

Two IDF soldiers killed in Gaza; foreign nations airdrop civilian aid into enclave

Israel says no limit set on truck deliveries to Strip; hostage release negotiations continue in Qatar as families of captives march on Jerusalem

By [Emanuel Fabian](#) and [Agencies](#) Today, 5:03 pm



This composite image shows Maj. Iftah Shahar (R) and Cpt. Itai Seif of the Givati Brigade's Tzabar battalion, who were killed fighting in the Gaza Strip on February 27, 2024. (Israel Defense Forces)

The Israel Defense Forces announced Wednesday that two soldiers had been killed in battles against Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile mediators from Egypt, Qatar, and the United States continued to strive for a path to a temporary ceasefire and hostage release amid the bitter fighting, with negotiators seeking a six-week pause in the nearly five-month war.

And as a round of negotiations was held in Qatar, families of hostages abducted during Hamas's October 7 attack on southern Israel marched on Jerusalem to demand the government agree to a deal for their release.

The IDF announced **two officers had been killed fighting Tuesday** in northern Gaza, raising the ground toll in the offensive against Hamas to 242.

They were named as Maj. Iftah Shahar, 25, a company commander in the Givati Brigade's Tzabar Battalion, from Paran, and **Cpt. Itai Seif, 24, a platoon commander** also in the Givati Brigade's Tzabar Battalion, from Yeruham.

Shahar had until recently served as an officer in the Israeli Air Force's elite Shaldag unit. He had been sent to the infantry unit to replace a seriously wounded Givati company commander.

The IDF said **another seven soldiers of the Tzabar Battalion were seriously wounded** in the same incident.

Shahar and Seif were killed and the seven other soldiers were injured as a result of an explosion in a booby-trapped building in Gaza City's Zeitoun neighborhood on Tuesday.

As **global concerns mount over the humanitarian crisis in Gaza**, where over 2 million people reside, the **IDF said it coordinated the airdrop of food and medical supplies** by several nations to the southern Gaza Strip over the previous two days.

Some **160 packages of humanitarian aid were airdropped to 17 locations along the southern coastline** of the Strip using American, Egyptian, Emirati, French and Jordanian planes, the IDF said.



A Jordanian military aircraft (not pictured) drops humanitarian aid over Rafah and Khan Yunis in the skies of the southern Gaza Strip on February 27, 2024. (SAID KHATIB / AFP)

Additional packages of food, medical supplies and fuel were also airdropped to a Jordanian field hospital in Khan Yunis, the IDF said.

The **Jordan News Agency reported that King Abdullah II, who is Supreme Commander of the Jordanian military, participated in an airdrop Tuesday.** According to the report, **six C130 aircraft**

flew in from Amman, three of which were from the Royal Jordanian Air Force alongside three others from the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and France.

The **IDF said the recent airdrops were in addition to trucks of humanitarian aid** that enter the Strip

daily.

A **convoy of 31 trucks carrying food entered the northern Gaza Strip Wednesday**, according to the military liaison to the Palestinians, the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories. COGAT added that close to 50 trucks had traveled to the northern part of the enclave over the past three days, and that “there is no limitation on the amount of humanitarian aid for the civilians in Gaza.”

Northern **Gaza is seeing a spiraling humanitarian crisis**, with aid agencies unable to get into the area because of the fighting, and frenzied looting of the few trucks that do enter.

Overnight, (Feb 28.) A convoy of 31 trucks carrying food made its way to northern Gaza Strip.

Over the last 3 days, close to 50 trucks were transferred to the northern Gaza Strip.

There is no limit to the amount of humanitarian aid for the civilians in Gaza. pic.twitter.com/WSfEuickGL

— COGAT (@cogatonline) **February 28, 2024**

Israel has denied fault for the low numbers of trucks entering the enclave and blamed humanitarian organizations operating inside Gaza, saying hundreds of trucks filled with aid sit idle on the Palestinian side of the Kerem Shalom Crossing. The UN, in turn, says it can't always reach the trucks at the crossing because it is at times too dangerous.

Additionally, Israel has long accused Hamas of appropriating and stealing aid from an increasingly desperate civilian population.

In **other operations, the IDF said it killed dozens of Hamas operatives across the Gaza Strip over the previous day, releasing footage of a strike on a gunman who tried to flee after opening fire at troops.** The military said it carried out **overnight airstrikes on eight “significant targets”** in an area from which rockets were fired at Ashkelon on Tuesday.

Several more sites in the area, including tunnel shafts, were also struck, the IDF added.

In southern **Gaza, the IDF said troops raided Hamas sites, captured weapons, and killed a five-man Hamas cell in a vehicle using a** guided munition.

In **Khan Younis fighter jets struck buildings where Hamas operatives were gathered** and preparing to attack troops, the IDF said, while ground troops killed several gunman in clashes.

The military said it was **continuing to operate in Gaza City's Zeitoun neighborhood**, where soldiers killed several Hamas gunmen and located weapons over the past day.

The **Hamas-controlled Gaza health ministry reported that 91 people were killed overnight during Israeli strikes.** It said that since the start of the war, at least 29,954 people had been killed in Gaza. The figures cannot be independently verified, and are believed to include both civilians and Hamas members killed in Gaza, including as a consequence of terror groups' own rocket misfires. The IDF says it has killed over 12,000 terror operatives in Gaza, in addition to some 1,000 terrorists inside Israel on October 7.

War erupted when Hamas led a devastating cross-border attack on southern Israel that killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians. Israel responded with a military campaign to topple the Hamas regime in Gaza and free the 253 hostages who were abducted by terrorists during the October 7 attack.

The **security cabinet was set to meet Thursday evening amid efforts to secure a deal that would see a temporary ceasefire and the return of the 130 hostages still held in Gaza — not all of them** alive.



An aerial view shows relatives and supporters of Israeli hostages held in Gaza since the October 7 attacks by Hamas terrorist, marching as they start a four-day march to Jerusalem calling for their release, in Reim in southern Israel, on February 28, 2024. Hebrew banner on leading vehicle reads 'Release them from Hell.' (Jack GUEZ / AFP)

Families of hostages began a four-day march from the south of the country to Jerusalem as they lobby for the government to quickly reach a deal that will secure freedom for their loved ones.

A US-drafted proposal reportedly provides for a six-week pause in fighting during which some 40 hostages would be freed in exchange for

some 400 Palestinian security prisoners.

There have been **conflicting reports on whether a deal is close at hand**, and Israeli officials in recent

days have said Hamas has signaled it is preparing to reject the terms of the latest proposal offered by mediators.

Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh said Wednesday that while the terror group is showing flexibility in talks for a potential deal, it is prepared to continue to fight.

The **terror leader additionally called on Palestinians in Jerusalem and the West Bank to march to the flashpoint Temple Mount on the first day of Ramadan.**

Meanwhile, Hamas claimed to have fired 40 Grad rockets from Lebanon at IDF bases near Kiryat Shmona in the north of the country.

The **IDF identified only some 10 rockets crossing the border, one of which struck a building in Kiryat Shmona**, causing damage but no injuries.

Earlier, another four rockets were fired at the city, which caused no damage.

There **has been daily violence across the border** with Lebanon since October 8 when Iran-backed terror group Hezbollah began launching attacks on Israel it says are a show of support for Palestinians in Gaza. The level of violence has crept upwards with Hezbollah firing dozens of rockets at northern areas earlier in the week while the IDF has pounded the terror groups assets with airstrikes reaching further and further into Lebanon.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/two-idf-soldiers-killed-in-gaza-foreign-nations-airdrop-civilian-aid-into-enclave/>

Hamas said to deride deal outline as 'Zionist document' as Qatar sees 'race against time'

Qatari mediators said to relay broadly negative response by terror group to 6-week truce framework; TV report details US formula for 40-for-400 hostage-prisoner exchange

By [Agencies](#) and [Tel Staff](#) Today, 1:26 am Updated at 10:33 am



A woman and her children walk past a wall with photographs of hostages who were kidnapped during the October 7 Hamas-led cross-border terror onslaught in Israel, seen in Jerusalem, February 26, 2024. (Leo Correa/AP)

The emir of Qatar spoke of “a race against time” to secure the release of Israeli hostages held by terror groups in the Gaza Strip, as Israel’s Army Radio reported that Hamas representatives, in an unofficial response, had angrily rebuffed a proposed outline for a deal.

Several Hebrew media reports late Tuesday and Wednesday said Qatari mediators had conveyed a Hamas response to the outline, which had been

drawn up by the US and agreed on by Israel, Egypt and Qatar last Friday in Paris, though no formal Hamas response had been presented. While a report by the Kan public broadcaster on Tuesday evening quoted an Israeli official expressing “very cautious optimism” about the prospects for progress, an Army Radio report on Wednesday morning described a largely negative Hamas response.

The **unsourced Army Radio report said Hamas representatives had termed the proposed outline “a Zionist document,” and objected to the fact that it did not relate to Hamas’s demand for an end to the war**, did not include Israeli agreement to the full return to northern Gaza of internally displaced residents, and envisaged too few Palestinian security prisoners being freed in return for Israeli hostages.

The **US-drafted proposal reportedly provides for a six-week pause in fighting** during which some 40 hostages would be freed in exchange for some 400 Palestinian security prisoners.

The Kan report said that **Qatari officials updated their Israeli counterparts Tuesday on Hamas’s response** to some aspects of topics discussed at the talks Qatar has been holding with Hamas representatives. An unnamed Israeli official was quoted by the broadcaster saying that “there is very cautious optimism, but progress is slow and the gaps are large.”

The **Kan report also said that Hamas has yet to provide a list of living hostages held in Gaza or a list of the Palestinian prisoners it wants released. Israeli sources have said that without those two pieces of information, negotiations cannot advance.** There are 130 hostages abducted by terrorists from southern Israel on October 7 who remain in Gaza; Israel says about a quarter of them are dead.

Qatar’s Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, whose country has been a key supporter of Hamas, denounced Israel during his speech in Paris on Tuesday, delivered at a dinner in his honor with his host, French President Emmanuel Macron.

“We are in a race against time to bring the hostages back to their families and at the same time we must work to put an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people,” he said. “The world sees a genocide of the Palestinian people,” he asserted. “Hunger, forced displacement, savage bombardments are used as weapons. And the international community still hasn’t managed to adopt a unified position to end the war in Gaza and provide the strict minimum of protection for children, women, and civilians.”



Qatar’s Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani delivers a speech during a state dinner with French President Emmanuel Macron at the Elysee Palace in Paris, February 27, 2024. (Yoan Valat, Pool via AP)

The war erupted after Hamas led a devastating attack against Israel on October 7 that killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians, amid horrific atrocities including widespread gang rape, torture and mutilation of victims. Some 3,000 attackers burst through the border with Gaza to rampage murderously through southern Israeli regions. Terrorists also kidnapped 253 people of all ages who were taken as hostages to Gaza.

Israel responded with an air, sea, and ground offensive to topple the Hamas regime in Gaza, destroy the terror group, and free the hostages.

The exchange ratio

Meanwhile, Israel’s Channel 12 on Tuesday reported what it said was the American proposal for a key part of the potential hostage release deal: the number and nature of the Palestinian security prisoners who would be released in exchange for hostages held in Gaza since October 7.

In all, the report said, the **US proposed at talks in Paris last week that some 400 Palestinian terror inmates would be released in exchange for 40 Israeli hostages** during the planned six-week truce.



IDF troops seen operating in Gaza in this handout photo cleared for publication on February 27, 2024 (IDF)

Twenty-one Palestinian security prisoners would be freed by Israel in exchange for the seven Israeli women who were to have been released on the final day of a previous truce, at the end of November, when Hamas reneged on the terms and the truce collapsed. That comes out to a three-to-one ratio.

Ninety Palestinian security prisoners would be released in exchange for five Israeli women soldiers held hostage, an 18-to-one ratio. Fifteen of those prisoners would reportedly be major

terrorists with blood on their hands, including several mass murderers.

Another 90 prisoners would be released in exchange for 15 men among the hostages who are older than 50, a six-to-one ratio.

One hundred and fifty-six prisoners would be released in exchange for 13 Israeli male hostages who are ill or injured, a 12-to-one ratio.



Finally, according to the Channel 12 report, another 40 Palestinian security prisoners who were freed in the 2011 deal for the release of kidnapped IDF soldier Gilad Shalit, but who have since been rearrested for further terrorist activities, would also be released.

A tent camp housing Palestinians displaced by the Israeli offensive is seen in Rafah, Gaza Strip, February 27, 2024. (Hatem Ali/AP)

The TV report, which was unsourced, said the US proposal was put on the table in Paris.

It also noted that despite US President Joe Biden’s optimistic talk Monday of a truce agreement by March 4,

Israel remains pessimistic about an imminent deal coming to fruition.

The **Associated Press**, adding further details to the behind-the-scenes contacts on a potential deal, cited a senior official from Egypt as saying Israel would allow displaced Palestinians to return to certain areas in northern Gaza. The Egyptian official said aid deliveries would be ramped up during the temporary ceasefire, with 300 to 500 trucks entering the beleaguered territory per day, far more than the daily average number of trucks entering since the start of the war.

The **deliveries to areas across Gaza would be facilitated by Israel, whose forces would refrain from attacks on them and on police escorting the aid convoys, said the official**, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss details of the talks with journalists.

Sticking points

Despite Biden's optimism, Israel and Hamas have for weeks been far apart on their terms for a deal, dragging out negotiations amid intermittent signs of momentum.

AP noted that Israel wants all female soldiers included in the first phase of hostage releases, according to an Israeli official who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the ongoing talks. Hamas views all soldiers as more significant bargaining chips and is likely to push back on this demand. The Egyptian official said the female soldiers were at this point being held off until after the first release.

The **Egyptian official said the sides were also discussing how many Palestinians would be allowed to return to northern Gaza and whether to limit their return to women and men over 50.**

Talks **are also pinning down specifics of areas of Gaza from which Israel would withdraw** troops during the truce, the Egyptian official said, adding that Israel wants Hamas to refrain from using areas it leaves as staging grounds for attacks. It also wants Hamas to stop firing rockets at southern Israel. Hamas has so far rejected both demands, the official said.

On **Tuesday, incoming rocket sirens sounded in the southern coastal city of Ashkelon for the first time in 10 days. Alarms were also activated in several nearby communities. A large** fragment of an intercepted rocket landed on a parked car in Ashkelon. There were no injuries.

A chunk of an intercepted rocket hit a car in Ashkelon, causing damage. MDA says no injuries.

pic.twitter.com/lz2UHI7Twp

— Emanuel (Mannie) Fabian (@manniefabian) [February 27, 2024](#)

The **Palestinian Islamic Jihad terror group, based in Gaza and allied with Hamas, claimed responsibility, saying it fired several rockets at the city.**

Rocket fire from the Gaza Strip has greatly subsided in recent months, amid the IDF's ongoing ground offensive against Hamas. The initial October 7 terror attack came under cover of a barrage of thousands of rockets fired at many areas in Israel.

The **potential deal leaves a door open for Israel to operate in the southern border town of Rafah once it expires**. More than half of Gaza's population has fled to the southern city on the Egyptian border. Israel wants to destroy what it says are the few Hamas battalions left standing there. However, the international community, including the US, has raised fears over the possible high civilian casualties from such an operation and Washington has demanded a plan that enables noncombatants to evacuate to safe zones. The IDF presented its plan for Rafah to the war cabinet on Monday evening.

What remains to be negotiated?

During the temporary ceasefire, unconfirmed reports have said, there would be provision for negotiations on further phases of a deal, to include the release of all other hostages, alive and dead, in exchange for more Palestinian security prisoners and a longer pause in the fighting.

Prime **Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed not to agree to a deal that came with too high a price**. But the families of the hostages, whose plight has deeply shaken Israelis, are likely to ramp up pressure if others are freed. Netanyahu has also insisted that the war will resume after any truce, and will not end until "total victory" over Hamas.

The **US hopes a new deal would be a launching pad for implementing its vision for a postwar Gaza that would eventually lead to the creation of a Palestinian state**. It wants Gaza to be governed by a revamped Palestinian Authority, which administers part of the West Bank. On Monday, the PA took a first step that could usher in US-backed reforms by disbanding its government.

Israel **wants to retain overall security control in the Gaza Strip and has rejected having world powers impose a state on it.**



Palestinians wait for humanitarian aid on a beachfront in Gaza City, Gaza Strip, February 25, 2024. (Mahmoud Essa/AP)

Biden said on Monday that Israel would be willing to pause its war on Hamas in Gaza during the upcoming Islamic holy month of Ramadan if a deal is reached to release some of the hostages held by the terrorists.

Israeli officials said Biden's comments, including his prediction of a possible deal by March 4, came as a surprise and were not made in coordination with the country's leadership.

The **start of Ramadan, which is expected to be around March 10, is seen as an unofficial deadline for a ceasefire.** The month is a time of heightened religious observance and dawn-to-dusk fasting for hundreds of millions of Muslims around the world.



IDF troops seen operating in Gaza in this handout photo cleared for publication on February 27, 2024 (IDF)

Fears of famine

Meanwhile, a senior UN aid official told the Security Council at least 576,000 people in the Gaza Strip – a quarter of the population – are one step away from famine, warning that widespread famine could be “almost inevitable” without action.

One in six children under 2 years of age in northern Gaza is suffering from acute malnutrition and practically all the 2.3 million people in the Palestinian enclave rely on

“woefully inadequate” food aid to survive, Ramesh Rajasingham, director of coordination for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, told the council.

The **World Food Program “is ready to swiftly expand and scale up our operations** if there is a ceasefire agreement,” WFP Deputy Executive Director Carl Skau told the 15-member council.

“But in the meantime, the risk of famine is being fueled by the inability to bring critical food supplies into Gaza in sufficient quantities, and the almost impossible operating conditions faced by our staff on the ground,” he said.

Emmanuel Macron **said on X, formerly Twitter, that France and Qatar in a joint operation chartered humanitarian and medical aid on Tuesday for “the people of Gaza.”**

Macron said “75 tons of freight, 10 ambulances, food rations, 300 family tents” arrived in el-Arish airport in Egypt, near the Rafah crossing to Gaza.

France and Qatar also mediated a deal in January for the shipment of medicine for the dozens of hostages held by Hamas. Qatar authorities said last week that Hamas has started delivering the medication.

On Wednesday, the prime ministers of Qatar and France will chair an economic forum to boost investments in sectors such as artificial intelligence, health, green technologies, transport, and tourism.

Nearly 30,000 Palestinians have been killed since the war began, according to Hamas-run health authorities, though these figures cannot be independently verified, and are believed to include both civilians and Hamas members killed in Gaza, including as a consequence of terror groups' own rocket misfires. The IDF says it has killed over 12,000 operatives in Gaza, in addition to some 1,000 terrorists inside Israel on October 7. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/qatari-emir-warns-of-race-against-time-to-free-hostages-as-deal-seems-to-take-shape/>

Gazans burn tires in protest of soaring food costs amid allegations Hamas misappropriating aid
Angry mob expells merchants from Rafah market, accusing them of price gouging; terror group accused of redirecting humanitarian aid intended for Gaza to traders for sale, rather than distributing it for free

Large crowds burned tires and forced merchants out of a market in the southern Gaza Strip city of Rafah in protest of soaring food prices.

Although there were no explicit chants against Hamas, the demonstrations unfolded amid allegations that the terror organization has been diverting part of the humanitarian aid meant for the Gaza Strip and selling it to traders instead of distributing it for free.



Angry mob burning tires in Gaza's Rafah in protest of soaring food prices (Photo: MOHAMMED ABED / AFP)



Angry mob burning tires in Gaza's Rafah in protest of soaring food prices (Photo: MOHAMMED ABED / AFP)



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Angry mob burning tires in Gaza's Rafah in protest of soaring food prices (Photo: MOHAMMED ABED / AFP)

Gaza Liberators, an organization that opposes Hamas and organizes protests against it, characterized the Rafah protest as a demonstration against the terrorist group.

The group has recently begun to openly challenge Hamas' rule over the Palestinian enclave as the living conditions in the territory continue to worsen and as the terrorist organization refuses to cede power amid the war against Israel.

Opposing Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar's reign, the group has been disseminating anti-Hamas materials throughout the Gaza Strip, calling for public protests against Hamas.

These materials have been primarily distributed in the sprawling displaced persons' encampments scattered around Rafah, where over a million Gazans have sought refuge from fighting elsewhere in the territory.

It is unclear who is behind the "rogue" group. Speculation in Gaza suggests that the orchestrators could be members of Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas' rival Fatah faction remaining in the Strip or other opponents of the terrorist group backed by external forces. The group has recently been gaining traction in various parts of the Gaza Strip.

Demonstrations against Hamas in the Gaza Strip are becoming increasingly vocal, with protesters calling for the release of Israeli hostages and an end to the war. They are also criticizing the group's leaders, pointing out that these figures and their families are not affected by the ongoing hostilities with Israel.

Gaza's Liberators has published videos of protests in the northern Gaza Strip, with added commentary, such as

"May God take revenge on Sinwar, the dog who ravaged Gaza."

In a statement issued last week, the group called to stop the war while jibing at Hamas' leaders who reside outside of the Gaza Strip and are unaffected by the war.



A Gaza Liberators' social media post calling on Gazans to protest against Hamas

"One word is what we need - help - and climb down the ladder. Save what's left of us from the onslaught of the Jews. Save us, the defenseless and oppressed. We don't have planes to protect us. We have no shelters, no tunnels and no Qatari and Turkish hotels like you do. It's your duty now to not let words and speeches lead you to places you don't want to be in," the statement read.

Another statement read, "A message to the people of Hamas - you have neither the right nor the permission to force the defenseless to die in

your place from bombings by planes and tanks. We do not have tanks to protect us or F-35 jets, as we are not in the era of the Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, for God's sake, stop relying on Quranic verses in places that are not yours."

IDF **Arabic Spokesperson Lt. Col. Avichay Adraee** also shared clips from the protests on X and quoted chants from one of the demonstrations, saying, "Sinwar tell Haniyeh that the people are the victims. Go away, Sinwar! Listen, listen, Haniyeh, go back to Turkey. Listen, Listen, Hamdan, go back to Lebanon."

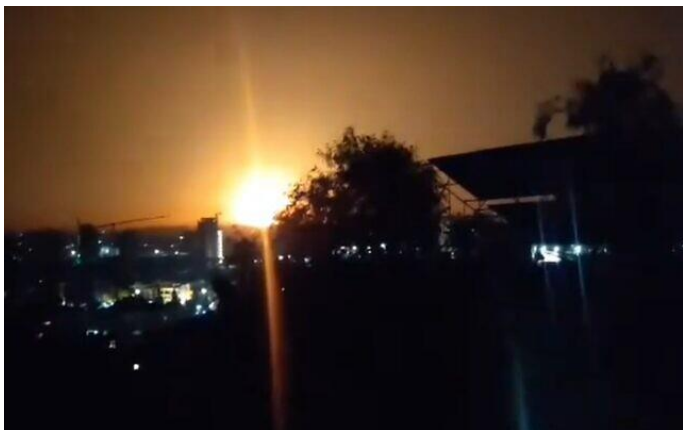
"Gazans recognize the reason behind the tragedy in the Gaza Strip and the consequences of the destruction and terror wrought by Sinwar and his gang," Adraee added in the post.

These aren't the first protests against Hamas in Gaza. In recent weeks, Adraee has been sharing numerous videos depicting similar protests where residents boldly call for the overthrow of Hamas and openly criticize its top officials. According to Adraee, these are spontaneous demonstrations by residents of the Gaza Strip, expressing their frustration with Hamas leadership, which "has led them to disaster." <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/byydz2hnp#autoplay>

Israeli strikes said to target pro-Iran stronghold near Damascus

Syria makes regular claim most missiles shot down but admits material losses; attack reportedly takes place in neighborhood where pro-Iran forces thought to have underground bases

By [Agencies](#) and [Tol Staff](#) Today, 2:49 am



Footage of an alleged Israeli strike near Damascus on February 28, 2024. (screen capture: X)

Israeli strikes caused damage to sites near Damascus Wednesday night, Syria's defense ministry said, in what appeared to be the latest attack in an intensified campaign against Iran-backed forces in the country.

"The Israeli enemy launched air strikes from the direction of the occupied Syrian Golan, targeting a number of sites in the Damascus countryside," the ministry said in a statement carried by state media.

It claimed that most missiles were shot down, a regular

assertion on alleged Israeli strikes that analysts are generally skeptical of.

"The losses were limited to material," Syria's official SANA outlet reported.

The Israel Defense Forces did not comment on the strike.

An AFP correspondent in the Syrian capital heard explosions followed by the sirens of ambulances.

Whatever the Syria air defense attempted to do, it doesn't seem to have worked.

pic.twitter.com/OiLG6UeDsb

— Joe Truzman (@JoeTruzman) [February 28, 2024](#)

Pro-Iranian Lebanese television al Maydeen said a large explosion was heard in the heavily fortified Sayeda Zainab neighborhood of the Syrian capital, home to a major Shi'ite shrine. It gave no further details.

Regional intelligence sources say Iran's Quds Force and militias it backs, whose presence has spread in Syria in recent years, have a strong presence in the Sayeda Zainab neighborhood.

The neighborhood is in southern Damascus, where Iran-backed groups have a string of underground bases.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor said the Israeli strikes targeted "sites where Iran-backed groups including Lebanon's Hezbollah are based" in two locations near Damascus.

Syria's air defenses confront enemy targets in Damascus pic.twitter.com/gStsF8bV5x

— Press TV ???? (@PressTV) [February 28, 2024](#)

On Sunday, an Israeli strike on a truck in Syria near the Lebanese border killed two Hezbollah members, according to source close to Lebanese terror group.

A day later, Israel struck a site deep inside Lebanon, in the Baalbek region near the border with Syria, which is thought to be used as a major route for weapons transfers.



A Lebanese army vehicle block a road leading to a destroyed warehouse, background, which was attacked by Israeli airstrikes, on the outskirts of the Hezbollah stronghold village of Buday, near Baalbek town, east Lebanon, Monday, Feb. 26, 2024. (AP)

Hezbollah has repeatedly barraged northern Israel with rockets since the Monday strike.

Israel has launched hundreds of air strikes against Syria since at least 2013, primarily targeting pro-Iran forces, among them Hezbollah.

The strikes have multiplied during the almost five-month war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza.

More than half a dozen Iranian Revolutionary Guards officers killed in suspected Israeli strikes on Syria since December.

Since the war broke out October 7, Hezbollah has repeatedly fired from Lebanon at northern Israel, drawing retaliatory strikes that have significantly raised tensions along the border.

Israel rarely comments on individual strikes inside Syria but has repeatedly said it will not allow Iran to expand its presence in the country. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-strikes-said-to-target-pro-iran-stronghold-near-damascus/>

'Lebanon will be next': Iran greenlights Hezbollah attack on Israel - report

As per the report, Tehran gave the go-ahead amid fears that, after the IDF completes an invasion of Rafah, southern Lebanon "will be next."

By [TAL SPUNGIN](#) FEBRUARY 28, 2024 18:10 **Updated:** FEBRUARY 28, 2024 18:26



A Hezbollah fighter stands in front of anti-tank artillery at Juroud Aarsal (photo credit: REUTERS/ALI HASHISHO)

Iran has given Lebanese terror organization Hezbollah the green light to escalate its attacks along Israel's northern border, the Arabic Post reported on Wednesday, citing high-level Iranian and Lebanese sources.

The Islamic Republic has reportedly set conditions for Hezbollah, ordering it to launch a large-scale attack on Israel only after it "had become certain of Israel's

intention" to carry out an invasion of the southern Gaza city of Rafah.

As per the report, Tehran gave the go-ahead amid fears that, after the IDF completes an invasion of Rafah, southern Lebanon "will be next."

Nasrallah calls emergency meeting with Quds Force chief over Israeli threats

A source from Iran's Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) told Arabic Post that Esmail Qaani, the IRGC's Quds Force commander, visited Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah on Monday to discuss "the latest developments" along Israel's northern border.



Esmail Qaani, the head of the Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force, speaks in Tehran, Iran April 14, 2022 (credit: MAJID ASGARIPOUR/WANA (WEST ASIA NEWS AGENCY) VIA REUTERS)

The meeting between the two was reportedly held at the request of Nasrallah, who called for the "necessity" of holding an emergency meeting after "information was obtained" indicating Israeli intention to launch a large-scale assault on Hezbollah in Lebanon.

"Hassan Nasrallah told Qaani that the attack is likely to be very imminent, most likely in the month of Ramadan, or with Israel's invasion of the city of Rafah," an IRGC source told Arabic Post. "Nasrallah said

that he is completely certain of [Israel's] intention to launch a large-scale attack on Lebanon, and he asked Qaani to give him complete freedom in how he intends to attack," another diplomatic source in Iran said.

Tehran disapproved of Hezbollah's 'uncoordinated' attack on Safed

According to the same sources, Qaani expressed Tehran's disapproval of a reportedly uncoordinated launch of rockets by Hezbollah on the northern Israeli city of Safed, with one hitting the entrance to the Ziv Medical Center. The director of the hospital, Dr. Salman Zarka, wrote after the attack, "We are very lucky here. The missile did not explode."

Another rocket launched during the same barrage hit a military base, killing IDF Staff.-Sgt. Omer Sarah Benjo and wounding 10 other soldiers.

Hezbollah's attack on Safed "angered Tehran to some extent" due to Iran's insistence that Hezbollah adopts a "policy of strategic patience in the face of Israeli and American provocations," the Arabic Post added, citing Iranian sources. <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-789447>

Gallant says no Haredi draft bill without centrist support, risking coalition crisis

Defense minister says ultra-Orthodox must share military burden; announcement welcomed by Gantz, met by vague Haredi threats that issue could bring down the government

By [Emanuel Fabian](#), [Jeremy Sharon](#) and [Tol Staff](#) Today, 12:22 am



Defense Minister Yoav Gallant speaks at a press conference in Tel Aviv on February 28, 2024. (Screen capture)

Defense Minister Yoav Gallant called for an end to military draft exemptions for members of the ultra-Orthodox community Wednesday, and said he would only back legislation settling the matter if it is endorsed by centrist ministers Benny Gantz and Gadi Eisenkot.

His position, along with growing pressure on the government to reach a resolution on the long-deferred political hot potato, could set up a do-or-die clash with Haredi parties key to the survival of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's ruling coalition.

Urging lawmakers to hash out legislation to address a situation in which most ultra-Orthodox men can skip mandatory service in favor of religious studies, Gallant said manpower strains on the army amid fighting in Gaza and on the northern border required the contribution of all sectors of society.

"We cherish and appreciate those who dedicate their lives to learning the Torah. However, without physical existence, there is no spiritual existence. Our security challenges demonstrate that everyone must bear the burden [of service]. All parts of society," Gallant said in a televised address from Defense Ministry headquarters in Tel Aviv Wednesday evening.

"To attain the goals of the war, to handle the threats from Gaza, from Lebanon, from [the West

Bank], and to prepare for the emerging threats from the east, we need unity and partnership in decisions about our future,” he said

“Any draft law agreed to by all parties of the emergency coalition will be acceptable to me,” he said. “But without the agreement of all parts of the coalition, the defense system under my leadership will not present the law.”

Gallant’s insistence on a law supported by National Unity party lawmakers Gantz and Eisenkot, both former Israel Defense Forces chiefs of staff, is likely to put to bed any chance of the coalition being able to pass a Haredi-friendly bill without reaching across the aisle to those opposed to large-scale exemptions.

The announcement was welcomed by Gantz, but met with immediate Haredi backlash and vague threats that the issue could bring down the government.

The issue of ultra-Orthodox exemptions has crept back to the fore of the political agenda in recent weeks after the IDF announced plans to add time onto mandatory service terms for military recruits and to delay retirement for some reservists while also raising the number of days they must serve annually, as it prepares for extended fighting in Gaza and the possibility of war against Lebanese terror group Hezbollah.

The plan was met with fierce backlash, with a number of lawmakers, including some within the coalition, demanding the shortage be made up by the ultra-Orthodox.

Successive Netanyahu governments have struggled to come to a consensus on legislation dealing with ultra-Orthodox military service since a 2017 High Court decision that determined blanket military service exemptions for ultra-Orthodox yeshiva students to be discriminatory and illegal.

Attempts to draft legislation have failed to bridge gaps between mainstream lawmakers who seek a more equal sharing of the burden of military service and the ultra-Orthodox Shas and United Torah Judaism parties that demand exemptions continue and whose support Netanyahu’s governments have relied on to stay in power.

On Monday, the court threatened to annul a government resolution passed in June 2023 instructing the IDF not to draft ultra-Orthodox yeshiva students for nine months, while it formulates a new law. MORE - <https://www.timesofisrael.com/gallant-say-no-haredi-draft-bill-without-centrist-support-risking-coalition-crisis/>

Report: War cabinet sidelines Ben Gvir, rejects Ramadan Al Aqsa limits on Arab Israelis

Rejection follows Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh’s call for Palestinians in Jerusalem and the West Bank to march to Al-Aqsa Mosque on the first day of holy month

By [Tol Staff](#) 28 February 2024, 11:35 pm



Tens of thousands of Muslim worshippers pray at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound atop the Temple Mount during the holy month of Ramadan, Jerusalem's Old City, April 17, 2023. (Jamal Awad/ Flash90/ File)

National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir will not be permitted to bar Arab Israelis from worshipping at the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount on Ramadan, Israel’s war cabinet has ruled, according to a Hebrew media report Wednesday.

The Channel 12 report, which did not cite any specific sources, said the war cabinet — made up of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and Minister Benny Gantz, as well as several other ministers who serve as

observers — also decided that it would be the sole body to make decisions regarding policy at the flashpoint site. This would effectively sideline the far-right national security minister, who [said](#) in mid-February that Palestinian residents of the West Bank should be barred from attending prayers at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem during Ramadan. Ben Gvir is also [reported to have sought](#) to limit Arab Israeli visits.

Also on Wednesday, Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh called on Palestinians in Jerusalem and the West Bank to march to Al-Aqsa Mosque to pray on the first day of Ramadan on March 10, during the war in Gaza, seemingly seeking to raise tensions in the area.

Asked to respond to Haniyeh’s statement during a press conference, US State Department

Spokesperson Matthew Miller offered no comment, but clarified that the US will “continue to urge Israel to facilitate access to the Temple Mount for peaceful worshipers during Ramadan, consistent with past practice.”

“It’s not just the right thing to do,” Miller added. “It’s not just a matter of granting people religious freedom, which they deserve, but it’s also a matter that is directly important to Israel’s security. It is not in Israel’s security interests to enflame tensions.”

The **Temple Mount is the holiest place in Judaism**, where two biblical Temples once stood, and is the third-holiest site in Islam, making it a hot-button site in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. **MORE -**
<https://www.timesofisrael.com/report-war-cabinet-sidelines-ben-gvir-rejects-ramadan-al-aqsa-limits-on-arab-israelis/>

CIA working in Ukraine – US mercenary

One American fighter has made that revelation to Russian pranksters Vovan and Lexus

28 Feb, 2024 21:57



Screenshot from the ViL Show © Telegram / Russiacalling

American spies and special forces operatives are in Ukraine helping its military in the conflict with Russia, according to one US fighter who thought he was speaking with former Ukrainian President Pyotr Poroshenko. Instead, he was speaking with Russian pranksters Vovan and Lexus.

Interviews with “soldiers of misfortune” were posted on Wednesday as part of the latest episode of the notorious duo’s RuTube show. Jason Freeman, who is married to a Ukrainian in Nikolaev, was the first they tried to recruit into “Poroshenko’s” new mercenary outfit.

Freeman boasted that he killed 21 Russian soldiers and hit 13 more, but admitted that his entire unit was destroyed in the battle of Artyomovsk (known in Ukraine as Bakhmut). He also complained about problems with getting paid and criticized the Ukrainian Armed Forces command as incompetent.

“Young Ukrainians are dying because of bad orders or tactics. Most of those here are actually fresh meat,” Freeman said, according to a translation of his remarks.

According to Freeman, **CIA and US special forces operatives are in Ukraine even now**, advising the Ukrainian armed forces on the frontlines.

The **New York Times revealed the CIA’s presence in Ukraine on Sunday**, noting that the **US spy agency has been setting up operations in the country since the 2014 coup in Kiev** and is currently operating a dozen bases along the Russian border.

The second mercenary who spoke to “Poroshenko” was identified as Joshua Randsford, who said he wasn’t interested in Ukrainian politics, only “fighting against Russia.” Randsford said he had fought in Afghanistan and Iraq and that the current conflict seemed worse, due to the Ukrainians’ “lack of professionalism.”

Morale is low both in the military and among the special forces operated by the GUR intelligence, he claimed. Randsford spoke from Poland, where he is attending a sniper course, but said he was looking forward to returning to fighting as soon as possible.

The **Americans also complained that Ukraine’s counteroffensive last summer had been “a waste of lives”** and seemed resigned to Kiev’s forces taking even more casualties as the fighting went on.

Last July, the **Russian Defense Ministry estimated that around 11,000 foreign fighters flocked to Ukraine at the start of the conflict. About 5,000 had left the country while others became casualties**, leaving only around 2,000 on the battlefield, Moscow said.

According to Vovan and Lexus – Vladimir Kuznetsov and Alexey Stolyarov – that number might be as high as 20,000, however. AP recently reported that Kiev was offering \$3,300 a month to former **Colombian soldiers**, luring them away from mercenary work in Yemen or the drug cartels. One Ukrainian officer [has told CNN](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/28/ukraine-war-foreign-fighters/index.html) that a lot of the foreigners who come to Ukraine with romantic notions flee after experiencing the reality of war. <https://www.rt.com/news/593344-cia-operatives-ukraine-pranksters/>

Moscow responds to claims US Intel attempted to track Putin

The Kremlin's spokesman has said he's unaware of cellphone-signal operations detailed in a recent book by reporter Byron Tau

28 Feb, 2024 16:06



Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov.

Moscow is unaware of any US tracking operations aimed at Russian President Vladimir Putin, described in a recent exposé, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov has stated. Former Wall Street Journal reporter Byron Tau claims that a novel surveillance tool was used to harvest geolocation data from the cellphones of people close to the Russian head of state, and in this way to infer the president's actual location.

Excerpts from Tau's book, titled 'Means of Control: How the Hidden Alliance of Tech and Government Is Creating a New American Surveillance State,' were cited by Wired on Tuesday. The account describes how a researcher, specializing in "obtaining unique data sets for government agencies," came up with a tool that enabled near real-time tracking of individual devices' location within a given area.

Speaking to the media on Wednesday, Peskov said that the Kremlin was not aware of any such surveillance directed at the Russian president. The official also noted that Russian authorities do not know what the allegations made by Tau are based on.

Peskov reassured reporters that "of course, our special services do everything necessary to ensure the security of the head of state." The Kremlin representative went on to point out that *"any smartphone with any operational system is absolutely transparent for surveillance."*

According to the book, in the mid-2010s US researcher Mike Yeagley started exploring ways to harness the geolocation data routinely collected for advertising purposes. He allegedly worked for several firms bankrolled by the CIA and the Pentagon. The software, reportedly named Locomotive and later rebranded as VISR (Virtual Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance), is said to have enabled its developers to *"track phones in the Russian President Vladimir Putin's entourage."* The necessary data was being sourced from dating and weather apps, as well as games that require users' location, Tau claims.

While none of the devices in question were owned by the Russian leader personally, PlanetRisk believed it had access to the smartphones that "belonged to the drivers, the security personnel, the political aides, and other support staff around the Russian president," according to the account. This presumably meant that President Putin's whereabouts could be identified, too.

The **exposé alleges that Yeagley's brainchild was received enthusiastically by the US intelligence community**, and was adopted *"as part of an interagency program."* <https://www.rt.com/russia/593327-peskov-claims-putin-us-surveillance/>

LEV U'NESHAMA (HEART AND SOUL) - TZFAT, ISRAEL

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OP ED

Michigan Muslims Take Biden Hostage To Save Hamas

Daniel Greenfield

While Israeli commandos rescued a 70-year-old man and 60-year-old man who were being held hostage in Gaza, Hamas supporters in America were taking an 81-year-old man hostage in D.C.

Hamas may be losing in Gaza, but it's winning in Michigan.

Rep. Rashida Tlaib is now the latest Michigan Muslim terror activist to urge Hamas supporters in the state to reject Biden in the primary by casting an "uncommitted" vote.

According to Rep. Tlaib, who became the only member of Congress to refuse to vote to condemn Hamas rapes of Jewish women, her goal is to "create a voting bloc" to stop Israel's campaign to take down the Islamic terror group.

The campaign, misleadingly titled, "Listen to Michigan", to pressure Biden into saving Hamas is being run by Layla Elabed, Rep. Tlaib's sister and its spokesman is Abbas Alawieh, who had served as Rep. Tlaib's legislative director and then as Rep. Cori Bush's chief of staff.

The leading signatory of 'Listen to Michigan' is [Dearborn Mayor Abdullah H. Hammoud](#) (pictured above) who after the Hamas atrocities of Oct 7 had [addressed](#) a pro-Hamas rally declaring that Dearborn was "the city of resistance".

That same rally featured Osama Siblani, the publisher of the Arab American News paper and with whom [Biden officials had met](#) in an attempt to end the pro-Hamas pressure campaign, who had [previously told](#) the Washington Post that, "Mr. Bush believes Hezbollah, Hamas and other Palestinian factions are terrorists, but we believe they are freedom fighters."

The Dearborn mayor had spoken at a previous pro-Hamas rally at which Osama Siblani had threatened, "We are the Arabs that are going to lift Palestinians all the way to victory. Whether we are in Michigan, and whether we are in Jenin. Believe me. Everyone should fight within his means. They will fight with stones. Others will fight with guns. Others will fight with planes, drones. And others will fight with rockets. And others will fight in their voice."

Michigan Muslims have decided to fight by taking Biden hostage while playing the victim.

Mayor Hammoud had recently convinced Biden to condemn a Wall Street Journal [op-ed](#) by a MEMRI counterterrorism researcher which exposed the level of terror support in Dearborn.

Hammoud then repaid Biden by doubling down on fighting to save Hamas from Israel.

The number two signatory is Michigan State Assembly Majority Floor Leader Abraham Aiyash out of Hamtramck, the first all-Muslim governed city in the country, who has accused Israel of "genocide" and promoted a message urging "context" for the Hamas atrocities of Oct 7.

(Rep. Aiyash was profiled in the David Horowitz Freedom Center's [Election Jihad report](#).)



The Hamtramck politician was rapidly elevated by the Democratic Party to one of the top positions in the state after first being elected in 2020. Rep. Aiyash abused that power to first block a resolution condemning the Hamas atrocities of Oct 7 because it did not also criticize Israel and complained that it neglected “the conversation around the Palestinian people, particularly in the Gaza Strip, who for decades have endured mistreatment.”

He has now decided to repay the Democratic Party by taking Biden hostage for Hamas.

Also signing on to the campaign is State Rep. Alabas Farhat, newly elected in the 2022 midterms, who claimed that asking him to condemn Hamas was a “racist dog whistle”, and who has accused Israel of “apartheid”, “occupation” and the “systematic murder of Palestinians.

Also listed is ‘Bill’ Bazzi, Dearborn Heights’ first Muslim mayor, as well as Dearborn Councilman Mustapha Hammoud, the son of [Abed Hammoud](#). Abed Hammoud, a Lebanese immigrant and an “old family friend” of Gov. Whitmer, who had headed the Congress of Arab American Organizations alongside Osama Siblani, had complained that a government crackdown on the Hezbollah Islamic terrorist group was “smearing the whole community”.

“Now people are scared to even say ‘I want Hezbollah to defend Lebanon,’” he had objected.

Despite that, the Obama-Biden administration had made Hammoud an Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan. Hammoud is currently listed as the lawyer for Hezbollah financier Mohammad Bazzi: a “specially designated global terrorist” who has been described as “a player for senior Hezbollah operatives and senior Iranian leadership”.

Hammoud, the other Hammoud, Farhat, Aiyash and multiple other Dearborn, Dearborn Heights, and Muslim officials across Wayne County benefited from significant Democratic Party funding outlays. But they did not run for office or take power for the party, the country or for anyone or anything except members of their tribal group and its ideology of Islam.

Given a chance they demonstrated that their only loyalty was to Islam and Muslim terrorists, not America or even the Democrats who brought them here, nurtured them and funded them.

At a recent speech, Rep. Ilhan Omar, speaking in her native language, [hailed Somalis](#) as “people of one blood” and “people who know they are Somalians first”.

“The US government will only do what Somalians in the US tell them to do,” the translation describes the Somali Muslim congresswoman as saying. “They will do what we want and nothing else. They must follow our orders.”

“Sleep in comfort knowing I am here to protect the interests of Somalia from inside the US system,” Rep. Omar assured them.

That is the ‘Listen to Michigan’ campaign writ large.

“We are on the road to a great victory here in D.C. and there in Palestine,” Osama Siblani, who had openly expressed his support for Hamas and Hezbollah, boasted at the same rally at which Mayor Hammoud spoke and at which other ‘Listen to Michigan’ signatories were present.

To the Hamas caucus in America, they are fighting one war whether it’s in Israel or America.

And Democrats are learning the hard way that their new Muslim constituency has no loyalties or allegiances to anything except, as Rep. Omar put it, “people of one blood” and, as has been made clear in Dearborn, people of the same religion. And the issue goes far beyond Israel.

Hamtramck Amer Ghalib, the mayor of the first all-Muslim governed city in America, is one of the ‘Listen to Michigan’ signatories. Democrats squirmed when Ghalib banned flying gay flags, compared black people to animals and attacked Christians. He [praised Saddam and Iran](#).

These are a few of the other things that Democrats have to accept from their new electorate.

‘Listen to Michigan’ and you can hear the mayor of the first all-Muslim governed city [thanking a Sheikh](#) and celebrating the “young people from the Salafi stream who came out with great enthusiasm and elected me”. Salafis, like the Al Qaeda group, are a Jihadist movement.

‘Listen to Michigan’ and you can hear the Dearborn mayor hailing his city as a “city of resistance” at a pro-Hamas rally.

‘Listen to Michigan’ and you can see Michigan being taken hostage by Islamic terrorists. And that same movement is now bent on hijacking the 2024 presidential election. With Biden polling poorly, the Hamas supporters in Michigan are betting that they can either force Biden to save Hamas by imposing sanctions on Israel or that they can take credit for his election defeat.

The emerging narrative is that the Democrats aren’t turning out voters because the party hasn’t come out strongly enough in support of Hamas and against Israel. If the Democrats lose in 2024, that narrative will solidify and

future Democratic Party presidential candidates will be warned to support Islamic terrorism and oppose those like Israel who resist it or lose

A handful of Muslim settlers in Michigan built up their state within a state, they've taken the Democratic Party hostage and now intend to take the United States of America hostage.

[Daniel Greenfield](#) is a Shillman Journalism Fellow at the David Horowitz Freedom Center. This article previously appeared at the Center's [Front Page Magazine](#).

[Michigan Muslims Take Biden Hostage to Save Hamas - Daniel Greenfield / Sultan Knish Articles at DanielGreenfield.org](#)