



Israel & the United States at War with Iran Special Update from Israel

April 23, 2026

Prepared by and sent from Jewish Federations of North America's Israel Office

- **Ceasefires with Iran and Lebanon hold, shakily, while negotiations continue.**
- **Two IDF soldiers were killed in Lebanon last week**
- **Argentinian President visits Israel**

Iran

- Hours before the two-week ceasefire with Iran was set to expire, President Donald Trump announced he was **extending the truce "for the time being,"** saying Pakistani mediators sought more time for Iran's leadership to submit a unified proposal. He said the US would continue a naval blockade tied to Iran. Meanwhile, the US and Pakistan awaited Iran's response to a US proposal; a second round of talks that had been pushed off, so VP JD Vance called off his planned trip to Pakistan.
- Iranian forces **targeted three container ships** in and around the Strait of Hormuz and seized two of them, identifying the vessels as the MSC Francesca and the Epaminondas. A UK maritime security report said an IRGC gunboat fired on one ship about 15 nautical miles northeast of Oman, causing heavy damage to the bridge, although the crews were safe. Panama condemned what it called the "illegal seizure" of a vessel sailing under its flag through the Strait of Hormuz, saying it was forcibly taken into Iranian waters.
- US defense officials predicted that the work of **clearing the mines laid in the Strait of Hormuz** would take about six months.
- According to Israeli media, pressure on Tehran is increasingly coming from Beijing, as China's oil reserves decline. The New York Times reported that it was because of China's intervention that Iran agreed to the Pakistan-mediated ceasefire; Beijing told Tehran to "show flexibility and defuse tensions."
- **Iran executed** Soltanali Shirzadi Fakhr for cooperating with Israeli intelligence; he was a long-time member of the Mujahideen-e-Khalq.
- The Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence arm, said that one of its members **had been killed inside an "enemy country,"** without further details being released.

Iran's Options

- According to Israeli reporter Amit Segal, Iran now has four broad strategic options, none of which offer a clear or low-cost exit:
 1. **Renew the war:** Iran could decline to extend the ceasefire and resume direct conflict, likely focusing on high-impact targets such as oil and gas infrastructure in neighboring Gulf states to intensify the global energy crisis and generate pressure on Washington. This path carries significant risk, given Iran's depleted military stocks, Israel's readiness to respond, and the arrival of additional US naval forces in the region.
 2. **Proxy escalation:** Iran could attempt to raise indirect pressure through allied groups, particularly Shiite militias in Iraq or the Houthis in Yemen, including attacks on Gulf energy facilities or shipping routes. However, Hezbollah seems unlikely to re-enter fighting after the recent Lebanon ceasefire, and the Houthis have shown limited willingness to escalate against a reinforced US military presence.
 3. **Capitulate and negotiate:** Tehran could return to negotiations while the naval blockade remained in place. While this option reduced immediate military risk, it would represent a major political and reputational setback for a regime that had publicly ruled out negotiations under blockade conditions.
 4. **Maintain the stalemate:** Iran could take no immediate action, preserving the status quo while betting that domestic political pressure in the US and sustained energy market strain would eventually push Washington to soften its demands. This approach risks prolonged economic damage inside Iran, with the possibility that the existing equilibrium could become unsustainable within weeks.
- From **Israel's perspective**, the continuation of the ceasefire combined with Iran's absence from negotiations is seen as a favorable outcome, as it leaves Tehran under sustained pressure from US naval containment and sanctions without unlocking funds or concessions that could enable Iran to rebuild its military capabilities.

Lebanon

- **Two Israeli reserve soldiers were killed** last week during operations in southern Lebanon after explosive devices detonated during patrol activity. Sgt. First Class (res.) Lidor Porat, 31, was killed when an explosive detonated as his vehicle passed over it, while Command Sgt. Maj. (res.) Barak Kalfon, 48, was killed when an explosive device was triggered during a search of a building for weapons. The IDF carried out targeted strikes against Hezbollah infrastructure in response.
- Israel and Lebanon remained in the U.S.-brokered **indirect negotiations** under a 10-day ceasefire that took effect on April 16, which was aimed at creating space for a more permanent security arrangement along the northern border. The Israeli and Lebanese ambassadors to the U.S. in Washington are set to meet as early as today with Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Lebanon is seeking to extend the current ceasefire beyond the initial 10 days.
- Israel said the **cease-fire is "conditional and temporary,"** stressing that Israel retained full [freedom of action](#) against imminent Hezbollah threats and continued to demand the disarmament of Hezbollah and the removal of its forces from southern Lebanon. Lebanese officials described the talks as fragile but necessary, emphasizing Lebanese sovereignty, while insisting that Hezbollah's fate could only be addressed "through internal Lebanese consensus." Hezbollah signaled cautious adherence to the ceasefire but warned it would respond to any Israeli violations. Israeli media say that the success of the talks is dependent on whether the Lebanese government and military have the desire and the ability to disarm Hezbollah.

- The IDF said its troops [captured a member](#) of **Hezbollah's elite Radwan Force** in southern Lebanon after identifying him as planning "imminent" attacks on Israeli forces stationed there. The military said the operative surrendered shortly after being spotted and was taken to Israel for interrogation by the IDF.
- A Lebanese journalist, Amal Khalil of the pro-Hezbollah daily Al-Akhbar, **was killed after Israeli strikes** in southern Lebanon, with her body later pulled from rubble hours after the attack. The account said a strike hit a vehicle near where Amal Khalil and freelance photographer Zeinab Faraj were working, and they then ran into a nearby house that was also hit.
- Read: [Inside Israel's Buffer Zone in Southern Lebanon](#)

Israel's Home Front

- Israel's Home Front is **operating as normal** with schools, businesses, gatherings and workplaces functioning without restrictions, including in the country's north. Nonetheless, citizens are braced for a renewal of fighting, on either or both fronts, at any moment.
- Israel's **air traffic remains well below normal levels** despite the formal reopening of airspace, with operations concentrated mainly at Ben Gurion Airport and only limited activity elsewhere. Ben Gurion was open to commercial flights, led primarily by Israeli carriers El Al, Arkia, Israir and Air Haifa, alongside a small number of foreign airlines, led by UAE-based Etihad. Officials said capacity is still only a fraction of pre-war levels, with airlines operating reduced schedules and, in many cases, fewer frequencies and seats per route than usual.
- Following the commemoration of **Yom Hazikaron and celebrations of Yom Ha'atzmaut**, read: [A Country Worthy of their Sacrifice](#) and [A Day to Remember](#).

Diplomatic Developments

- **Argentine President Javier Milei paid a historic state visit** to Israel last week. During the trip, Milei announced the opening of Argentina's embassy in Jerusalem, making Argentina the latest country to formally locate its embassy in Israel's capital, and joined Israeli leaders in announcing the launch of direct flights between Tel Aviv and Buenos Aires later this year. Milei also became the first foreign leader to light a torch at Israel's official Independence Day ceremony at Mount Herzl.
- The US Defense Department announced that John Phelan, the **US Navy secretary, departed his post "effective immediately,"** with Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell saying Hung Cao would become acting secretary. The departure came a day after Phelan addressed a Navy conference, and weeks after Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth fired the Army's top officer, Gen. Randy George, along with two other top generals.
- Israel's Defense Ministry ordered another **\$200 million worth of aerial munitions** from Elbit under a multiyear arrangement, describing the purchase as aimed at bolstering readiness for near-term combat scenarios and preparing for a more intense security decade. The order included missiles and other bombs used by Israeli Air Force aircraft for strikes and interceptions. A similar \$183 million deal was signed in January.
- UK counter-terror police arrested three suspects aged 20, 19 and 17 over the **arson attack that destroyed four ambulances** belonging to the Jewish volunteer organization Hatzalah near a synagogue in the Golders Green area of London. The arrests were on suspicion of conspiracy to commit arson with intent to endanger life.

Jewish Federations and Partners

The Jewish Agency for Israel

- The Jewish Agency, supported by Jewish Federations, has provided approximately \$6.3 million in loans and grants to 402 small businesses.
- Under the Roaring Lion Fund for victims, 1,224 applications were approved and an additional 126 were in process, representing about \$1.43 million in assistance.
- Since the beginning of the war, 357 new immigrants have arrived, and 2,851 new aliyah files have been opened. The first flight of about 220 Bnei Menashe immigrants will arrive in Israel today. An additional two flights are planned over the next two weeks, bringing the first cohort to about 600 immigrants. All members of the new Bnei Menashe olim groups were set to reside at the Nof HaGalil absorption center for six months. Children will be integrated immediately into kindergartens and schools, and adults are scheduled to participate in Hebrew ulpan at the center.

The Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies

- The Schechter Institute, supported by Jewish Federations' iRep, is a Jerusalem-based umbrella network of over 40 Israeli-Judaism organizations and 25 communities working to promote a pluralistic, tolerant and accessible public sphere in the capital. The Institute is known as one of Israel's leading centers for pluralistic Jewish learning and community leadership training.
- The Institute's Marpeh program equips mental-health professionals with practical tools to strengthen personal and communal resilience and has continued despite the challenges of the war. When in-person meetings were no longer possible, Schechter quickly transitioned the program to Zoom. Participation remained strong, and the work has stayed deeply impactful. More broadly, the Institute opened its new academic semester online to ensure continuous learning and connection for students.

The Shalom Hartman Institute

- The Shalom Hartman Institute, supported by Jewish Federations' iRep, is a leading center for Jewish thought and moral leadership and has been active on multiple fronts throughout the war. Hartman has produced special podcast episodes, offered timely educational briefings, and provided program-specific support across its communities. The institute's shared-society educators' program, Min HaBe'erot, recently held a virtual session for Arab and Jewish participants on "Hope in a Time of War," drawing strong participation despite sirens and shelter relocations.
- Rabbanut Yisraelit, Hartman's network of Israeli rabbis, has focused on supporting rabbis personally, equipping them with tools for their communal roles and fostering shared spiritual reflection. Meanwhile, core programs, including the ordination program, continue online.

Jewish Federations **continue to monitor the situation** on the ground very closely and will report as needed.

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