



## Israel at War

Thursday, March 13, 2025

**Day 524, 59 Hostages Remain in Captivity**

### Latest Updates

Listen to [this recording](#) of Jewish Federations' Chair Julie Platt speaking on Jewish Crossroads, a podcast presented by the Jewish People Policy Institute. In an interview with senior Israeli journalist Tamar Ish Shalom, Julie discusses Jewish leadership, rising antisemitism, and the evolving U.S. - Israel relationship.

### Ceasefire Negotiations

- The Israeli negotiating team remains in Qatar as discussions on an extension of the ceasefire and further hostage releases continue.
- US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff arrived in Qatar last night. The latest proposal, as presented by Witkoff, calls for a two-month extension of the ceasefire in exchange for the release of ten live hostages. It is believed that there are, at most, 24 hostages still alive out of the 59 in captivity.
- While Hamas has indicated that it is interested in making a deal, the terror group is also demanding that any agreement include a second phase that

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would see the complete withdrawal of IDF forces from Gaza, something that Israel is opposed to.

- The Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen earlier threatened to resume attacks on Israel if it did not allow the resumption of truck convoys into Gaza by the beginning of this week. When the ultimatum ran out on Tuesday, the terror group said that it would resume attacking any Israeli ships in the area, but, significantly, did not announce an intention to attack Israel's population centers by rocket and drone fire, as it has previously done.

## Hostages

- Israel received a “sign of life” of hostage Avinatan Or from former hostages who were held in refugee camps in central Gaza. Or's family has received multiple indications that he has been alive since October 7, but none since the spring of 2024. He was kidnapped on October 7 from the Nova music festival, alongside his girlfriend, rescued hostage Noa Argamani.
- Watch [this emotional video](#), presented at the recent Jewish Agency Board of Governors meetings in Jerusalem, summarizing some of the joyous scenes from the last two months, as released hostages are reunited with their families.
- In recent weeks, a number of the released hostages have spoken with Israeli media about their experiences in captivity. [Eli Sharabi's interview](#) on Israel TV Channel 12 was viewed by President Trump, leading to last week's meeting in the Oval Office between the president, Sharabi, and seven other released hostages.
- Another freed hostage, Omer Wenkert, gave his first television interview since being released from more than 500 days in Hamas captivity. Wenkert was 22 when he was kidnapped from a bomb shelter near the Nova festival; his best friend, Kim Damti, was murdered on the spot. Wenkert said he was held in a place “much worse than a dungeon.” He also described how, “suddenly, two people pass in the tunnel and just hit you like crazy, with everything they can find—whether it's hitting your legs with the barrel of the gun, punching your face, or kicking you all over. With each punch you

pass out, and the next one wakes you back up.” See an excerpt of the interview with English subtitles [here](#).

## The IDF

- Hamas sent a 4-year-old Gazan boy to a military post in the Gaza border security zone on Tuesday. IDF troops returned the boy to the Gaza Strip in coordination with international organizations. The security zone is guarded by IDF troops.
- Yesterday, an Israeli man was shot and wounded during an apparent terror attack near Ariel in Samaria. A large IDF manhunt has so far failed to locate the perpetrator.
- Following attacks by the new Syrian regime on its citizens that left more than a thousand dead, Israel’s Defense Minister Israel Katz said yesterday that the IDF presence in southern Syria would continue indefinitely. “Every morning when [Syrian leader] al-Jolani opens his eyes at the presidential palace in Damascus, he will see the IDF watching him from the peak of the Hermon and remember that we are here and in the entire security area of southern Syria, to protect the Golan and Galilee residents against any of his threats and those of his Jihadist friends.”
- Katz’s comments also follow over 40 IDF attacks against targets in Syria in recent days, which struck multiple sites throughout the country’s south, including air defense installations and radars. The recent attacks were the largest against targets in Syria in two months.
- A UN report issued today has accused Israel of carrying out “genocidal acts” against Palestinians by systematically destroying women’s healthcare facilities during the conflict in Gaza. It also accused the IDF of systematically using forced public stripping and sexual assault as tools of war. Israel calls the report “unfounded, biased and lacking credibility.” The paper claims that Israel had “intentionally attacked and destroyed” the Palestinian Territory’s main fertility center and had simultaneously imposed a siege that blocked aid (including medication for ensuring safe pregnancies, deliveries, and neonatal care).

- In response to the UN report, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, "The anti-Israel circus known as the UN 'Human Rights Council' has long been revealed as an antisemitic, rotten, and irrelevant organization that supports terrorism. For good reason, Israel decided to quit it approximately one month ago. Instead of focusing on the crimes against humanity and the war crimes that were perpetrated by the Hamas terrorist organization in the worst massacre carried out against the Jewish people since the Holocaust, the UN has again chosen to attack the State of Israel with false accusations, including baseless accusations of sexual violence."

## Other Developments

- At the beginning of the week, schools reopened in the north for the first time since October 7, 2023. While many have returned to their homes in the area, many remain in temporary accommodation in other parts of the country. Schools reported that around 65% of students from the region returned to classes.
- According to Israeli media reports, Israel is looking to normalize relations with Lebanon. Yesterday, it was announced that representatives from Israel, the US, France and Lebanon met in Naqoura, Lebanon. The negotiators agreed to form three joint working groups, aiming to stabilize the area and focus on: the five points under IDF control in southern Lebanon; discussions on the Blue Line (which forms the de-facto border between the two countries) and points still in dispute; and the issue of Lebanese detainees being held by Israel. As a goodwill gesture, Israel released five Lebanese detainees.
- Last month, Israel's Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara ordered an investigation into connections between senior figures in the prime minister's office and Hamas' main financial backers in Qatar. Last Thursday, former Israel Police chief Roni Alsheich said that he "begged" Netanyahu's office to "cut off the connection" with Qatar, saying, "This is much more serious than two people having contact with Qataris." Yesterday, Former Defense Minister Moshe "Bogie" Ya'alon said in an interview that there was "unproven intelligence" revealing that the prime

minister himself received from Qatar \$15 million in 2012 and \$50 million in 2018. Netanyahu said yesterday that he is suing Ya'alon for spreading “a despicable lie.” There is now a court-imposed gag order on the investigation.

- Justice Minister Yariv Levin initiated the process of removing Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara from her post, saying she has politicized her office and “repeatedly thwarted the will of the government.” Levin submitted an 800-page report detailing what he termed the “failings of the Attorney General.” On Monday, the government set a date to begin hearings on Levin’s motion in the cabinet. The entire process could take many months, and will almost certainly be challenged in the Supreme Court. Prime Minister Netanyahu cannot take part in any discussions or votes on the issue as a result of potential conflicts of interest due to his current trial.
- According to newly released data by the Israel Democracy Institute, while Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s majority in the Knesset remains solid, 72.5% of Israelis now think that he should accept responsibility for the failures of October 7 and resign from office. Some 48% believe he should step down immediately; 24.5% believe he should do so once the war is over. See the full details, including polling on other issues, [here](#).

## For Further Reading

- [Iran’s Regional Recalibration: Qatar at the Center, Proxies on the Periphery](#)
- [Egypt- Israel: A Cold Peace in Peril?](#)
- [Israel cannot let Hamas win by abandoning the pursuit of peace](#)

Am Yisrael Chai!

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