



War in Israel: Update on Current Situation

July 17, 2025 - October 7 War, Day 650, 50 hostages remain in captivity

LATEST UPDATES

The conflict between Israel and Syria is flaring up as negotiations over a potential ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas inch forward and political turmoil engulfs Israel's ruling coalition.

Syria

- In a surprising development, a major **flare-up has taken place** between Israel and Syria.
- Internal conflicts in recent days and weeks have seen some **armed Muslim groups in Syria attack members of the country's Druze community**, particularly in the area around the town of Sweida. There are reports of a massacre with hundreds of casualties.
- Close ties including family relationships connect the Syrian and Israeli Druze communities; **Israel's government and the IDF have promised to help protect the Druze community over the border.**
- Earlier this week, the spiritual leader of Israel's Druze community, Sheikh Muafaq Tarif, announced **"days of rage"** and demonstrations in the north. The Sheikh called on Druze to go up to the Golan Heights near the border and do "whatever is necessary" to protect their Druze families in Syria.
- Yesterday, in response, **over a thousand Israeli Druze overran the border** crossing in the Golan Heights and entered Syria to support their fellow community members. The Israeli Druze headed towards the Sweida district, which was already under attack by Muslim militias. A number of Syrian Druze also crossed into Israel.
- **Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** was called out of the courtroom during his ongoing trial as the situation intensified. Shortly afterwards, the prime minister made a special public announcement saying, "My brothers, the Druze citizens of Israel: the situation in Sweida, the situation in south-western Syria, is very serious. The IDF is operating, the Air Force is operating, other forces are operating. We are acting to save our Druze brothers and to eliminate the gangs of the regime. And now I have a single request of you: you are Israeli citizens. Do not cross the border. You are risking your lives; you could be murdered, you could be taken hostage, and you are impeding the efforts of the IDF. Therefore I ask of you: return to your homes and let the IDF take action."
- In a clear warning to the Syrian leader Ahmed al-Sharaa (also known as Abu Mohammad al-Jolani) indicating that [Israel holds the Syrian Army](#) responsible for controlling the armed militias, the IDF attacked [Syrian Army headquarters](#) in Damascus, as well as targets in Sweida itself, including Syrian Army [vehicles](#).

- The IDF also moved **substantial numbers of troops to the Syrian border**, while the Syrian government warned Israel not to “interfere in the country’s domestic affairs.” The US Administration also asked Israel to refrain from further strikes in Syria.
- Earlier today, Syria announced that a **ceasefire agreement has been reached** between the various factions in the area, and reports suggested that the Syrian Army was withdrawing its troops. At least 350 people were reportedly killed in the fighting.
- It is understood that many of the Israeli Druze who crossed into Syria have **now returned home safely**, but some remain in Syria.
- In an unusual move, Israel’s **Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Kalman Ber** issued an open call to Israel and the world to help the Druze in Syria, citing the biblical commandment “not to stand by the blood of your neighbor.” Rabbi Ber said, “We are witnessing a brutal campaign of murder against the Druze people. These are acts that we and all religious leaders around the world must not ignore or remain silent in the face of. We have seen savage beasts descend in a fury upon innocent civilians, without distinguishing between man and woman, elder and child. We are reminded of the dark days of history, when bloodthirsty nations committed similar atrocities — and the world was silent.”
- [Israel's decisive Syria strikes highlight need for intervention in preventing genocides](#)

Gaza

- Fighting continues in Gaza. On Monday, **three soldiers were killed** in a tank explosion in northern Gaza: Shoham Menahem, 21, from Yardenia; Shlomo Yakir Shrem, 20, from Efrat; and Yuliy Faktor, 19, from Rishon Lezion. While no final determination has been made, it is possible that the three were killed in an operational error.
- Also on Monday, an **IDF soldier took his own life** on an army base in northern Israel. He was the third soldier to do so in less than two weeks.
- **Twenty-six IDF soldiers have been killed in the last month**, and a total of 893 since October 7, 2023.
- Yesterday, the IDF **Chief of Staff visited troops fighting in Gaza**. Read more about his remarks, and see footage [here](#).
- Negotiations on a **ceasefire and hostage-release agreement continue**. While there are [numerous reports of progress](#), an immediate ceasefire does not yet seem imminent. According to many reports, Israel has now dropped one of its key demands – for the IDF to remain in the Morag Corridor – which was a major sticking point in negotiations. Remaining in the Corridor, which divides the Strip along an east-west axis, was important for Israel which sought to establish a humanitarian zone around Rafah, enabling the IDF to isolate Hamas in the north.
- More than **20 Gazans were killed yesterday** at an aid site in Khan Yunis run by the private US organization, the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF). GHF said in a statement, “We are heartbroken to confirm that 20 people died this morning in a tragic incident at the distribution site SDS3 in Khan Yunis. Our current understanding is that 19 of the victims were trampled and one was stabbed amid a chaotic and dangerous surge, driven by agitators in the crowd.”
- While the IDF has not confirmed if it carried out a **strike that hit the only Catholic Church in Gaza**, the Holy Family Church, where four people were badly injured, four lightly hurt and multiple additional casualties were reported, Israel expressed “deep sorrow over the damage [to the church] and over any civilian casualty.” The Foreign Ministry said that “Israel never (purposely) targets churches or religious sites and regrets any harm to a religious site or to uninvolved civilians. The IDF is examining this incident, the circumstances of which are still unclear, and the results of the investigation will be published transparently.” See our social post on the incident [here](#).

Politics

- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's governing coalition **seemingly lost its majority** in the Knesset after the haredi (ultra-Orthodox) parties left the government.
- The two haredi parties, Shas and United Torah Judaism (a merger of Degel HaTorah and Agudat Yisrael), had been threatening to leave the coalition if a suitable bill that provided a basis for at least some **haredi exemptions from military service** was not presented for voting. Despite intense negotiations with MK Yuli Edelstein (Likud), who chairs the Knesset's Defense and Foreign Affairs Committee, no agreement was reached.
- Shas's position is a little more complicated, saying that its **11-person faction has quit the government but will not leave the coalition**. This leaves Netanyahu with just 50 of the Knesset's 120 seats (without Shas, or 61 with), and little ability to govern effectively. The Knesset will disperse for the long summer recess in just over a week, leaving no time to hold a vote of no confidence which could trigger new elections.
- Significantly, the haredi parties have said that they **will not join the opposition**, and are not trying to topple the government, but can no longer support the current coalition. In practice, this means that the government will have great difficulty passing any new legislation.
- Two other coalition parties, Religious Zionism (led by Minister Bezalel Smotrich) and Jewish Power (led by Itamar Ben Gvir) have also **threatened to leave the government** if a ceasefire agreement is reached that doesn't allow Israel to keep fighting Hamas.
- While it is possible that the coalition members may reach a new agreement on haredi conscription over the summer Knesset break, most commentators agree that the likely outcome will be that when the Knesset reconvenes in October, there will be a **vote on new elections which would probably take place in January 2026**, around ten months earlier than originally scheduled.
- Recent polls indicate that while Netanyahu's Likud would likely emerge with the most number of seats in new elections, the party would have **difficulty forming a coalition**. If polls are correct, former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett may be best positioned to return and form a new government.
- Yesterday, **US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee arrived at the Tel Aviv courthouse** to sit in on Netanyahu's trial. In response to journalists asking him why he was there, the Ambassador responded, "I came to observe." Numerous Israeli commentators called the move an improper intervention in Israel's judicial system and even a problematic show of support by a foreign government in an ongoing criminal trial.
- In July, the Knesset House Committee **voted to expel Member of Knesset Ayman Odeh** (Arab Hadash party) from the Knesset for saying he was happy about the release of Palestinian prisoners and that "Gaza won and Gaza will win." The decision to expel a member of Knesset requires a "super-majority" of 90 of 120 members. On Monday the move failed to pass as only 83 MKs voted to expel Odeh with 15 voting against the bill and 22 absent from the plenary.

Houthis

- **Sirens continue to sound** in Israel every few days, mainly when missiles are fired by Houthis in Yemen.
- Yesterday one such ballistic missile triggered **alarms in the Dead Sea area**. The missile was successfully intercepted and caused no damage.
- In Yemen, the (non-Houthi) government **intercepted a very large shipment of weapons** weighing 750 tons that had been sent by Iran to the Houthis.

Further Reading

- [Israel's Druze have sacrificed so much, and their families in Syria deserve safety](#)
- [The Risks of Ending the Gaza War](#)
- [Optimism in Israel on the Rise](#)
- [Will Iranians Rise Up? Hidden Khamenei](#)
- [Hopes for a quick deal with Syria are gone, but Israel needs a strategy beyond strikes](#)

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