



Ari Cicurel  
*Assistant Director of Foreign Policy*

Yoni Tobin  
*Policy Analyst*

Zachary Schildcrout  
*Policy Analyst*

Anna Schafel  
*Programs and Outreach Associate*

## Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update February 14, 2024

JINSA's [Israel at War](#) webpage is a dedicated resource for analysis, commentary, webinars, and media coverage about the 10/7 attacks and the ensuing Israel-Hamas conflict. JINSA will release the Swords of Iron Update on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. An update with the latest information and analysis about the war is below.

### Analysis

- On February 14, Hezbollah launched a [deadly rocket attack](#) against multiple locations in northern Israel, including a base in Safed that was likely the [IDF's Northern Command headquarters](#). The attack raises the risk of escalation to a full-scale war along Israel's northern border.
  - » The barrage, which killed one person and injured at least eight others, may increase international pressure on Israel to accept a French diplomatic [proposal](#) to end the fighting between Israel and Hezbollah.
  - » The attack may also reinforce Israel's concerns that Hezbollah is likely to violate any diplomatic agreement and that only stronger Israeli military action can roll the terrorist group back away from the border.
- On February 13, the Senate passed a [\\$95.34 billion aid package](#) that includes \$14 billion for Israel. The House of Representatives will now take up the legislation.
  - » JINSA released a [statement](#) on February 11 that "it's long past time for Congress to act on a bipartisan basis to provide essential assistance to America's most dependable Middle East partner. Israel is now at war with one Iranian proxy, Hamas, and faces the prospect of an even more devastating war with another Iranian proxy, Hezbollah. It's critical that Congress send a definitive message that, despite internal divisions, U.S. leadership remains steadfast in supporting its friends who carry the burden of fighting our common enemies."
  - » On February 9, JINSA Vice President for Government Affairs Matt Kenney released a NatSec Brief that [examined](#) the similarities and differences between bill provisions supporting Israel—many of which closely align with JINSA's previous recommendations.

# Last 48 Hours

## Attacks Against Israel

- At least 13,000 rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles have been [fired](#) at Israel during the war.

## Gaza

- No sirens sounded from attacks originating in Gaza.
- On February 13, Israel [released](#) surveillance footage purporting to show Hamas's leader in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar, walking through a tunnel along with his wife, three of his children, and his brother. The IDF [posted](#) the video on X with the caption, "Spotted: Yahya Sinwar running away and hiding in his underground terrorist tunnel network as Gazan civilians suffer above ground under the rule of Hamas terrorism. There is no tunnel deep enough for him to hide in."
  - » According to the IDF, the footage was [taken](#) underneath the southern Gazan city of Khan Younis on October 10, three days after the October 7 attack. Sinwar has been in hiding since the war began, and Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed in December that "it's only a matter of time before we get him."

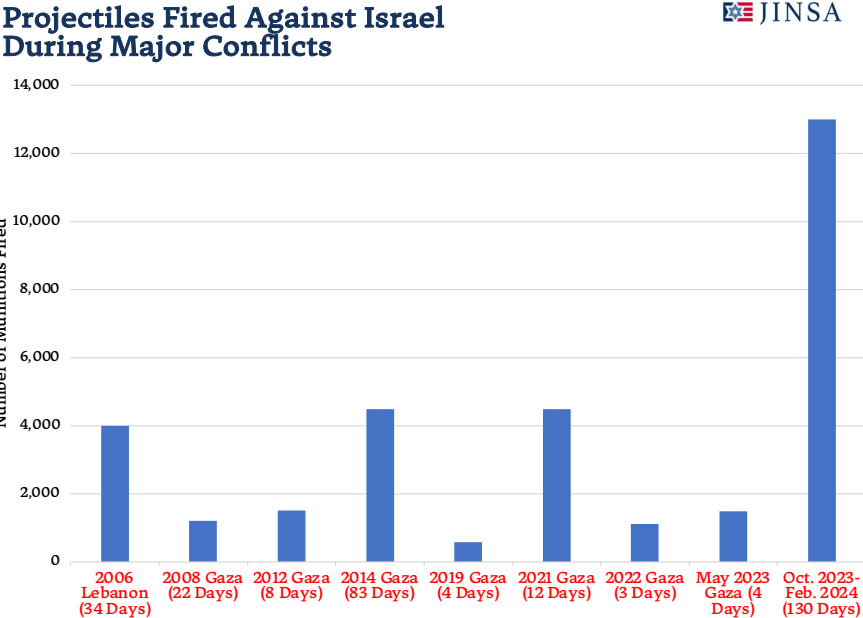
## Lebanon

- Rockets struck [Safed](#), and sirens sounded in [Manara](#), [Safed](#), and several areas [near Mount Meron](#).
- On February 14, Hezbollah [launched](#) a barrage of projectiles against northern Israel, triggering sirens in Safed, Meron, and other locations throughout the upper Western Galilee region, killing an IDF soldier and [wounding](#) eight others when rockets struck Safed. The IDF [said](#) that terrorists launched [rockets](#) at "an IDF base in northern Israel," likely the military's Safed-based [Northern Command headquarters](#).
- On February 14, citing Israel's *Kan* broadcaster, *The Times of Israel* [reported](#) that hundreds of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) operatives from Syria and Lebanon are part of Hezbollah's elite Radwan unit and have been used in attempts to infiltrate the Israel-Lebanon border.
- During a [speech](#) on February 13, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah seemed to denigrate a French proposal geared toward ending the current fighting between Israel and the terror group, and boasted that Hezbollah's attacks against Israel have "proven to be successful, and [have] demonstrated Lebanon's strength." He insisted that Hezbollah's attacks against Israel will not cease until Israeli "aggression" against Gaza ends.
  - » Nasrallah added, "we were hoping that once the ceasefire is declared in Gaza, the attacks would stop in Lebanon. However, [Defense Minister Yoav Gallant] said that this will not be the case, that even if they stop their attacks on Gaza, they will continue to strike Lebanon," and that "Gallant said he won't stop, so don't stop. We won't stop either."
  - » He warned that Israel will be forced to evacuate "millions" of citizens throughout Israel should Hezbollah's war with Israel expand.
- On February 13, Hezbollah took credit for a rocket [attack](#) against the northern Israeli city of Kiryat Shmona that seriously injured a 15-year-old boy and his 47-year-old mother, both of whom are in [stable](#) condition.

- On February 13, Hezbollah [fired](#) two rockets at the Mount Dov area of northern Israel which landed in open areas. No injuries were reported.

**West Bank**

- On February 14, Palestinian Islamic Jihad claimed credit for a [shooting attack](#) on the town of Meirav, just outside the West Bank.
  - No injuries were reported in the attack, which a town spokesperson said took place as kids were heading home from school. According to Israeli media reports, a home may have been struck by bullets in the attack.
- On February 13, a terrorist attempting to [stab](#) an individual near the town of Elazar was shot and injured. No other injuries were reported.
- On February 13, a vehicle [drove](#) erratically towards a group of IDF soldiers at a bus stop in the Gush Etzion Junction. The soldiers fired on the suspected terrorist, who was later arrested in the town of Elazar. No injuries were reported.



*IDF Operations*

**Gaza**

- On February 14, Palestinians who had been sheltering in Nasser Hospital in the southern Gazan city of Khan Younis began to [leave](#) the facility. Last month, Israel ordered the evacuation of the hospital and its surrounding areas, except for medical staff and patients.
  - In videos cited by the Associated Press, dozens of Palestinians can be seen departing the hospital.
  - The Hamas-run Gaza Health Ministry claims that around 10,000 displaced people had been sheltering in the facility.
- On February 13, IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi [said](#) in a press conference that the IDF will work to evacuate civilians from the southern Gazan city of Rafah before it launches an offensive there.

- » Halevi said, “I am saying here that the residents of Rafah will be allowed to evacuate the area. It is not right for the citizens, for the residents, for the families, to be in the area of fighting. When will it happen? How will it happen? We will decide when the time comes.”
- » Halevi added, “it is more difficult for us to fight in an environment where there are over a million people and another 10,000 Hamas operatives.” Halevi also noted that “in previous parts of the war, we sought to isolate the population. We have the capabilities to do it. We did it in Gaza City. We did it in Khan Younis. We did it in the central camps [of Gaza].”
- On February 13, IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzl Halevi [said](#) that “terror activity” occurs in the northern Gaza Strip “nearly every day” and that Palestinian civilians who have been evacuated from the northern part of Gaza will be able to return there “when acts of terror are not carried out there.”
  - » Halevi further stated, “we don’t want to create a situation in which the residents of the Gaza Strip mix with the enemy, thus creating danger to their lives. That is why we are still isolating the north of the Strip to prevent danger to the citizens of Gaza.”
- IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzl Halevi [said](#) on February 13, “every week we carry out special operations, while risking [troops’] lives in complex conditions with great uncertainty, to try and return hostages home. This time we were successful. There were more operations that did not succeed or failed. We will not stop trying, and we will do it with great responsibility.”
- On February 13, the *Wall Street Journal* [reported](#) that Israel has proposed to Egypt a plan under which Palestinian civilians currently sheltering in Rafah would be evacuated to Gaza’s west coast within 15 encampments containing 25,000 tents each.
  - » The evacuation plan reportedly would [involve](#) Egypt setting up the 15 encampments as well as field hospitals to treat injured civilians.
- On February 13, *Al Jazeera* [alleged](#) that an Israeli airstrike near Rafah injured two of its journalists, Ahmad Matar and Ismail Abu Omar. The latter was reportedly filming in Kibbutz Nir Oz during the October 7 massacre.
- On February 13, the IDF [said](#) that it discovered, and subsequently killed or arrested, dozens of Hamas members in a shelter in which thousands of civilians had sought refuge.
  - » The military also said that it created a corridor to permit civilians to leave the building. The IDF said that Hamas “cynically exploited the civilian population as a shelter for terror.”
- *The New York Times* [reported](#) on February 12 that “evidence [it] examined ... suggests Hamas used [Al-Shifa] hospital for cover, stored weapons inside it and maintained a hardened tunnel beneath the complex that was supplied with water, power and air-conditioning.”
  - » The report also noted that according to U.S. intelligence, Hamas held hostages at the Gaza City hospital and “evacuated the complex days before Israeli forces moved into Al-Shifa, destroying documents and electronics as they left.”
- According to February 12 [reports](#), the Israeli special forces soldiers who rescued Fernando Simon Marman and Norberto Louis Har from Rafah announced on their radios, “the diamonds are in our hands,” less than a minute after entering the building where they were being held captive. The Israeli Air Force then launched strikes against terrorist targets to

protect the forces during extraction, and a helicopter transported Marman and Har to Sheba Hospital in Ramat Gan.

- » The IDF released [video](#) of the operation on February 12.
- On February 12, Israel's Defense Minister Yoav Gallant [told](#) members of Israel's elite police counterterrorism unit Yamam that the hostage rescue represents a "turning point in the campaign" against Hamas.
  - » Gallant added that "there will be more operations" and that "Hamas is vulnerable, Hamas is penetrable, and it is possible to go anywhere and do anything." Gallant also noted, "we [still] have hostages and we need to reach them. Most of them we will not bring this way, [but rather] I hope, through processes of agreement. But how many more times will [a rescue operation] be required, and under what circumstances—who knows."
- On February 11, Israel's President Isaac Herzog [argued](#) in an op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal* that South Africa's case against Israel at the International Court of Justice is a "blood libel against the nation-state of the Jewish people" and a "shameful low" for the international system that emerged in the aftermath of World War II.
  - » Herzog also referenced the fact that his own comment from October 12—that there is "an entire nation out there that is responsible" for the October 7 attack—was cited in the trial to suggest Israeli leaders' genocidal intentions, saying that his remark was "misconstrued."
    - Herzog stated that his remark was made in light of the fact that "many Palestinian civilians entered Israel on Oct. 7 on the heels of the Hamas terrorists and participated in murder, rape and looting, much of it documented on film" and that "Hamas operates from within the heart of its civilian population and enjoys broad support."
    - Herzog added that his remark was "purposely distorted," writing that he also "stated, in no uncertain terms, that there are many innocent Palestinians, and that the state of Israel and our security forces don't view innocent civilians as targets in any way."

## Lebanon

- On February 14, the IDF [conducted](#) what it said was a "widespread" wave of airstrikes in Lebanon in response to the rocket attack on the Israeli city of Safed that day that killed at least one person and injured several others.
- The IDF [said](#) on February 13 that it used fighter jets to strike Hezbollah targets in the Lebanese towns of Houla, Qalaat Debba, Yaroun, Meiss al-Jabal, Yarine, and Chihine, and conducted artillery shelling against a Hezbollah target in the Lebanese village of Ramyeh following the terror group's rocket attack that day against Kiryat Shmona that injured two. Targets of the Israeli strikes included buildings and observation posts.
- On February 13, the IDF [struck](#) two Hezbollah posts in the southern Lebanese towns of Rachaya al-Foukhar and Ramyeh in response to earlier rocket attacks.

## Syria

- On February 13, the IDF, Israel Police, and Shin Bet security agency [said](#) that they arrested the chief of Hamas's military infrastructure, Omar Fayed, during a raid in Jenin. Fayed had orchestrated shooting attacks targeting Israeli soldiers.

### *Humanitarian Efforts*

- AFP reported on February 14, citing a Hamas source, that a delegation was [en route](#) to Cairo, Egypt that day to meet with Egyptian and Qatari mediators regarding ongoing hostage negotiations.
- In a February 14 [statement](#), Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas called on Hamas to “quickly complete a prisoner deal” in order “to spare our Palestinian people from the calamity of another catastrophic event with dire consequences, no less dangerous than the Nakba [catastrophe] of 1948.”

### *Casualties and Hostages*

- Over 1,200 people were [killed](#) in Israel, and 13,000 Israelis have been [injured](#) in the war.
  - » 570 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#).
    - 232 IDF soldiers have been [killed](#) during ground combat in Gaza so far.
    - The IDF [announced](#) the deaths of Lt. Col. (res.) Netanel Yaacov Elkouby, 36, from Haifa; Maj. (res.) Yair Cohen, 30, from Ramat Gan; Sgt. First Class (res.) Ziv Chen, 27, from Kfar Saba.
    - On February 14, one soldier was [killed](#) in a rocket barrage fired by Hezbollah targeting northern Israel. The name of the soldier has not yet been released.
  - » Numerous foreign nationals have been killed in the war, including at least 33 [American](#) nationals, 34 [Thai](#) nationals, 39 [French](#) nationals, 19 [Russian](#) nationals, 12 [British](#) nationals, 10 [Nepalese](#) nationals, 9 [Argentinian](#) nationals, 6 [Canadian](#) nationals, 4 [Philippines](#) nationals, 4 [Austrian](#) nationals, 4 [Romanian](#) nationals, 4 [Portuguese](#) nationals, 4 [Chinese](#) nationals, 3 [Brazilian](#) nationals, 3 [Belarusian](#) nationals, 3 [Italian](#) nationals, 3 [Peruvian](#) nationals, a [Cambodian](#) national, a [Chilean](#) national, an [Irish](#) national, a [Spanish](#) national, an [Australian](#) national, an [Azeri](#) national, a [Honduran](#) national, a [Swiss](#) national, a [Tanzanian](#) national, and a [Turkish](#) national.
- According to unverified figures from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry, at least 28,576 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza, and 68,291 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.”
- According to the Palestinian Authority-run Palestinian Ministry of Health, at least 394 people have been [killed](#), and at least 4,440 have been wounded in the West Bank.
- The IDF [claims](#) that it has killed at least 1,500 infiltrators from Gaza since the start of the war.
- So far, [105](#) hostages in Gaza have been released, [three](#) have been rescued by the IDF, [seven](#) have been [found](#) dead, three have been [mistakenly](#) killed by the IDF, and one was [killed](#) during an IDF attempt to rescue him.
  - » 81 Israeli hostages have been released.
  - » 46 hostages with foreign nationalities—some also holding Israeli citizenship—have been released.

- Thus far, 23 [Thai](#) nationals, 6 [Argentinian](#) nationals, 5 [German nationals](#), 3 [French](#) nationals, 4 [Russian nationals](#), 1 [Dutch](#) national, 1 [Filipino national](#), 1 [Mexican](#) national, 1 [Uruguayan](#) national, and 1 [American](#) national have been released.
- Hamas has released [36 children](#) and still holds two as hostages.
- Israel has said that terrorists in Gaza currently [hold](#) 134 hostages, and according to IDF spokesman Rear Adm Daniel Hagari, the IDF has [notified](#) the families of 31 of the 136 hostages that their loved ones died, including two who were abducted prior to October 7.
  - » Many of the hostages are foreign or dual nationals, including up to 8 [American](#) nationals, 6 [German](#) nationals, 13 [Thai](#) nationals, 4 [Portuguese](#) nationals, 3 [British](#) nationals, 2 [Italian](#) nationals, 4 [Romanian](#) nationals, and 2 [Mexican](#) nationals.
- On February 13, the niece of rescued hostage Fernando Simon Marman [said](#) that Marman never received medications that were to be [transferred](#) to the hostages under a Qatar-brokered deal with Hamas last month. The niece, Maayan Signal Koren, also [said](#) that another freed hostage—Marman’s brother-in-law, Norberto Louis Har—did not receive hypertension and diabetes medication he needed.

### *Iranian Involvement and Response*

- On February 14, the manager of Iran’s gas network control center, Saeed Aghli, claimed that “sabotage and terrorist” action caused an [explosion and fire](#) affecting a 790-mile gas pipeline that runs from Iran’s western Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari provinces up to the Caspian Sea. It is not clear who or what caused the explosion.
- On February 13 at roughly 9:20 p.m. local time, the Iran-backed Houthis [launched](#) one anti-ship ballistic missile into the Gulf of Aden. U.S. Navy ships tracked the missile but did not intercept it because the missile was not on a trajectory to strike near any ships.
- On February 12 between 3:30 and 3:45 a.m. local time, the Houthis in Yemen [launched](#) two missiles at the MV *Star Iris*, a Greek-owned, Marshall Islands-flagged cargo vessel in the Bab al-Mandeb Strait. The ship, which sustained minor damage, was transporting corn from Brazil to Bandar Iman Khomeini in Iran, according to U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM).

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

- On February 14, *The Wall Street Journal* [reported](#), citing U.S. officials, that the United States is investigating several Israeli airstrikes in Gaza that allegedly killed dozens of civilians and is also investigating Israel’s possible use of white phosphorus in Lebanon. These investigations are part of a State Department probe “to determine whether Israel has misused its weapons to kill civilians,” according to the report.
  - » One incident reportedly under investigation is an Israeli airstrike on October 31 on the Jabaliya refugee camp that allegedly killed over 125 people. The report stated that weapons investigators suspect that Israel used a 2,000 bomb in the airstrike, potentially provided by the United States, which Israel said targeted a Hamas commander in a tunnel.
  - » Investigators are also probing Israel’s alleged use of white phosphorus in October during operations in Lebanon. White phosphorus is highly flammable and “can be used legally in war,” but the report notes that “its use is restricted and can constitute a war crime if it is fired at civilians.”

- » The investigations are reportedly part of a new State Department process set up in August, prior to the war's outbreak, which is intended to give the United States more options to restrict military aid to countries if they misuse U.S.-provided weapons.
  - State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said that the process “is not intended to function as a rapid response mechanism” but instead “is designed to systematically assess civilian harm incidents and develop appropriate policy responses to reduce the risk of such incidents occurring in the future.”
- » According to the report, if investigators “conclude that Israel misused American weapons,” they could “recommend a cutoff in the supply of military aid, suggest restrictions on their use, or propose new guidance.”
- » The IDF declined to comment on the U.S. investigation and whether or not it would cooperate with the probe.
- On February 14, Israel's Ambassador to the United States Michael Herzog [told](#) Israel's *Army Radio* that the United States is not pushing for an end to the war. Herzog said, “the U.S. government has questions about the humanitarian side of the war's management, but I don't see an American stance of trying to stop us.”
  - » Herzog added that the United States seeks “a truce to free hostages, sure,” but added that there have not been “calls for a ceasefire.”
  - » Herzog further stated that despite differences of opinion among Democrats regarding U.S. policy towards Israel, “their basic support of our war goals has not changed.”
- On February 13, the U.S. Senate [approved](#) (70 in favor, 29 against) a \$95.34 billion foreign aid supplemental spending bill that [includes](#) funding for Israel, Gaza, the West Bank, Ukraine, Taiwan, and other partners in the Indo-Pacific, but does not include border provisions.
  - » President Biden [said](#) on February 13 that the vote “is critical to advancing America's national security interests” and added that it “will allow the United States to continue our vital work, together with our allies and partners all around the world.”
  - » He also said, “significantly, this agreement will provide life-saving humanitarian assistance for the Palestinian people, the vast majority of whom have nothing to do with Hamas,” and “I applaud the bipartisan coalition of Senators who came together to advance this agreement, and I urge the House to move on this with urgency. We cannot afford to wait any longer.”
- During a press briefing on February 13, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby [said](#), “any credible [Israeli] plan [to safeguard civilians in Rafah] that could be executable would have to take into account their physical movement, safe movement, as well as proper sustenance for them – food, water, medicine, access to healthcare,” and the United States has “not seen what the Israelis are thinking” in this regard.
  - » However, he noted that “we have seen them take actions, sometimes actions that even I'm not sure our own military would take, in terms of informing civilian populations ahead of operations where to go, where not to go.”
- On February 13 at roughly 2:35 p.m. local time, the United States [struck](#) one mobile anti-ship cruise missile in Houthi controlled territory in Yemen that was prepared to target ships in the Red Sea.



- While speaking alongside Jordan’s King Abdullah II in Washington on February 12, U.S. President Joe Biden [stated](#) that a major Israeli military operation in Rafah “should not proceed without a credible plan - a credible plan for ensuring the safety and support of more than one million people sheltering there.” Biden added, “we have also been clear from the start: We oppose any forced displacement of Palestinians from Gaza.”
- On February 12, President Biden [said](#) that the Palestinian Authority “must urgently reform so it can effectively deliver for the Palestinian people in both the West Bank and Gaza. Once Hamas’s control of Gaza is over, they must prepare to build a state that accepts peace, does not harbor terrorist groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad.”
- On February 12, John Kirby [said](#) during a press briefing that the United States is “pleased” about Israel’s successful hostage-rescue operation in Rafah. Regarding reports of civilian casualties during the operation, he said that “I can’t confirm those reports, but as we have said many times, the proper number of civilian casualties is zero.”
  - » He added that the United States “never said that they can’t go into Rafah to remove Hamas. Hamas remains a viable threat to the Israeli people. And the Israelis and the IDF, absolutely, are going to continue operations against their leadership and their infrastructure, as they should. We don’t want to see another October 7th.”
  - » He further clarified: “what we’ve said is we don’t believe that it’s advisable to go in in a major way in Rafah without a proper, executable, effective, and credible plan for the safety of the more than a million Palestinians that are taking refuge in Rafah. They’ve left the north, and they certainly went south out of Khan Yunis to try to get out of the fighting. So, Israel has an obligation to make sure that they can protect them.”
- On February 12, U.S. State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller [told](#) reporters that Israel is “well within its rights” to conduct hostage rescue operations, and that the February 12 operation that successfully liberated two hostages “should in no way impact the negotiations” to free remaining hostages.
- On February 12, State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller [told](#) reporters that the United States is “devastated” by the alleged Israeli killing of a 6-year-old Palestinian girl on February 10 in the Gazan neighborhood of Tel al-Hawa. The IDF has said it is investigating the incident.
  - » Miller stated, “we have asked the Israeli authorities to investigate this incident on an urgent basis. We understand that they are doing so, and we expect to see those results in a timely fashion. They should include accountability measures as appropriate.”
  - » The girl reportedly called Palestinian rescuers and begged them to help her prior to her death. Her body was reportedly found along with the bodies of five of her family members and two ambulance workers, and the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) alleged that Israel opened fire on an ambulance it sent to rescue the girl and her family workers.
- On February 12, *The Times of Israel* [reported](#), citing Israel’s *Channel 13*, that U.S. President Joe Biden said to Prime Minister Netanyahu over the phone that Netanyahu was not adequately fulfilling earlier pledges to increase the amount of humanitarian aid entering Gaza.
- On February 12, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Human Rights Council Michele Taylor [wrote](#) on X that United Nations Special Rapporteur for the Palestinians “Francesca Albanese has a history of using antisemitic tropes. Her most recent statements justifying, dismissing and denying the antisemitic undertones of Hamas’s October 7 attack are

unacceptable and antisemitic. We expect more of independent UN experts and condemn all forms of antisemitism.”

- » Albanese had said on February 10 that the victims of the October 7 attack “were not killed because of their Judaism, but in response to Israel’s oppression.”
- Reuters [reported](#) on February 12 that it had reviewed France’s proposal for ending hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah. The proposal, which France reportedly delivered last week to senior Lebanese officials, including Prime Minister Najib Mikati, called for Hezbollah to withdraw all combat forces to at least 10 kilometers north of the Lebanese-Israeli border.
  - » Under the proposed arrangement, Hezbollah and any other armed groups operating in southern Lebanon would also have to dismantle all facilities and premises close to the border, and up to 15,000 Lebanese army soldiers would be deployed to border areas in southern Lebanon.
  - » The proposal calls for a phased agreement under which both sides would first cease all military operations during its first phase. Within three days, during the second phase, all Lebanese armed groups would withdraw combat forces to 10 kilometers north of the border, Lebanese military troops would deploy to border areas, and Israel would cease overflights above Lebanese territory.
  - » In the third phase, Israel and Lebanon would resume negotiations on demarcating the border. The third phase would also include the establishment of an area in southern Lebanon south of the Litani River free of armed groups with the help of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).
  - » The proposal also calls for an international effort to support the Lebanese military with “financing, equipment, [and] training,” and calls for the “socio-economic development of southern Lebanon.”
  - » Senior Hezbollah official Hassan Fadlallah told Reuters that Hezbollah would not discuss “any matter related to the situation in the south before the halt of the aggression on Gaza.” An Israeli official told Reuters that Israel was reviewing the proposal and discussing it internally.
  - » Lebanon reportedly objected to certain parts of the proposal, including the demand to close Hezbollah facilities near the border. The concern of the Lebanese government is that it is worded too vaguely and could impact civilian institutions affiliated with Hezbollah.
- On February 14, the prime ministers of Spain and Ireland [asked](#) the European Union (EU)’s top body, the European Commission, in a joint letter to review whether Israel is complying with its human rights obligations in Gaza.
  - » Ireland’s Prime Minister Leo Varadkar also said that several EU countries are considering jointly recognizing a Palestinian state.
  - » An EU spokesperson confirmed receipt of the letter and said in a statement, “we do urge all sides when it comes to Israel to respect international law and we note that there must be respect, there must be accountability for violations of international law.”
- On February 13, Israel’s Ambassador to the United Nations Meirav Shahar [said](#) to reporters in Geneva that although “we plan to cooperate with the [UN] investigation” into allegations that United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) employees participated in the October 7 massacre, “the mandate as it stands right now is too wide.”

- » She added, “this is not a mandate that helps to check to ensure how you don’t deploy terrorists in the future, how you don’t have ... hundreds of tunnels under UNRWA schools, under their main headquarters,” and “the mandate needs to be more concise.”
- South Africa’s President Cyril Ramaphosa [announced](#) on February 13 that “the South African Government has made an urgent request to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to consider whether the decision announced by Israel to extend its military operations in Rafah, which is the last refuge for surviving people in Gaza, requires that the court uses its power to prevent further imminent breach of the rights of Palestinians in Gaza.”
- On February 13, a spokesperson for China’s Foreign Ministry [said](#) in a statement that China urges Israel to “stop its military operation as soon as possible, make every effort to avoid innocent civilian casualties” in order “to prevent a more serious humanitarian disaster in the Rafah area.”
- On February 13, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov [said](#), “we are ready to support any action that will lead to the release of the hostages and a ceasefire. But, we believe that the actions should be constructive, aimed at a comprehensive solution of the problem within the framework of international law and previously-adopted Security Council resolutions.”
- On February 13, Germany’s Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock [said](#) during a press briefing in Berlin alongside the Palestinian foreign minister, “I am especially concerned about the announcement by the Israeli government of a large ground military operation in Rafah,” and “of course, it is completely clear that also in Rafah, there is an unbelievably large net of [the] Hamas terrorist organization.”
- On February 13, Italy’s Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani [said](#), “at this point Israel’s reaction against the Palestinian civilian population is disproportionate ... there are too many victims who have nothing to do with Hamas.” Tajani also condemned Hamas’s October 7 massacre and said that Israel has a right to self-defense.
- France [said](#) on February 13 that it sanctioned 28 “extremist Israeli settlers” implicated in violence against Palestinian civilians in the West Bank which bars them from entering French territory. France’s Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs explained that “these measures come as violence perpetrated by settlers against the Palestinian population has increased in recent months.”
- Speaking alongside President Joe Biden at the White House on February 12, Jordan’s King Abdullah II [said](#) that “all attacks against innocent civilians—women and children—including those of October 7th, cannot be accepted by any Muslim, as I have previously stressed.” King Abdullah also called for a ceasefire and “a political horizon that leads to a just and comprehensive peace on the basis of the two-state solution—an independent, sovereign, and viable Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.”
  - » During his remarks, Abdullah stated that it is “imperative that UNRWA continues to receive the support it needs to carry out its mandate.”
  - » Abdullah added that “continued escalations by extremist settlers in the West Bank and Jerusalem’s holy sites and the expansion of illegal settlements will unleash chaos on the entire region” and expressed concerns that “the vast majority of Muslim worshippers are not being allowed to enter Al-Aqsa Mosque.”
  - » Abdullah also cautioned Israel against conducting an operation in Rafah, saying, “we cannot afford an Israeli attack on Rafah. It is certain to produce another humanitarian catastrophe. The situation is already unbearable for over a million people who have

been pushed into Rafah since the war started. We cannot stand by and let this continue.”

- On February 12, UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini [told](#) reporters, “no, I have no intention to resign” in response to Israel’s requests that Lazzarini step down over recent [evidence](#) indicating extensive [ties](#) between UNRWA employees and Hamas.
- On February 12, the EU’s top diplomat, Josep Borrell, [said](#) to journalists in Brussels, responding to President Biden’s claim that Israel’s conduct in Gaza has been “over the top,” that “if you believe that too many people are being killed, maybe you should provide less arms in order to prevent so many people being killed.”
  - » Borrell also said, “if the international community believes that this is a slaughter, that too many people are being killed, maybe we have to think about the provision of arms.”
  - » He added, “everybody goes to Tel Aviv, begging ‘please don’t do that, protect civilians, don’t kill so many.’ How many is too many? What is the standard?” and “Netanyahu doesn’t listen (to) anyone.”
  - » He said, “[Palestinians in Rafah] are going to evacuate? Where? To the moon? Where are they going to evacuate these people?”
  - » Responding to Borrell’s comments, Israel’s Foreign Minister Israel Katz [said](#) on February 13, “Israel adheres strictly to international laws of war, ensuring the safe movement of civilians in Gaza.”
    - Katz also said, “in stark contrast, Hamas prevents their safe passage. Our commitment to the lives of Gazan civilians is greater than Hamas’s. Calls to limit Israel’s defense only strengthen Hamas. Rest assured, Israel is resolute in its mission to dismantle Hamas.”
- On February 12, the International Criminal Court’s (ICC) head prosecutor Karim Khan [said](#), “I am deeply concerned by the reported bombardment and potential ground incursion by Israeli forces in Rafah” and added that the ICC’s investigation into Israeli and Hamas conduct that began in 2021 now “extends to the escalation of hostilities and violence since the attacks that took place on October 7, 2023.”
  - » Khan added, “all wars have rules and the laws applicable to armed conflict cannot be interpreted so as to render them hollow or devoid of meaning,” and “this has been my consistent message, including from Ramallah last year. Since that time, I have not seen any discernible change in conduct by Israel.” He also called on Hamas to release all its hostages.
- Dismissing earlier Egyptian threats to nullify its 1979 peace treaty with Israel if Israel conducts a military operation in Rafah, Egypt’s Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry [said](#) on February 12, “there is already a peace agreement between Egypt and Israel, which has been in effect for the past forty years, and we will continue to [abide by] this” while also criticizing Israel’s operations in Gaza.

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

- According to an American Jewish Committee poll [released](#) on February 13, 63 percent of American Jews feel [less secure](#) than they did a year ago, compared to 34 percent who feel about as secure as a year prior and 3 percent who feel more secure than they did a year prior.

- Reuters [reported](#) on February 13 that, according to law enforcement, the woman who opened fire inside a church in Houston, Texas, on February 11 had “antisemitic writings” in her possession and the gun she used had a sticker with the word “Palestine” on it.
  - » The commander of the Houston Police Department’s homicide division said the antisemitic writings may have stemmed from a “familial dispute that has taken place between her ex-husband and her ex-husband’s family” due to the fact that “some of those individuals are Jewish.”
- On February 13, pro-Palestinian protesters [heckled](#) newly-elected Rep. Tom Suozzi (NY-3) during his victor speech, one of whom rushed the stage and shouted, “you support genocide” and “ceasefire now.”
- On February 12, in Staten Island, New York, a man allegedly [struck](#) another man in the head with a baseball bat and called him a “dirty Jew.” The victim was taken to the hospital and the suspect fled from the scene.
- On February 12, the Palestinian Authority (PA)-run *Wafa* news agency [reported](#) that Jewish settlers from the West Bank town of Yitzhar entered the nearby town of Asira-al Qabliya, shot two men, lit a house on fire, and threw a Molotov cocktail at a car, setting it on fire.
  - » The settlers allegedly shot one man in the stomach and shot a teenager in the hand. The two men were reportedly taken to the hospital for treatment.
- On February 12, the Israeli organization Yesh Din [said](#) that Israelis from the West Bank settlement of Yitzhar harassed and threatened a Palestinian farmer and fired their guns in the air and toward the farmer’s tractor after another Palestinian arrived at the scene to intervene.
  - » Yesh Din also reported another incident in which Israelis from Yitzhar allegedly stole a water container owned by Palestinians and threw stones at houses in the Palestinian village of Madama. The perpetrators also allegedly fired at residents of Madama who intervened.
- On February 12, the PA-run *Wafa* news agency [reported](#) that a truck belonging to a Palestinian man in the West Bank town of Huwara was set on fire. There were reportedly no occupants in the vehicle at the time, and no injuries were reported.
- On February 12, London’s Soho theater [apologized](#) after comedian Paul Currie told a Jewish Israeli audience member to “leave my f—g show” after the audience member did not stand and applaud a Palestinian flag that Currie placed on stage. The audience member departed the theater after others in the audience shouted, “free Palestine” and “get out” until the man left.
- On February 12, local authorities [opened an investigation](#) into a ski equipment shop on Pischha Mountain in Davos, Switzerland, that had put up signs in Hebrew saying the store would no longer rent gear to “our Jewish brothers” due to a string of alleged “very annoying incidents” including theft.
  - » According to *BBC News*, the signs were [taken down](#) after 24 hours, and the manager of the shop apologized, saying that the signs were “badly worded.”

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