



War in Israel: Update on Current Situation

October 16, 2025 - October 7 War, Day 741, 19 hostage bodies remain in captivity

LATEST UPDATES

Israel marks the official state memorial day for the October 7 attacks as additional bodies are returned to the Jewish state for burial.

Israel's President Isaac Herzog:

"In this sacred ceremony, in this sacred place, I wish to speak as President of the State of Israel to you, my dear ones, and to all the bereaved families, to bow my head in reverence and say thank you on behalf of the State of Israel. Thank you for the children you raised as warriors of courage who did not hesitate when called to rescue the State of Israel, to defeat the enemy, and to bring the hostages home. Warriors who carried photos of the hostages in their pockets and courage and strength in their hearts.

"There is no doubt that these days are historic and deeply emotional — filled both with relief and with profound pain and sorrow. As our beloved ones return to us from the murderers' hands, some to their homes and healing, others to be laid to rest in dignity, an entire nation has struggled for two long years to reach this moment. And even if this may not yet be the end, we can feel through tears of pain and of relief mingled together that perhaps, hopefully, we are drawing near to it. Even now, we remember: the mission is not complete. We must do everything through every possible means to ensure that all the fallen hostages, every last one, are brought back to their families, to their homeland and to eternal rest."

- Agreement reached on a permanent end to the war in Gaza
- Ceasefire in place
- All hostages to be released in the coming days
- President Trump is likely to arrive on Saturday night
- The deal comes as Israelis mark two years since the tragedies of October 7, 2023.

October 7 Memorial Day

- Today marks Israel's new **National Remembrance Day for October 7**, designated by the government to fall annually on the 24th of Tishrei.
- As part of the national commemoration, IDF Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir announced the creation of a "**citations committee**" to honor those who showed extraordinary heroism during and after the attacks.

- Defense Minister Israel Katz has asked Zamir to recommend candidates for the Medal of Valor — the IDF's **highest honor**, last awarded in 1975. One potential candidate is 19-year-old Matan Abergil, who fought Hamas terrorists at Kibbutz Nir Am. When a grenade was thrown into his vehicle, Abergil threw himself on top of his fellow soldiers to shield them, sacrificing his life to protect others.

Bodies of Hostages Released

- Last night, **Hamas released the bodies of two additional hostages**. Muhammad el-Atrash, 39, and [Inbar Haiman](#), 27 were returned to Israel for burial. Muhammad served as a Bedouin tracker in the IDF; he was killed while fighting Hamas terrorists around Nahal Oz on October 7 and his body was taken into Gaza. He left behind two wives and 13 children. Inbar, who was working at the Nova festival as a “helper” for partygoers who were intoxicated or in distress, was killed by terrorists when she fought back against their attempts to take her captive. She was the last female who remained captive in Gaza.
- **This follows** the four bodies (Guy Ilouz, Yossi Sharabi - brother of Eli Sharabi returned alive eight months ago – Daniel Peretz, and Nepalese Bippin Joshi) released on Monday and three (Uriel Baruch, Eytan Levy and Tamir Nimrodi) released on Tuesday. (Hamas sent four bodies on Tuesday, but one was determined to be the remains of a Palestinian from Jericho.)
- **Funerals have taken** place for some of those returned. Surviving families are in great distress, despite the closure that the burials have provided.
- Under Jewish Law, even families who had already **sat shiva for their loved ones**, sit again for one additional day upon the reburial.
- Hamas claimed last night that it **has now returned all the bodies it can access**, saying that retrieving the rest would require “significant efforts and special equipment.” Israeli officials reject that claim, assessing that Hamas still holds at least ten more bodies. Under the ceasefire agreement, all living and deceased hostages were supposed to have been returned within the first 72 hours of the deal. Defense Minister Israel Katz has now instructed the IDF to prepare to resume fighting, in coordination with Washington, if Hamas fails to meet its obligations.
- **Nineteen bodies are still being held**, despite Hamas's obligation, under the agreement, to return them all immediately.
- Aided by intelligence information provided by Israel, an **international task force** made up of Egyptians, Qataris and Turks has begun searching for the remaining bodies in Gaza. Under the agreement, areas in which the search is conducted will be closed off to returning Gazans and to any rehabilitation efforts so as to maximize the chances of locating the hostage bodies. This gives Israel effective veto power over the return of many Gazans to their homes and will impede the start of rehabilitation activities, providing Israel with leverage over Hamas to accelerate the search.
- Israel has released **15 bodies of Hamas terrorists for each of the Israeli bodies** returned.

Hostage Captivity Details Emerging

- As the returned live hostages begin their **long journey to physical and emotional recovery**, some [details are emerging](#) about their time in captivity.
- Yosef Haim Ohana was frequently **held at gunpoint** by terrorists who took pleasure in frightening him. He was repeatedly forced to beg for his life.
- Rom Braslavsky said his captors pressured him to **convert to Islam**, promising more food and gifts if he fasted during Ramadan. He refused. His ankles were shackled for much of his captivity. At one point, the terrorists told him that Iran had destroyed Israel with nuclear weapons. Braslavsky spent most of his two years in solitary confinement. After last week's deal, he and six others were taken into a deep tunnel and kept in a narrow pit; they were unable to sit down for four or five days.
- Some hostages were beaten for long periods with **burlap sacks over their heads**.
- Hostages who were **forced to film** “proof of life” videos used for psychological warfare were given small amounts of food as “compensation.”

- Some released hostages said they were **exposed to Israeli media** during captivity and followed the large public rallies and interviews with their families. They said that hearing those voices and knowing people were fighting for them gave them great strength.

Gaza

- Negotiations have reportedly begun on **Phase 2 of the ceasefire agreement** that will involve discussions on disarming Hamas, the IDF's withdrawal, the future governance of Gaza, and other issues.
- For now, **Hamas retains control** over some 50% of the Strip's area and almost all of its citizens.
- Yesterday, numerous **gruesome videos emerged** of Hamas conducting mass public executions of those it says "collaborated" with Israel. All were filmed in recent days. In the videos, which have shocked Israeli and global audiences, large crowds, which include children, are seen gathered in public squares as armed Hamas men drag in numerous blindfolded civilians and then shoot them dead.

Regional Talks

- Immediately after the Presidential visit to Israel on Monday, **world leaders gathered** in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, for a summit co-chaired by U.S. President Donald Trump and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi.
- More than **20 countries** and several major international figures attended or were represented; the meeting included the signing of a joint document to implement the ceasefire, to reconstruct Gaza, and to create a framework for the future of the enclave.
- **Hamas did not participate** in the summit. Iranian representatives were also absent; however, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas was in attendance.
- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin **Netanyahu was invited** but did not attend the summit, given that it took place just before Simchat Torah.
- The summit produced **commitments from regional and Western countries** to support reconstruction and humanitarian relief; organizers said mechanisms would be created to oversee governance and security during the transition period.
- World leaders **included** French President Emmanuel Macron, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez. Regional leaders included Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Jordanian King Abdullah II, Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al Abdullah Al Sabah, Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al Sudani and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. The summit also featured EU President António Costa and UN Secretary-General António Guterres.
- The Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen have today confirmed that their Military Chief of Staff, Muhammad Abd Al-Karim al-Ghamari, succumbed to injuries sustained during an Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) operation. The IDF has not publicly commented on the claim.

Emotional Reunions

- Since their release, **emotional reunion stories** have circulated widely:
- Alon Ohel **played the piano** in his hospital lobby — the same symbol of hope placed in Hostage Square.
- Avinatan Or and Noa Argamani, whose kidnapping photos became iconic, **went to the beach** together.
- Eytan Horn, born in Argentina and kidnapped with his brother, lost 130 pounds; **his first request was barbecued steak**, which the hospital provided.
- Matan Angrest, an IDF soldier kidnapped from his burning tank on October 7 and released two days ago, insisted on **attending the funeral** of his commander, Captain Daniel Peretz, whose body was returned yesterday.
- On October 7, **Matan fought for hours** against Hamas terrorists at the Nahal Oz outpost alongside Tomer Leibovitz, 19; Itay Chen, 19; and Peretz, 22. Matan, who was the only survivor of that battle, was kidnapped alive into Gaza, while Daniel and Itay's bodies were taken into the Strip.
- **Itay's body** is yet to be returned home.
- In a demonstration of just how important it was for Matan to be at Daniel's funeral, South African-born Rabbi Doron, Daniel's father (and head of the World Mizrahi Movement), noted that **Matan's doctor told him not to attend**, and in turn, the Perez family told Matan not to come.
- But **Matan insisted** on leaving his hospital in Tel Aviv, and despite not having written a speech, and as he told those gathered, "I can barely stand," he eulogized his commander for six minutes, leaving the funeral's attendees speechless. "This is the least I can do for Daniel and for my entire team — true heroes," Matan said. "I didn't plan to speak. I didn't even believe I'd make it here. But I had to come."
- **"Daniel led our heroic battle** that Shabbat," Matan saying, "My commander will always be my commander, until the day I die. You will go with me until my last day and even in the world to come."

- At one point during his speech, Matan turned to the Perez family, saying: **“I promise to be there for this family for life — I’m not leaving you, not for a second. Daniel is with me everywhere I go, just like Itay and Tomer. They are part of me. I’m proud we defended Israel under Daniel’s command. He is my hero and will always be my commander.”**
- As for Itay, whose body is still in Gaza, Matan declared: **“I’m ready to go back into Gaza right now to bring him back.”**
- At the funeral, **President Isaac Herzog said**, “Daniel led his soldiers with responsibility, with faith in the justice of their cause and with boundless love for his people and his homeland. He fought until the last drop of blood, embodying the very spirit of the Israeli warrior — steadfast, moral, and brave. Today, the son of the nation returns to his soil, to our soil.”
- After the final hostages were freed, it was disclosed that **several had been serving as soldiers** when abducted, though Hamas did not know this because they were in civilian clothes at the time. Maxim Harkin, for example, had completed the IDF officers’ training course just two months earlier; he destroyed his military ID tag during the Nova festival attack and posed as a civilian. The IDF and security forces quickly erased social media profiles of kidnapped soldiers to prevent Hamas from discovering their military status. Soldiers were treated more harshly; Hamas viewed them as the most “valuable” hostages.
- As we noted on Monday, numerous **moving, and highly emotional scenes** of reunions between hostages and their families, as well as the IDF, have been recorded, and many new ones have now been released. A sample of newer scenes can be seen here:
- Nimrod Cohen: [video](#) and [photos](#)
- Brothers Ariel and David Cunio: [video](#) and [photos](#)
- Evyatar David: [videos](#) and [photos](#)

Further Reading

- [What the End of the War Means for the “Pro-Palestine” Movement](#)
- [We were never able to remove Hamas from power by military force](#)
- [Gaza’s Clan Architecture: The Only Alternative to Hamas’s Resurgence](#)
- [Jared Kushner on His Approach to Middle East Diplomacy](#)
- [Despite the widespread anger over the failures of October 7, Netanyahu remains Israel’s leading candidate](#)

For more information, please contact: Jewish Federations of North America’s Dani Wassner dani.wassner@jewishfederations.org. Subscribe to this weekly update [here](#).