh from which a rocket barrage was fired toward the northern Israeli town of Kiryat Shmona that day, in addition to other Hezbollah targets.
- On March 4, the IDF [said](#) that it responded to that morning's anti-tank missile attack from Lebanon against Margalioth that killed one civilian with airstrikes against Hezbollah targets in Bint Jbeil, Sultaniyeh, and Seddiqine.
- On March 4, the IDF said it [struck](#) several buildings used by Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and shelled rocket launch sites with artillery.



## Syria

- The IDF [said](#) on March 5 that an Air Force pilot operating a fighter jet intercepted a “suspicious aerial target,” likely a drone, fired from Syria.

## West Bank

- On March 5, Border Police, the Shin Bet security agency, and the IDF [said](#) that Israel detained Muhammad Tanji in the Balata refugee camp close to Nablus, who was allegedly orchestrating an “imminent” terrorist attack with additional suspects. The IDF also said that it arrested an additional 20 suspects throughout the West Bank.
- On March 5, Israeli troops in Kobar [arrested](#) several people, including Hanan Barghouti, a 59-year-old mother who was the oldest detainee that Israel released in November as part of a deal to free hostages that Hamas held in Gaza.
- According to March 4 [reports](#) from Israel human rights activist group Yesh Din and local Palestinian media sources, the IDF shot and killed a 10-year-old boy in the town of Burin as he exited his vehicle while going on a shopping trip with his family.
  - » The IDF said that day that it was [investigating](#) the incident and that troops were conducting operations in Burin when individuals began hurling stones at them, leading troops to return fire.

## Humanitarian Efforts

- A *Times of Israel* report on March 6 indicated that a large U.S. shipment of flour for Gaza has [remained stalled](#) for nearly two weeks after Israel agreed to a new framework for its delivery and 46 days since the Biden administration announced the shipment.
- Qatar’s ambassador to the United Nations [announced](#) on March 6 that Qatar would be providing UNRWA with an additional \$25 million in aid.
- Israel’s *Channel 13* [reported](#) on March 5 that, for the first time since the war began, humanitarian aid will reach Gaza by sea in the coming days.
  - » Israel has reportedly approved the plan, which will involve aid first being sent from the United Arab Emirates, which is funding the initiative, to Cyprus to be inspected by Israeli officials.
  - » If the aid shipments pass inspection, they will reportedly then be sent by ship to the Gaza Strip. The report stated that the aid is expected to arrive around the start of Ramadan, which begins on March 10.
- The United States Central Command (CENTCOM) [announced](#) on March 5 that it participated in a joint operation with Jordan to drop “over 36,800 meal equivalents in northern Gaza” from a number of U.S. Air Force C-130 aircraft.
  - » Jordan’s state-run media [reported](#) on March 5 that the operation involved three Jordanian planes, three U.S. planes, one Egyptian plane, and one French plane.
  - » The aid airdropped [included](#) food and other supplies. According to the Jordanian government, a total of 43 airdrops into Gaza have been conducted since the war began.
- U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin [expressed alarm](#) at the humanitarian situation in Gaza and pushed Israel to increase humanitarian aid into Gaza during their meetings with Israel’s Minister without portfolio Benny Gantz on March 5, according to the secretaries’ offices.

- On March 4, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby [claimed](#) that “there have been some obstacles to getting the aid in that are organic to the fact that we’re talking about a war zone, but also inorganic obstacles [have been] thrown up in some cases by some members of the Israeli cabinet that have made it hard to get that aid in.” Kirby did not specify the Israeli cabinet members to whom he was referring.
- On March 4, Secretary Blinken spoke over the phone with Israel’s Minister for Strategic Affairs Ron Dermer, a former JINSA Distinguished Fellow, and [urged](#) Israel to expand humanitarian aid into Gaza.

### *Ceasefire and Hostage Negotiations*

- According to a March 6 [report](#) from Israel’s *Maariv* outlet, citing Arabic-language sources, Hamas’s latest demands for a hostage and ceasefire deal involve an agreement under which Hamas would release hostages “in batches” and without first disclosing “the identity or condition of the abductees.”
  - » Hamas is reportedly seeking the release of 160 high-profile Palestinian terrorists currently in Israel’s prisons, including one of the instigators of the Second Intifada, Marwan Barghouti, and Walid Deka, who kidnapped and murdered an IDF soldier.
  - » According to the report, Hamas’s wide-ranging demands include Israel withdrawing from the Gaza Strip and “international guarantees” to ensure Israel would not return.
  - » The report also stated that Hamas’s demands also include freedom of movement for Palestinians throughout the Gaza Strip, the right for Palestinians to return to their homes in northern Gaza, and increased humanitarian aid shipments throughout Gaza.
- On March 5, President Biden [told reporters](#) that “the hostage deal is in the hands of Hamas right now ... There’s been a rational offer. The Israelis have agreed to it ... We’ll know in a couple days if it’s going to happen.”
- During a meeting in Cairo with Egyptian and Qatari mediators on March 5, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken called for Hamas to accept an “immediate ceasefire” and [argued](#), “it is on Hamas to make decisions about whether it is prepared to engage in that ceasefire ... It’s also urgent—irrespective of a ceasefire—to dramatically increase the humanitarian assistance that is getting to people inside Gaza.”
- Israel’s *Channel 12* [reported](#) on March 5 that Hamas has been “mapping out” the location of hostages held in Gaza in recent days, and that as a result, Israel is providing “a final opportunity” for negotiations to become fruitful.
  - » The report alleged that Israel is seeking specific information about 40 hostages whose release is the subject of present negotiations.
- A *Wall Street Journal* [report](#) on March 5 indicated that U.S. and Arab officials continue to seek a ceasefire and hostage deal but have also floated a short ceasefire deal lasting several days while a larger deal is being negotiated.
- On March 4, a senior Hamas official told Lebanon’s *Al Mayadeen* channel that “there is no real progress” in ceasefire and hostage negotiations and [blamed](#) Israel’s “refusal to give clear answers regarding Hamas demands.”
  - » Those demands included nonstarters for Israel, such as a full ceasefire, the withdrawal of IDF forces from Gaza, and allowing displaced Gazans to return home before Hamas provides information on the hostages.



- On March 4, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby [indicated](#) that the Biden administration hopes to reach a ceasefire and hostage deal by the start of Ramadan on March 10.

### *Post-War Planning*

- Israel's *Ynet* outlet [reported](#) on March 6 that prominent local clans in Gaza have largely rejected an arrangement proposed by Israel under which clan leaders would “assume administrative responsibilities and manage aid distribution to the population.”
  - » According to the report, “only a select few leaders” were open to IDF proposals for them to manage aid distribution.
  - » Other prominent local clan leaders released a statement on March 4 rejecting Israel's plan and pledging loyalty to the Palestinian Authority (PA).
- According to a March 5 *Washington Post* [report](#) citing Palestinian and Western officials, PA security forces, despite “two decades of reforms,” remain “chronically underfunded and widely unpopular, [and] ill-equipped to take on the massive responsibilities that their Western backers are envisioning.”
  - » One Western official cited in the report stated that “the PA is not ready to go to Gaza and won't be anytime soon. I don't see them having the numbers to be able to do it, or the will, or the knowledge of Gaza.”

### *Casualties and Hostages*

- Over 1,200 people were [killed](#) in Israel, and 13,000 Israelis have been [injured](#) in the war.
  - » 586 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#).
    - 246 IDF soldiers have been [killed](#) during ground combat in Gaza so far.
  - » 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, 30,717 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza, and 72,156 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 29 that it has killed approximately 13,000 Hamas operatives over the course of the war.
- According to the Palestinian Authority-run Palestinian Ministry of Health, at least 420 people have been [killed](#), and an additional 4,500 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*

- On March 6, British security firm Ambrey reported an [explosion](#) near a U.S.-owned, Barbados-flagged cargo ship near the port of Aden. The ship was hailed by an entity calling itself the “Yemeni Navy” and ordered to change its course.
- AFP [reported](#) on March 5, citing environmental experts and local officials, that Yemen is facing potential “environmental disaster” and a “worst-case scenario” stemming from the sinking of the *Rubymar*, a ship that is beginning to sink after being struck by a Houthi missile in the Red Sea on February 18.
  - » According to the report, the *Rubymar* has some 21,000 metric tons of ammonium phosphate sulfate fertilizer on board and is actively leaking fuel.
  - » Yemeni officials cited in the report said that the ship’s chemical cargo may enter Yemen’s seawater desalination plants and water sources and may impact fishing and the supply of drinking water for citizens along the country’s coast.
  - » The report quoted VADM George Wikoff, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) commander, as saying that the sinking ship also presents an impending “subsurface impact risk” to ships transiting the Red Sea.
- On March 5 between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. local time, the Iran-backed Houthis [launched](#) one anti-ship ballistic missile and three one-way attack drones from Yemen toward the USS *Carney* in the Red Sea. U.S. forces shot down the projectiles, and there were no injuries or damage to the *Carney*.
- On March 5, *The Telegraph* accused *BBC Verify*, the *BBC*’s fact-checking arm, of [relying](#) on eyewitness accounts of Mahmoud Awadayah, who it claimed worked for Iran’s *Tasnim* news agency.
- On March 4 at around 2:15 a.m. local time, the Houthis [fired](#) an anti-ship ballistic missile from Yemen toward the southern Red Sea, which landed in the water and did not strike any vessels.

- On March 4, Houthi Telecommunications Minister Misfer Al-Numair claimed that ships entering Yemeni waters will need a [permit](#) from the Houthi-controlled Maritime Affairs Authority.
  - » The Houthi order extends halfway into the 12-mile (20-km) wide Bab al-Mandab Strait.
- On March 4 between 3:50 p.m. and 4:15 p.m. local time, the Houthis [fired](#) two anti-ship ballistic missiles from Yemen at the MV *MSC SKY II*, a Liberian-flagged and Swiss-owned commercial vessel, in the Gulf of Aden. One missile struck the vessel, causing “damage” and no injuries, according to U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM).
  - » Global shipping company MSC [confirmed](#) that its vessel, the *MSC Sky II*, was “hit by a missile” that day approximately “85 miles (135 kilometers) southeast of Aden and 170 miles east-southeast of the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.”
  - » MSC said the missile strike caused a “small fire” on the vessel, but no injuries. The ship was able to [continue](#) on its voyage.

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

- According to a March 6 Reuters [report](#), the Biden administration has revised language in its draft United Nations Security Council resolution to back “an immediate ceasefire of roughly six-weeks in Gaza together with the release of all hostages.” The third revision of the draft resolution now reflects remarks by Vice President Kamala Harris for an immediate six-week ceasefire.
  - » The initial U.S. draft had supported “a temporary ceasefire.”
- On March 5, Israel’s *Channel 12* reported that U.S. officials [remained dubious](#) of Israel’s plans for a ground operation in Rafah after meeting with Israel’s minister without portfolio Benny Gantz in Washington.
- On March 5, a *New York Times* [report](#) indicated that Vice President Harris has argued that the Biden administration “must show more empathy for Palestinian civilians by speaking publicly about the high death toll in Gaza and the plight of survivors.”
  - » Also on March 5, a spokesperson for Vice President Harris [pushed back](#) on an *NBC News* report claiming that White House officials had watered down the vice president’s remarks about the war on March 3 and that she had planned to criticize Israel more harshly.
- On March 5 between 8:45 p.m. and 9:40 p.m. local time, the United States [struck](#) three Houthi anti-ship missiles and three unmanned surface vessels (USV) in Yemen.
- On March 4 at 8 p.m. local time, the United States [struck](#) two Houthi anti-ship cruise missiles in Yemen that were preparing to target nearby ships.
- In an interview with the *New Yorker* published March 4, President Biden [said](#), “I don’t want to see any Palestinians killed—I think that it’s contrary to what we believe as Americans,” and, “the pressure on [Israel’s] leadership to move with every ounce of capacity against Hamas is real. But it doesn’t mean it should be continued. It doesn’t mean it’s right. And so, I think you’re going to see—I’m praying you’re going to see—a significant downturn in the use of force.”
  - » Biden also urged critics to “give this just a little bit of time, understanding what would happen if they came into their state or their neighborhood and saw what happened with Hamas.”

- » Biden stated that when he had urged Israel’s leaders to be cautious in Israel’s campaign, they noted that America had carpet-bombed Germany in World War II, to which Biden said he responded, “that’s why we ended up with the United Nations and all these rules about not doing that again.”
- » Referring to Israeli settler attacks against Palestinians in the West Bank, Biden stated, “I’ve been pushing very hard for the Israeli government to come down hard on these out-of-control settlers.”
- » Calling for a Palestinian state in tandem with Saudi-Israel normalization, Biden opined, “we could put in place a circumstance that ends up where they continue to move—as we did with [Osama] bin Laden—against the leaders of Hamas, but not assume that every Palestinian is a supporter of Hamas.”
- During a March 4 meeting with Israel’s Minister without portfolio Benny Gantz, Vice President Kamala Harris [expressed](#) support for “Israel’s right to defend itself” and conveyed “deep concern about the humanitarian conditions in Gaza and the recent horrific tragedy around an aid convoy in northern Gaza,” according to a White House readout.
  - » Vice President Harris, according to the readout, also “discussed the situation in Rafah and the need for a credible and implementable humanitarian plan prior to contemplating any major military operation there given the risks to civilians” and urged Israel to do more to facilitate the entry of aid into Gaza and ensure its “safe distribution to those in need.”
- A Gallup poll released on March 4 found that Americans have the [least favorable](#) views of Israel in over 20 years and the least favorable views of the Palestinian Authority in nearly 10 years.
  - » The poll found that 58 percent of Americans have either a “very” or “mostly” favorable opinion of Israel, compared to 68 percent in the annual poll last year.
  - » According to the poll, Americans between the ages of 18 and 34 have a markedly lower favorable view of Israel—38 percent—compared to last year’s poll, which found that 64 percent of Americans in that age group held a favorable view of Israel.
  - » The percentage of Americans holding favorable views of the Palestinian Authority declined to 18 percent this year, compared to 26 percent last year.
- On March 5, Lebanon’s caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati said that [indirect negotiations](#) to end hostilities along the Israel-Lebanon border will begin during Ramadan. He added that Lebanon’s parliament speaker Nabih Berri, who is an ally of Hezbollah, was reviewing a proposal verbally suggested by U.S. envoy Amos Hochstein.
  - » Hochstein’s proposal, which centered on how to enforce United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701, called for non-state forces to withdraw from southern Lebanon, the deployment of Lebanese troops along the border, and “a development plan for south Lebanon.”
- On March 5, Reem Alsalem, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, claimed during an [interview](#) with Israel’s *Channel 13* that she was unaware of the daily rocket attacks by Hamas and Hezbollah against Israel.
  - » In response to a question about the rocket fire, she [responded](#), “every single day?” When asked about whether she had seen the daily reports of rocket fire, she said, “at this point, I have not seen that, no.”

- On March 5, Turkey’s state-owned *Anadolu* news agency reported that Turkish police [detained](#) seven people suspected of selling information to Israel’s Mossad.
- On March 4, Italy’s parliament voted to [approve](#) Italy’s participation in Aspides, the European Union naval mission to protect shipping in the Red Sea.
  - » Italy’s Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani stated that day that the naval mission is tasked with “self-defense, that is, the neutralization of direct attacks on merchant ships under escort and repelling any attempts to seize the vessels.”

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

- On March 4, hundreds of anti-Israel protesters [gathered](#) in front of the Montreal Holocaust Museum to protest a panel that included IDF reservist speakers. One protest leader said, “we have to remain [as] one hand, and inshallah we will defeat the Zionists.”
- On March 4, Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (NY-14) was [confronted](#) by anti-Israel protesters outside of a movie theater in Brooklyn, New York, who followed her and demanded she accuse Israel of genocide. The congresswoman told the protesters, “I need you to understand that this is not OK,” as the exchange grew heated.
- On March 2, pro-Palestinian protesters [repeatedly interrupted](#) First Lady Jill Biden’s remarks at an event for “Women for Biden-Harris” in Tucson, Arizona.
- On March 1, a man wearing a kippah was [assaulted](#) leaving a synagogue in Paris by an attacker who yelled, “dirty Jew” and kicked and punched the man to the ground. The victim was reportedly taken to the hospital.
- On February 29, the European Jewish Association (EJA) [released](#) the findings of a poll in which 14 percent of 923 Moldovans polled said they “really don’t like” Jews, and 19 percent had negative perceptions of the Jewish people.
- On February 28, a visibly Jewish man on the London Underground was [harassed](#) by a passenger who blew vape smoke towards him, and said, “your religion kills Muslims ... You kill Muslims ... You’re wearing the hat,” referring to the man’s kippah.

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