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Israel's Operation Swords of Iron Update March 29, 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 March 27 JINSA [webinar](#) about the state of U.S.-Israel relations in the wake of the U.S. abstention from voting on a UN Security Council ceasefire resolution, JINSA's Randi & Charles Wax Senior Fellow John Hannah argued, "we're now obviously already in campaign mode, and [President Biden's] political advisors seem to have convinced him that a dramatic pivot was required in his position on Israel and the war, at least in terms of his public rhetoric on this, if not real American actions on the ground."
 - » JINSA Distinguished Fellow IDF MG (ret.) Yaakov Amidror argued, "the interest of Israel was to signal clearly to the Americans that their decision not to veto the [UN resolution] is harming the efforts of Israel to dismantle Hamas and will give Hamas hope that it can survive. It will make the whole negotiations with Hamas about the hostages much more complicated because if America does not stand with Israel, Hamas will feel that it can be more extreme in its demands from Israel."
 - » JINSA's President & CEO Dr. Michael Makovsky noted, however, that "despite the tension that we're seeing ... it seems like the [military-to-military] relationship [between the United States and Israel] is continuing decently."
- Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen Charles Q. Brown's [statement](#) on March 28 that Israel is not receiving all the weapons it has requested from the United States because the United States is not "willing" to provide them seemed to implicitly confirm that the United States is slow-walking or withholding certain munitions to Israel, either for internal stockpile readiness purposes or political reasons, such as disagreements over how the war should proceed.
- Israel has increased its targeting of Iran-linked fighters in Syria and Lebanon. Israeli strikes in southern Lebanon [killed](#) Ali Naim, deputy commander of Hezbollah's rocket unit on March 29, reportedly [killed](#) at least 33 Syrian troops and civilians and five Hezbollah fighters in Syria on the same day, and killed nine pro-Iranian fighters and injured another 20 in strikes that [targeted](#) Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) assets in eastern Syria on March 26.

Last 48 Hours

Attacks Against Israel

- At least 15,000 rockets, mortars, drones, and other projectiles have been fired at Israel from all fronts combined during the war, according to JINSA data.
- On March 27, Mohammed Deif, Hamas's military leader, [released](#) a 35-second-long sound clip that seems to have been recorded on October 7 in which he urged "our people in Jordan and Lebanon, in Egypt, Algeria, and the Maghreb, in Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia" to "start marching now, not tomorrow, toward Palestine, and do not let borders, regimes, and restrictions deprive you of the honor of waging jihad and taking part in the liberation of the Al-Aqsa Mosque."

Gaza

- According to a March 28 [report](#) citing Palestinian sources, Hamas has decided to change its warfighting strategy in Gaza after suffering many losses throughout the war.
 - » The report alleges that Hamas is shifting its approach in an effort to preserve part of its forces for the "day after" period, and is adopting new tactics accordingly. The new tactics reportedly prioritize limited attacks on IDF troops conducted in ways that limit the exposure of Hamas operatives in an effort to reduce their casualties.
 - » According to the sources cited, though Hamas does not have a clear sense of when and how the war will end, it is betting on a "winning card" of continuing to hold hostages in captivity in order to force a ceasefire.
 - » Hamas has depleted most of its rocket arsenal but is saving a considerable quantity of rockets to launch towards Israeli cities if it feels "the war is nearing its end," according to the report.
 - » The report also alleges that Hamas still has a number of anti-tank missiles, mortar shells, explosive charges, and other munitions left in its weapons arsenal.
- On March 28, the IDF [publicized](#) a video of the Military Intelligence Directorate Unit 504's interrogation of Manar Qassem, a Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) operative, who admitted to raping an Israeli woman in a kibbutz on October 7.
- *The Times of Israel* [reported](#) on March 28 that Israel expects a protest flotilla coordinated by the Turkish organization Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH)—the same group that organized the *Mavi Marmara* flotilla in 2010—to arrive in adjacent waters in the second week of April.
 - » Last month, Bülent Yıldırım, IHH's president, said, "we will test both the Egyptian and Gazan entry points from the sea. Israel previously conducted a raid on the *Mavi Marmara*. This time, they won't be able to do anything. Even if they do, so what? We'll become martyrs."
- On March 27, a terrorist in Gaza [fired](#) a rocket toward Kissufim in Israel's south, striking an unpopulated area and inflicting no injuries or damage.

Lebanon

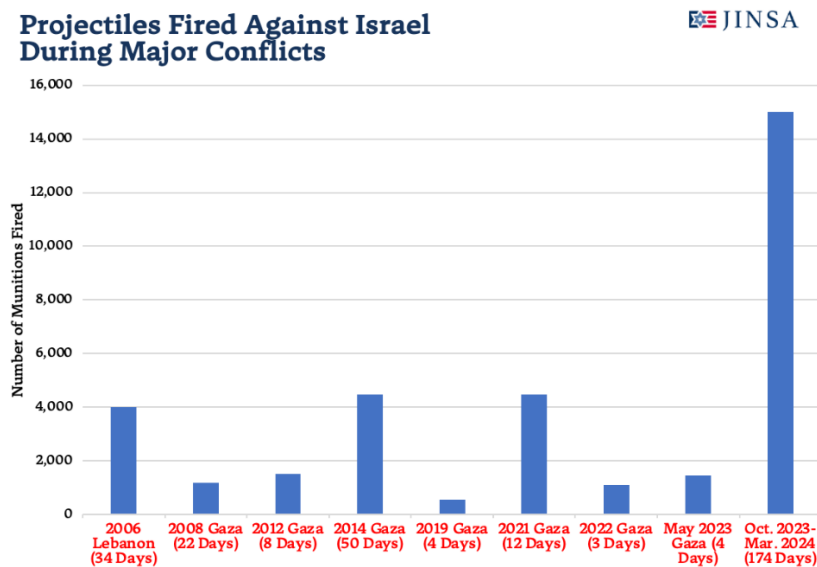
- Rockets struck [Shlomi and Goren](#), and sirens [sounded](#) in Shlomi, Rosh Hanikra, Lehman, Betzet, Achziv Miluot Industrial Zone, [Ramot Naftali](#), Mevo'ot Hermon Regional Council, Malkia, Iftach, Dishon, [Gornot HaGali, Kiyat Shmona, and Tel Hai](#).
- On March 28, Hezbollah [took credit](#) for firing rockets toward Shlomi and Goren in northern Israel. The projectiles reportedly did not cause injuries but inflicted damage. Hezbollah

[claimed](#) it used rockets with heavy warheads, also known as heavy rockets, to target civilian sites for the first time in the war in the attack.

- » The IDF [said](#) the morning of March 28 that the Iron Dome intercepted nine of 10 rockets that terrorists in Lebanon launched toward the northern Israeli town of Shlomi, causing no reported injuries or damage.
- On March 28, the IDF [said](#) that a Patriot air defense system battery shot down a “suspicious aerial target” encroaching into Israel from Lebanon. The interceptor was [launched](#) from near the town of Safed in northern Israel.
- On March 27, Hezbollah [took credit](#) for shelling a target in the eastern Galilee’s Har Dov area. Israeli reports also said that two rockets struck unpopulated areas in northern Israel.
 - » Israel’s head fire-fighting official in the country’s north, Yair Elkayam, told *Army Radio* that day, “we need to prepare for the summer, fire season ... in May, when everything is dry, every impact will ignite a blaze,” and “we’re doing yeoman’s work to see how we can prepare for incidents affecting multiple areas at once.”
- The IDF [said](#) on March 27 that it discovered a crashed Hezbollah drone near Rosh Hanikra in the Western Galilee region of northern Israel, which the IDF safely removed.

West Bank

- On March 28, Israel’s Magen David Adom first responders [said](#) that a 30-year-old man, a man in his 20s, and a 13-year-old boy were injured in a shooting attack in [al-Auja](#) in the West Bank. They were reported in moderate-to-serious condition, mildly injured, and in good condition, respectively. The 13-year-old boy was injured by glass shards.
 - » The two injured men are [members](#) of a group called Looking the Occupation in the Eye and were traveling at the time of the shooting to help nearby Palestinian shepherds.
 - » The organization said on social media, “these days, amid the war in Gaza, we’re seeing an increase in the intensity and scope of the oppression of the Palestinians all over the occupied territories. Human rights activists working in this violent reality may also be harmed as we witnessed this morning.”
 - » The alleged assailant, who was still at large as of March 28, is a [member](#) of the Palestinian Authority security forces.



IDF Operations

- Citing a U.S. official, *The Times of Israel* [reported](#) on March 27 that “Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office has reached out to the White House, asking to reschedule a meeting regarding a potential Israeli operation in Rafah, which the premier canceled earlier this week.” The delegation could visit Washington as early as [next week](#).
 - » Netanyahu had initially canceled the meeting out of protest after the United States [abstained](#) from voting on a UN Security Council resolution on March 25 that called for a hostage release and ceasefire but did not specify that an end in fighting should only take place after Hamas releases the hostages. Israel’s Strategic Affairs Minister and former JINSA Distinguished Fellow Ron Dermer and Israel’s National Security Council head Tzachi Hanegbi were supposed to attend the meeting, which was originally scheduled for March 27.
 - After canceling the meeting, Netanyahu [said](#) on March 27, “the bad thing about the US decision ... was it encouraged Hamas to take a hard line and to believe that international pressure will prevent Israel from freeing the hostages and destroying Hamas.”
 - He argued further that the meeting cancellation was “a message to Hamas: ‘Don’t bet on this pressure, it’s not going to work.’ I hope they got the message.”
 - » The Prime Minister’s office [said](#) that Netanyahu “did not approve the departure of the delegation to Washington” but did not rebuff the assertion that talks to reschedule the trip are taking place.
- According to a March 27 report from Lebanon’s *Al-Akhbar* outlet, which is [affiliated](#) with Hezbollah, Israel is preparing for a Rafah offensive soon after the end of Eid al-Fitr, the holiday that immediately follows the end of Ramadan, on April 12.
 - » The report, which cites Egyptian officials, states that Israel will launch such an operation by early May, at the latest, and that the operation is expected to take an estimated four to eight weeks.
 - » The report further states that the operation would be accompanied by a mass evacuation of civilians from Rafah to the center of Gaza along specific routes and at specific times, announced to civilians in advance, much as Israel did in advance of its operation in northern Gaza.
 - » According to the report, Egypt’s President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi refused a request from Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to maintain a direct open line of communication between the two leaders.
 - » On March 27, Israel’s *Ynet News* outlet similarly [noted](#) a *Washington Post* report from that day indicating that Israel might begin its Rafah operation right after Ramadan concludes should hostage negotiations break down.
- *The Times of Israel* [reported](#) on March 27 that the Israeli Air Force (IAF) has resumed exercises that had mostly been halted since the October 7 massacre, focusing on Israel’s northern front.
 - » The IDF said, “the training program will focus on increasing the Air Force’s readiness for war in the northern arena and in other theaters, amid prolonged combat” and will involve “massive, long-range strikes, flights deep in enemy territory, decision-making in war conditions ... and surprise exercises will be held for the various units.”

Gaza

- On March 29, the IDF [said](#) it had located and destroyed several rocket launchers that were aimed at Israel in the central Gaza Strip.
 - » The IAF also struck a building it says was used by Hamas for terror activities in Nuseirat.
- The IDF [announced](#) on March 28 that of the approximately 900 terror suspects that have been apprehended at Shifa Hospital during the operation, 513 have been confirmed to be terror operatives. The IDF also [announced](#) later that day that over 200 Hamas gunmen have been killed in the hospital during the operation.
 - » According to the IDF, Hamas gunmen have repeatedly [ambushed](#) troops from Shifa Hospital's emergency room wing throughout the operation.
- On March 28, IDF Spokesman Rear Adm Daniel Hagari [said](#) that the IDF's Shayetet 13 commando unit killed Raad Thabet, Hamas's head of supply, during the ongoing Shifa Hospital operation. Thabet was, according to Hagari, one of the top 10 most senior Hamas military commanders.
 - » According to Hagari, many of the remaining nearly 400 detainees from the operation are also [suspected](#) to be terrorists.
 - » That day, the reconnaissance unit of the IDF's Nahal Brigade [killed](#) an additional three gunmen in the hospital.
- On March 28, the IDF [announced](#) that troops seized hundreds of weapons from a building next to the al-Amal Hospital in the southern Gazan city of Khan Younis. The IDF's elite Egoz commando unit also captured dozens of terror operatives in the surrounding al-Amal neighborhood, and killed numerous gunmen with sniper fire, close-combat gunfights, and by calling in airstrikes.
- On March 28, the IDF [said](#) that it demolished much of a 2.5 kilometer-long tunnel used by Hamas that stretched from northern to southern Gaza.
- *The New York Times* [reported](#) on March 27 that Israel is operating a facial recognition program in Gaza "to conduct mass surveillance there, collecting and cataloging the faces of Palestinians without their knowledge or consent, according to Israeli intelligence officers, military officials and soldiers."
 - » The report noted that Israel first used the technology to locate hostages and subsequently used it to attempt to locate people affiliated with terrorist organizations. The Israeli company Corsight reportedly produced technology that enables the program, which uses Google Photos as well.
- *The Times of Israel* [reported](#) on March 27 that the IDF found a "significant" tunnel system in Khan Younis's Al-Amal neighborhood after gleaning information from interrogated terrorists.
- On March 27, *The Times of Israel* [reported](#), citing an unnamed Israeli official, that Israel thinks that Hamas exploited the maternity ward in Shifa Hospital in Gaza City as "propaganda headquarters."
- On March 27, the IDF released [video](#) of a drone strike against a terrorist operative in Khan Younis who the IDF said was scouting troops and relaying their locations to combatants by phone.
- The IDF [said](#) on March 27 that it launched an airstrike targeting a terrorist in Gaza who fired a rocket toward Kissufim in southern Israel minutes earlier.

Lebanon

- On March 29, AFP [reported](#), citing a Lebanese defense official, that a Hezbollah operative was killed in an Israeli drone strike near the town of Bazouriyeh in southern Lebanon that day. The IDF [specified](#) that the strike killed Ali Naim, deputy commander of the terror group's rocket unit.
- On March 28, the IDF [said](#) that it responded to Hezbollah's rocket attack against Shlomi and Goren by firing artillery toward the source of the attack.
- On March 28, the IDF conducted a [surprise drill](#) to strengthen its readiness for a potential war to Israel's north.
- On March 28, *Israel Hayom* [reported](#) that a senior Israeli official claimed, "achieving the strategic goal of the return of northern [Israeli] residents to their homes requires a ground war. We will do that after Rafah, not simultaneously."
- On March 27, Reuters reported that five people, including Hezbollah fighters, were [killed](#) in IDF airstrikes in southern Lebanon. According to local reports, the strikes targeted sites in Naqura and Tayr Harfa. Subsequent [reports](#) that day indicated that the strikes killed at least eight people, Hezbollah operatives among them.
- Israel's *Ynet News* [reported](#) on March 27 that Israeli military officials believe that fighting with Hezbollah will mitigate via a diplomatic arrangement, not escalate to a full-scale military campaign, that involves "stronger and more significant enforcement of keeping the terror group's elite Radwan forces away from the border."
 - » However, the report also said, "the IDF expresses pessimism regarding the likelihood of a near-term settlement through U.S.-French mediation," and "IDF officials say that a significant military operation against Hezbollah is clearly needed to allow residents of the north to return to their homes."
- On March 27, the IDF [said](#) that it conducted airstrikes overnight against an al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya cell in Habbariyeh in southern Lebanon, which killed the cell's seven operatives, because the terrorists were devising an infiltration of Israel's northern border.
 - » The Lebanese Ambulance Association [claimed](#) that seven volunteers were killed in the strikes, and the Islamic Emergency and Relief Corps alleged that an Israeli airstrike targeted an office building of theirs.

Syria

- On March 29, *The Times of Israel* [reported](#), citing unnamed security sources' correspondence with Reuters, that Israeli strikes in Aleppo killed 33 Syrian troops and civilians and five Hezbollah fighters. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, based in the United Kingdom, [said](#) that day that the strikes killed 36 Syrian soldiers and wounded dozens. The organization also said that the strikes hit Hezbollah missiles.
 - » *The Times of Israel* noted that the Britain-based group "has been accused in the past of inflating death tolls and damage from alleged Israeli attacks."
- Syria's official SANA news outlet [said](#) on March 28 that according to an unnamed military source, the Israeli Air Force launched airstrikes against a residential building near Damascus, wounding two civilians and inflicting "material losses."

West Bank

- The IDF and Israel Police [announced](#) on March 29 that two Palestinians who opened fire at an army post near Nablus several hours earlier were arrested in a raid in Nablus and that the gun likely used to perpetrate the attack was seized.

- During a raid in the Nur Shams refugee camp near Tulkarem on March 29, Israel's security forces [arrested](#) a PIJ terror operative believed to have been involved in shooting attacks. The detained terrorist also was involved in manufacturing explosive devices.

Humanitarian Efforts

- On March 29, Israel's Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) announced that nine UN World Food Program (WFP) trucks [entered](#) northern Gaza the previous night.
 - » The trucks' entry brought the total of aid trucks that entered northern Gaza via the recently-opened Gate 96 crossing on the Israeli-Gaza border to 47.
- On March 29, AFP [reported](#) that Japan is planning to restore funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). Japan had been the sixth-largest contributor to UNRWA until it suspended its funding after Israel alleged that six UNRWA staff members participated in the October 7 attack.
- On March 29, Israel's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Lior Hayat, [posted on X](#) that Israel would work to "continue to promote new initiatives, and to expand existing ones, in order to enable and facilitate the flow of aid to the Gaza Strip in a continuous and extensive manner, by land, air, and sea, together with UN bodies and other partners in the international community."
- On March 28, the International Court of Justice [ordered](#) Israel to ensure "the unhindered provision at scale ... of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance, including food, water, electricity, fuel, shelter, clothing, hygiene and sanitation requirements," and medical supplies, as well as "increasing the capacity and number of land crossing points and maintaining them open for as long as necessary."
 - » The ICJ argued that "Palestinians in Gaza are no longer facing only a risk of famine, as noted in the Order of 26 January 2024, but that famine is setting in," and "the provisional measures indicated in the Order of 26 January 2024 do not fully address the consequences arising from the changes in the situation ... thus justifying the modification of these measures."
- France [announced](#) on March 28 that it would resume funding to UNRWA after previously pausing funding in light of Israel's assertions that the agency's staffers maintain [deep ties](#) with Hamas.
 - » France will provide over \$32 million to the agency this year, while also "ensuring that the conditions are met for UNRWA to fulfill its missions in a spirit devoid of incitement to hatred and violence," according to a French Foreign Ministry spokesperson.
 - » The spokesperson did not specify how these conditions would be met or what benchmarks France would be using to measure them.
- On March 27, *The Times of Israel* [reported](#), citing a senior Israeli official, that 25 aid trucks entered northern Gaza via the Gate 96 crossing the previous night.
- On March 26, *Politico* [reported](#), citing two U.S. officials, that Israel has agreed to provide security for the temporary pier that the U.S. military is slated to build on the coast of Gaza to allow more aid to enter the territory.
 - » An IDF spokesperson told *Politico* that the IDF "will be coordinating with the U.S. military to facilitate the project indeed," but did not elaborate further.

- » The report also revealed details about the pier’s construction plan, which involves U.S. military personnel building a floating pier 3 to 5 miles off the coast of Gaza and then constructing a 1,800-foot causeway to Gaza’s shore.
- » Aid will, according to the report, be first offloaded onto the floating pier and then taken by U.S. boats to the causeway, where it will then be taken to aid trucks to be distributed inside the Gaza Strip.

Ceasefire and Hostage Negotiations

- Former Hamas political head Khaled Mashaal [said](#) during a March 27 speech that Hamas will not release any more hostages until Israel agrees to a ceasefire and withdraws its troops from the Gaza Strip.
 - » Mashaal further stated that Hamas is waging a “negotiating battle that is no less fierce” than its combat operations.

Post-War Planning

- On March 28, *Politico* [reported](#) that the U.S. Department of Defense has begun early conversations to fund a peacekeeping force in Gaza, reportedly either a “a multinational force or a Palestinian peacekeeping team.” This force would not involve U.S. troops on the ground.
- On March 27, minister without portfolio Gadi Eisenkot [presented](#) a [plan](#) for post-war Gaza during a meeting of Israel’s war cabinet, according to Israel’s *Ynet* news outlet.
 - » For the immediate future, the plan stresses the need to dismantle Hamas and reach a hostage deal.
 - » The plan also calls for a U.S.-Israeli-Arab coalition that would transfer civil matters in Gaza to a coalition of local leaders, prevent strengthening Hamas in Gaza and the West Bank, end the fighting with Hezbollah, push for improved relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia, and counter the shared threats that Iran poses.
 - A Palestinian technocrat would handle civil and economic issues in Gaza and would be supervised by a coalition of the United States, five Arab nations, and the international community. That coalition would also be responsible for reforming Gaza’s education system.
 - » Eisenkot’s plan also called for the closure of UNRWA and the creation of a “Palestinian entity” that works to fight terrorism and ends the “pay-to-slay” program of providing funds to the families of terrorists who attack Israelis.
 - » Former IDF intelligence chief Amos Yadlin and the MIND Israel consultant group reportedly drafted the plan outline.

Casualties and Hostages

- Over 1,200 people were [killed](#) in Israel, and 13,000 Israelis have been injured in the war.
 - » 597 Israeli soldiers have been [killed](#).
 - 253 IDF soldiers have been [killed](#) during ground combat in Gaza so far.
 - The IDF [announced](#) the death of Staff Sgt. Nisim Kachlon, 21, from Hadera.

- As of March 15, 1,480 IDF soldiers have been [injured](#) during ground combat in Gaza, including 310 who have been severely injured.
- » Numerous foreign nationals have been killed in the war, including at least 34 [American nationals](#), 34 [Thai](#) nationals, 39 [French](#) nationals, 19 [Russian](#) nationals, 12 [British](#) nationals, 10 [Nepalese](#) nationals, 9 [Argentinian](#) nationals, 6 [Canadian](#) nationals, 4 [Philippines](#) nationals, 4 [Austrian](#) nationals, 4 [Romanian](#) nationals, 4 [Portuguese](#) nationals, 4 [Chinese](#) nationals, 3 [Brazilian](#) nationals, 3 [Belarusian](#) nationals, 3 [Italian](#) nationals, 3 [Peruvian](#) nationals, a [Cambodian](#) national, a [Chilean](#) national, an [Irish](#) national, a [Spanish](#) national, an [Australian](#) national, an [Azeri](#) national, a [Honduran](#) national, a [Swiss](#) national, a [Tanzanian](#) national, and a [Turkish](#) national.
- According to unverified figures from the Hamas-controlled Gaza Health Ministry, 32,623 people have been [killed](#) in Gaza, and 75,092 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, 453 people have been [killed](#), and an additional 4,600 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 deceased hostage bodies.
 - » Israeli officials have confirmed the [deaths](#) of at least [34](#) 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.

Iranian Involvement and Response

- On March 28, between 6:00 and 10:56 p.m. local time, the Houthis [launched](#) four drones from Yemen toward the Red Sea. The United States later neutralized the drones.
- On March 27, between 2:00 and 2:20 a.m. local time, the Houthis [launched](#) four long-range drones from Yemen at a U.S. naval vessel. The United States later intercepted the drones, and there were no reported injuries or damage.
- During a meeting with Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh on March 27, the Iranian regime's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei [argued](#) that "despite the enemy's wishes, it has turned Palestine to the world's first issue."
- On March 27, Haniyeh also met with Iranian regime President Ebrahim Raisi, who [claimed](#) that "today, with the fierce resistance and standing of the oppressed and powerful people of Gaza, the issue of Palestine has gone beyond the Islamic world and has become the issue of the world of humanity. The people of the world hate the criminal Zionist regime and its main supporter, the United States, with all their heart. They love the oppressed people of Gaza."

U.S. and International Response

- On March 28, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby told reporters that the Biden administration was hoping to [reschedule](#) a meeting with the previously canceled delegation from Israel in person in Washington.
 - » On March 27, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters that Israel agreed to reschedule the meeting.
- On March 28, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen Charles Q. Brown [told](#) reporters that during his recent briefings from Israeli officials, he received "broad details" about plans for moving civilians out of Rafah before any Israeli operation but noted that "we probably need a bit more detail" to know if it would be acceptable for the Biden administration.
 - » Discussing weapons sales to Israel, Brown [added](#) that Israel has "not received everything they've asked for" and noted that the lack of sales for some of these requests was due to issues with U.S. capacity and others were because the United States was "[not willing](#)" to provide the systems.
- On March 28, State Department Spokesperson Mathew Miller [responded](#) to the creation of a new Palestinian Authority (PA) cabinet by indicating that the Biden administration has "encouraged them to implement reforms that crack down on corruption, increase transparency, increase media freedoms and increase the ability for civil society to engage with the government."
 - » Miller also noted that the Biden administration was encouraged that several members of the PA cabinet are from Gaza, which was in line with its desire to see a government that better represented the Palestinian people.
- A [Gallup poll](#) released on March 27 indicated that 55% of Americans disapprove of Israel's military response in Gaza, a 10-percentage point increase since November.
 - » 36% of Americans approve of Israel's military actions in Gaza, down from 50% in November.
 - » 64% of Republicans in March approved of Israel's actions, down from 71% in November.
 - » 18% of Democrats in March approved of Israel's actions, down from 36% in November.

- » 29% of Independents in March approved of Israel's actions, down from 47% in November.
- On March 27, Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC) [said](#) while visiting Jerusalem that UNRWA is “dead to Congress” and “dead to the United States.” Graham noted that “for decades now, Palestinian children have been taught through UNRWA and other agencies to kill all the Jews.”
 - » Senator Graham also [told](#) reporters that reports of Israel using starvation as a tool of war in Gaza is “bulls—t” and a “blood libel,” adding that “never in the history of warfare have I seen such an effort by one of the protagonists in a war to lessen the effect on the population of the other side.”
 - Graham further stated that the “Israeli military and government, in my view, are doing incredible efforts in a time of war to make sure that innocent Palestinians can have the basics of life.”
 - Graham also commented on Israel's plans to evacuate civilians from Rafah, which he was briefed on, saying the plan was “very impressive.”
- While meeting with Senator Rick Scott (R-FL) on March 27, Prime Minister Netanyahu [stated](#) that “the U.S. decision in the Security Council was a very bad move,” adding that “the worst part” was that the abstention “encouraged Hamas to take a tough stance, relying on international pressure to prevent Israel from releasing the hostages and dismantling Hamas.”
- On March 27, Senators Joni Ernst (R-IA) and Ted Budd (R-NC) released a [statement](#) saying that “enough is enough. It is crystal clear that Hamas has no interest in reasonable negotiations to release hostages from Gaza, including U.S. citizens. Qatar's harboring and support have led Hamas to believe that it can kill and kidnap Americans with impunity. This must end now.”
 - » The senators further stated, “we urge the Biden administration to demand that Qatar expel Hamas from Doha immediately. Until Doha acts against the Hamas leaders it is currently sheltering, we will work with our colleagues to hold Qatar accountable for its support of this vile terrorist group.”
- On March 27, the U.S. Treasury Department [announced](#) sanctions against two individuals and three entities, in conjunction with the United Kingdom, for fundraising on behalf of Hamas. One of the entities, Gaza Now, had a Telegram channel that [garnered](#) significant attention and at one point in the war had nearly 2 million subscribers.
- On March 27, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby [explained](#) that the Biden administration “just can't support a major ground offensive in Rafah that doesn't include an achievable, verifiable plan to look after the safety and security of the 1.5 million Gazans that have sought refuge there.”
 - » He stated, “look, we recognize that there's a need to go after Hamas ... Hamas still represents a viable threat and we know that there are Hamas fighters in Rafah.” Kirby added, “we don't believe that going in on the ground in Rafah is a good idea in a major way, [we believe] that there are other ways to get after that threat.”
 - » Kirby argued, “we believe that a major ground operation in Rafah is a mistake. We believe that there are other ways to go after Hamas in Rafah ... to do it in a way that doesn't put those people, the refugees, in harm's way.”
 - » Kirby also rejected allegations from Israel's National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir that Biden prefers aligning with Hamas leader in Gaza Yahya Sinwar than Netanyahu.

- According to a poll released by The Israel Democracy Institute on March 26, 82.5% those on the Israeli left and 64.5% in the Israeli center [supported](#) coordination with the United States.
 - » 64% of those on the Israeli right said Israel should act only in accordance with the judgment of its own leadership.
- On March 25, a bipartisan group of 12 members of the U.S. House of Representatives wrote a [letter](#) to U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Administrator for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Samantha Power expressing their “deep concern about Pierre Krahenbuhl’s appointment to be Director General of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)” based on “his disastrous tenure as Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).”
 - » The letter’s signatories were Representatives Darrell Issa (R-CA), Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ), Joe Wilson (R-SC), Jared Moskowitz (D-FL), Andrew Ogles (R-TN), Dan Crenshaw (R-TX), Beth Van Duyne (R-TX), Bryan Steil (R-WI), W. Gregory Steube (R-FL), Clay Higgins (R-LA), Keith Self (R-TX), Claudia Tenney (R-NY), Bill Huizenga (R-MI), Roger Williams (R-TX), and Rich McCormick (R-GA).
- On March 28, Israel’s *Channel 12* [reported](#) that France is drafting a United Nations Security Council resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire and recognition of a Palestinian state.
- On March 28, the Russian Navy indicated that the Russian cruiser *Varyag* and the frigate *Marshal Shaposhnikov* [traveled](#) through the Bab al-Mandab Strait into the Red Sea.

Rising Antisemitism, Protests, and Attacks

- On March 28, President Biden and former Presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton were [heckled](#) by anti-Israel protesters at a New York City fundraiser.
- On March 27, the House Education Committee [announced](#) it was adding Rutgers University to the list of colleges and universities it was investigating for its handling of antisemitism on campus. The committee’s chair, Virginia Foxx (NC-5), said, “I have grave concerns regarding the inadequacy of Rutgers’ response to antisemitism on its campuses.”
- On March 27, three women [accosted](#) a Jewish Dutch woman at her home in an Amsterdam suburb, calling her a “child murderer” and saying, “I don’t understand why you are still here in the Netherlands,” because of her daughter’s service in the IDF.
 - » Beginning in February, fliers were also distributed in the woman’s neighborhood that accused her of being complicit in “child murder” and listed her home address. The flier also said, “residents beware, a child murderer lives in the neighborhood. This genocidal maniac returned from her murderous activities in Israel and will be soon (sic) be tried.”
- On March 27, four Vanderbilt University students [were](#) arrested after they staged an anti-Israel sit-in at the university’s main administration building for almost 24 hours. Three of the students were charged with assault after they pushed a community service officer and a Vanderbilt faculty member. The fourth was charged with vandalism after breaking a window in the building. The University placed the nearly two dozen students who participated in the protest on interim suspension.
- On March 26, anti-Israel protesters [clashed](#) with police at an Israel-Norway under-19 soccer match in Skien, Norway. The protesters threw rocks and fireworks at the police. The Norwegian Football Federation had already closed the match to spectators after “an overall assessment of the safety of the players and the public.”

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- Jonathan Ruhe, "[The Biden Administration Has an Opportunity to Rein In Iran](#)," *The Dispatch*, March 27, 2024
- Sander Gerber, "[How is the PA's Agenda not Genocide?](#)" *Jewish News Syndicate*, March 26, 2024
- Ari Cicurel and Jacob Olidort, "[U.S. Abstention at the UN Undermined Support for Israel—And Stated U.S. Policy](#)," March 26, 2024