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Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update October 17, 2023

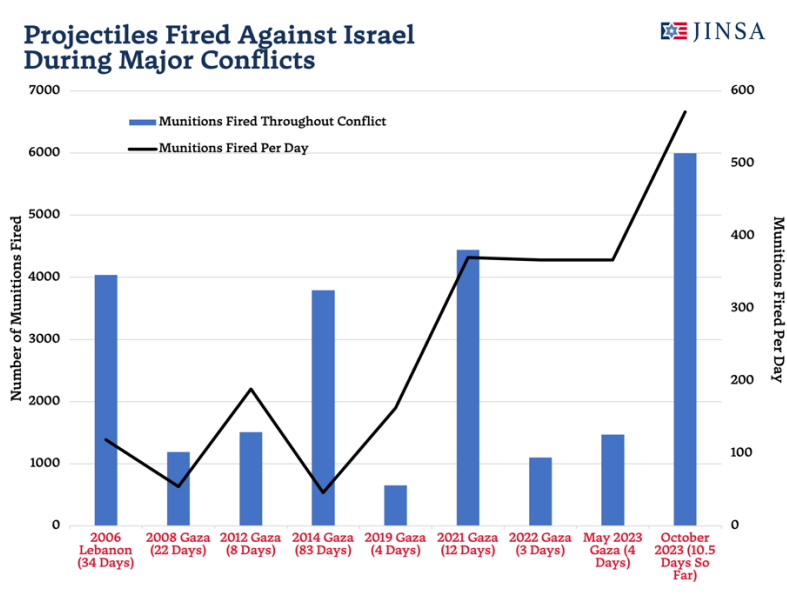
On October 7, Hamas launched an unprovoked and unprecedented multi-pronged attack on Israel by land, air, and sea. JINSA issued a NatSec Brief with an [early assessment](#) of the war on October 8 and has produced daily updates during the war. JINSA also held a [webinar](#) yesterday with JINSA Vice President for Policy Blaise Misztal, JINSA's Senior Vice President for Israeli Affairs IDF MG (ret.) Yaacov Ayish, IDF MG (ret.) JINSA Distinguished Fellow Amikam Norkin, and JINSA Distinguished Fellow IDF MG (ret.) Yaakov Amidror about the war. Updated information and analysis are below, which JINSA will continue to produce throughout the war.

Last 24 Hours

Attacks Against Israel

- At least [6,000](#) rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles have been fired from Gaza during the war.
 - » Sirens [sounded](#) in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Beersheba, Rishon Lezion, and in Israeli towns surrounding Gaza, as well as other locations in southern Israel.
- A number of projectiles have been fired from Lebanon into Israel during the past 24 hours, and an attempted incursion by terrorists was foiled by IDF soldiers.
 - » The IDF reported on October 16 that shots were [fired](#) towards an IDF tank and posts on the Lebanese border and that the IDF responded with artillery fire.
 - » The IDF reported on October 16 that another anti-tank missile had been [launched](#) from Lebanon at the Israeli city of Metula, injuring three, including two lightly and one moderately.
 - Hezbollah [claimed](#) responsibility for the missile strike, and the IDF responded with artillery fire into Lebanon.
 - » The IDF also reported that an anti-tank guided missile was [fired](#) from Lebanon on October 17 at a military post near the town of Margaliot without releasing further details on the incident.
 - Later, the IDF said two more anti-tank missiles were [fired](#) from Lebanon toward the Lebanon border near Kibbutz Yiftah.

- » The IDF stated on October 17 that it killed four terrorists who attempted to [breach](#) the Lebanese-Israeli border and plant an improvised explosive device (IED).



IDF Operations

- The IDF stated that it [launched](#) strikes on over 200 targets in Gaza in the last 24 hours.
 - » Among the targets the Israeli Air Force [struck](#) were Hamas operational headquarters, a bank used to fund Hamas activity, and a number of Hamas’s underground tunnels in Gaza City, Jabaliya, Khan Younis, and Rafah.
 - » The Israeli Navy used precision weaponry to [target](#) Hamas buildings and weapons depots in Gaza City.
 - » The IDF announced it had [killed](#) Osama al-Mazini, senior member of Hamas’s political bureau.
- On October 17, the IDF [shelled](#) southern Lebanon after Hezbollah took credit for anti-tank fire that targeted Metula.
- According to the IDF Prison Service, [118 terrorists](#) who participated in the October 7 attack are currently detained in Israeli prisons.
- Despite IDF warnings to move to southern Gaza, roughly [100,000](#) people remain in Gaza City, according to an IDF spokesman.

Casualties and Hostages

- Over 1,400 people in Israel have [died](#), and another 3,400 have been injured in the war.
 - » 299 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#).
 - » Numerous foreign nationals have been killed in the war, including at least thirty [American](#) nationals, twenty-four [Thai](#) nationals, seventeen [British](#) nationals, ten [Nepalese](#) nationals, seven [Argentinian](#) nationals, seventeen [French](#) nationals, sixteen [Russian](#) nationals, four [Romanian](#) nationals, four [Chinese](#) nationals, three [Brazilian](#) nationals, three [Belarusian](#) nationals, three Chilean [nationals](#), three [Philippines](#)

nationals, two [Ukrainian](#) nationals, two [Peruvian](#) nationals, five [Canadian](#) nationals, a [Cambodian](#) national, a [Colombian](#) national, an [Irish](#) national, a [Spanish](#) national, a [Swiss](#) national, a [Turkish](#) national, and an [Austrian](#) national.

- According to the Palestinian Health Ministry, over 2,800 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza, and more than 10,000 have been injured during the war.
- According to the Palestinian Health Ministry, sixty-one people have been [killed](#), and an additional 1,200 people have been [wounded](#) in the West Bank.
- The IDF claims that at least 1,500 infiltrators from Gaza have been [killed](#) in Israel since the start of the war.
- According to the IDF's latest press release, the families of [199](#) individuals have been notified that their loved ones were taken hostage.
 - » Hamas spokesman Abu Obeida said in a [televised statement](#) that Hamas was holding roughly 200 hostages and that fifty hostages were held by other "resistance factions."
 - » Hamas [released](#) a video of one hostage, but it is not clear when each portion of the video was taken, with indications that some material was produced at least six days ago.
- Foreign nationals also remain missing, including at least thirteen [American](#) nationals, fifteen [French](#) nationals, fifteen [Argentinian](#) nationals, nine [Ukrainian](#) nationals, eight [Russian](#) nationals, three [Canadian](#) nationals, three [Philippines](#) nationals, two [Austrian](#) nationals, three [Italian](#) nationals, two [Paraguayan](#) nationals, five [Peruvian](#) nationals, two [Sri Lankan](#) nationals, two [Tanzanian](#) nationals, a [Chilean](#) national, an [Azeri](#) national, and a [Nepalese](#) national.
 - » At least eight [German](#) nationals, seventeen [Thai](#) nationals, four [Portuguese](#) nationals, three [Italian](#) nationals, and two [Mexican](#) nationals have been taken hostage by Hamas.
- On October 14, a 6-year-old Palestinian boy in the Chicago area was [stabbed to death](#), and his mother was seriously wounded, by their family's landlord, according to the local Sheriff's office. The suspect is in custody and allegedly targeted them "due to them being Muslim and the ongoing Middle Eastern conflict involving Hamas and the Israelis."

Iranian Involvement

- On October 17, Ayatollah Khamenei [threatened](#) Israel if it continued its security operations, announcing on Iranian television that "if the crimes of the Zionist regime continue, Muslims and resistance forces will become impatient, and no one can stop them."
- On October 16, *Reuters* [reported](#) that Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said that "preemptive action" may unfold soon and that "leaders of the Resistance will not allow the Zionist regime to take any action in Gaza. ... All options are open and we cannot be indifferent to the war crimes committed against the people of Gaza."

U.S. and International Response

- President Biden will be [traveling](#) to Israel on October 18 to meet with Prime Minister Netanyahu, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced on October 16.
 - » The meeting will focus on U.S. security assistance, hostage release efforts, and humanitarian aid.

- » President Biden will also travel to Amman, Jordan on October 18 to meet with Jordanian King Abdullah II bin Al-Hussein, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.
- » President Biden [announced](#) on X that he will “travel to Israel to stand in solidarity in the face of Hamas’s brutal terrorist attack. I’ll then travel to Jordan to address dire humanitarian needs, meet with leaders, and make clear that Hamas does not stand for Palestinians’ right to self-determination.”
- » IDF spokesperson Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus [stated](#) that Biden’s visit would not impact or delay Israel’s planned offensive into Gaza.
- On October 17, Romanian Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu was the [first](#) world leader to meet with Netanyahu in Israel since the war began.
- Several other world leaders will reportedly visit Israel soon.
 - » German Chancellor Olaf Scholz will [meet](#) with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and war cabinet member Benny Gantz on October 17.
 - » On October 17, Israeli press sources [reported](#) that French President Emmanuel Macron would be visiting Israel in the coming days.
- On October 17, U.S. Central Command head General Michael Kurilla [arrived](#) in Tel Aviv to meet with his Israeli counterparts and “gain a clear understanding of Israel’s defense requirements” as well as “ensure that Israel has what it needs to defend itself and [focus] on avoiding other parties expanding the conflict.”
- On October 17, during a press conference with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Berlin, Jordanian King Abdullah II [said](#) that “there will be no refugees in Jordan and no refugees in Egypt” and added that this would represent a “red line” for Jordan.
- On October 16, New York Governor Kathy Hochul announced that she would be traveling to Israel on October 17 on a “solidarity mission” to [meet](#) with those “who have been devastated by the horrific Hamas attacks.”
- U.S. defense officials indicated on October 16 that the U.S. 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit, which consists of [2,000 U.S. Marines and Sailors](#) and can conduct amphibious assault, crisis response, humanitarian assistance, and certain special operations, is sailing to waters off of Israel.
- On October 16, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken returned to Israel for a [meeting](#) with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.
 - » According to a [readout](#) from U.S. State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller, the two leaders discussed Blinken’s meetings with regional partners, and Netanyahu updated Blinken on the situation on the ground.
 - » Blinken [reiterated](#) support for Israel’s right to self-defense against Hamas and pledged U.S. commitment to provide Israel with what is required to defend its citizens, and he outlined his efforts to coordinate with the UN and regional partners to provide civilians with humanitarian aid. He also [discussed](#) the U.S. commitment to securing the safe and speedy release of the hostages.
- On October 16, Secretary Blinken also met with Israel President Isaac Herzog.
 - » Blinken [reiterated](#) U.S. support for Israel’s right to self-defense against Hamas and for providing Israel with the necessary assistance to protect Israeli citizens, according to a State Department readout.

- » Blinken and Herzog [discussed](#) ongoing efforts to protect civilians in harm's way by Hamas's actions and to secure the release of the hostages held in Gaza.
- On October 16, President Biden [spoke](#) with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani to discuss developments in the war and humanitarian efforts in Gaza.
- On October 16, Prime Minister Netanyahu [spoke](#) with Russian President Vladimir Putin to discuss the ongoing war, including ways to work on humanitarian developments in the Gaza Strip.
- On October 16, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken [announced](#) on X (formerly Twitter) that "the United States and Israel have agreed to develop a plan that will enable humanitarian aid from donor nations and multilateral organizations to reach civilians in Gaza, including the possibility of creating areas to help keep civilians out of harm's way."
 - » Large humanitarian aid convoys have amassed on the Egyptian-Gaza border on the Egypt side of the Rafah crossing, but none have been [permitted](#) to enter Gaza as of October 17.
 - *Al Arabiya* reported on October 16 that over 100 trucks are waiting at the Egyptian side of the Rafah crossing. The network also [reported](#) that the convoy will be allowed to enter on October 17, but this has not been confirmed by officials or other sources.
- On October 15, *The New York Times* [reported](#) that the U.S. Department of Defense sent a small group of Special Operations forces to help Israel with any intelligence and planning necessary for operations to free hostages in Gaza.

Analysis

- Despite having announced imminent "[significant ground operations](#)" into Gaza on October 14, Israel has yet to conduct such operations, reportedly in part due to inclement [weather](#) over the weekend.
 - » In light of comments [made](#) by IDF army spokesperson Lt. Col. Richard Hecht on October 17 that "we are preparing for the next stages of war ... everybody's talking about the ground offensive. It might be something different," Israeli soldiers' ongoing intensive preparations for urban warfare and amassing of hundreds of thousands of troops near Gaza indicate a large-scale ground offensive will likely come soon.
 - » Israel has stated that it is taking time to continue [familiarizing](#) its troops with the internal layout of the Gaza Strip and training soldiers to fight in complex urban warfare, which may also be a consideration in its operational timetable.
 - » Additionally, Israel may be allowing for more humanitarian developments to unfold, such as ensuring that the mass movement of civilians to areas south of Wadi Gaza is complete, before it begins major ground operations.
- During a JINSA [webinar](#) yesterday, JINSA Vice President for Policy Blaise Misztal discussed recent developments in the war with JINSA Senior Vice President for Israeli Affairs IDF Major General (ret.) Yaacov Ayish, JINSA Distinguished Fellow IDF Major General (ret.) Yaakov Amidror, and JINSA Distinguished Fellow IDF Major General (ret.) Amikam Norkin.
 - » During the webinar, MG Ayish (ret.) noted that Israel's restoration of water to the southern part of the Gaza Strip was part of an effort to incentivize Palestinians to travel south of Wadi Gaza.

- » MG (ret.) Ayish also noted the high number and sophisticated nature of the weapons employed by the Hamas fighters in the October 7 attacks, which included over 1,500 AK-47s, 1,000 IEDs, and eighty surface-to-air missiles.
 - MG (ret.) Ayish also observed that these realities suggest extensive and advanced artillery in Gaza, posing challenges for a prospective Israeli ground operation that is almost certainly imminent.
- » MG (ret.) Norkin responded to a question about the U.S. role in the region by saying the deployment of two aircraft carrier strike groups was a “very strong step” and added that the United States could “send even a stronger message” by rapidly deploying three or four KC-46A aerial refueling tankers to Israel.
 - Previously, JINSA has [recommended](#) that the U.S. expedite the delivery of KC-46A aircraft refueling tankers to Israel, which would significantly upgrade its refueling capabilities over its over fifty-years-old fleet of tankers and strengthen deterrence against Iranian aggression and nuclear development.

Israel Evacuates Communities Along the Border With Lebanon

The move creates a 2-kilometer buffer zone after escalating attacks in Northern Israel, which the Israeli Army attributes to Lebanon-based Hezbollah

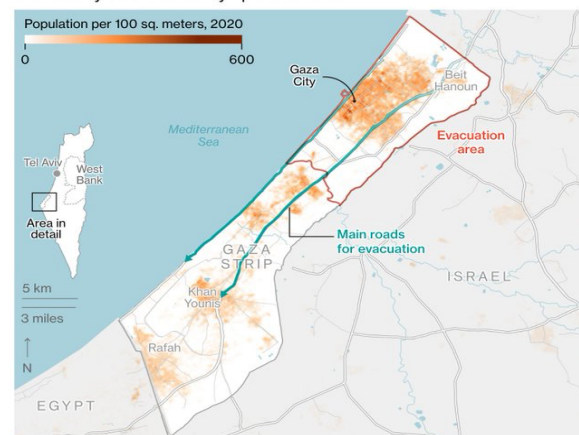


Sources: Israel Defense Forces; Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project
 Note: Attacks against Israel include rocket attacks, anti-tank fires and small arms combats. The map shows the centroid for each evacuated community.

Source: [Bloomberg](#)

Israel Urges Evacuation of Northern Gaza

The Israeli army has allowed Gaza residents safe movement to the south of the territory before Saturday 4pm local time



Sources: Israel Defense Forces; European Commission, Global Human Settlement Layer

Source: [Bloomberg](#)