



ISRAEL UPDATE



Update from Israel

January 22, 2026 - October 7 War, Day 832, 1 hostage body remains in captivity.

Israel remains on high alert over Iran and Trump launches the Board of Peace

Iran

- Uncertainty and concern remain in Israel as the Islamic regime in Iran seems to have **forcefully stopped the anti-government protests**.
- With most communication blocked, it is **unclear how many protestors have been killed**; estimates range from 5,000 (the figure cited by the government itself) to as high as 30,000 with thousands more injured, many seriously.
- Israeli defense capabilities remain on high alert, with concerns that an American attack on Iran could trigger an **Iranian missile barrage against Israel**. There are also fears that Iran may consider attacking Israel as a way to divert attention from the protestors at home, thus projecting strength and attempting to unite the Iranian population behind the government.
- The **intentions of the US also remain unclear**. While President Trump has repeatedly threatened to attack Iran if the regime continues to kill protestors, no such action has occurred, despite the large-scale crackdown. At the same time, the US is maintaining, and in fact increasing, its military presence in the area, leading to speculation that an American attack may still come. US military preparation has included the assembling of fighter squadrons, refuelling assets, and a redeployed carrier strike group, all in close proximity to Iran.
- Among analysts in Israel, the **US delay in attacking Iran has been attributed to a number of factors**. Firstly, most of the Gulf states, including the UAE, fear any destabilization in the region, with Qatar seen as the state most opposed to military action. The players in the region appear eager to distance themselves from any US attack, for fear of Iranian retaliation. In addition, Israel reportedly considered the proposed strike to be insufficiently impactful.

Gaza Ceasefire: Stage Two

- US President Donald Trump **announced the formation of the Board of Peace** in Davos today. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that the Jewish state will join the Board as a founding country. Most European countries have declined to sign up, while many

Muslim nations have agreed, including Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Indonesia, Pakistan, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.

- The Board is a component of the next stage of the Gaza ceasefire, which includes a number of newly-created bodies:
- **The Board of Peace**, a US-led international governing body created under UN Security Council Resolution 2803 (2025) to oversee Gaza's post-war ceasefire implementation, reconstruction, security transition, governance, and economic recovery. While President Trump has invited many countries to join the Board of Peace, it is the **Executive Board**, dominated by senior US officials, that will oversee Gaza.
- The chairman of the Executive Board is President Donald Trump himself, who retains the top authority and strategic decision-making power within the board, with influence over all of the organizations and bodies reporting to it.
 - The Executive Board's other members are:
 - Marco Rubio (U.S. Secretary of State)
 - Steve Witkoff (U.S. special envoy)
 - Jared Kushner (President Trump's adviser and peace plan architect)
 - Sir Tony Blair (former UK prime minister)
 - Marc Rowan (business leader and chair of UJA Federation New York)
 - Ajay Banga (World Bank President)
 - Robert Gabriel (U.S. official)
- These members each oversee key portfolios, including governance capacity, financing, reconstruction, and regional relations.
- **The Office of the High Representative for Gaza** acts as the on-the-ground executive link between the Board of Peace's Executive Board and other Gaza bodies under this agreement. The High Representative is Nickolay Mladenov, who is a Bulgarian diplomat and former UN Middle East envoy. His position is akin to the CEO or chief administrator of the Board of Peace.
- **The National Committee for the Administration of Gaza** (NCAG) is a Palestinian interim governing body tasked with managing day-to-day civil administration and public services in the Strip. It was also established under UNSCR 2803 and operates under supervision of the Board of Peace.
 - The chair of the Committee is Dr. Ali Shaath, a Palestinian "technocrat" and former Palestinian Authority (PA) official.
 - 15 Palestinian technocrats (most of whom have ties to the PA as well as Fatah) are members of the Committee, with each heading key sectors such as economy and trade, health, education, interior and internal security, justice, municipalities and water, and finance and social affairs.
 - Numerous commentators point out that by using former PA figures, Israel is able to claim that its demand to prevent the PA out from governing Gaza has been upheld, while those wanting the PA to be included can also trumpet a victory of sorts.
 - The Committee will administer Gaza's civil service functions: health, education, utilities, justice, municipal services. It will also coordinate stabilization and early reconstruction efforts and oversee internal security (civil policing) under the transitional framework.
 - NCAG's decisions are made by its committee members under Shaath's leadership but their authority is subject to Board of Peace supervision, led by President Trump.
- The **Gaza Executive Board** is a subsidiary support board intended to "enhance governance and service delivery" in Gaza, during transition. This board is designed to help deliver "effective governance" and provision of services to Gaza, and also act as a bridge between high-level Board of Peace policies and Gaza's on-the-ground administration. The membership of this board is more controversial, but its role is also more limited. Israel has objected to the presence of representatives from Turkey and Qatar. It includes representatives drawn from international and regional political/diplomatic figures:
 - Steve Witkoff, Jared Kushner, Tony Blair, Marc Rowan (who are also on the Board of Peace)
 - Hakan Fidan (the Turkish foreign minister)
 - Ali Al-Thawadi (Qatar)
 - Hassan Rashad (Egypt)
 - Reem Al-Hashimy (UAE)
 - Sigrid Kaag (UN coordinator)
 - Yakir Gabay (business figure)
 - Nickolay Mladenov (High Representative)

- In addition, the **International Stabilization Force** has also been UN-mandated but is not yet final or operational. It will be a multinational peacekeeping and security operation, envisioned to replace Hamas' control and also to demilitarize Gaza. It will be led by fUS Major General Jasper Jeffers and will be subject to the direction of the Board of Peace. Other forces may include Indonesia and Egypt. Turkey would like to be included, but Israel is opposed to their participation. The Force is set to provide overarching security, border control, and protection of civilians and aid operations, as well as to facilitate humanitarian corridors and stability.
- It is also mandated to support demilitarization, including the removal and destruction of militant infrastructure, and to train a vetted local Palestinian police force.
- Israel has reiterated that it will not proceed with Stage Two of the Gaza ceasefire until the body of the last hostage, Ran Gvili, is returned.

Other Significant News

- This week in Jerusalem, an **incident** at an unlicensed daycare left two Haredi infants—three-month-old Leah Golovnetsitz and six-month-old Aharon Katz—dead. According to authorities, the deaths likely stemmed from severe dehydration in a heated room with poor ventilation. The tragedy has brought new scrutiny to the common use of unregulated childcare. A High Court decision blocked the autopsies of the victims due to widespread protests by Haredi community members that shut down major roads in numerous cities. Police are also probing possible neglect and abuse by caregivers. Senior Haredi political figures publicly blamed the state's conscription efforts and related policy changes for the tragedy. Leaders from ultra-Orthodox parties linked the tragedy to government actions tied to the draft debate, including cuts to subsidies that had supported such child care, which were driven by efforts to enforce conscription.
- Former IDF chief of staff and government minister Gadi Eisenkot has proposed **forming a single party** with Yair Lapid and Naftali Bennett, aiming to create a centrist "Zionist Majority" that could win around 40 Knesset seats, which is enough to surpass other factions and challenge Netanyahu in the next elections. The elections must be held by October of this year. Combining their current polling, the **bloc could realistically reach 38–44 seats**, with Bennett contributing the most, Eisenkot bridging the center, and Lapid appealing to center-left voters.
 - The alliance would mirror past Israeli "big-tent politics" and **aim to project unity early**, with leadership to be decided closer to the election based on "electability" and polling, likely putting Bennett at the helm if polls hold.
 - The strategy's main goal is to **increase turnout and break the opposition deadlock**, but it carries significant risks; merging parties doesn't always guarantee better results, especially as ideological differences could alienate parts of each leader's base.
 - Neither Bennett nor Lapid have publicly responded to the proposal.
- Israeli media has pointed out that Prime Minister **Netanyahu's travel options are limited** due to fears of backlash against him over the Gaza war, and even possible arrest, in many places across the globe (with the US as a notable, and critical, exception).
 - In his stead, **President Isaac Herzog**, considered by many international players to be less controversial, has continued representing Israel, including at this week's World Economic Forum in Davos.
 - In Davos, Herzog met with **numerous heads of state** and government, including the presidents of Azerbaijan, the Swiss Confederation, Finland, Lithuania, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Serbia, and Panama, as well as the prime ministers of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, and Sweden.
 - President Herzog also **met with senior global business leaders**, including Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang, and leaders of international organizations, including the secretaries-general of NATO and the OECD, and the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross.
 - Watch President **Herzog's address** in Davos [here](#).
- Israel is strengthening its role in **NATO's defense network**, with Rafael Advanced Defense Systems supplying its Windbreaker active protection system (essentially an "Iron Dome for tanks") to 150 Leopard tanks used by Lithuania, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, and Croatia. The system intercepts incoming anti-tank missiles before they hit, offering protection without adding heavy armor. Germany, having already ordered Windbreaker systems for 123

tanks, appears to want more, and this latest \$390 million deal marks another major contract for Israel's rapidly growing defense industry. Beyond boosting exports, this integration into NATO systems could deepen Israel–EU relations.

- Israeli authorities have **demolished a long-controversial UNRWA facility** in east Jerusalem, ending decades of operation that included alleged funding of terrorism and incitement against Israel. The building had also reportedly hosted activities to indoctrinate children and glorify violence. After revelations that some Gazan UNRWA employees were acting as Hamas operatives, the Knesset banned the agency from operating in Israel in January 2025, though the facility continued until police seized it in December over unpaid taxes. The site can now be repurposed for public use.
- The US is building a **nuclear power plant in Israel to support AI and data centers**, circumventing the Non-Proliferation Treaty by placing the facility on Israeli soil but under American sovereignty, thus legally treating it like a US-based reactor. The plant will power Israel's data centers, strengthening Washington's "Pax Silica Alliance," a trusted network of tech partners including Japan, South Korea, Singapore, the UK, and Qatar. Israel's inclusion reflects its technical expertise and strategic location, but the country's limited energy resources have long constrained this development. Nuclear power, discussed by Netanyahu and Trump in December, should enable Israel to support large-scale AI development.
- On Sunday, Prime Minister Netanyahu met with **US Securities and Exchange Commission Chair Paul Atkins** and US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee in Jerusalem to discuss creating a mutual recognition framework for securities registration between Israel and the US. The plan would allow Israeli companies listed on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange to trade more easily in US markets by reducing regulatory duplication, streamlining reporting, and expanding access to international capital.

Further Reading

- [Why Israel is responding to protests in Iran with caution](#)
- [Lebanon's Government's Ongoing Failure in Confronting Hezbollah](#)
- [When Fear Stopped Working in Iran](#)
- [Syria Puts a Boot on the Neck of the Kurds](#)
- [Iran is boiling, Gaza is entering a new phase, and Syria is re-emerging as a hub for radical Islamist threats: A discussion with Diaspora Affairs Minister Amichai Chikl](#)
- [Israel's First Elections in the Age of AI Will Test the Integrity of Democracy](#)

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