



Israel at War

Thursday, December 19, 2024

Day 440

Latest Updates

Israel marked a national day of recognition for wounded soldiers yesterday, acknowledging the 13,500 who were injured in the current war. See details below.

Rocket Fire

- Overall rocket fire – and subsequent sirens - have been down in recent weeks, with virtually no projectiles fired by Hezbollah since the ceasefire in the north, and Hamas's capabilities reduced by many orders of magnitude. In addition, as Iran's unsuccessful missile attacks on Israel were all met by punishing retaliation, the Islamic Republic has also refrained from firing at the Jewish state again.
- Nonetheless, the Iran-backed [Houthi](#) rebels in Yemen have continued to fire ballistic missiles as well as to launch UAVs at Israel. Due to the nature of the weapons and the distance from launch, the IDF is unable to determine their precise target. As a result, these firings trigger sirens over vast areas of the country.

Mark Segel

- Last night, for the second time in a week, Houthi missiles were fired at the center of the country, sounding sirens and sending millions of Israelis running to shelters at 2:30 am in Tel Aviv, Ramat Gan, Herzliya, Petach Tikva, Rishon Letziyon and other places.
- While the IDF was able to successfully intercept the incoming attack (and loud explosions were heard across large areas of the country), shrapnel fell on the main building of the Ramat Eyal school in Ramat Gan, [causing the structure to collapse](#). Thankfully, nobody was in the building at the time. See video footage of the moment of impact embedded in [this](#) article in Hebrew.
- The Houthi rebels **have fired over 200 ballistic missiles and over 170 drones** at Israel, since the war began, with most being shot down by the US or Israel; however, 22 have penetrated the borders of the Jewish state. In July, one Israeli was killed in Tel Aviv by a Houthi drone from Yemen.

Retaliation

- One hour after the Houthi attack, Israel Air Force jets attacked multiple terror and other strategic sites in Yemen's capital Sana'a and the country's coastal area.
- The targets hit included weapons facilities as well as ports and energy infrastructure. It is believed that all three Houthi-controlled ports may now be out of action.
- According to media reports, the IDF gave the US military advance warning of the retaliatory attacks on Yemen.
- The [IDF said](#) that 14 aircraft were involved in the mission, and that all returned safely to Israel.
- See this [op-ed](#) by retired US Navy admiral and former supreme allied commander of NATO, James Stavridis, on a strategy to defeat the Houthis (written prior to last night's attacks). And also see this military training [video](#) of the Houthis promising that, **"Israel will come to an end. We will disfigure their faces and we will cut down the blasphemy."**

IDF Activities

- Earlier in the week, two IDF soldiers were killed in the northern Gaza Strip when a building collapsed. Major (reserves) Moshiko Maxim Rosenwald and Staff Sergeant (reserves) Alexander Anosov, both from Modi'in, fell in the incident. It took IDF forces over 12 hours to retrieve the bodies from the collapsed building, while two other soldiers who were in the building were rescued with minor injuries.
- Two days ago, the IDF struck a Hezbollah terrorist, who was loading weapons into a car in southern Lebanon in contravention to the ceasefire agreement.
- The IDF has continued hitting Syrian armed forces' capabilities to ensure that weapons and other military infrastructure do not fall into the hands of those who may seek to harm Israel. It is estimated that some 85% of the country's military has been destroyed, including its entire Navy and much of the Air Force. Israel has eliminated chemical weapons facilities, rocket production capabilities, and other major sources of threat to the Jewish state. The destruction of Syria's air defenses also gives the Israeli air force a clearer and safer route to Iran, should the need arise to attack there.
- The IDF has apparently been given instructions to prepare for a longer-term stay in the small buffer zone on the Syrian side of the Golan border. Israel is determined to remain in the area until greater stability returns to Syria, but stresses that it has no long-term plans to remain.
- The IDF has told the country's political leadership that it would be safe for evacuees to return to their homes in the north from March 2025.
- According to newly-released data, reserve duty time in the IDF has jumped from a pre-war average of 25-42 days over one to three years, to 136 days per year for combat fighters during wartime. Commanders are now serving even longer, at an average of 168 days per year, with certain soldiers serving on the front for around 142 days. The IDF hopes that in the coming year reservist duty could drop back down to 70-72 days.
- Israel marked a national day of recognition for wounded soldiers yesterday, acknowledging the 13,500 who were injured in the current war. The number of killed and wounded civilians dwarfed any comparative number for decades. Prior

to the war, there were around 62,000 injured soldiers from all prior wars and battles of whom 18%, or 11,000, had emotional harm. See further details [here](#).

Gaza and the Hostages

- According to multiple reports, prospects for a deal resulting in a ceasefire in Gaza, alongside a hostage release, have advanced significantly. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was set to hold a high-level meeting with top security officials later today as efforts appeared to gather momentum.
- Intense negotiations are believed to be taking place between the sides, with the United States, Qatar and Egypt acting as mediators.
- Israeli media reports that Hamas has made considerable compromises on its earlier positions and is no longer insisting on a complete Israeli withdrawal from Gaza before any hostages are released.
- Earlier in the week, both Israeli and Hamas officials stated that a deal is **“closer than ever before.”**
- In all likelihood, any new agreement would take place in stages, with a small number of hostages released in conjunction with Israeli pull-outs from areas it currently controls, alongside a complete ceasefire. In addition, large numbers of Hamas prisoners would be released from Israeli jails. It is also possible that terrorists who are convicted of very serious offenses would be exiled to Qatar or Turkey.

Diplomacy

- Earlier in the week, Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that it was closing its embassy in Ireland due to the country's “extreme anti-Israel policies.” In a statement, Israel's embassy in Dublin said that criticism of Israel “can be legitimate” but that the Irish government “has gone beyond legitimate criticism.” The embassy added that Ireland “has promoted steps and rhetoric which attempt to delegitimize Israel. It has libeled the State of Israel by saying it has deliberately starved children and deliberately killed civilians, and it is seeking

to have the legal definition of genocide redefined in a way that would be used to advance baseless charges.”

For Further Reading

- [Syria and the Middle East Are No Safer After the Fall of Assad](#)
- [Closing Dublin embassy: Israel writes off luck with the Irish](#)
- [Israel's Priorities in Syria](#)

Am Yisrael Chai!

Mark Segel

Executive Director of Combating Antisemitism

mark.segel@jewishtampa.com

813.769.2811