



## War in Israel: Update on Current Situation

**September 18, 2025 - October 7 War, Day 713, 48 hostages remain in captivity**

### LATEST UPDATES

Six Israelis have fallen today, and Israel has begun its expanded operations in Gaza City, hitting a large number of targets, while also opening an additional humanitarian safe evacuation route for civilians. As a new deal with Syria seems imminent, Israel has also announced that its new “Laser Dome” defense system is now operational.

### Tragedy

- Just as this update is being sent, we’ve learned that four IDF soldiers fell in battle in Gaza today when their vehicle drove over an IED. The soldiers were named as Major Omri Chai Ben Moshe, 26; Lieutenant Ron Arieli, 20; Lieutenant Eitan Avner Ben Itzhak, 22; and Lieutenant Eran Shelem, 23.
- Earlier today, the driver of a truck entering Israel through the “humanitarian lane” from Jordan exited his vehicle and opened fire at Israeli guards, killing two. [Click here for our statement.](#)

### Renewed Fighting in Gaza

- Earlier this week, the IDF launched its long-expected **major offensive into Gaza City**, with the IDF’s [98th Division leading maneuvers](#) supported by air and naval firepower. The [operation targeted Hamas strongholds](#) and military infrastructure. Close to 200 terror targets have been struck in recent days.
- IDF spokesperson Effie Defrin stated that the mission to take control of Gaza City could take “a few months,” followed by additional time to dismantle Hamas infrastructure. The Israeli media have reported that **the military is moving very cautiously and slowly** to protect soldiers.
- The IDF’s strategy includes **preemptively destroying buildings** to prevent ambushes and reduce casualties in ground combat. However, critics argue this tactic has limited effectiveness, as Hamas fighters primarily operate from underground tunnels.
- Until now, the IDF has prioritized the demolition of tall buildings, including the Al-Mashtaha Tower, which was struck by three missiles. Israeli officials claim these towers are used as Hamas command centers. Defense Minister Israel Katz warned that the initial destruction of multi-story buildings is just the beginning, as the IDF **continues to eliminate Hamas’s urban warfare capabilities**. See [this strike](#) on a Hamas weapons storage facility and secondary explosions.

- The Israeli military reports that roughly **300,000 civilians have fled Gaza City**, but an estimated 700,000 remain under bombardment. A new coastal evacuation route has been opened for those trying to leave the area of fighting.
- Despite broad international criticism and humanitarian concerns, Israeli officials maintain that the **new offensive is necessary to dismantle Hamas** and secure Israel's borders.
- On Tuesday, US **President Donald Trump wrote**, "I have just read a News Report that Hamas has moved the hostages above ground to use them as human shields against Israel's ground offensive. I hope the Leaders of Hamas know what they're getting into if they do such a thing. This is a human atrocity, the likes of which few people have ever seen before. Don't let this happen or ALL 'BETS' ARE OFF. RELEASE ALL HOSTAGES NOW!" Many Israelis took the post as implicit support by the US for the new Israeli offensive.
- Many in Israel fear that the latest fighting **gravely endangers the lives of the hostages**, many of whom are believed to be located in Gaza City.
- Thousands of Israelis, led by the families of hostages, have been taking to the streets daily to **protest the new offensive**.
- Leaked internal documents from Hamas, published by NGO Monitor, confirm that the group has **embedded its military infrastructure and leadership within Gaza's hospitals**. The documents—originating from Hamas's Ministry of Interior and National Security—describe hospitals as gathering points for wounded fighters and senior officials during escalations, and detail how facilities like Al-Shifa and Abu Yousef El-Najar were strategically used for Hamas operations. The findings also reveal Hamas's efforts to control the movement and placement of foreign medical delegations, further exposing its exploitation of humanitarian spaces for terror purposes.
- On Tuesday, the **IDF bombed the Hudeidah port in Yemen**, used by the Houthis as a shipping port. Two hours later, a ballistic missile was launched from Yemen, setting off sirens in the greater Tel Aviv area and in Jerusalem. The missile was successfully intercepted.

## Diplomacy

- **US Secretary of State Marco Rubio** visited Israel this week and met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem, where the two leaders reaffirmed the strength of the US-Israel alliance. The two visited the Kotel (Western Wall) together, offering prayers for peace and for the hostages held by Hamas. Netanyahu praised the alliance as "as strong and durable as the stones of the Western Wall," while Rubio emphasized that "Hamas cannot continue to exist if peace in the region is the goal."
- Israel and Syria, under the leadership of President Ahmed al-Sharaa (formerly Abu Mohammed al-Joulani), are nearing a **landmark security agreement** aimed at reducing tensions along the shared border.
  - The deal, brokered with U.S. mediation, includes **extending the demilitarized buffer zone** on the Syrian side by two kilometers and creating layered zones with limited weaponry based on proximity to Israel. Israel has also requested a safe air corridor to Iran, potentially for future military operations.

- In exchange, Israel is offering a **phased withdrawal from Syrian territory** captured after the fall of the Assad regime, while retaining control of strategic positions on Mount Hermon. Syria has pledged to prevent Iranian and proxy forces from operating within its borders and to avoid using its territory for attacks against Israel.
- Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer is meeting Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaybani in London today, joined by U.S. envoy Tom Barrack, to finalize the details. The agreement is **expected to be signed on September 25** at the UN General Assembly, with a possible follow-up ceremony in Washington attended by Netanyahu, al-Sharaa, and President Trump.
- French President Emmanuel Macron is expected to **formally recognize a Palestinian state** on September 22. The decision has sparked outrage in Jerusalem, where officials view the move as a reward for Hamas and a threat to Israel's security. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has warned that if France proceeds with unilateral recognition, Israel may respond with its own unilateral steps, though he has not specified what those might be.
- In response, Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar told his French counterpart that **Macron would not be welcome in Israel** if the initiative goes forward, calling the recognition "a gift to terrorism" and a blow to regional stability.
- The Pacific nation of **Fiji has opened an embassy in Jerusalem**. The country's prime minister and foreign minister attended the event in Israel, where they were joined by Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu and other senior Israeli officials.
- The **Eurovision Song Contest** has unofficially proposed that Israel either withdraw from the 2026 contest or compete under a neutral flag, following boycott threats from Spain, the Netherlands, Ireland, and Slovenia. The suggestion, reportedly timed to avoid clashing with President Trump's UK visit, is seen by some as a way to spare Israel from a politically driven disqualification. However, in Jerusalem, both options—withdrawal or neutral participation—are viewed as deeply humiliating and potentially precedent-setting. Eurovision holds symbolic weight for many Israelis, representing rare international acceptance, especially after recent strong showings by Yuval Raphael, Eden Golan, and Noa Kirel. Losing that platform would be felt far beyond the stage.

### Other Important News

- Following Israel's September 9 airstrike in Doha, Qatar, that targeted senior Hamas leaders and killed six people—including the son of Hamas negotiator Khalil al-Hayya and a Qatari security officer—it has now been revealed that the attack **likely failed to eliminate any top Hamas figures**. The strike sparked widespread international condemnation and strained U.S.-Qatar relations, with Qatar reserving the right to respond while maintaining its role as a mediator.
- Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu held an **economic press conference** on Tuesday evening to clarify remarks he made the day before, suggesting Israel must become "Athens and super-Sparta."
  - The original statement, delivered at a Finance Ministry conference, was widely interpreted as a call for **Israel to reluctantly accept a measure of economic isolation** in response to growing international pressure over the war in Gaza. Netanyahu warned that Israel may face arms embargoes and trade restrictions, and argued that the country must become self-reliant in defense production—hence the Sparta analogy, referencing the ancient Greek city-state known for its military discipline and closed economy.

- Facing backlash from political opponents and the market, Netanyahu insisted at the press conference that he has **“full confidence” in Israel’s economy** and that the brief drop in the stock market was due to a “misunderstanding.”
- He clarified that his comments were specifically **aimed at the defense sector, not the broader economy**: “There is one area I referred to where indeed there could be restrictions—not economic ones, but political at their core—and that’s what’s happening in the defense industries,” he said. “If there is one lesson we have drawn from this war, it’s that we want to be in a situation where we are not restricted—that Israel defends itself with its own forces and with its own weapons.”
- The defense industry, already aware of shifting international dynamics, is adapting to increase domestic production. Netanyahu’s message was essentially that **the country must ensure its ability to defend itself** and never become dependent on the political whims of others.
- On Wednesday, Israel officially declared its **Iron Beam laser interception system**—also known as **“Laser Dome”**—operational, marking a historic breakthrough in military technology.
  - Developed by Rafael Advanced Defense Systems in collaboration with the Defense Ministry and Israeli Air Force, Iron Beam uses **high-powered lasers to destroy aerial threats** like rockets, drones, and mortars at the speed of light.
  - Defense Minister Israel Katz hailed the achievement as placing Israel “at the **forefront of global military technology**,” emphasizing its strategic value and cost-efficiency.
  - Unlike traditional missile interceptors that cost tens of thousands of dollars per launch, **Iron Beam’s interceptions cost only a few dollars**, offering a game-changing economic advantage. The system is set to be delivered to the IDF in the coming months and will complement existing air defense layers such as Iron Dome and David’s Sling.
  - Symbolically renamed **“Or Eitan”** (Eitan’s Light), the system honors Captain Eitan Oster, the first IDF soldier killed in the Lebanon ground operation last year. His father, a Defense Ministry engineer, was one of the project’s initiators.
- Israeli singer Idan Raichel shared a **deeply emotional story** during a televised interview that captured the heartbreak many Israelis feel in the wake of October 7. An IDF soldier brought Raichel two photos found in a home in Gaza. One showed Raichel himself with a Palestinian father and his young son, taken a decade ago when the child received life-saving heart surgery in Israel through the nonprofit “Save a Child’s Heart.” Raichel had volunteered to sing for the boy during his treatment. The second photo, found in the same home, showed the now-teenage boy dressed as a Hamas “martyr” after participating in a terror attack against Israelis. The father, who once brought his son to Israel for help, had since joined Hamas. The story underscores the painful complexity and disillusionment felt by many Israelis—how acts of compassion can be met with betrayal.
- At a signing ceremony on September 11, Prime Minister Netanyahu declared “there will be no Palestinian state” as he **approved construction in the open-land area between Ma’ale Adumim and Jerusalem**, known as E1. The plan will house 20,000 Israelis over the next decade and effectively split the West Bank, eliminating territorial contiguity for Palestinians.

## Rebuilding Israel

- Israel's Tkuma administration, responsible for post-October 7 rebuilding, reports that **nearly 90% of Israeli residents from the Gaza border area have returned** to their communities. However, many are not yet back in their original homes due to widespread destruction. In Kerem Shalom, adjacent to Rafah, 88% have returned, and in Re'im the figure is even higher at 95%. Nir Oz remains an exception, with fewer than a third of residents back or planning to return in the coming months.
- Israel's Defense Ministry's **Rehabilitation Department** published a summary in the lead up to the two-year anniversary of October 7. According to its report:
  - Since the October 7 massacre, the department has begun treating **20,000 new wounded IDF soldiers**, and is expected to receive another 20,000 by 2028.
  - There is a severe **shortage of caregivers**, with a caregiver-to-patient ratio of 1:750.
  - 55 percent of wounded soldiers suffer **various psychological conditions**, such as PTSD. And when it comes to a return to normalcy, they are struggling even more than those who are physically wounded. Only 48 percent of psychologically affected soldiers have returned to work, compared to 67 percent of physically injured soldiers.
  - In what likely only compounds the problem, wounded Israelis are **waiting on average for three to four months for a psychiatric appointment**.
  - Before October 7, 2023, the department was responsible for 11,000 people with psychological issues. That has since **increased by 180 percent** to 31,000 and is expected to reach 50,000 by 2028.

## Further Reading

[Israel's Strategic Goals and the Aims of the War](#)

[Iran Bolsters Hezbollah's Presence in Lebanon with Strategic Support](#)

[Why Israel's Strike Against Hamas Was Both Justified and Overdue](#)

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