



ISRAEL UPDATE



Update from Israel

December 4, 2025 - October 7 War, Day 782, 1 hostage body remains in captivity.

The body of hostage Sudthisak Rinthalak was returned to Israel last night, leaving only one final hostage body in the hands of terror groups.

Hostages

- The body of Sudthisak Rinthalak, a 43-year-old Thai national murdered on October 7th at Kibbutz Be'eri, was returned this week. See our statement [here](#).
- With Rinthalak's return, the recovery effort shifts focus to the remains of the very last captive: Staff Sgt. Major Ran Gvili, 24, who was killed in battle after bravely rescuing attendees at the Nova festival.
- Israeli authorities reiterated that the return of all the hostages — living and deceased — is a prerequisite for fully reopening the Rafah Crossing between Gaza and Egypt.
- With just one hostage body still in captivity, the weekly Saturday night rallies at Tel Aviv's Hostage Square organized by the Hostages and Missing Families Forum are coming to an end with a pivot to pre-Sabbath gatherings held on Friday afternoons.
- President Donald Trump said the second phase of his Gaza peace plan will begin "pretty soon," even as concerns rise that the initiative has stalled. The ceasefire he brokered in October remains fragile, with no agreement yet on postwar governance and continued deadly clashes between Israel and Hamas.

Gaza

- On Monday, a Hamas gunman approached the agreed perimeter in Gaza (the Yellow Line) and opened fire on Israeli troops near a humanitarian corridor, which the IDF called a "blatant violation" of the ceasefire.
- On Wednesday, Israel [announced](#) that it would allow some Palestinians, primarily the sick and wounded, to leave the Gaza Strip for Egypt via the Rafah border crossing "in the coming days," stating the one-way opening would be overseen by COGAT, the EU, Egypt,

and Israel. However, the Egyptian government immediately contradicted this announcement, denying that any coordination for reopening the Rafah crossing had occurred.

- Despite the ongoing conflict, [mass wedding celebrations](#) took place this week in the war-scarred southern Gaza Strip, with dozens of couples moving forward with ceremonies that had been put on hold for the last two years.
- IDF forces maintained control over significant areas and continued operations targeting Hamas infrastructure, eliminating and detaining operatives entrenched in the tunnel network in Rafah. Among those eliminated in renewed Rafah tunnel operations this week was the commander of the East Rafah Battalion and the son of senior Hamas political bureau figure Ghazi Hamad.

Violence in the West Bank

- Last Thursday, two Palestinian men who appeared to surrender were shot dead by Israeli border police in the northern city of Jenin, sparking immediate controversy. The incident took place during an IDF counter-terrorism operation in Jenin aimed at locating a known terror cell.
- Video footage widely circulated on social media showed the two men exiting a narrow alleyway, appearing to comply with demands with their hands raised, moments before they were shot at close range.
- The IDF Spokesperson's Unit issued a statement confirming a military police investigation: "The circumstances surrounding the engagement in Jenin, specifically the sequence of events leading to the fatal shots, are under immediate military police review. The IDF is committed to upholding the professional standards of engagement, and any deviation will be addressed fully."

Judicial & Political Crisis

- In an unprecedented move, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu requested a pardon on Sunday from President Isaac Herzog in his corruption trial. President Donald Trump had written last month to President Herzog to ask him to pardon the Israeli premier.
- Reports indicate that Netanyahu's legal team is exploring avenues with Herzog's office, which requires a public admission of guilt to proceed.
- Any plea deal resulting in a conviction on the serious charges of bribery or fraud would require the Attorney General's approval and would almost certainly force Netanyahu to resign under the moral turpitude clause. The AG, Gali Baharav-Miara, is facing immense political pressure not to approve any deal that circumvents this clause.
- Based on two identical surveys released on Sunday, over one-third of Israelis (38%) favor granting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu a pardon, while 43% oppose it. This support slightly increases if the pardon is made conditional on his retiring from political life.

The Muslim Brotherhood Controversy

- Controversy surrounding the global status of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) — the ideological precursor to Hamas — has resurfaced in Israeli and international discourse after Texas Governor Greg Abbott designated the Muslim Brotherhood and CAIR as foreign terrorist and transnational criminal organizations under state law.
- The move in Texas requires heightened enforcement, bans the groups from acquiring land, and orders state police to launch criminal investigations into their activities.

- Israeli officials have also increasingly pressed Western allies to formally designate the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization, arguing that its global financial and ideological support structure indirectly fuels groups like Hamas.
- However, key European allies, including the UK and Germany, continue to resist the formal designation of the entire MB organization, citing its diverse political wings in various nations (like Tunisia and Morocco) and the potential for diplomatic backlash.
- Efforts have focused on targeting specific MB-linked charities and financial entities across Europe and North America that are believed to be channeling funds to extremist groups.
- The push for the designation has created diplomatic tension with Turkey and Qatar, who host key MB figures and maintain relationships with the movement's political arms. A Turkish Foreign Ministry official warned against the move, stating it would be a "drastic overreach that ignores the political realities and legitimate civil society functions of the movement in many nations."

The Conscription Crisis (Draft Law)

- The fight over extending mandatory military conscription to include Ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) men continues to intensify. The battle over the issue may force early elections, bringing forward the timeline which has Israelis going to the polls next November.
- The Opposition, along with the reservist community and their families, strongly oppose the proposed legislation which would, by definition, require those already serving to continue to do so for long periods of time. This would exacerbate the already deep strain on the reservists, their families, and the economy.
- The IDF has recently stated that the unprecedented strain on the reserve forces and the need for a larger permanent army necessitate the inclusion of the Haredi sector, reframing the issue as a matter of national security, not just social equity.

Mossad Leader Appointment

- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has appointed Major General Roman Gofman, a decorated veteran field commander severely wounded on October 7th, as the next Director of Mossad, succeeding David Barnea in June 2026.
- Gofman is currently Prime Minister Netanyahu's military secretary, a position he has held since May 2024.
- This appointment marks the highest-ever government position reached by an immigrant from the former Soviet Union. Gofman is a veteran field commander who led major IDF units, including the 7th Armored Brigade and the Bashan Division. The Prime Minister's Office praised his appointment, specifically citing his "leadership, creativity, initiative, stratagem, deep recognition of the enemy, absolute discretion, and the safeguarding of secrets."

Talks Between Israel and Lebanon

- Diplomats from Israel and Lebanon met yesterday under US auspices in Naqoura — the first direct, public engagement since 1993 — to discuss economic cooperation near their shared border aimed at stabilizing southern Lebanon.
- The dialogue, fostered by the Trump administration over nine months, is intended to de-escalate tensions and prevent a resumption of war, particularly in the wake of Israel's recent assassination of Hezbollah's top military commander, Haytham Ali Tabatabai, in Beirut. The US believes that the assassination temporarily granted Israel more political leeway, making a major operation less likely in the immediate future.
- A key point of disagreement remains Israel's demand that the Lebanese government disarm Hezbollah, which Jerusalem claims is rapidly rearming, while Lebanon denounces Israeli strikes and demands Israeli withdrawal from five outposts.

Further Reading

- [Israel in Wondering if America is Still on Its Side](#)
- [No Exemptions Left: How Israel is Dismantling the Haredi Draft Privilege System](#)
- [An Unprecedented Pardon Request](#)
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