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# Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update February 9, 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

- During a February 8 JINSA [webinar](#) discussing the latest developments in the Israel-Hamas war, JINSA Distinguished Fellow IDF MG (ret.) Yaakov Amidror said, “we will have to find a solution how to move [Palestinian civilians] from Rafah, either to the center of Mawasi or other places ... and then we have to move to Rafah and take Rafah on the ground and under the ground [and defeat the remaining Hamas battalions].”
  - » Amidror also addressed threats to Israel on its northern border, arguing, “both sides [Israel and Hezbollah] are doing actions that they didn’t [previously] ... I think that at the same time, both sides are very clear in their signals that they don’t want deterioration into a big war. When [Hezbollah sees] what happened in Gaza, they understand that there are prices that I’m not sure [Hezbollah leader Hassan] Nasrallah is willing to take.”
- During a February 7 JINSA [webinar](#) discussing the post-October 7 surge in antisemitism, including at U.S. universities, Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY) warned that “the data shows that the number one hate crime in the United States is antisemitic hate crimes ... that’s data provided to us by the FBI. So, they are seeing this nationwide ... and they need to make sure that they are very focused on this national security and homeland security threat.”
  - » JINSA Distinguished Fellow Sander Gerber said, “I think that the fact that we now have students on college campuses protesting in favor of terrorist movements is a reflection of a rot in our society. [Not all of our society], but there are segments of society that have lost their sensibility.”
  - » JINSA President & CEO Dr. Michael Makovsky noted that “if this was right-wing, white supremacist [protests] ... it would be a national disgrace ... I don’t hear the same demonization of the pro-Hamas rallies.”

# Last 48 Hours

## Attacks Against Israel

- At least 13,000 rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles have been [fired](#) at Israel during the war.
- On February 8, Israel's *Channel 12* [reported](#) that a passenger on an El Al flight that day from Prague to Tel Aviv attempted unsuccessfully to storm the cockpit, forcing the plane to land in Greece.
  - » The passenger reportedly was grabbed and handcuffed by an El Al security officer. According to reports, Israeli officials believe the incident was an attempted terrorist attack.

## Gaza

- Sirens sounded in [Nahal Oz](#), [Sderot](#), [Ibim](#), and [Nir Am](#).
- On February 9, Israel's Iron Dome air defense system [shot down](#) a "suspicious aerial target" off the coast of Haifa.
- During a meeting on February 7, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [showed](#) U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken pictures of a large tunnel that the IDF recently discovered below the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)'s main headquarters in Gaza, *Israel Hayom* reported.

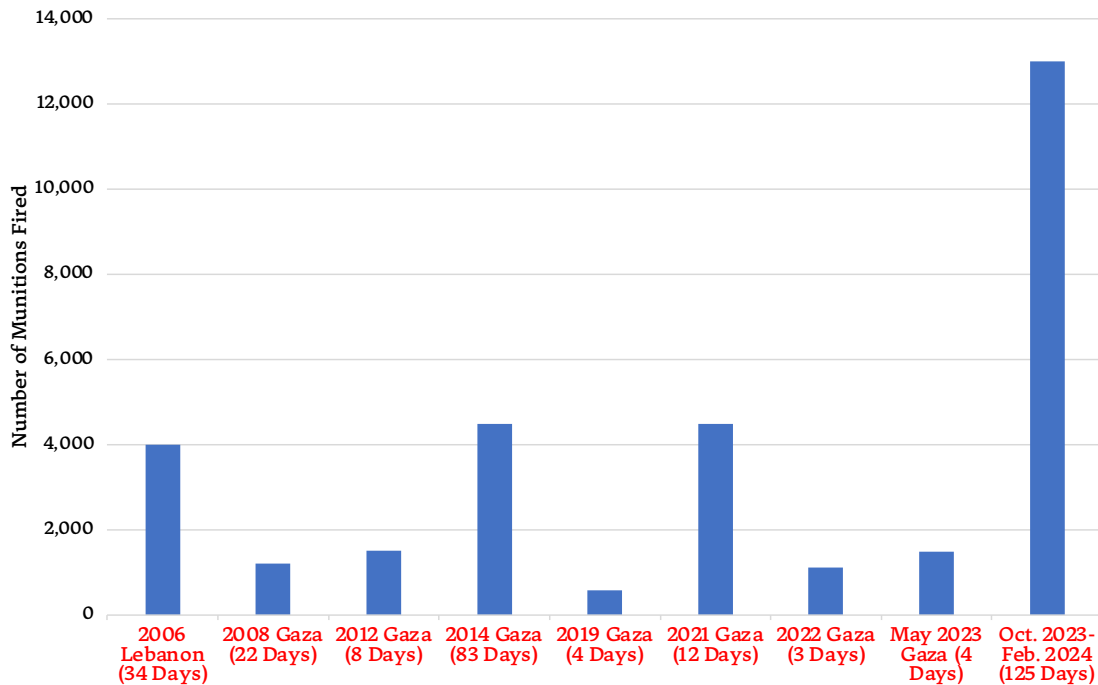
## Lebanon

- Rockets struck [Metula](#) and [Kiryat Shmona](#), and sirens sounded in [Abirim](#), [Goren](#), [Even Menachem](#), [Kibbutz Snir](#), [Dovev](#), [Shaar Yashuv](#), [Tzivon](#), [Zarit](#), [Arab al-Aramshe](#), [Shomera](#), and [Meron](#).
- On February 9, sirens indicating a hostile aircraft—likely a drone—[sounded](#) in Abirim, Even Menachem, and Goren.
- On February 8, Hezbollah [launched](#) at least 30 rockets towards Meron in Israel's north, according to Hebrew-language media.
- Projectiles [fired](#) from Lebanon that triggered sirens in Kibbutz Snir on February 8 landed in unpopulated areas.
- On February 8, Israel's *Arutz Sheva* [reported](#) that a hostile aircraft—likely a drone—entered into northern Israel.
- On February 8, terrorists in Lebanon [struck](#) a home in Metula in northern Israel with an anti-tank missile.
- On February 8, Hezbollah [fired](#) an anti-tank missile toward Kiryat Shmona in northern Israel, seriously injuring a non-commissioned officer and mildly wounding two IDF soldiers.
- On February 8, terrorists in Lebanon [launched](#) projectiles toward the IDF's Biranit base and Mount Hermon.

## West Bank

- On February 8, a Palestinian assailant [fired](#) at IDF troops near Dayr Sharaf in the West Bank. Soldiers in the 7037th Reserve Battalion killed the assailant after returning fire, Rescuers Without Borders said. The organization also said that two additional Palestinians were injured in the incident, possibly by the attacker. The IDF said that no soldiers were injured despite a bullet striking a soldier's helmet.

# Projectiles Fired Against Israel During Major Conflicts



## IDF Operations

### Gaza

- On February 9, [reports](#) indicated that Israel has intensified airstrikes in the southern Gazan city of Rafah as Israel pledges to begin ground operations there against Hamas. Rafah is quite crowded as more than one million Palestinians have sought refuge there amid intense combat in Gaza City and Khan Younis since October 7.
- The IDF [continued](#) its operations in the southern Gazan city of Khan Younis, eliminating Hamas operatives and raiding Hamas facilities.
  - » Troops from the IDF’s Paratroopers Brigade killed approximately 15 Hamas operatives in Khan Younis over the previous day, eliminated Hamas facilities through ground raids and by calling in airstrikes, and seized Hamas weapons and other military equipment.
  - » The IDF’s Commando Brigade raided Hamas sites in western Khan Younis, and troops eliminated a Hamas cell attempting to place an explosive device near soldiers. The 414th Combat Intelligence Collection Unit called in an airstrike and eliminated two Hamas operatives in the city.
- On February 9, the IDF’s Northern Brigade [called in](#) airstrikes on a group of Hamas terrorists in northern Gaza’s Beit Lahiya, killing several operatives.
- On February 8, *Al Arabiya* [reported](#) that according to an unnamed senior Israeli military officer, “the Khan Younis Brigade was the most powerful that Hamas had, with a very dominant commander. We are peeling it back, layer by layer.”
  - » The officer added, “I assess beyond a doubt that [Hamas head Yahya Sinwar] is in Khan Younis—along with some of the remaining Hamas leadership.”

- On February 8, the IDF [said](#) that in addition to several continued operational achievements against terror operatives in Khan Younis and northern and central Gaza, the Commando Brigade arrested dozens of people in Khan Younis, including two participants in the October 7 attack.
- On February 8, Israel's Shin Bet security agency [published](#) a video of an interrogation during which Muhammad Nasser Suleiman Abu Namer, a commander of Hamas's elite Nukhba unit, said, "I advise everyone to surrender, because your fate otherwise is death."
  - » He also said, "we made a decision that we don't want to fight and as soon as the army comes we will turn ourselves in," and "we sat in the room, we put all the weapons outside the room ... We sat and waited. When the army arrived, we raised our hands and surrendered."
- On February 8, a U.S. State Department spokesperson [said](#) the department is "aware of reports of [the] detention of two U.S. citizens in Gaza and [was] seeking additional information." The families of Hashem Alagha, aged 20, and Borak Alagha, aged 18, identified the two brothers as those detained in Khan Younis.
- According to an *NBC News* [report](#) from February 7 citing six Israeli officials and senior advisers, Israel is willing to permit Hamas's leader in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar, to leave Gaza if every hostage is released and Hamas governance in Gaza ends. However, an unnamed former senior Israeli security official told the outlet that "[Exile] is this magical solution that everybody would want, but there's absolutely no way Hamas would agree to that."
- Netanyahu [argued](#) during the February 7 press conference that "there is no alternative to the military collapse [of Hamas]. There will not be a civilian collapse [of Hamas rule] without a military one."
  - » He [criticized](#) those who doubted that the IDF's operation would achieve successes, praising Israel's "valiant fighters" who "proved that everything they told us was impossible was possible ... and more. He also claimed that 20,000 Hamas combatants have been killed or injured. The prime minister said that the IDF is preparing to begin fighting in the southern Gazan city of Rafah.
  - » Netanyahu [argued](#) that after Hamas is defeated, "the circle of peace will expand," and "there'll be no agreement [on further peace treaties] if Hamas is not defeated."
- On February 7, Hamas [said](#) that an Israeli airstrike in Rafah killed its senior police officer Majdi Abdel-AI and that a separate strike targeting a house in Rafah killed three additional people.
- On February 6, IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzl Halevi [said](#) while visiting northern Gaza, "today we are on day 122, but we are making progress, we are not standing still. When we talked about dismantling Hamas, we didn't think it would be in a week, we didn't think it would be in a month, it's peeling back layers."
  - » He added that the IDF's operations are leading to "more dead terrorists, more dead commanders, more destroyed infrastructure" and that "I hope that this pressure also brings us to achieve one more important goal, returning the hostages."
  - » He elaborated, "it won't happen without military pressure, let's not fool ourselves, that's why across the entire Strip we are applying pressure with fire, with a [ground] maneuver, with surprise raids, and we will continue to do it in a very, very high-quality way."

## Lebanon

- On February 8, Israel [responded](#) to Hezbollah's rocket barrage against Meron with artillery fire targeting the attack site.
- On February 8, [reports](#) indicated that Israel killed Hezbollah commander Abbas al Dabs, or Hajj Abdullah, in a drone strike.
  - » Israel's *i24 News* [reported](#) that day that al Dabs was responsible for launching anti-tank missile attacks towards the northern Israeli city of Kiryat Shmona and assisted Iran with setting up air defenses in Syria.
- On February 8, the IDF [responded](#) to Hezbollah's anti-tank missile attack that injured three in Kiryat Shmona with airstrikes against the source of the attack in the southern Lebanese town of Khiam.
- On February 8, the IDF [responded](#) to the projectile attack against the Biranit base and Mount Hermon with artillery fire.

## Syria

- Syrian state-run media *SANA* [reported](#) on February 9, citing a Syrian military source, that Syria's air defense systems shot down two drones west of the capital city of Damascus that entered Syrian airspace from Israel.
  - » Earlier that day, *SANA* reported that Syria's air defense systems were [engaging](#) "hostile targets in the vicinity of Damascus."

## West Bank

- Overnight between February 6 and February 7, the IDF [arrested](#) 21 wanted individuals in the West Bank, including in Qalqilya, Jenin, and three additional towns. In a warehouse in Qalqilya, Israel Border Police and IDF soldiers found materials for building explosives. The forces faced improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and were fired upon in Jenin.
- *i24 News* [reported](#) on February 8, citing *The Times of Israel's* correspondence with two unnamed Israeli sources, that during a February 6 meeting between several Israeli and Palestinian Authority (PA) security officials, Israel pledged to attempt to lessen tensions during Ramadan by reducing the quantity of checkpoints and raids in the West Bank.
  - » Israel will also reportedly permit "a subset of several thousand workers above the age of 45 to return to their jobs in Israel," while the PA will reportedly reopen Palestinian cities to Arab citizens of Israel. According to the report, Israel might "offer more flexibility" on distributing tax revenue to the PA that it is currently withholding.
- On February 7, the IDF and Israeli police [said](#) that Undercover Border Police and 8105th Battalion reservists surrounded a building in Nur Shams in the West Bank in which Moatasem Ali, a wanted terror suspect, was hiding. He was killed following a gunfight, along with two other gunmen who tried to escape. The soldiers and police confiscated weapons in the building and were uninjured.

## Humanitarian Efforts

- Netanyahu [said](#) during his February 7 press conference that Israel "has not committed to anything" vis-a-vis negotiations for a hostage release deal.

- » He added, “there is supposed to be some kind of negotiation via the intermediaries. But right now, given what I see from the response by Hamas [to the Israel-backed framework for talks on a deal], they’re not there.”
- » Netanyahu [argued](#) that “continued military pressure is an essential condition for the freeing of the hostages” and “surrender to Hamas’s delusional demands, that we’ve just heard, not only would not bring about the freedom of the hostages, it would only invite an additional slaughter; it would invite disaster for Israel that no Israeli citizens want.”
- » He also [said](#) during the press conference that “up to 60 percent of the humanitarian aid [in Gaza] is taken by Hamas.”
- While visiting Israel’s President Isaac Herzog at his home on February 7, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken [said](#), “there’s a lot of work to be done” to reach a hostage deal, and “we’re looking at [the recent proposal] intensely, as is, I know, the Government of Israel, and there’s a lot of work to be done, but we are very much focused on doing that work and hopefully, being able to resume the release of hostages that was interrupted so many months ago.”
  - » Blinken added, “we want to see [the hostages] back as soon as possible. The situation is dire. And clearly, Hamas is violating every rule of human behavior in this respect.”
- On February 7, Blinken [said](#) that any forthcoming IDF combat in Rafah “needs to put civilians first and foremost in mind.” He also said that “it is imperative” to investigate allegations implicating 12 United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) employees in the October 7 massacre, but the organization’s work “has to be preserved, because so many lives depend on it ... The functions have to be preserved.”
- On February 7, an unnamed Israeli official [said](#) to *CNN* there is “no way” Israel will agree to Hamas’s terms in its latest ceasefire proposal that would necessitate an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and an end to the war.

### *Post-War Planning*

- *The Times of Israel* [reported](#) on February 9, citing *Al Arabiya*, that Qatar and the United States are devising a plan to remove Hamas leaders from the Qatari capital of Doha.
- During his February 7 press conference, Netanyahu [argued](#) that only the destruction and demilitarization of Hamas can enable conditions favorable to a civil administration in Gaza that does not support terrorism.
  - » He argued further that because potential future administrators in Gaza fear that Hamas would put “a bullet in [their] head,” the idea that you can eliminate Hamas’s civilian governance before its military apparatus is “not serious.”
  - » He [announced](#) that “we will have to replace UNRWA. I have ordered that this process begin, and updated Secretary Blinken about this today.”

### *Casualties and Hostages*

- Over 1,200 people were [killed](#) in Israel, and 13,000 Israelis have been [injured](#) in the war.
  - » 564 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#).
    - 227 IDF soldiers have been [killed](#) during ground combat in Gaza so far.

- » Numerous foreign nationals have been killed in the war, including at least 33 [American](#) nationals, 34 [Thai](#) nationals, 39 [French](#) nationals, 19 [Russian](#) nationals, 12 [British](#) nationals, 10 [Nepalese](#) nationals, 9 [Argentinian](#) nationals, 6 [Canadian](#) nationals, 4 [Philippines](#) nationals, 4 [Austrian](#) nationals, 4 [Romanian](#) nationals, 4 [Portuguese](#) nationals, 4 [Chinese](#) nationals, 3 [Brazilian](#) nationals, 3 [Belarusian](#) nationals, 3 [Italian](#) nationals, 3 [Peruvian](#) nationals, a [Cambodian](#) national, a [Chilean](#) national, an [Irish](#) national, a [Spanish](#) national, an [Australian](#) national, an [Azeri](#) national, a [Honduran](#) national, a [Swiss](#) national, a [Tanzanian](#) national, and a [Turkish](#) national.
- According to unverified figures from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry, at least 27,947 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza, and 67,459 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 386 people have been [killed](#), and an additional 4,400 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, [one](#) has 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](#) 136 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 8, a representative of Kibbutz Be’eri [said](#) that Manny Godard’s family has been notified that terrorists in Gaza are holding his body. He and his wife Ayelet were murdered on October 7.

### *Iranian Involvement and Response*

- Iran’s President Ebrahim Raisi [said](#) on February 7 that the U.S. military presence in the Middle East disrupts regional security. Raisi stated, “the presence of U.S. forces has no justification” and that past and present U.S. deployments “in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and the region [are] in no way creating security. It disrupts the security in the region.”

## *U.S. and International Response*

- On February 9, President Biden [issued](#) a *National Security Memorandum on Safeguards and Accountability With Respect to Transferred Defense Articles and Defense Services*, which will require nations that receive U.S. military aid to provide “credible and reliable written assurances” that they are abiding by international law.
  - » The memo also requires the Secretaries of State and Defense to report to the president within 45 days if they assess that those assurances “have been called into question and should be revisited” and “requires the Secretaries of State and Defense to provide periodic congressional reports to enable meaningful oversight.”
    - The Secretaries of State and Defense must submit written reports within 90 days and once every fiscal year about “any new assurances obtained since the prior report” and the reports must include “an assessment of any credible reports or allegations that such defense articles and, as appropriate, defense services, have been used in a manner not consistent with international law, including international humanitarian law.”
  - » The memo “does not apply to (1) air defense systems; (2) other defense articles or defense services that are intended to be used for strictly defensive purposes or are exclusively for non-lethal purposes other than in armed conflict; (3) defense articles or defense services that are non-lethal in nature; or (4) transfers strictly for the operational needs of the Department of Defense.”
- On February 8, U.S. President Joe Biden [told](#) reporters, “I’m of the view, as you know, that the conduct of the response in the Gaza Strip has been over the top.”
  - » Biden also said, “I talked to Bibi [Netanyahu] to open the gate on the Israeli side. I’ve been pushing really hard to get humanitarian assistance into Gaza. There are a lot of innocent people who are starving, a lot of innocent people who are in trouble and dying and it’s got to stop.”
  - » Noting that he is actively in discussions with regional leaders regarding hostage release negotiations, Biden added, “I’m pushing very hard now to deal with this hostage ceasefire. I’ve been working tirelessly in this deal to lead to a sustained pause in the fighting, in the actions taking place in the Gaza Strip, because I think if we can get the delay for that, the initial delay, we would be able to extend that so we can increase the prospect that this fighting in Gaza changes.”
- On February 8 between 5 a.m. and 9 p.m. local time, the United States [launched](#) seven strikes against four Houthi unmanned surface vessels (USV) and seven mobile anti-ship cruise missiles that were prepared to launch against ships in the Red Sea.
- On February 8, White House spokesperson John Kirby said that the United States would oppose a major IDF operation in the southern Gazan city of Rafah at the current time if the operation lacked proper consideration for civilians. Kirby [stated](#), “absent any full consideration of protecting civilians at that scale in Gaza, military operations [in Rafah] right now would be a disaster for those people. And it’s not something we would support.”
  - » Kirby added, “our view is, any major military operation in Rafah at this time, under these circumstances, with more than a million, probably more like a million and a half Palestinians who are seeking refuge and have been seeking refuge in Rafah, without due consideration for their safety, would be a disaster.”



- » Kirby’s comments echoed similar comments made that day by State Department spokesperson Vedant Patel, who [told](#) reporters that “to conduct such an operation right now with no planning and little thought in an area where there is sheltering (sic) a million people would be a disaster.”
- » Both Patel and Kirby said they had yet to see evidence of serious Israeli planning for such an operation. Neither spokesperson clarified what the administration considers sufficient consideration or planning.
- On February 8, the U.S. Senate [voted](#) 67-32 in a procedural motion to advance a \$95.34 billion security bill to allocate \$61 billion in aid to Ukraine; \$14 billion for Israel; and \$4.83 billion to Indo-Pacific partners including Taiwan, among other funding. The bill needed 60 votes in the procedural motion to advance to final vote.
  - » There were no reports regarding when a final vote on the bill might take place, but a Reuters report stated that “some senators said they expected to remain in session during the weekend if necessary” and that the “Senate is expected to take days to agree on a final version of the security aid package.”
  - » The vote follows Congress’s recent failure to pass a bill that included funding both for foreign aid priorities and measures regarding U.S. border security.
  - » Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer [said](#) on February 7, “if we fail in this moment, if we abandon our friends in Ukraine to [Russian President] Vladimir Putin, history will cast a shameful and permanent shadow on Senators who block funding.”
- On February 8, *The New York Times* [reported](#) that earlier this week U.S. intelligence officials told members of Congress that while Israel had degraded Hamas’s combat abilities, it was not close to eliminating the terror group.
- Several senior Biden administration aides [traveled](#) to Michigan on February 8 to meet with Arab-American and Muslim leaders there and discuss the Israel-Hamas war.
  - » The aides reportedly included Samantha Power, the administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID); Tom Perez, the director of the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs; and Jon Finer, Principal Deputy National Security Advisor.
  - » Michigan State Rep. Abraham Aiyash told reporters that a meeting between Biden officials and local Arab and Muslim leaders was “direct” and “intense.”
  - » Aiyash added, “I relayed the emotions and the concerns of our community, and we gave them tangible steps. We want to see a permanent cease-fire. We want to be able to see restrictions and conditions on any military aid that is sent to Israel. And we want to see the United States take a serious commitment towards rebuilding Gaza.”
- On February 8, Facebook and Instagram parent company Meta [removed](#) the accounts of Iran’s supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei for violating the company’s “Dangerous Organizations & Individuals policy,” according to a Meta spokesperson. Khamenei has repeatedly made antisemitic statements, used his social media accounts to call for Israel’s destruction, and praised terrorists who have killed Israelis.
  - » Facebook, Instagram, and X, where Khamenei remains active, are all blocked in Iran.
- On February 7, the United States [launched](#) an airstrike in Iraq that killed a commander of the Iran-backed militia Kataib Hezbollah who planned and conducted attacks on U.S. personnel in the Middle East.

- » According to a *Washington Post* [report](#) citing two Iranian proxy sources, the commander killed was Wisam Muhammad Sabir al-Saadi, also known as Abu Baqir al-Saadi, who was in charge of Kataib Hezbollah's operations in Syria.
- Israel's *i24 News* [reported](#), citing "reports from Iranian sources," that another Kataib Hezbollah commander, Arkan al-Alawi, was also killed in the strike.
- On February 7 at roughly 9:00 p.m. local time, the United States [struck](#) two Houthi mobile anti-ship cruise missiles ready to attack ships traveling through the Red Sea, as well as a mobile land attack cruise missile at 11:30 p.m. local time.
- Netanyahu [noted](#) during his February 7 press conference that he turned down U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's request to meet with IDF Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi alone but that he and the security chiefs met with Blinken on February 7.
- Secretary Blinken [said](#) during his February 7 visit to President Herzog's home, "we've made it clear in the International Court of Justice in the Hague, we made it clear at all forums that are relevant to this question and as such, we of course condemn and reject any call for hurting or damaging any civilian population anywhere, let alone of course, in this conflict."
  - » He added, "there are so many innocent men, women, and children who are suffering as a result of the attacks perpetrated by Hamas, and now being caught in a crossfire of Hamas's making."
  - » He also said, "I've heard, including in Saudi Arabia, as well as in other places, in Egypt and Qatar, and I do believe that there is a very positive, powerful future that is possible, that genuinely integrates Israel into the region and addresses its most profound security needs to be able to live in peace and genuine security, and also answers the aspirations of the Palestinian people."
- On February 7, Secretary Blinken [visited](#) Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas at PA headquarters in the West Bank city of Ramallah.
  - » According to Palestinian media outlets, Abbas pushed for the United States to recognize a Palestinian state in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip with full United Nations membership.
  - » Abbas also reportedly called for increased efforts to end "Israeli aggression" as well as the displacement of Palestinians and settler attacks in the West Bank.
  - » According to *The Times of Israel*, Abbas asked Blinken to increase U.S. pressure on Israel to release PA tax revenues that are currently held by Israel.
- On February 7, U.S. State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller [said](#) that Secretary Blinken "reaffirmed the United States' support for Israel's right to ensure the terrorist attacks of October 7 are never repeated and stressed the importance of taking all possible steps to protect civilians in Gaza" during the secretary's meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu.
  - » Miller also said that the two leaders discussed increasing "the amount of humanitarian assistance reaching displaced civilians throughout Gaza" and that Blinken argued that a Palestinian state is "the best way to ensure lasting peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike and greater integration for the region."
  - » The secretary also emphasized the "urgent need to de-escalate tensions in the West Bank and prevent the conflict from expanding."

- On February 12, Jordan’s King Abdullah will [visit](#) Washington, D.C., for a White House visit with President Biden. According to the White House, the purpose of the visit is to “discuss the ongoing situation in Gaza and efforts to produce an enduring end to the crisis.”
  - » The White House added, “towards that end, the two leaders will discuss the US effort to support the Palestinian people, including through enhanced humanitarian assistance into Gaza and a vision for a durable peace to include a two-state solution with Israel’s security guaranteed.”
- On February 8, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres [argued](#) that “no other organization has a meaningful presence inside Gaza—and nothing compared with this situation. So there is no other organization that would be able now to replace” UNRWA.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk [said](#) on February 8 that “extensive destruction of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly, amounts to a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and a war crime” in reference to Israel’s destruction of buildings to create a buffer zone on the Gaza side of the Israel-Gaza border.
- On February 8, Egypt’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Ahmed Abu Zeid [said](#) during an interview, “continuing Israeli strikes on densely populated areas will create an unlivable reality. The scenario of mass displacement is a possibility. The Egyptian position on this has been very clear and straightforward: We are against this policy, and we will not allow it.”
  - » He also indicated that Egypt is worried that Palestinians might attempt to cross the Egyptian border en masse once Israel begins operations in the southern Gazan city of Rafah.
- According to February 8 [reports](#), the military spokesperson for Iraq’s prime minister said in a statement that the international counter-ISIS coalition led by the United States “has become a factor for instability and threatens to entangle Iraq in the cycle of conflict.” The spokesperson, Yahya Rasool, added that the Iraqi government seeks to conclude the coalition’s mission because of U.S. strikes targeting Iran-backed militias in the country.
- Reports from February 8 [indicated](#) that Danish shipping company Maersk said in its annual earnings report that “high uncertainty remains around the duration and degree of the Red Sea disruption with the duration from one quarter to full year reflected in the guidance range.” The company said it had a large net profit decrease in 2023 and cautioned that there will be “uncertainty” in 2024 because of Houthi attacks.
- On February 7, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres [said](#) that he is “alarmed by reports that the Israeli military intends to focus next on [the southern Gazan city of] Rafah—where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have been squeezed in a desperate search for safety.” Guterres added, “such an action would exponentially increase what is already a humanitarian nightmare with untold regional consequences.”
- On February 7, France’s president, Emmanuel Macron, [condemned](#) Hamas’s October 7 attacks as the “largest antisemitic massacre of our century,” at a national ceremony honoring the victims of the attack, including the 42 French citizens who were killed and the three who are still believed to be held hostage by the terror group.

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

- On February 8, European Commission Vice President Margaritis Schinas [said](#) to the European Parliament, “many Jews and Muslims living in Europe are fearing for their own safety.” He also noted physical attacks including firebombing synagogues, destruction of Jewish shops, and swastikas and “slurs” denigrating Muslims graffitied on mosques and houses.
  - » He also said that hate against Jews and Muslims online has “exploded” and added that “this is simply unacceptable.”
- On February 8, Australian lawmaker Jenny Leong, a member of the New South Wales parliament, [apologized](#) after a video of her December 2023 remarks resurfaced in which she said, “the Jewish lobby and the Zionist lobby are infiltrating into every single aspect of what is ethnic community groups. Their tentacles reach into the areas that try and influence power and I think we need to call that out and expose it.”
  - » In her apology, she said her intentions were “to criticize those who support and back a Zionist agenda and pro-genocide, pro-apartheid stance.”

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