



Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update April 22, 2024

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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 conflict between Israel, the Iranian regime, and the regime's proxies. JINSA will release the Swords of Iron Update on April 22, April 25, and April 26 this week due to the Jewish holiday of Passover. An update with the latest information and analysis about the war is below.

Analysis

- The U.S. House of Representatives' [passage](#) of a \$95 billion aid package, which includes roughly \$14 billion in military aid to Israel, is a positive step towards providing Israel the munitions it needs to conduct military operations against not only Hamas but also Iran-backed adversaries in Lebanon and Syria, as well as Iran itself.
 - » The package, which remains subject to approval by the Senate, includes \$5.2 billion toward replenishing and expanding Israel's missile and rocket defense system; \$3.5 billion for purchasing advanced weapons systems; \$1 billion to enhance weapons production, and; \$4.4 billion for other defense supplies and services provided to Israel.
 - » As JINSA Policy Analyst Yoni Tobin has [noted](#), "continued and timely U.S. arms supply to Israel" is essential to defeating Hamas and "deterring or, if need be, responding to, attacks by Hezbollah, other Iranian proxies, and Iran itself."
 - Tobin also noted that "ensuring Israel's qualitative military edge (QME) over its enemies is a key U.S. strategic interest, both to deal a blow to Iran's 'ring of fire' web of proxies and to demonstrate, to friends and adversaries alike, that the United States stands by its partners."
- [Reports](#) that the United States is set to announce unprecedented sanctions against an IDF unit, the Netzah Yehuda battalion, could signal to adversaries of the United States and Israel that there is growing "[daylight](#)," or tension, between the two countries, risking increased belligerency from Iran and its regional proxy groups.
 - » *The Times of Israel* [reported](#), citing a U.S. official, that it is likely "that other Western countries would follow Washington's lead in targeting [IDF] units" with sanctions.
 - » Israel's Minister without portfolio Benny Gantz [observed](#) that "Israel has a strong, independent judicial system that evaluates meticulously any claim of a violation or deviation from IDF orders and code of conduct."

- Reports that, following a rocket attack [launched](#) from Iraq against a U.S. base in Syria, Iran-backed terrorist group Kataib Hezbollah [announced](#) that terrorist groups in Iraq will resume attacks on U.S. troops and personnel in the region after a three-month respite indicate that U.S. deterrence against Iranian proxies is waning.
 - » As JINSA Assistant Director of Foreign Policy Ari Cicurel previously [noted](#), “rounds of infrequent and limited U.S. strikes against Iran-backed groups have not deterred them or the regime in Tehran that funds, arms, and directs them.”
 - » Instead, Cicurel argued, “establishing deterrence will require the United States to use stronger, faster, and more frequent military force against Iran-linked targets that endanger U.S. personnel or American partners” in the Middle East.
- CIA Director Bill Burns’ April 19 [comments](#) blaming Hamas for the lack of progress on ceasefire and hostage negotiations underscore the Chair of Urban Warfare Studies at West Point’s Modern War Institute John Spencer’s [argument](#) on April 20 that “Hamas has no motivation or incentive to negotiate. They think the world will keep Israel from doing the Rafah operation, their strategy will work, they will survive the war and thus achieve victory.”

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 April 22, two terrorists mildly [injured](#) three people in Jerusalem in a car-ramming attack before trying to shoot others nearby with a gun that jammed. Police later [caught](#) both perpetrators.

Iranian Regime

- According to a *Wall Street Journal* article from April 21, a Biden administration official [said](#) of Iran’s April 13-14 projectile attack against Israel, “the results of the defenses were unclear until all was said and done,” and a senior official said, “this was on the high end, I think, of what we were—what we were anticipating.”

Gaza

- Sirens sounded in [Sderot](#).
- On April 19, the IDF [said](#) that terrorists in Gaza fired numerous rockets toward Sderot, one of which the Iron Dome intercepted, and the remainder fell in Gaza.

Lebanon

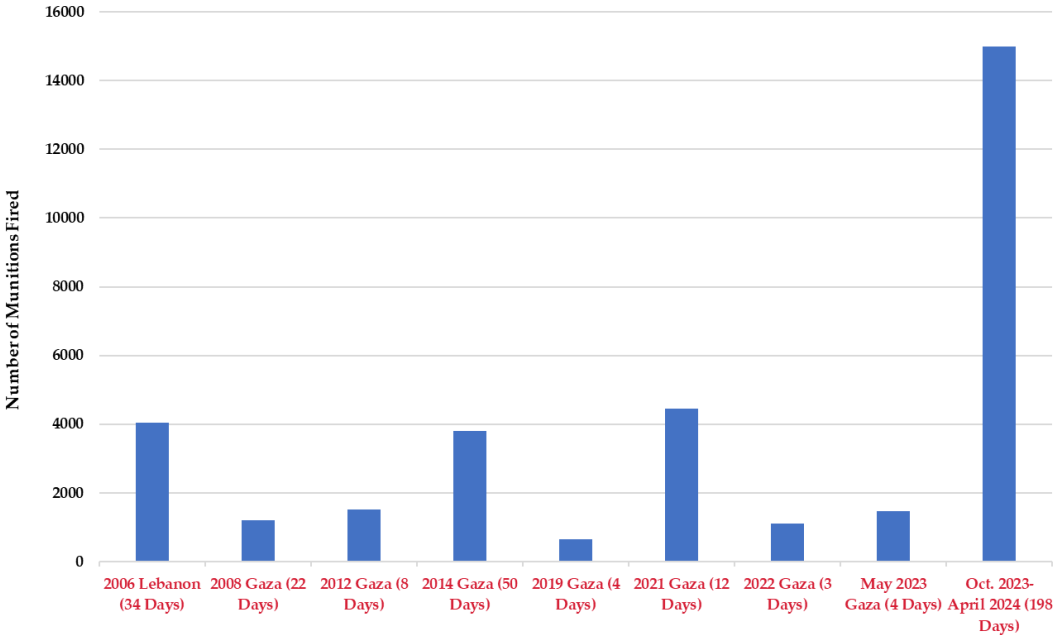
- Rockets struck [Rosh Hanikra](#), and sirens sounded in [Sasa](#), [Kiryat Shmona](#), [Metulla](#), [Tel Hai](#), two [towns](#) in the Western Galilee, and [several](#) other [northern](#) Israeli communities.
- On April 22, the IDF [said](#) that it intercepted a “suspicious aerial target” from Lebanon that triggered alarms in Kiryat Shmona and nearby areas.
- According to an April 21 [report](#) from Israel’s *Maariv* outlet citing Lebanon’s Hezbollah-affiliated *Al Mayadeen* outlet, France’s proposal for a diplomatic solution no longer includes a demand for Hezbollah to move back from the Lebanese-Israeli border.
 - » According to the report, Prime Minister Netanyahu has asked French mediators to instead focus their efforts on reducing Hezbollah terror activity, including projectile attacks against Israel.

- On April 21, one person in Rosh Hanikra in northern Israel was injured by a rocket [attack](#) from Lebanon.
- On April 21, Hamas took credit for a [salvo](#) of 20 Grad rockets fired that day toward an IDF base near Shomera in northern Israel. The attack inflicted no reported injuries.
- On April 21, Hezbollah claimed that it [downed](#) an IDF drone, a Hermes 450, over the town of Aaichiyeh in southern Lebanon, which the IDF [confirmed](#) the following day.
 - » The IDF [announced](#) on April 22 that it was investigating the incident.
 - » According to *The Times of Israel*, “if true, this would be the third Israeli UAV” that Hezbollah downed since October.
- On April 19, terrorists in Lebanon [fired](#) three projectiles toward Yiftah, inflicting no damage or injuries.

West Bank

- On April 21, two terrorists near Hebron in the West Bank [tried](#) to shoot and stab Israeli soldiers but did not succeed and were [killed](#) by troops.
- On April 21, an explosive device lightly [wounded](#) an Israeli as he tried to remove a Palestinian flag planted by Route 458 in the West Bank.
- The IDF said on April 21 that terrorists [fired](#) toward Kibbutz Meirav in the West Bank, mildly damaging a home but inflicting no injuries. While troops were searching for the attackers, Palestinians threw an explosive toward the soldiers.
- On April 21, the IDF [said](#) that it “neutralized” a Palestinian woman who tried to carry out a stabbing attack against troops at the Beka’ot Checkpoint in the Jordan Valley.

Projectiles Fired Against Israel During Major Conflicts JINSA



IDF Operations

- On April 22, Israel's military intelligence chief Maj. Gen. Aharon Haliva [announced](#) that he would retire once his successor is selected in light of Israel's intelligence failure on October 7.
 - » The IDF said in a statement that Haliva "[requested](#) to end his position, following his leadership responsibility as the head of the intelligence directorate for the events of 7 October."

Iranian Regime

- On April 22, *The New York Times* [reported](#) that "Israel abandoned plans for a much more extensive counterstrike on Iran after concerted diplomatic pressure from the United States and other foreign allies and because the brunt of an Iranian assault on [Israeli] soil had been thwarted, according to three senior Israeli officials."
- On April 20, *The New York Times* [reported](#), "the [Israeli airstrike in Isfahan in Iran], two Western officials said, was calculated to deliver a message to Iran that Israel could bypass Iran's defense systems undetected and paralyze them."
 - » During the strike, Israel [used](#) a missile called The Rampage, an air-to-surface projectile developed in Israel. The strike [targeted](#) a Russian S-300 air defense battery.
- An unnamed U.S. official [told](#) *ABC News* on April 19 that Israel used fighter jets to target an Iranian air defense radar site close to Isfahan with three missiles. The site guarded the Natanz nuclear facility.
- *CNN* [reported](#) on April 19 that according to intelligence sources in the Middle East, strikes between Israel and Iran are "over."
- On April 19, *The Times of Israel* cited *Fox News's* correspondence with high-ranking U.S. military sources, one of whom [said](#), "the Israelis hit what they intended to strike," including air defense platforms at a military base in Isfahan. The air defense systems were reportedly defending adjacent nuclear facilities.
- *The Times of Israel* [reported](#) on April 19 that "satellite images [taken five hours after Israel's airstrike in Isfahan in Iran] published by CNN do not appear to show any extensive damage to Iran's Isfahan air base, which was allegedly targeted last night by Israel."
 - » On April 21, *The Times of Israel* [said](#), "Iran International [published] what it says are images of before and after the alleged Israeli strike on Friday on air defenses near an Iranian nuclear site," and "the satellite images appear to show that the damage was very precise."

Gaza

- On April 22, *The Wall Street Journal* [reported](#) that "Israel's military is gearing up" for an offensive in the southern Gazan city of Rafah, where Hamas's final brigade remains active. Following two to three weeks of civilian evacuations, the offensive is expected to last six weeks, according to Egyptian officials briefed on the matter.
 - » According to the report, prior to major combat, "Israel is preparing to move civilians from Rafah to nearby Khan Younis and other areas, where it plans to set up shelters with tents, food-distribution centers and medical facilities such as field hospitals."
 - » The report alleges, citing Egyptian officials, that the civilian evacuation dimension of the plan will be done "in coordination with the U.S., Egypt and other Arab countries such as the United Arab Emirates."

- On April 22, the IDF [announced](#) that it was initiating a new operation in central Gaza to target pockets of terror activity.
 - » Soldiers have eliminated terrorists, located terrorist infrastructure, and called in airstrikes as part of the operation, which is led by the Nahal Brigade and involves other troops from the 162nd Division.
- On April 21, *CBS News* [reported](#), citing local Palestinian sources, that the IDF conducted two airstrikes in the southern Gazan city of Rafah. According to the reports, the airstrikes killed 18 people, including 14 children.
- On April 21, the IDF [said](#) that its Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi conducted an “assessment of the situation and approval of plans for the continuation of the war” in Gaza, along with Maj. Gen. Yaron Finkelman, leader of the military’s Southern Command.
- On April 20, the IDF [said](#) that it launched strikes against launch sites in Beit Hanoun used to attack Sderot with rockets earlier. The IDF also said that it conducted airstrikes against dozens of additional targets in Gaza during the past day.
- On April 20, *i24 News* [reported](#), “since the partial withdrawal of [the IDF] from the Gaza Strip, approximately 250,000 Palestinians have relocated from the town of Rafah to other areas further north, particularly between Nuseirat and Khan Younes, south of the Wadi Gaza line.”

Lebanon

- On April 22, the IDF [conducted airstrikes](#) against a Hezbollah missile launch site in southern Lebanon in response to Hezbollah shooting down an IDF drone the prior day.
- On April 21, the IDF carried out an airstrike to [eliminate](#) a Hezbollah operative in the southern Lebanese town of Tayr Harfa.
- On April 21, Israel’s *Arutz Sheva* outlet [reported](#), “overnight, [Israeli Air Force] fighter jets struck a number of Hezbollah terror targets in Lebanon, including an observation post in the area of Odaisseh, and two military structures in the area of Khiam.”
- The IDF [said](#) on April 21 that it carried out airstrikes against Hezbollah targets in Ayta ash-Shab, Naqoura, and Majdal Zoun.
- On April 20, the IDF [carried out airstrikes](#) to eliminate Hezbollah operatives in terror facilities in the southern Lebanese towns of Ayta ash-Shab and Kfar Kila. Afterward, Hezbollah [said](#) that day that its operatives Ali Harb and Hussein Daghman were killed by Israeli strikes.
- On April 20, the IDF [said](#) that it launched airstrikes against a Hezbollah site in Jebbayn after Etzioni Brigade reservists noticed Hezbollah members there.
- The IDF [said](#) on April 19 that it struck Hezbollah targets in Mansouri and Aitaroun in southern Lebanon and fired artillery toward rocket launching sites.

West Bank

- *The Times of Israel* [reported](#) on April 22 that “the terrorist who murdered 14-year-old Benjamin Achimeir in the West Bank earlier this month has been arrested, the Shin Bet security agency, police and IDF say in a joint statement.” The suspect is 21-year-old Ahmed Dawabsha from Duma in the West Bank.
- The IDF [said](#) on April 20 that it has been conducting an operation against terrorists in Nur Shams in the West Bank for over 40 hours, killing gunmen, arresting suspects, and confiscating weapons. The Palestinian Red Crescent [said](#) the next day that at least 14 people were killed during the operation.

- » The IDF [said](#) on April 21 that it concluded the operation after 50 hours and that it killed 14 combatants, arrested 15, and destroyed and confiscated weapons. The military also said that nine troops and one police officer were injured.
- According to [reports](#) from April 19, the IDF killed Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) operative Muhammad Jaber, among other gunmen, during a raid in Tulkarem that day. He was the commander of the terror group's Tulkarem branch.

Humanitarian Efforts

- According to Israel's Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories ([COGAT](#)), from the beginning of the war to April 21, there have been 468,790 tons of humanitarian aid that entered Gaza on 24,790 trucks.
- On April 22, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric [said](#), “[Secretary-General Antonio Guterres] has agreed with Commissioner General Philippe Lazzarini that UNRWA, with the Secretary-General’s support, will establish an action plan to implement the recommendations” of an independent review of UNRWA, and “moving forward, the Secretary-General appeals to all stakeholders to actively support UNRWA, as it is a lifeline for Palestine refugees in the region.”
 - » *The Times of Israel* [reported](#) that day that “Israel has failed to provide evidence of claims that UNRWA workers in Gaza have ties to terrorist organizations, the Guardian newspaper alleges, citing the findings of an independent panel that has been conducting a review into the allegations presented by Israel in the aftermath of Hamas’s October 7 terror onslaught.”
- The Associated Press [reported](#) on April 20 that “the UN World Food Program has agreed to help deliver aid for civilians in Gaza once the US military completes a pier for transporting the humanitarian assistance by sea,” according to U.S. officials.
 - » The report also said, “the US Agency for International Development confirmed to The Associated Press that it would partner with the WFP on delivering humanitarian assistance to Gaza via the maritime corridor.”

Ceasefire and Hostage Negotiations

- On April 19, CIA head Bill Burns [said](#) of Hamas’s approach to hostage negotiations, “it was a deep disappointment to get a negative reaction from Hamas,” and “right now, it’s that negative reaction that really is standing in the way of innocent civilians in Gaza getting humanitarian relief that they so desperately need.” He added, “and it breaks your heart because you can see in very human terms what’s at stake here as well.”

Post-War Planning

- On April 21, *The Times of Israel* [reported](#), “the issue of how Gaza will be governed once Israel’s war with Hamas reaches an end is scheduled to be discussed by Israel’s war cabinet this evening in more detail than it has been in some time, [Israel’s] *Channel 12* reports, although [Israel’s] *Channel 13* alleges that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu blocked the discussion from taking place.”

Casualties and Hostages

- Over 1,200 people were [killed](#) in Israel, and 13,000 Israelis have been [injured](#) in the war.
 - » 605 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#).
 - 260 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 34,151 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza, and 77,084 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, 485 people have been [killed](#), and an additional 4,900 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, [eight](#) 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 [35](#) 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.
- The IDF [said](#) on April 21 that Maj. (res.) Dor Zimel, 27, died after sustaining injuries in Hezbollah's projectile barrage against Arab al-Aramshe in northern Israel last week.

Iranian Involvement and Response

- On April 21, Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei [lauded](#) the country's military for its massive projectile attack against Israel and urged them to "ceaselessly pursue military innovation and learn the enemy's tactics."
 - » He also said, "how many missiles were launched and how many of them hit their target is not the primary question. What really matters is that Iran demonstrated its willpower during that operation."
- On April 21, Reuters [reported](#), citing two Iraqi security officials, that at least five rockets were fired from northern Iraq toward a U.S. military base in Syria that day.
 - » Reuters reported on April 22 that Iran-backed terror group Kataib Hezbollah [said](#) in a statement that day that Iraqi terror groups had decided to resume projectile attacks on U.S. forces in the region. The group formally [suspended](#) such attacks three months ago.
 - According to the report, the terror group stated that due to the lack of progress on government discussions to end the U.S. military presence in Iraq, "what happened a short while ago is the beginning" of resumed attacks on U.S. forces.
 - » However, Kataib Hezbollah issued a statement later that day [denying](#) that it was resuming projectile attacks against U.S. forces, stating that such reports were "fabricated news."
- On April 21, *The Times of Israel* [reported](#) that "Iran is preparing to receive a shipment of the Sukhoi Su-35 fighter jets from Russia to the Isfahan air base ... according to unconfirmed reports."
- On April 20, Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian [said](#) to *NBC News* that Israel's airstrike against a site in Iran "was not a strike," and that the two or three munitions used "were more like toys that our children play with – not drones."
 - » Amir-Abdollahian added that "as long as there is no new adventurism by Israel against our interests, then we are not going to have any new reactions."
 - » Amir-Abdollahian alleged that the munitions were launched from within Iran and were downed by Iran's air defenses. He added that Iran's response would be "immediate" and at the "maximum level" if Israel wants to "do another adventurism (sic)."
- On April 19, Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian [said](#), "the Zionist regime's media supporters, in a desperate effort, tried to make victory out of their defeat, while the downed mini-drones have not caused any damage or casualties."

U.S. and International Response

- On April 22, *The Times of Israel* [noted](#) that "the US State Department confirms that Secretary of State Antony Blinken held calls with Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and war cabinet minister Benny Gantz earlier today, but makes no mention of the actual reason for the calls — the Israeli cabinet members' efforts to convince the Biden administration to walk

back plans to sanction the Netzah Yehuda battalion over alleged human rights abuses against Palestinians in the West Bank.”

- On April 21, Israel’s *Maariv* outlet reported, citing a source close to the Biden administration, that the United States is seriously [considering](#) pursuing a new nuclear deal with Iran.
 - » According to the report, the framework of such a deal would involve the lifting of some U.S. economic sanctions on Iran in exchange for restrictions on Iran’s nuclear program.
 - » The source told *Maariv*, “the administration sees an opportunity to start diplomatic talks to revive the nuclear agreement with Iran.”
 - » The source added that the administration believes such an agreement would be in the interest of both Iran and Israel, as “the nuclear threat from Iran [would] be eliminated, and Iran would be guaranteed that a military response from Israel on its soil would be avoided” in the future.
- On April 21, *The Times of Israel* [reported](#), citing two U.S. officials, that the United States is “considering sanctions against other Israeli military and police units alleged to have committed human rights violations against Palestinians” in addition to the IDF’s Netzah Yehuda Battalion.
 - » According to a U.S. source cited in the report, other Western countries are likely to also target IDF units with sanctions if the United States does so first.
- On April 21, President Joe Biden [said](#) in a statement marking the upcoming Jewish holiday of Passover, “this Passover falls particularly hard on hostage families trying to honor the spirit of the holiday – a story centered on freedom – while their loved ones remain in captivity. Our hearts are with all the victims, survivors, families, and friends whose loved ones have been killed, taken hostage, wounded, displaced, or are in harm’s way.”
 - » Biden also stated that “my commitment to the safety of the Jewish people, the security of Israel and its right to exist as an independent Jewish state is ironclad.”
 - » Biden further stated, “we will continue to work toward a two-state solution that provides equal security, prosperity and enduring peace for Israelis and Palestinians.”
- On April 20, the U.S. House of Representatives [approved](#) a bill to provide a total of \$95 billion in security aid to Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan. \$14 billion would go to Israel and \$9 billion toward humanitarian aid to Gaza and other areas affected by war.
 - » The aid to Israel includes \$5.2 billion toward air defense, \$3.5 billion to advanced weapons, \$1 billion toward weapons manufacturing, and \$4.4 billion to defense equipment and services.
 - » President Biden said, “this package will deliver critical support to Israel and Ukraine; provide desperately needed humanitarian aid to Gaza, Sudan, Haiti and other locations ... and bolster security and stability in the Indo-Pacific.”
- On April 20, *Axios* and Israel’s *Walla* outlet [reported](#), each citing multiple U.S. officials, that U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken will [announce](#) sanctions in the coming days against the IDF’s Netzah Yehuda battalion for alleged human rights violations against Palestinians in the West Bank.
 - » *Axios* [reported](#) that if the sanctions are imposed, they would represent “the first time the U.S. imposed sanctions on an Israeli military unit.” According to the report, the sanctions would “ban the battalion and its members from receiving any kind of U.S. military assistance or training.”

- » *ProPublica* had [reported](#) on April 17 that “a special State Department panel recommended months ago that Secretary of State Antony Blinken disqualify multiple Israeli military and police units from receiving U.S. aid” due to alleged human rights violations.
 - *Walla* [reported](#) that the research leading to the reported sanctioning decision was conducted prior to October 7.
 - According to the report from *Walla*, Blinken had [considered](#) sanctioning additional military and police units that the United States was investigating but decided against doing so due to improvements in those units’ conduct.
- » The IDF [said](#) on April 21 that it was unaware of plans to sanction the battalion, but that “if a decision is made on the matter, it will be reviewed.”
 - The IDF added that the battalion is “now participating in the war in the Gaza Strip, with courage and professionalism, while maintaining the values and spirit of the IDF and the principles of international law.”
 - The IDF also stated, “over the past few years, the battalion’s troops have been at the core of operational activities around the clock, to maintain the security of the citizens of the State of Israel, alongside being a leading battalion in the integration of ultra-Orthodox troops in the IDF.”
- » Senior Israeli leaders strongly criticized the reported decision.
 - Prime Minister Netanyahu [vowed](#) in a post on X that the “government I lead will act with all means against these moves” and added that “while our soldiers are fighting terrorist monsters, the intention to impose sanctions on an IDF unit is the height of absurdity and a moral nadir.”
 - Defense Minister Yoav Gallant [stated](#) that he “expect[s] the American administration to go back on its intention to impose sanctions on the Netzah Yehuda Battalion.” Gallant added that the battalion acts “in accordance with IDF values and according to international law, and any event that deviates from the procedures is handled accordingly.”
 - Minister without portfolio Benny Gantz [said](#) in a statement that the reported U.S. decision “sets a dangerous precedent.” Gantz added, “Israel has a strong, independent judicial system that evaluates meticulously any claim of a violation or deviation from IDF orders and code of conduct, and will continue to do so.”
- On April 19, Secretary Blinken [said](#) during a press briefing in Italy, “first, there are currently somewhere around 1.4 million people in Rafah — many of them displaced from other parts of Gaza. It’s imperative that people are able to get out of the way of any conflict, and doing so is a monumental task for which we have yet to see a plan,” and “not only getting them out of harm’s way, but making sure that they can be supported with humanitarian assistance.”
 - » He also said, “second, even if people are largely out of harm’s way, inevitably there’s going to remain a pretty significant civilian population in Rafah, and we believe that a major military operation with a large presence of the civilian population would have terrible consequences for that population.”
 - » Blinken said further, “we are committed, as Israel is, to ensuring that Gaza cannot be controlled by Hamas ... But in terms of major military operations in Rafah, that’s something that we don’t support, and we believe that the objective can be achieved by other means,” and “we’ve been engaged in conversations at senior levels with Israel over the past couple of weeks on this, including as recently as this week.”

- » When asked whether the State Department seeks to slash military aid to particular Israeli units implicated in possible rights violations in the West Bank, Blinken [said](#), “I think you’re referring to the so-called Leahy Law and our work under that,” and “so this is a very important law. And it’s one that we apply across the board. And when we’re doing these investigations, these inquiries, it’s something that takes time. That has to be done very carefully, both in collecting the facts and analyzing them.”
 - He said, “and that’s exactly what we’ve done. And I think it’s fair to say that you’ll see results very soon. I made determinations. You can expect to see them in the days ahead.”
- Barak Ravid of *Axios* [reported](#) on April 19 that during a phone call that day between U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and Israel’s Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, the two discussed “maintaining stability in the Middle East,” according to the U.S. Department of Defense.
- On April 19, White House Middle East envoy Brett McGurk [said](#) that the United States is working to build on and formalize the regional cooperation that was on display during operations to thwart Iran’s April 13-14 projectile attack on Israel.
 - » McGurk stated that he considers the regional cooperation demonstrated over that weekend to be “a game changer, because it speaks to what could be a security-integrated architecture in the Middle East that is now developing, and that we think we can now formalize.”
 - » McGurk added, “if you go back to the president’s visit to Israel and Saudi Arabia in the summer of 2022, a main focus was the integrated air defense early-warning systems that we have been so focused on ... it’s been kind of a theoretical principle. But it came to a head on Saturday night [during Iran’s attack] in an incredibly successful way.”
- On April 19, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre [declined](#) to comment on a question about the alleged Israeli airstrike in Iran.
- Reuters and *The Times of Israel* [reported](#) on April 22 that “European Union foreign ministers will meet in Luxembourg tomorrow to discuss expanding sanctions on Iran and bolstering Ukraine’s air defenses,” including possibly designating the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist group. Belgium’s Foreign Minister Hadja Lahbib [expressed support](#) for sanctioning the IRGC.
- On April 20, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas [said](#) to the *Wafa* news agency, “while the world agrees on the application of international law and stands by the Palestinian right, America continues to support the occupation, refusing to compel Israel to stop its genocidal war. It provides Israel with weapons and funds that kill our children and destroy our homes, and it stands against us in international forums, in positions that do not serve security and stability in the region.”
 - » He also said, “the United States has violated all international laws and abandoned all promises regarding the two-state solution and achieving peace in the region” and argued that the Biden administration has “renege[d] on its promises and commitments ... by remaining silent on [Israel’s] theft of Palestinian funds.”
 - » He insisted, “Jerusalem, with its Islamic and Christian sanctities, is a red line that no one can cross.”
- According to [reports](#) from April 20, Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh met in Istanbul. The two reportedly discussed ceasefire negotiations and aid shipments to the Gaza Strip.

- » On April 21, *The Washington Post* [reported](#) that a Turkish flotilla of ships is preparing to set sail from Turkey in the coming days towards Gaza with the aim of “breaching Israel’s naval blockade.”
 - The organizers previously sent a flotilla toward Gaza in 2010, which resulted in 10 deaths after individuals on board the ships attacked Israeli forces boarding the vessel.
- On April 21, Israel’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson Oren Marmorstein [announced](#) that Israel would be summoning the ambassadors of Ecuador, France, Japan, Malta, Slovakia, and South Korea on April 22 after those countries voted for a United Nations Security Council Resolution that would have granted the Palestinians statehood.
 - » The resolution passed but was vetoed by the United States.
 - » Marmorstein stated that Israel would convey an “unambiguous message” that a “political gesture to the Palestinians and a call to recognize a Palestinian state – six months after the October 7 massacre – is a prize for terrorism.”
- On April 20, China’s Foreign Minister Wang Yi [said](#), “a prompt admission of Palestine into the United Nations is a move to rectify a prolonged historical injustice.”
- On April 19, Reuters [reported](#) that “French President Emmanuel Macron met Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati and the country’s army chief Joseph Aoun in Paris earlier today for talks on how to end cross-border fighting between Hezbollah and Israel and ease a political stalemate in Lebanon.”
 - » In addition, “a statement from Mikati’s office says he discussed with Macron a French proposal to end cross-border fighting that envisions increased support for the Lebanese army and the withdrawal of Hezbollah fighters from within 10 kilometers (six miles) of the border,” Reuters noted.
- Iraq’s state-run news outlet [reported](#) on April 19 that Iraq conveyed concern over the airstrike against targets in Isfahan in Iran.
- Reports from April 19 [indicated](#) that several shipping associations penned a letter to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres that said that Iran’s capture of the MSC *Aries* near the United Arab Emirates “once again highlighted the intolerable situation where shipping has become a target.”
 - » The letter also said, “innocent seafarers have been killed, seafarers are being held hostage,” and “the world would be outraged if four airliners were seized and held hostage with innocent souls onboard. Regrettably, there does not seem to be the same response or concern (for ships and their crew members).”
 - » It said further, “seafarers and the maritime sector are neutral and must not be politicized,” and “given the continually evolving and severe threat profile within the area, we call on you for enhanced co-ordinated military presence, missions and patrols in the region, to protect our seafarers against any further possible aggression.”
- Reports from April 19 [indicated](#) that the European Union (EU) placed sanctions on the Israeli group Lehava, which *The Times of Israel* described as an anti-miscegenation group, as well as Israelis Meir Ettinger, Elisha Yered, Neria Ben Pazi, and Yinon Levy.
 - » Ettinger is part of the so-called “hilltop youth,” which *The Times of Israel* said “are known for establishing illegal outposts throughout the West Bank and sometimes clashing with IDF soldiers, Palestinians and the left-wing Israeli activists trying to protect them.” Yered was a spokesperson for Otzma Yehudit party member MK Limor Son Har-Melech.

- On April 19, the U.S. State Department [announced](#) that it sanctioned Benzi Gopstein, head of Lehava, which the department said is “an organization whose members have engaged in destabilizing violence affecting the West Bank.” The State Department said further, “under Gopstein’s leadership, Lehava and its members have been involved in acts or threats of violence against Palestinians, often targeting sensitive or volatile areas.”
 - » The U.S. Treasury Department also sanctioned the Mount Hebron Fund and Shlom Asiraich for facilitating fundraising for violent extremists Yinon Levi and David Chai Chasdai.

Rising Antisemitism, Protests, and Attacks

- On April 22, over 40 pro-Palestinian protesters were [arrested](#) on Yale University’s campus and charged with trespassing after they refused to leave Yale’s Beinecke Plaza despite warnings from police.
- On April 22, Harvard University [restricted](#) access to Harvard Yard to Harvard ID holders until April 26 in anticipation of pro-Palestinian demonstrations on campus.
 - » In an announcement posted on the entrance gates to Harvard Yard, the university warned of disciplinary measures for students and affiliates who bring in unauthorized structures or block access to building entrances.
- On April 22, Columbia University President Nemat “Minouche” Shafik [suspended](#) in-person classes that day due to growing unruly anti-Israel protests on Columbia’s campus. Shafik said in a statement that “these tensions have been exploited and amplified by individuals who are not affiliated with Columbia who have come to campus to pursue their own agenda” and that “we need a reset.”
 - » Shafik’s announcement came one day after *CNN* [reported](#) that Columbia University’s campus Orthodox rabbi sent a message to Jewish students urging them to stay home for their own personal safety.
 - » Protestors have [chanted](#) slogans including “ Hamas, we love you,” and “long live the intifada.” Three protestors have been arrested, including for acts of violence.
- On April 22, *The Times of Israel* [reported](#) that “six people have been hurt in clashes in an alleged settler attack on the Palestinian village of Burqa, near Ramallah, according to Palestinian reports.”
- On April 21, as part of a pre-Passover [statement](#), President Biden noted that “the ancient story of persecution against Jews in the Haggadah also reminds us that we must speak out against the alarming surge of antisemitism—in our schools, communities and online. Silence is complicity.”
 - » Biden added that “even in recent days, we’ve seen harassment and calls for violence against Jews. This blatant antisemitism is reprehensible and dangerous—and it has absolutely no place on college campuses, or anywhere in our country.”
- On April 21, Yale student Sahar Tartak [wrote](#) on X, “tonight at Yale, I was assaulted by a student today at an anti-Israel protest. He stabbed me in the eye with a Palestinian flag. Now I’m in the hospital. This is what happens when visibly Jewish students try to attend and document these rallies.”
- On April 21, the head of the U.K.-based Campaign Against Antisemitism, Gideon Falter, called for the London Metropolitan Police chief to [resign](#) in the wake of an incident in which Falter was asked to leave an anti-Israel march because he is “openly Jewish.”

- » A police officer told Falter during the march last week that he should leave because “you are quite openly Jewish. This is a pro-Palestinian march. I am not accusing you of anything, but I am worried about the reaction to your presence.”
- » Another officer [told](#) Falter, “because you are causing a breach of peace with all these other people, you will be arrested” if Falter did not leave.
- » *The Jerusalem Post* [reported](#) that British Home Secretary James Cleverly “had contacted the [Metropolitan Police] about the incident.”
- On April 20, France’s *Le Monde* reported that French police were seeking to [question](#) political candidate Rima Hassan, who is running for a seat in the European Parliament under the ticket of the far-left LFI party, for allegedly “advocating terrorism.”
 - » Hassan previously referred to the October 7 attack as a “legitimate action” and said that Israel does not have the right to self-defense.
- On April 19, French police [arrested](#) a suspect at Iran’s consulate in Paris who was wearing an explosive vest and carrying a grenade. He had threatened to detonate himself at the consulate earlier.

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