



Funeral of IRGC officers with Supreme Leader Khamenei | Source: Jihad Land in Telegram, t.me/@eretz

Overview

- An IRGC compound in Damascus, that operated under the guise of an Iranian consulate, was struck, reportedly by an Israeli airstrike. In the attack, Mohammad Reza Mehdavi Zahedi, the IRGC commander responsible for Syria and Lebanon was killed along with his deputy and 5 other IRGC officers. This is the most senior Iranian commander to have been killed since the US eliminated Qasem Soleimani in 2020.
- **With the exit of the 98th Division, the bulk of Israeli ground troops left Gaza, leaving only a handful of brigades to safeguard corridors.** Israel says it is bracing up to the Rafah operation and continues to conduct focused operations around Gaza.
- **US President Joe Biden warned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that America would change its approach towards Israel if it does not increase humanitarian assistance to Gaza.**
- Israel's war cabinet agreed to allow the transfer of humanitarian aid through Ashdod's port and to open the Erez crossing for the first time. The cabinet also authorized the War Cabinet members Netanyahu, Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant and Minister Benny Gantz, to take further "immediate steps" to increase aid flow to Gaza.
- During a two-and-a-half-hour virtual call, Israeli and American officials discussed Israel's operational plans for the **Rafah military operation.**
- Following Biden's call to Netanyahu, Hamas rejected the latest Israeli offer for a hostage deal in Cairo.
- **IDF Chief of Staff Lt Gen Herzi Halevi published the findings of the inquiry into the World Central Kitchen incident,** in which 7 foreign aid workers were killed. The Chief of Staff sacked two officers, including the chief of staff of the Nahal Brigade. He called it a "terrible accident", in which the combatant were certain that the vehicle contained Hamas militants.
- Operation "Local Surgery" which started on March 18th at the Shifa Hospital in Gaza, concluded exactly two weeks later. **Over 200 terrorists were eliminated, and close to 1,000 individuals suspected of terrorism were arrested** (of which over 500 were confirmed as Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists).
- **The body of hostage Elad Katzir was rescued by security forces overnight from Khan Yunis and returned to Israeli territory after it was confirmed he was murdered in January.** Elad Katzir was abducted from Kibbutz Nir Oz by the Islamic Jihad terrorist organization during the October 7 Massacre.
- **Former CIA director David Petraeus said that Israel must maneuver in Rafah and conquer it, insisting that Israel must remain in the Strip even after the war.**
- Hamas claims to have arrested 10 armed members of the Palestinian Authority who entered with Israel's

help to organize the new civil administration and food distribution. The PA reported that two Palestinian Authority intelligence officers were killed in the Gaza Strip.

- **The spokesperson for Kata'ib Hezbollah in Iraq declared that they are preparing to arm and support 12,000 "Islamic Freedom Fighters" in Jordan, aiming to unite in the struggle against Israel in support of the Palestinians.**
- Since March 10th (the beginning of the Muslim Ramadan), **9 attacks** have been carried out within the "Israel Proper" (not including Judea and Samaria), **3 of them by Israeli Arabs.**

following findings in January that its employees participated in the October 7th massacre.

- Spanish PM Pedro Sanchez said Spain would **recognize the State of Palestine** by July.
- The EU condemned Israel's attack in Damascus without mentioning Israel explicitly.
- The United States, the United Kingdom, and France vetoed a Russian condemnation proposal in the UN Security Council for the attack attributed to Israel in Damascus.
- The United Arab Emirates is halting its humanitarian aid efforts through the maritime corridor from Cyprus to Gaza, following the **WCK (World Central Kitchen) incident.**



Israeli troops in the Gaza Strip | Photo: Daniel Attias @ daniel_attias1 on Instagram



Shifa hospital after the IDF left the compound | Source: Radio Palestine on Telegram, <https://t.me/PalestineRadio>

International

- More than 600 UK lawyers signed a letter criticizing an earlier letter signed by three former Supreme Court justices which warned that Britain may be breaching international law by arming Israel.
- Matthew Miller, a spokesperson for the U.S. State Department, during a briefing suggested the U.S. would **veto the proposal** in the Security Council which would make Palestine full member of the UN by April.
- Japan **canceled their suspension of funding to UNRWA.** Japan had halted its funding of UNWRA



Gaza |Source: Amit Segal

Gaza Strip

Diplomatic

World Central Kitchen Incident

The IDF mistakenly misidentified the World Central Kitchen (an aid organization working with the IDF to deliver food to Gazans) vehicle carrying aid workers and hit it with a missile. As a result, **7 aid workers were killed** which caused a significant international diplomatic condemnation, especially from the countries from whose citizens died in the tragic incident.

Netanyahu who underwent a surgical procedure the previous evening, sent an apology video from the hospital, while the IDF launched an investigation into the matter. **The IDF investigation was conducted through General Staff Fact-Finding Assessment Mechanism, an independent**

military body responsible for investigating unusual incidents amid the war. The probe found that there were failures to comply with the IDF's engagement rules which was used to open fire on a suspected vehicle that was believed to carry Hamas gunmen although there was a low level of confidence. The officers did not identify the vehicles as belonging to WCK when the strike was ordered, and could not see the organization's logo on the vehicle during night time. **Two senior Israeli commanders will be removed** from their position. Other commanders were reprimanded by IDF Chief of Staff, Herzi Halevi.

Biden's Call to Netanyahu

After this incident, President Biden and Prime Minister Netanyahu spoke over the phone in what was described as a hard talk, the toughest call, in both substance and tone since the beginning of the war. **Biden told Netanyahu that America would change its approach towards Israel if it does not increase the humanitarian to Gaza.** Biden did not elaborate further regarding whether this would impact future weapon shipments to Israel. Biden reprimanded Netanyahu for the **WCK incident** and for the first time since the war began, called for an immediate ceasefire due to the humanitarian crisis, independent of any progress on the release of hostages **Biden also told Netanyahu that Israel must "announce and implement" a series of "concrete and measurable steps" to protect aid workers and address humanitarian suffering.** This shows that the President is also preoccupied with the optics of the situation by demanding that Israel publicly demonstrate its humanitarian efforts.

Secretary of State Anthony Blinken echoed that point in his own press conference on Thursday, threatening: "If we don't see the changes we need to see, **there will be a change in our policy.**" This point was also reiterated by Democratic Sen. Chris Coons, who is a close ally of President Biden and is often supportive of Israel, when he said for the first time that he would be open to the idea of conditioning US support for Israel based on Israel's conduct in the war. **In the US House of Representatives several GOP members blasted Biden's "ultimatum" to Netanyahu and accused the Biden administration of abandoning Israel.**

After the conversation took place, **Israel's war cabinet agreed to allow the transfer of humanitarian aid through use Ashdod's port and to open the Erez crossing for the first time. The cabinet also authorized war cabinet members Netanyahu, Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant and Minister Benny Gantz, to take further "immediate steps" to increase aid flow to Gaza.**

Israel's government is between a rock and a hard place- on one hand it could cave to international demands thereby demonstrating to the international community where they could be vulnerable to pressure to alter its behavior. On the other hand, Israel's international standing is also dependent on the difficulties facing many foreign political leaders for supporting Israel's war efforts as they **face growing domestic opposition.** US officials have repeatedly said to their Israeli counterparts that Israel needs to take steps that would **alleviate the pressure that they face at home due to their support for Israel.** Israel's

government is also facing internal political pressures for allowing aid into Gaza without preventing Hamas from accessing it, which puts the government in a tough spot **between domestic and international pressures.**

Rafah Operation Disagreements

During a two-and-a-half-hour virtual call American National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and Secretary of State Blinken discussed with Netanyahu confidants, Minister for Strategic Affairs Ron Dermer and National Security Adviser Tzachi Hanegbi, Israel's operational plans for the Rafah military operation. **The main friction point revolved around the way Israel would execute the evacuation of more than 1 million Gazans.** The Biden administration expressed concerns that a **quick and unorganized evacuation would result in a humanitarian disaster.** They are also very skeptical of Israel's ability to conduct the evacuation in 4 weeks or more - depending on the situation on the ground. The US believes that such an evacuation could take up to 4 months.

Sullivan expressed concern for the possibility that the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) organization would issue a famine declaration for Gaza as it would be "bad for Israel and for the U.S". **Israel rejects the assertion that Gaza is on the brink of famine.**

The Hamas Hostage Deal

On Friday in Cairo, Hamas rejected the latest Israeli offer for a hostage deal. The deal was envisioned to achieve a 6-week ceasefire that would include a multi-phase release of Israeli hostages. Hamas was adamant in its **2 demands** to allow for the **return of people to northern Gaza and have the IDF pull out completely from the Gaza Strip.** Hamas effectively is negotiating for its survival and would not budge from its fundamental demands that would guarantee its survival.

Israel's Mossad Director, David Barnea and Shin Bet Chief, Ronen Bar, were set to meet this weekend with CIA director William Burns but pulled out after Hamas rejected Israel's offer. Israeli officials have publicly wondered if there is any point to continue these talks given that Hamas has not budged from its position **self-preservation.**

After pressing Netanyahu, Biden mediators in Qatar and Egypt are using their influence with Hamas to push for the hostage deal. The current proposal is a six-week ceasefire in Gaza in exchange for the release of 40 hostages — female soldiers and other women, men over the age of 50 and men in critical medical conditions. **Israel would also need to release roughly 700 Palestinian prisoners, including about 100 who are serving life sentences for killing Israelis.**

- It was reported that as part of the negotiations taking place in Cairo, Israel expressed a willingness to allow the return of 2,000 displaced persons per day to the northern Gaza Strip, up to 60,000 per month. Men of fighting age will not be allowed to return, and those who do return will be housed in tents outside the city, not in the city itself or across the Gaza metropolis.

- Hamas is demanding the presence of international bodies and organizations, especially UNRWA, to provide assistance. Hamas intends to continue using UNRWA to cover its activities and legitimize them.

Operational

Shifa

Operation "Local Surgery" which started on March 18th at the Shifa Hospital in Gaza, concluded exactly two weeks later. **Over 200 terrorists were eliminated, and close to 1,000 individuals suspected of terrorism were arrested** (of which over 500 were confirmed as Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists). There are still terrorists nearby who attacked IDF troops using anti-tank missiles, snipers, and mortars, among others, in the nearby neighborhood of Tel al-Hawa.

In a joint statement from the **IDF and the Shin Bet**, it was reported that among the detainees was the **deputy head of the Information Department in Hamas's military intelligence**, Ashraf Ibrahim Samur. According to the statement, Samur described in his Shin Bet interrogation the many **Hamas bodies operating out of the hospital, from military intelligence, internal security, to the governance of the terror organization.** "Military intelligence units operated from Shifa. The Ministry of Interior, emergency committees, and the Hamas government also worked from there. It is a safe place," he told his interrogators.

Defense Minister Gallant held a situation assessment at the headquarters of Division 98 and stated that in the last two weeks, **hundreds of terrorists have surrendered. Hamas as an organization is breaking from within, and its terrorists are losing patience and cannot withstand the pressure.**

- **The body of Israeli hostage Elad Katzir was rescued by security forces overnight from Khan Yunis and returned to Israeli territory after it was confirmed he was murdered in January. Elad Katzir was abducted from Kibbutz Nir Oz by Islamic Jihad terrorists during the October 7 Massacre.**
- In an interview with SKY NEWS, former American general and **ex-CIA director David Petraeus said that Israel must maneuver in Rafah and conquer it, insisting that Israel must remain in the Strip even after the war.**
- **Hamas claims to have arrested 10 armed members of the Palestinian Authority who entered with Israel's help to organize the new civil administration and food distribution. The PA reported that two Palestinian Authority intelligence officers were killed in the Gaza Strip** by Hamas. Three members of Fatah were also injured.
- Netanyahu made a statement to the **Israeli media**, announcing that the **operational plans for maneuvering in Rafah have been approved.** In response to a journalist's question about the delay

in the maneuver, he said that the **delay is not due to American pressure** but due to **operational preparations**. He stated that it will be executed even without American support.

Domestic Arena

- Some of the families of the hostages along with anti-government protesters increased their protests this week with demonstrations all over Israel including next to the Prime Minister's residence in Jerusalem. There were instances of violence against police officers which caused further divisions in Israeli society following the reprimanding comments that politicians from the government and the opposition have made.
- For the first time, War Cabinet Member Benny Gantz called for an early election around September of this year which could further destabilize the Israeli government. Netanyahu has said that new elections would likely extend the war for 6 to 8 more months.
- Israel passed a bill that could lead to the outlawing the operation of Qatari funded Al Jazeera network that has been perpetuating Hamas propaganda during the whole course of the war.

Jordan

The spokesperson for the pro-Iranian militia Kata'ib Hezbollah in Iraq declared that they are preparing to arm and support 12,000 "Islamic Freedom Fighters" in Jordan, aiming to unite in the struggle against Israel in support of the Palestinians and to challenge the relationship between Israel and the Gulf countries. Since March 24, Jordan has been experiencing daily protests calling for the severance of ties with Israel. Meanwhile, Iran is trying to undermine Jordanian stability to bring about the rise of an Islamist regime, from which it could threaten Israel along its longest border and directly arm its proxies in Judea and Samaria.

Lebanon

Operational

Throughout the week there were routine aerial attacks against Hezbollah assets, with Hezbollah shooting rockets all over Israel's northern communities. There were attempts to launch UAVs that did not cross the border into Israel. The strategic equation against Hezbollah has been maintained for another week.



The new Palestinian government after the swearing-in ceremony in Ramallah | Source: <https://www.wafa.ps/>

Judea and Samaria

- On Sunday, there were **two terrorist attacks**: one in Gan Yavne, where a 19-year-old terrorist from Judea stabbed and wounded 3 Israelis, one of whom died a few days later. A terrorist from Rahat stabbed and wounded an officer at the Beer Sheva central bus station; a soldier present at the location shot him dead.
- A 26-year-old Israeli Arab from Tira carried out a **ramming attack** in the Kokhav Ya'ir area in central Israel,

injuring 4 police officers. He then attempted a stabbing attack at a local checkpoint and was successfully neutralized by security guards.

- Since March 10th (the beginning of the Muslim Ramadan), **9 attacks** have been carried out within the "Israel Proper" (not including Judea and Samaria), **3 of them by Israeli Arabs**.
- The Shin Bet thwarted a plot by a terrorist cell of Israeli Arabs from the south of the country, along with Arabs from the Judea and Samaria, to carry out a series of attacks inspired by the Islamic State, including a plan to assassinate the Minister of National Security.
- Fatah accused Iran of attempting to spread chaos in Judea and Samaria and stated that it would oppose operations from outside that have no connection to the Palestinian cause.
- On March 31, 2024, the swearing-in ceremony of **the 19th Palestinian government took place in Mahmoud Abbas's office in Ramallah, led by new Prime Minister Muhammad Mustafa**. Immediately after the ceremony, the government convened for its first meeting under Abbas, during which he called on the government to prepare for presidential elections throughout the territories of the Authority, **especially in East Jerusalem**.
- The Central Unit of the Jerusalem District Police and the Shin Bet thwarted terrorist attacks planned by ISIS supporters in East Jerusalem.

Iran



The IRGC Compound after Israel's attack | Source: Abu Saleh on Telegram, t.me/@abusalehg1



The Chief of Staff of the Popular Mobilization Forces, and the Secretary-General of the Islamic Jihad, Ziyad al-Nakhalah, participated in the Quds Day march in Tehran. | Source: Abu Saleh, Telegram

ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR:

Weekly War Summary

SIX MONTHS TO THE FIRST ISRAEL-IRAN WAR

MIDDLE EAST

420+
TOTAL SINCE 10.7
HOUTH ATTACKS

240
TOTAL SINCE 10.7
IRANIAN MILITIAS ATTACKS ON US BASES (IRAQ, SYRIA)

Week 26

Visit www.warinisrael.org for daily updating figures 31 Mar. - 6 April 2024

IDSF הביטחוניסטיים ISRAEL'S DEFENSE & SECURITY FORUM

Iraq and Syria

Hezbollah sent representatives to the city of Najaf in Iraq to coordinate positions for an attack against Israel in light of the killing of senior Revolutionary Guards members in Damascus.

Israel (according to foreign press) struck an **IRGC compound** in Damascus that operated under the guise of an Iranian consulate. In the attack, **Mohammad Reza Zahedi the IRGC commander responsible for Syria and Lebanon** was killed along with his deputy and 5 other IRGC officers. This is the **most senior Iranian commander** to have been killed since the US eliminated **Qasem Soleimani** in 2020.

This shows that Israel is willing to up the ante **by directly attacking the regime** who has thus far attacked Israel through its proxies but has not suffered any measurable

consequence. This elimination is bold as it was carried out during the day in the middle of Damascus next to the Iranian consulate and in close proximity to the Canadian consulate. Iran promised to avenge the death of the senior commander, and Israel increased its security around Israeli embassies, consulates, and other assets around the world.

Iran has yet to respond in a manner that will satisfy the **regime's hardline supporters** who do not wish to see the regime appearing weak, but on the other hand are reluctant to instigate a wider regional conflict.

Meanwhile, as the world's attention continues to be directed at the war in Gaza, Iran continues to advance its nuclear program and has obtained **large quantities of enriched Uranium which could be enough for 3-4 warheads**. Iran has also made significant progress in its underground **nuclear facilities in Natanz**. New satellite imagery shows substantial advancement in digging out tunnels with reinforcements and fortifications to ensure they do not collapse and can withstand waves of explosions as Iran prepares for the possibility of a US or an Israeli attack. These facilities are estimated to be **110-140 meters below the ground**.



Six IDF soldiers fell in combat this week in Gaza: Sergeant First Class Sivan Wail, Staff Sergeant Nadav Cohen, Captain Ido Baruch, Sergeant Amitai Even Shoshan, Sergeant Reef Harush, and Sergeant Ilai Zair Of Blessed Memory