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# Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update May 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 conflict between Israel, the Iranian regime, and the regime's proxies. 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

- On May 6, Hamas announced that it had accepted a ceasefire deal; however, reports indicated that Israeli officials stated that this was “a [trick](#)” and “a [deception](#)” because the deal Hamas had agreed to was a one-sided proposal that included elements that were unacceptable to Israel. Hamas may have been seeking to delay Israel's imminent ground operation in Rafah and portray Israel as the side preventing a ceasefire and hostage deal, despite U.S. officials, including Secretary of State Antony Blinken indicating that Hamas is to [blame](#) for the lack of a deal.
- On May 6, the IDF began to [evacuate](#) Palestinian civilians from Rafah by releasing flyers with maps of evacuation routes and safe zones, sending text messages, and making phone calls. These efforts to help civilians currently in Rafah get to safety will precede the IDF's long-telegraphed ground operation there with the objective of clearing out Hamas's last stronghold in Gaza of terrorist fighters and infrastructure.
  - » Providing humanitarian relief to large flows of Palestinian civilians who leave Rafah will remain an ongoing challenge that opponents of Israel could leverage to further delegitimize its efforts to defeat Hamas and recover the hostages.
- The United States has, for the first time since the war began, “put a hold on” providing a shipment of ammunition to Israel, according to a [report](#) in *Axios* on May 5. While President Biden indicated that protests on university campuses have not changed his Middle East policy, growing tensions that cause the Biden administration to place undue pressure on Israel would further embolden Hamas.
- On May 5, Israeli police [confiscated](#) *Al Jazeera*'s broadcasting equipment in Israel, following the passage of an Israeli law that allows Israel to temporarily close foreign outlets deemed detrimental to national security. In line with the law, the Israeli government voted to close the outlet for 45 days. The decision was an effort to diminish the Qatari-based outlet's ability to spread pro-Hamas propaganda and incitement.

# Last 72 Hours

## *Attacks Against Israel*

- At least 15,000 rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles have been fired at Israel from all fronts combined during the war, according to JINSA data.
- On May 5, Israeli fighter jets [intercepted](#) a drone approaching Israel from the east. It was unclear whether or not the drone was intercepted in Israeli airspace. No injuries or damage were reported in the incident.
- On May 5, a woman [tried to stab](#) police officers in the Old City area of Jerusalem after they attempted to question her due to suspicious behavior. The woman was detained and no injuries were reported.

## **Gaza**

- On May 5, Hamas [launched](#) at least 10 projectiles from Rafah near the Egyptian border toward the Kerem Shalom border crossing between Israel and Gaza, injuring 10 people.
  - » At least four IDF soldiers died from the [attack](#), and 10 civilians were seriously injured.
- On May 4, Israel's *Channel 12* outlet [reported](#), citing a senior Hamas official, that Hamas is preparing for ways to continue its operations in the Gaza Strip even after it no longer governs the territory.
  - » According to the report, Hamas "is ready to give up being a government in the Gaza Strip" given that it "ha[s] a lot of experience as an underground terrorist organization."
  - » The report further stated that Hamas is readying plans to continue operations in an "alternative" role in a post-war scenario and is coordinating with actors who are most likely to have a role in governing Gaza after the war.
    - According to the report, this includes Mohammed Dahlan, a former Fatah official and current U.A.E. advisor.

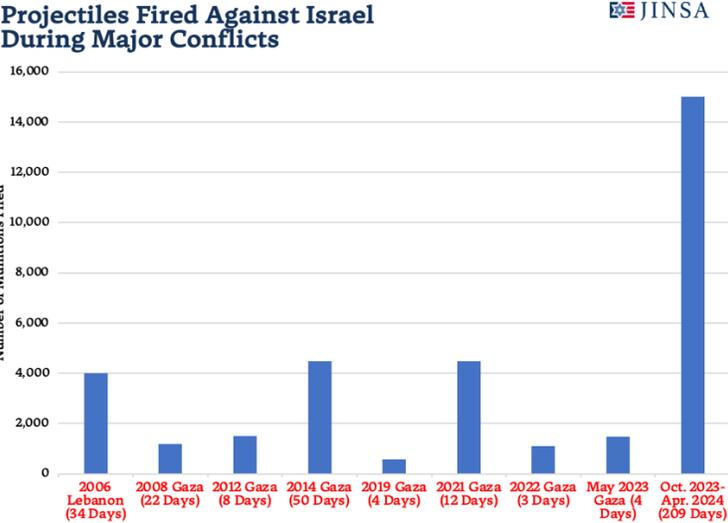
## **Lebanon**

- Sirens sounded in [Zivon](#).
- Citing Israel's *Army Radio*, *The Times of Israel* [reported](#) on May 5, "in January, some 334 rockets were launched at the north [of Israel], mostly by the Hezbollah terror group. In February, that number rose to 534," and "in March, the number of rockets fired at northern Israel soared to 746, and similarly, in April, 744 rockets were launched, according to" *Army Radio*. The station's data do not account for Hezbollah's drones and anti-tank missile attacks.
- On May 6, the IDF [said](#) that terrorists in Lebanon fired approximately 30 rockets toward the Golan Heights, inflicting no reported injuries.
- On May 6, the IDF [said](#) that Hezbollah fired a drone rigged with explosives toward northern Israel that impacted near Metula. Two people were [seriously injured](#) in the incident, according to *The Jerusalem Post*.
- On May 5, the IDF [said](#) that terrorists in Lebanon launched approximately 40 rockets toward the Galilee Panhandle, some of which Israel shot down. The barrage caused no reported injuries. Hezbollah claimed the attack.

- On May 5, Hezbollah [took credit](#) for a salvo of [at least](#) 20 rockets launched toward the area near Kiryat Shmona. The IDF said that the Iron Dome shot down some of the projectiles, and Magen David Adom medics [said](#) that shrapnel from the barrage lightly injured a 65-year-old man and damaged an ambulance.
- On May 3, *The Times of Israel* [reported](#), citing Israel’s *Channel 12*, that “Israel and Hezbollah are close to reaching an agreement that would see the terror group retreat away from Israel’s northern border and allow Israeli civilians to return to their homes” in northern Israel.
  - » U.S. diplomat Amos Hochstein led mediation toward the deal. The deal reportedly requires a hostage deal between Israel and Hamas that quells fighting in Gaza as a first step.
- On May 3, the IDF [said](#) that terrorists in Lebanon launched at least 10 rockets that impacted unpopulated areas near Mount Meron, inflicting no injuries.
- On May 3, the IDF [shot down](#) a drone that infiltrated Israel from Lebanon.

**Syria**

- On May 5, the IDF [said](#) that assailants in Syria launched two rockets toward Ramat Magshimim in the Golan Heights that hit unpopulated areas and inflicted no injuries or damage.



*IDF Operations*

- During a May 5 speech at Israel’s Holocaust remembrance center, Yad Vashem, which marked Yom Hashoah, the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Israel’s President Isaac Herzog [said](#) that this year, it “is not a regular Memorial Day,” and “this year, the State of Israel is at war. We are at war.”
  - » He added, “two hundred and twelve days have passed since the terrible massacre carried out by Hamas terrorists, against babies, children, and elderly, women and men. Since then, we have been in a period of ‘difficult days and heavy bloodshed.’ Since then, our brothers and sisters have been held hostage by a cruel enemy, and our hearts along with them.”

- » He also said, “I appeal from the heart to the families of the hostages, and I cry out, and pray, and hope, and commit on behalf of the entire nation: we will not rest and we will not be silent until our sons and daughters return home.”
- On May 5, soon after the Israeli government approved a 45-day shut-down of *Al Jazeera* in Israel, police and Communications Ministry inspectors [removed](#) the outlet’s broadcasting equipment from its office in Jerusalem.
  - » Addressing his decision to approve the directive to close the network, Communications Minister Shlomo Karhi [said](#), “our orders will go into effect immediately. Too much time has passed and there have been too many unnecessary legal hurdles in order to finally stop the well-oiled incitement machine of *Al Jazeera*, which harms the security of the state.”
  - » He added, “for months I have done everything so that they will not be able to work from Israel any more,” and “we are issuing the orders now; the propaganda [channel] of Hamas, those who incite against Israel, those who harm the security of Israel and IDF soldiers, will not broadcast anymore from Israel and their equipment will be confiscated.”

## Gaza

- On May 6, Israel’s Defense Minister Yoav Gallant [told](#) U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin that “at this stage, Hamas refuses any proposal that would allow” the release of hostages and that therefore “there was no choice left and this meant the start of the Israeli operation in Rafah,” according to a readout from Gallant’s office.
- On May 6, IDF fighter jets [struck](#) Hamas positions in the Rafah area that had been used to launch the barrage against Kerem Shalom on May 5.
- On May 5, the IDF [said](#) that senior Hamas commander Saleh Jamil Muhammad Imad, who was head of the Bureij Battalion’s combat support unit, was killed in a recent airstrike. The IDF said that another airstrike killed three members of Hamas’s elite Nukhba force who participated in the October 7 massacre.
- On May 5, the IDF and Israel’s internal security agency Shin Bet [announced](#) that the IDF conducted an airstrike that day against a Hamas command and control center that was located in a United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) facility in central Gaza.
  - » According to the statement, “the attack was carefully planned and carried out using precise weaponry to avoid as much harm as possible to uninvolved [civilians].”
  - » The IDF and Shin Bet stated that the facility was used to supply terror operatives with weapons and funnel other unspecified resources to Hamas members hiding in the group’s tunnel network.
- On May 4, the head of Israel’s National Security Council, Tzachi Hanegbi, told Israel’s *Channel 12* outlet that the IDF has come [very close](#) to killing Hamas’s leader in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar, on at least one occasion during the war.
  - » Hanegbi stated that Sinwar has been fleeing from hideout to hideout and added that Israel believes IDF troops missed reaching Sinwar by a matter of a few days at one point.
- On May 4, the IDF [said](#) an Israeli airstrike killed a senior PIJ commander in the terror group’s Rafah Brigade, Iman Zareb.
  - » According to a joint statement from the IDF and Shin Bet, Zagreb had “commanded and directed” several attacks and attempted infiltrations into Israel in recent years and had

commanded PIJ's elite forces during the October 7 massacre, specifically during the attack against Sufa and the nearby military post.

- On May 4, the IDF [said](#) fighter jets struck sites in Khan Younis after a rocket was fired from that area towards Kibbutz Ein Hashlosha the previous day. The IDF said fighter jets also struck a rocket launcher that was ready to be used in an attack against Israel, after civilians near the rocket launcher site had been evacuated.

### Lebanon

- On May 6, the IDF [said](#) that it targeted approximately 15 sites affiliated with Hezbollah's Radwan unit in al-Lwaiza in southern Lebanon.
- On May 6, the IDF [said](#) that it fired artillery toward the site of an earlier rocket barrage targeting the Golan Heights.
- On May 6, the IDF [said](#) fighter jets struck a Hezbollah compound overnight in the Sefri area in northeastern Lebanon near Baalbek. Lebanese media reported that three people were lightly injured in the strike.
- On May 5, the IDF [said](#) that it used fighter jets to target numerous Hezbollah sites in southern Lebanon, including in Markaba, Taybe, Kafr Kila, Odaisseh, and Mays al-Jabal.
- On May 4, the IDF [said](#) fighter jets struck a building used by Hezbollah in Tayr Harfa in southern Lebanon.
  - » The IDF said troops also shelled areas near Naqoura, Marwahin, Hanine and Matmoura with artillery to "remove threats," and tanks shelled a building in Kafr Kila where the IDF identified "terror activity."
  - » The IDF also shelled the launch sites where an anti-tank guided missile was fired from Lebanon targeting Shtula, and from which two rockets were fired at the Mount Hermon area.
- On May 3, the IDF [said](#) fighter jets struck Hezbollah positions in four areas in southern Lebanon. According to the IDF, fighter jets struck Hezbollah buildings in Kafr Kila and Maroun-al Ras, and infrastructure in Bint Jbeil and Aitaroun.
- On May 3, the IDF [said](#) fighter jets struck a building used by Hezbollah in Markaba, southern Lebanon, and troops shelled areas near Aalma ash-Shab with artillery to "remove threats."
  - » The IDF said that overnight two buildings used by Hezbollah in Aayta ash-Shab had also been struck.

### Syria

- On May 6, Israel's *Maariv* outlet [reported](#) that Iyad Al-Saleh, a senior Hezbollah recruitment official, was killed the prior night in the northeastern Syrian city of Al-Hasakah when an explosive device detonated in his car.
- On May 5, the IDF [fired](#) artillery toward the site from which two rockets were fired toward the Golan Heights.

### West Bank

- On May 4, the IDF and Israel Police [announced](#) that they jointly launched an operation in the West Bank town of Dayr al-Ghusun to eliminate a terror cell. The security forces killed five members of the terror cell after a roughly 12-hour battle, and forces seized several weapons during the raid.

- » Among the terrorists [killed](#) were Alaa Shreiteh, commander of Hamas’s forces in the Tulkarem area of the West Bank, and Tamer Faqha, who was responsible for a November 2 terrorist attack in which an off-duty IDF reservist was killed.
  - Another Hamas operative, Adnan Samara, and a Palestinian Islamic Jihad operative, Asal Badran, were also [killed](#) in the raid.
- » One officer in Israel Police’s elite Yamam counterterrorism unit was [severely injured](#) during the raid and taken to the hospital in “very serious” condition.

### *Humanitarian Efforts*

- On May 6, the IDF began to use [flyers](#), text messages, phone calls, and social media posts to help [guide](#) Palestinians out of certain areas in the southern Gazan city of Rafah in advance of IDF combat.
  - » The IDF published a map showing designated areas in eastern Rafah from which Palestinians were to evacuate.
  - » The map and the IDF’s instructions call for those fleeing the areas to move to the al-Mawasi designated safe area, which has now been expanded northward and eastward to encompass part of Khan Younis.
  - » One set of flyers cautioned residents not to approach Gaza’s borders with Egypt and Israel and was directed to all residents of the Gaza Strip.
    - The flyers read, “in this area the expanded humanitarian aid will continue. The IDF will continue fighting the terror organizations that use you as human shields. Therefore: Gaza City is a dangerous fighting zone; avoid crossing to the north of Wadi Gaza.” The flyer also stated, “it is prohibited to come near to the eastern and southern security fence.”
    - The flyers also announced the expansion of the al-Mawasi designated humanitarian zone and included the map of the zone’s new boundaries.
  - » Another set of flyers was addressed directly to individuals in eastern Rafah neighborhoods and warned that “the IDF is about to operate with force against the terror organizations in the area you currently reside, as the IDF has operated so far,” and that “anyone in the area puts themselves and their family members in danger.”
    - The second set of flyers also warned individuals not to approach Gaza’s borders with Egypt and Israel.
- On May 6, Juliette Touma, communications director for UNRWA, released a [statement](#) indicating that UNRWA “will not take part in any forced evacuation of the population in Rafah or elsewhere in Gaza.” Touma added, “we are committed to staying and delivering humanitarian assistance.”
- On May 5, Israel [closed](#) the Kerem Shalom crossing into Gaza after Hamas rocket fire on the area.
- On May 4, United Nations (UN) spokesperson Farhan Haq [said](#) that aid from a UN convoy that the United States stated had been [intercepted](#) and diverted by Hamas was entirely “subsequently accounted for” and “being distributed by the UN.”
  - » Haq stated that the aid “was rerouted by armed men” to the wrong UN facility following an unspecified “miscommunication” with the convoy.

- According to Haq, the aid was ultimately directed to the correct UN warehouse, a UN World Food Program facility in Beit Hanoun.
- » Haq added that the UN has clarified the misunderstanding with the “de facto authorities in Gaza to ensure that this doesn’t happen again.”
- According to Israel’s Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories ([COGAT](#)), from the beginning of the war to May 3, there have been 520,580 tons of humanitarian aid that entered Gaza on 27,330 trucks.

### *Ceasefire and Hostage Negotiations*

- On May 6, Hamas announced that it had accepted a ceasefire deal; however, reports indicated that Israeli officials claimed Hamas’s announcement was “a [trick](#)” and “a [deception](#)” because the deal Hamas had agreed to include elements that were unacceptable to Israel.
- On May 6, CIA Director Bill Burns will reportedly meet with Prime Minister Netanyahu as part of a last-chance effort to reach a ceasefire and hostage deal. Burns’s meeting in Israel followed his [trip](#) to Egypt on May 3 to discuss the ceasefire and hostage negotiations.
- On May 6, Hamas spokesman Abdul Latif al-Qanou [stated](#), “we will continue the negotiations positively and with an open heart,” despite Israel’s efforts to evacuate Rafah.
  - » However, also on May 6, a Hamas official [told](#) Israel’s *Walla* news outlet that “the Israeli decision to begin evacuating the population will stop the negotiations on the deal, which had progressed well and we were close to an agreement.”
    - The Hamas official added that Prime Minister “Netanyahu is under the illusion that the threat of an invasion of Rafah will put pressure on Hamas, but it will only lead to the collapse of the negotiations.”
- On May 6, following a *New York Times* [article](#) on May 5 that alleged a ceasefire and hostage deal was possible until Prime Minister Netanyahu released several statements that caused Hamas to harden its position, Netanyahu [released](#) a statement claiming that “Hamas is the one that sabotages any deal by not moving one millimeter from its extreme demands that no Israeli government could accept.”
  - » Following reports that Israel was willing to accept a deal that marked the effective end of the war, Netanyahu responded on May 5 that “Israel cannot accept this.” He added, “we are not ready to accept a situation in which the Hamas battalions come out of their bunkers, take control of Gaza again, rebuild their military infrastructure, and return to threatening the citizens of Israel in the surrounding communities, in the cities of the south, in all parts of the country.”
    - Netanyahu argued, “Israel will not agree to Hamas’s demands, which mean surrender, and will continue the fighting until all its goals are achieved.”
- On May 5, Israel’s *Maariv* outlet [reported](#) that Israel’s Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said that day that a ceasefire and hostage deal will likely not come to fruition in the current framework due to Hamas’s intransigence.
  - » Gallant stated that therefore it is “clear” that there will be intense combat in the near future in the southern Gazan city of Rafah, as well as in “other places” across the Gaza Strip.

- » The report also quoted an Israeli security official as saying that a Rafah offensive is imminent unless there is a “U-turn by Hamas” in its negotiating positions.
- On May 4, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken [noted](#) that Hamas “purports to represent” the Palestinian people, and, “if it is true, then taking the ceasefire should be a no-brainer.” He added, “the leaders of Hamas that we’re indirectly engaged with—through the Qataris, through the Egyptians—are, of course, living outside of Gaza.”
- On May 4, Israel’s *Channel 12* [reported](#) that a Hamas source claimed the terrorist group approved the first phase of a hostage deal that would include a U.S. guarantee that Israel would withdraw from Gaza after 124 days, following the conclusion of all three phases of the deal. The Hamas source stated that the deal was communicated via Egyptian and Qatari mediators.
  - » The report also claimed that the deal included a U.S. promise that Israel would not begin a ground operation in Rafah.
- On May 3, *The Wall Street Journal* [reported](#) that Israel had given Hamas one week to reach a ceasefire and hostage deal or it would begin its ground operation in Rafah.

### *Post-War Planning*

- On May 3, *The New York Times* [reported](#) that senior officials in the Israeli government are exploring a plan in which Israel and Arab states would maintain joint control over Gaza after the war.
  - » Under the plan, the Israel-Arab partnership would appoint leaders in Gaza to redevelop Gaza, maintain order, and overhaul Gaza’s education system.
  - » After 10 years, the plan would allow for Gaza to vote on whether it wants to unite with an unspecified Palestinian administration that would govern both Gaza and the West Bank. In the meantime, Israel would continue military operations in Gaza.

### *Casualties and Hostages*

- Over 1,200 people were [killed](#) in Israel, and 13,000 Israelis have been [injured](#) in the war.
  - » 612 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#).
    - 267 IDF soldiers have been [killed](#) during ground combat in Gaza so far.
    - The IDF [announced](#) the deaths of four soldiers who were killed in a Hamas-claimed rocket attack against Kerem Shalom on May 5; Staff Sgt. Ruben Marc Mordechai Assouline, 19, from Ra’anana; Staff Sgt. Ido Testa, 19, from Jerusalem; Staff Sgt. Tal Shavit, 21, from Kfar Giladi; and [Sgt. Michael Ruzal](#), 18, from Rishon Lezion.
    - As of May 6, 1,609 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, 34,735 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza, and 78,108 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, at least 497 people have been [killed](#), and an additional 4,950 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](#) 133 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.
  - » On May 3, Israel formally [announced](#) that Elyakim Libman, an Israeli citizen previously thought to have been a hostage, died in Israel on October 7 after Libman’s body was located in Israel and forensic tests were conducted.

### *Iranian Involvement and Response*

- On May 6, Israel’s *Maariv* outlet [reported](#), citing a report that day from the United Kingdom’s *The Telegraph* outlet, that Iran is using a secret drone facility to train Hezbollah operatives to conduct drone attacks against northern Israel.

- » The facility, reportedly located near the Iranian city of Qom, is used to both test drones and train pilots, according to the report.
- On May 3, the Houthis threatened to [expand](#) their attacks into the Mediterranean Sea by targeting “all ships that violate the ban (on) Israeli navigation and that head to the ports of occupied Palestine from the Mediterranean Sea in any reachable area within our ample zone.”

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

- On May 6, President Biden [met](#) with Jordan’s King Abdullah at the White House as prospects for a ceasefire and hostage release deal appeared to decline.
- On May 5, *Axios* [reported](#), citing two Israeli officials, that the United States held up an ammunition shipment to Israel, marking the first time that the United States has stopped an aid delivery to Israel since the war began.
- In a *Financial Times* [article](#) released on May 5, U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan stated, “the integrated vision is a bilateral understanding between the US and Saudi Arabia combined with normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabia, combined with meaningful steps on behalf of the Palestinian people.” He added, “all of that has to come together ... You can’t disentangle one piece from the others.”
- On May 4, Secretary of State Antony Blinken [argued](#) that “absent a credible plan to genuinely protect civilians who are in harm’s way—and keep in mind there are now 1.4 million or so people in Rafah, many of them displaced from the north—absent such a plan, we can’t support a major military operation going into Rafah because the damage it would do is beyond what’s acceptable.”
  - » Blinken also noted that Israel has “a complicated government. It’s a balancing act when you have a coalition. And if you’re just looking at the politics of it, that’s something that he has to factor in ... Irrespective of what you think of the prime minister, the government, what’s important to understand is that much of what he’s doing is not simply a reflection of his politics or his policies; it’s actually a reflection of where a large majority of Israelis are in this moment.”
- In a [statement](#) marking World Press Freedom Day on May 3, President Biden noted that “2023 was one of the deadliest years for journalists in recent memory. One reason for that is the war in Gaza, where far too many journalists, the vast majority of them Palestinian, have been killed.”
- On May 3, *The Washington Post* [reported](#) that Secretary of State Antony Blinken delivered a message to Qatar’s Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani in April that Qatar should expel Hamas leaders if they do not agree to a ceasefire and hostage release deal.
- On May 3, 86 Democrats in the House of Representatives signed a [letter](#) to President Biden claiming Israel’s aid restrictions “call into question” Israel’s assurances that it would abide by U.S. and international law. The letter stated that the members “expect the administration to ensure (Israel’s) compliance with existing law and to take all conceivable steps to prevent further humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza.
- On May 3, Turkey’s President Erdogan [stated](#) that the decision to halt trade with Israel was “to force Israel to agree to a ceasefire and increase the amount of humanitarian aid to enter.”

- On May 3, U.K. Foreign Minister David Cameron [announced](#) new sanctions on extremists in the West Bank accused of violence against Palestinians. According to Cameron, the sanctions package “targets two groups leading these attacks, and four individuals who are directly responsible for egregious violence against Palestinian civilians.”
- On May 3, The World Health Organization’s Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus [warned](#) that “WHO is deeply concerned that a full-scale military operation in Rafah, Gaza, could lead to a bloodbath, and further weaken an already broken health system.”
  - » WHO released a statement claiming that “a new wave of displacement would exacerbate overcrowding, further limiting access to food, water, health and sanitation services, leading to increased disease outbreaks, worsening levels of hunger, and additional loss of lives.” The statement also noted that “the broken health system would not be able to cope with a surge in casualties and deaths that a Rafah incursion would cause.”

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

- On May 6, several [protesters](#) held up a sign that read “stop genocide in Gaza” outside of the entrance to the Auschwitz museum in Poland as thousands of Jewish students marched there on Holocaust Remembrance Day.
  - » The International March of the Living responded with a statement indicating that “the half a dozen protestors who perversely saw this as an opportunity to voice hatred against Israel and the Jewish people serve as a timely reminder of the importance of Holocaust education and remembrance, and of teaching the dangers of hatred and extremism.”
- On May 6, a protester [disrupted](#) the wreath laying ceremony at Yad Vashem in honor of Holocaust Remembrance Day and demanded, “we must not descend into the abyss again. What else is necessary for you to go home?”
- Protesters continued occupying U.S. college campuses, putting students at risk and prompting both condemnation and support from officials in the United States and abroad. School officials at campuses across the country have begun clearing out the encampments in accordance with their codes of conduct.
  - » On May 6, Columbia University [canceled](#) its university-wide commencement ceremony and chose to replace it with “smaller-scale, school-based celebrations,” following the school’s decision to shut down the pro-Palestinian protesters’ encampment.
  - » On May 5, *Fox News* [reported](#) that at least 2,400 people have been arrested at anti-Israel protests at college and university campuses across the United States since mid-April.
  - » On May 4, twenty-five anti-Israel protesters were [arrested](#) for trespassing at the University of Virginia after they refused to remove their encampment.
    - The university’s president, Jim Ryan, said Virginia State Police were called in after attempts by university police “to resolve the situation were met with physical confrontation and attempted assault,” alleging that the protesters included people unaffiliated with the school.
  - » On May 4, the University of California, Santa Cruz chapter of the anti-Israel group, Students for Justice for Palestine (SJP), [issued a list of demands](#) on its social media calling on the school to boycott Israel and Jewish community organizations.

- In the social media post listing the group’s “demands,” they write, “Cut ties UC wide with all zionist organizations—including study abroad programs, fellowships, seminars, research collaborations and universities. Cut ties with the Hellen Diller foundation, Koret foundation, Israel Institute and Hillel International.”
- Jewish organizations have denounced the demands as antisemitic.
- The Bay Area Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC), wrote on X, “Three of the four organizations cited in the academic boycott demand by encampment activists at UCSC are Jewish charities and communal groups ... They are pillars of the Jewish community. This isn’t just about opposing Israel’s Gaza actions but seems aimed at Jewish institutions, revealing underlying antisemitism.”
- » On May 4, the University of Vermont [agreed](#) to the demands of the organizers of the anti-Israel encampment on its campus and removed U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield’s speech from the university’s upcoming commencement ceremony.
- » On May 4, administrators at the University of California, Riverside, announced they had [agreed](#) to the demands of the anti-Israel protesters on its campus in order to get protesters to close the encampment.
  - In the agreement, UC Riverside agreed to form a task force to explore removing its endowment from the broader University of California System’s management and invest those funds “in a manner that will be financially and ethically sound for the university with consideration to the companies involved in arms manufacturing and delivery.”
  - UC Riverside’s announcement marks an apparent break from the policy of the broader UC System, which announced last week that it opposes “calls for boycott against and divestment from Israel.”
- » On May 3, anti-Israel protesters [disrupted](#) the commencement ceremony at the University of Michigan’s School of Music, Theatre & Dance. The protesters, many of them wearing masks, held signs that read “UM funds genocide” and “ACAB.” After several warnings, police escorted the protesters out.
- On May 4, at least three synagogues and a museum in New York [received](#) bomb threats, none of which were deemed credible by the New York Police Department (NYPD).
  - » Manhattan Borough President Mark D. Levine wrote on X that the bomb threats were “a clear hate crime, and part of a growing trend of ‘swatting’ incidents targeting Jewish institutions ... This is a clear effort to sow fear in the Jewish community. Cannot be accepted.”
- On May 4, Israel’s Ambassador to Sweden Ziv Nevo Kulman [condemned](#) the burning of a Quran in Malmö by a pair of agitators, one of whom was wrapped in an Israeli flag.
  - » Kulman wrote, “burning the holy book of Koran while waving the Israeli flag is a disgusting act of disrespect, not only towards the 20% of Israeli citizens of the Muslim faith but also against the values of tolerance and mutual respect. I condemn this cowardly act in the strongest words. Malmö should be united by music the coming week, not hate!”

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