Israel at War

Thursday, May 17

Day 224

Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Activities

- **Five IDF soldiers were** killed and eight were injured (three seriously) as a result of a friendly fire error in Gaza overnight. The soldiers from an ultra-Orthodox unit were inside an abandoned building when an IDF tank force saw their rifle barrels at a window and mistakenly thought they were terrorists. The tanks fired two shells at the building, killing all five. The IDF is currently investigating the incident.
- In addition, a **sixth soldier was killed** yesterday in fighting in Rafah.
- The IDF is reporting increasing examples of **Hamas returning to areas in the Gaza Strip** that had already been cleared of the terror group by the IDF, including the Shifa hospital, Jabalya, Zeitoun, and other areas in the north.
- The IDF's Commando Brigade was **deployed to southern Gaza's Rafah** last night, joining the 162nd Division which has been operating in the eastern part of the city since earlier this month. The move comes as the Israeli government is expected to approve widening the offensive there.
- Last night, Israel's Defense Minister Yoav Gallant sparked a **political storm** by publicly criticizing his fellow Likud member, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and his handling of the subject of who will govern Gaza after Hamas is defeated.
    - The harsh comments came after months of tension between the two and after reports emerged earlier this week that senior IDF officers believed that the lack of a governing alternative to

Hamas had forced the IDF to return and fight in areas that had already been cleared out.

- Gallant argued that "indecision is, in essence, a decision" that would lead to one of two bad results: Continued Hamas rule, or IDF control over Gaza's civilian population.
- In response, the Prime Minister said "I am not willing to replace Hamastan with Fatahstan. As long as Hamas stands on its feet, no other body will enter to run civilian matters in Gaza, especially not the Palestinian Authority," which, Netanyahu said, "supports terror, educates to terror, and funds terror." Read more here.
- See more here about the possible political ramifications of Gallant's comments.

- A recent poll indicates that Israelis feel that the time has come for **those responsible for October 7 to step down**.

Humanitarian Aid

- The US military has finished installing their recently completed **floating pier** for the Gaza Strip. The structure is poised to begin allowing the ferrying of humanitarian aid into the enclave via the sea. Israeli forces will be in charge of security on the shore, but there are also two US Navy warships near the area in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, the USS Arleigh Burke and the USS Paul Ignatius. Both ships are destroyers equipped with a wide range of weapons and capabilities to protect American troops offshore and allies on the beach.
- See more figures on humanitarian aid here

Hostages

- Reports persist, as they have for months, that the sides may be close to a hostage deal, yet **no agreement has been finalized**. Read more:
    - The Hostage Release Deal, Rafah, and Defeating Hamas. Where Are We?
    - Mosaic: What's Happening with the Hostage Negotiations?

International Response

- There continues to be disagreement between various parties on what post-war Gaza will look like. Yesterday **US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan** presented an overview of President Joe Biden's approach to the Israel-Hamas war. Among the points he made, which include his reiteration of the President's ironclad support of Israel and its aim to defeat Hamas and its military leader Yahya Sinwar, he emphasized the President's determination to see a political strategy for post-war Gaza.

Rockets

- While the number of **Hamas** rocket attacks on Israel remains fairly low, rocket fire from Gaza has increased over the last two weeks. Recent days have seen almost daily fire at Sderot and other locations near the Strip.
- In the **north**, Hezbollah continues to fire at Israeli targets, triggering significant Israeli retaliations. In recent days, there has been a marked increase in rocket fire in the area. Earlier today, Hezbollah said that they targeted three military bases and fired 60 Katyusha rockets. The IDF reported that some 40 rockets crossed the border in the attack. Yesterday, a Hezbollah explosive-carrying drone launched from Lebanon hit a "sensitive military facility" near the Golani Junction in the Galilee. Two drones were launched in the attack, with one being downed by air defenses. The second explosive drone struck the site, and the damage is "currently being evaluated by the

military." Read this piece from INSS, The Likelihood of the Conflict Between Israel and Hezbollah Expanding.

- In the **Red Sea**, the US, the UK, and Israel are defending against attacks by Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen. Similarly, the US military is striking pro-Iranian targets in Syria and Iraq. Earlier this week, a US Navy destroyer intercepted a Houthi anti-ship missile over the Red Sea after the group claimed they had targeted the warship. US forces also destroyed two drones.

Stories of Heartbreak, Heroism, and Hope

- **Read this** story of 22-year-old Amit Mann, an MDA paramedic from Kibbutz Be'eri. Amit, the youngest of five sisters, began volunteering with MDA at 15 and aspired to study medicine. On October 7, when terrorists overran her kibbutz, she ran to the clinic to treat the wounded instead of hiding. Despite being under fire, she treated victims for hours until she was shot in the legs and head. A website dedicated to her memory says, "In the darkest of places, she was a great light and demonstrated compassion, humanity and giving."
- Watch these **two videos** from Jewish Federations' partner, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC): "I Feel Completely New": Prioritizing Emotional Healing in Israel; and Community Resilience in Ofakim.

On Campus

- See this piece: How Do Palestinians View the U.S. "Campus Intifada?"
- And read, Hatred of Israel Invades Universities in Europe and America

Further Reading

- **See this** open letter signed by over 90 retired U.S. admirals and generals on the mutual benefit of a strong U.S.–Israel relationship, and why it is imperative that "America unequivocally stand by this indispensable ally."
- In a May 11 interview with Dr. Phil, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated that post-war Gaza might need a civilian administration by Gazans not committed to Israel's destruction, possibly aided by the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and other countries seeking stability and peace.
- The Exodus Project: A Jewish Answer to the University Crisis
- The Gaza War Hasn't Stopped Israel-Arab Normalization

Jewish Federations Resources

Jewish Federations have collectively raised over $800 million and allocated more than $400 million for humanitarian needs and economic

support in Israel since October 7. For an updated list of allocations, click here. Read this JTA Jewish Federations story: "The man allocating $800M in post-Oct. 7 donations to Israel on where the money goes."

Jewish Federations' Backgrounders:

At-Risk Youth
Young Children
Volunteers
Women
Pastoral Guidance
Bedouin Communities
Food Security
People with Disabilities

As part of the **Second Line** initiative, Jewish Federations are partnering with the Israel Ministry of Health, the Israel Trauma Coalition, and Birthright Israel to recruit qualified volunteers to provide both in-person and remote support to both affected populations and local mental health professionals in Israel. To apply, click here. For more information, contact Hannah Miller.

Resources: Readers can see links to resources, background, research and other information on the current war here; can access a Jewish Federations toolkit here, and can refer to the Community Mobilization Center Resource Hub for the latest talking points and tools.

Details: For information on the latest overall numbers from the conflict, see here.

Volunteering: Read this updated Jewish Federations' overview on the latest volunteering opportunities in Israel right now.

Read the latest communication from the **Community Mobilization Center** here.

Am Yisrael Chai!

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