



Israel at War

Thursday, February 13, 2025

Day 496

Latest Updates

73 Hostages Remain in Captivity

Ceasefire

- Earlier this week, Hamas announced that it would not release three hostages this coming Saturday, as stipulated in the agreement. The terrorist organization claims that Israel has violated the deal in several ways, including in not permitting the agreed-upon amount of humanitarian aid to be delivered into the Strip. (Release appears to be scheduled again as of the publication of this update.)
- Israel strongly denied breaching the agreement. The IDF said that it had fully withdrawn from the Netzarim Corridor early in the week (a key Hamas demand in the negotiations leading up to the deal), despite its concerns over the security risks of such a pull-back of troops.

- In response to the Hamas announcement, US President Donald Trump said that “there will be hell to pay,” if Hamas did not release the hostages. He then clarified and demanded that “all hostages be released” by noon on Saturday.
- The Israeli government said that it “agreed” with President Trump’s demands. However, Prime Minister Netanyahu said that the IDF was prepared and ready to restart the war immediately, and fight “until Hamas is completely decimated” if the hostages were not released. Unlike Trump, Netanyahu did not say “all” of the hostages; leaving the door open for the original agreement to be fulfilled by both sides.
- To back up Netanyahu’s threats, the IDF called up additional reserves and moved troops closer to the Gaza border and within the Strip itself, as if in preparation to resume fighting. Israel’s Defense Minister Yisrael Katz also threatened Hamas, saying that “if they stop releasing the hostages, then there is no agreement, and there is war.... The new Gaza war will be different in intensity from the one before the ceasefire – and it will not end without Hamas’ defeat and the release of all the hostages.”
- Faced with stepped-up Israeli military preparations and the prospect of full US backing for all-out Israeli attacks on Hamas, Hamas agreed to discuss the resumption of the deal. Fearing a surprise attack, Hamas instructed its commanders to avoid using cell phones, which could be location-traced by the IDF.
- At the time of this writing, Hamas has said that it has accepted proposed terms to continue the ceasefire, including releasing the three hostages scheduled to be set free on Saturday. Israel has not yet confirmed that the deal will go ahead, although it seems likely at this point.

Hostages

- Last Saturday, three hostages were returned as part of the deal between Israel and Hamas.
- For the first time, the returnees were in very poor physical condition; they appeared to be severely malnourished. Many Israeli leaders and commentators, in addition to President Trump, said that the three had the appearance of

“Holocaust survivors.” “Before and after” [captivity photos](#) showed severe physical deterioration.

- The Israeli public were shocked by the appearance of the three, which raised profound concerns for the safety and well-being of the remaining hostages.
- The released hostages were:
 - Eli Sharabi, 51, who was kidnapped from his house in Kibbutz Be’eri along with his brother, who was killed in captivity. The brother’s body is still being held by Hamas. Eli’s wife and two teenage daughters were brutally murdered on October 7. A few moments before his release, Eli was paraded on stage in Gaza and a Hamas fighter prodded him to say that he was looking forward to reuniting with his wife and daughters. Upon being returned to Israel, the devastating news about his family was relayed to him.
 - Or Levy, 33, was kidnapped from the Nova music festival which he attended along with his wife, who was murdered on October 7. The couple have a two-year-old son who was with his grandparents when the couple were at the festival; he has lived with them ever since. Or, who was kidnapped along with Hersh Goldberg-Polin, was reunited with his son.
 - Ohad Ben-Ami, 55, was kidnapped from his house in Kibbutz Be’eri with his wife Raz, who was released as part of the November 2023 hostage deal. Watch [this video](#) of Ohad being reunited with his daughters, during which he jokes that “I left you as an XXL and return to you as a Medium.”
- Former hostage Danilla Gilboa was forced by Hamas to film a video of her own death, according to her mother Orly. “One of the captors simply came with a camera and told her: 'Today we're filming you dead.' She begged for her life and asked him not to do it." The terrorists poured powder on her daughter so that she’d look like she was covered in plaster. Hamas announced Daniella’s ‘death’ in November 2024, stating that she had been killed by IDF fire; they showed blurred photos of her body that made it seem as if she was covered in plaster.
- The families of [three more hostages](#) announced on Wednesday that they had received signs of life from their captive loved ones, bringing to ten the total number of abductees for whom signs of life have been announced in recent days. Only one of these is on the list of the 33 captives whom Hamas is supposed to release in the first phase of the ceasefire-hostage deal.

Diplomacy

- While many had expected him to back-pedal on earlier statements, President Trump has continued to double-down on his plans to relocate the Palestinian population of Gaza including clarifying that:
 - His plan is for the entire Gaza population;
 - The move would be permanent.
 - Jordan and Egypt should take in the majority of those moved out;
 - Israel would hand-over the Strip to US control;
 - America would develop Gaza into a new “Middle East Riviera.”
- Yesterday, Jordan’s King Abdullah met with President Trump in the White House. While not directly rejecting the relocation idea, Abdullah did suggest that other viable options should be discussed, and that he “had to do what was best for his own country.” In what was likely an effort to ease tensions, Abdullah announced that Jordan would accept 2,000 sick children from Gaza for medical treatment.
- International media reported earlier today that the US government believes that Israel will attack Iran’s nuclear facilities in the next six months, apparently with a green light from the US. Iran’s president said in response that if his country’s nuclear sites are hit, the Islamic Republic will simply rebuild them.
- New US Secretary of State Marco Rubio will visit in Israel in the coming days.
- Earlier today, millions of credit cards in Israel stopped working, apparently as a result of a cyber-attack. It remains unclear who was responsible for the attack.
- Judge Isaac Amit was sworn in today as the new Chief Justice of Israel’s Supreme Court, following a year and half where the position was vacant (Amit served as an Interim Chief Justice). The selection went ahead by order of the Court, following an extended period of legal and political wrangling initiated by Justice Minister Yariv Levin’s opposition to electing Amit. Levin boycotted today’s swearing-in ceremony.

For Further Reading

Mark Segel

- **Hamas must decide to continue the deal or let 'all hell break loose'**
- Netanyahu and Abdullah are living in Trump's world now. Is Hamas?
- Why the West Can't Defeat the Houthis Without Securing Yemen's Ports
- Syria in Turmoil: The View from Jerusalem

Am Yisrael Chai!

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