24 IDF soldiers killed in deadliest day since start of Gaza combat

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<https://www.jns.org/24-idf-soldiers-killed-in-deadliest-day-since-start-of-gaza-combat/>

Twenty-four Israel Defense Forces soldiers were killed in the Gaza Strip on Monday, the deadliest single day for the Israeli military since the start of its ground operation against Hamas on Oct. 27.

Twenty-one soldiers were killed in central [Gaza](https://www.jns.org/idf-kicks-off-fierce-battle-in-western-khan-yunis/) when two buildings collapsed due to a blast, IDF Spokesperson Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said on Tuesday morning.

Three other soldiers were killed in battle in the southern Gaza Strip.

The incident occurred 600 meters (2,000 feet) from the Israeli border, near the northwestern Negev community of Kibbutz Kissufim, as Israeli forces were working on clearing Hamas infrastructure and buildings to establish a [buffer zone](https://www.jns.org/israel-starts-building-gaza-buffer-zone/).

According to Hagari, around 4 p.m., terrorists fired a rocket-propelled grenade at a tank securing the forces. At the same time, two two-story buildings collapsed as a result of an explosion while most of the troops were inside or near them. The blast was apparently caused by explosives placed by the Israeli forces, intended to destroy the buildings in a controlled event.

Hagari emphasized that the incident is still under investigation, including the cause of the explosion.

He added that a “very complicated” rescue operation took place involving commanders and rescue workers who quickly arrived at the scene.

“War has a very painful and heavy price. The dedicated reservists, who stood up for the flag, sacrificed the most precious of all, for the security of the State of Israel and so that we can all live here safely,” said Hagari.

War Cabinet ministers—Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and Minister-without-Portfolio Benny Gantz—issued a joint statement about the incident on Tuesday afternoon.

“We bow our heads in memory of our fallen, and yet we do not for a moment stop striving for an irreplaceable goal—the achievement of absolute victory,” they said.

Earlier on Tuesday, Netanyahu called Monday “one of the most difficult days since the outbreak of the war,” saying that he was sending strength to the bereaved families.

“I mourn for our fallen heroic soldiers. I hug the families in their time of need and we all pray for the peace of our wounded,” the premier continued, adding that the IDF had opened an investigation into the incident.

“We must learn the necessary lessons and do everything to preserve the lives of our warriors. In the name of our heroes, we will not stop fighting until absolute victory,” said Netanyahu.

Israeli President Isaac Herzog on Tuesday called it “an unbearably difficult morning, in which more and more names of the best of our sons … are added to the gravestones of heroes.”

Herzog continued, “Behind every name is a family whose world has fallen, a family whose pain and sorrow we feel in our hearts. At the same time, we feel pride for the heroism of our generation, for the mission to combat evil, for sticking to the goal and for the love of our people and homeland.”

Gallant said, “Our hearts are with the dear families in their most difficult time,” adding, “This is a war that will determine the future of Israel for decades to come—the fall of the soldiers compels us to achieve the goals of the fighting.”

The IDF initially released for publication the names of 10 of the soldiers killed in the incident. The families of the remaining 11 were notified. The military later in the morning allowed for the publication of the names of seven additional soldiers and then the remaining four in the afternoon.

They are:

Sgt. Maj. (res.) Matan Lazar, from Haifa;

Sgt. First Class (res.) Hadar Kapeluk, from Mevo Beitar;

Sgt. Maj. (res.) Sergey Gontmaher, from Ramat Gan;

Sgt. First Class (res.) Elkana Yehuda Sfez, from Kiryat Arba;

Sgt. First Class (res.) Yoval Lopez, from Alon Shvut;

Master Sgt. (res.) Yoav Levi, from Yehud-Monosson;

Sgt. First Class (res.) Nicholas Berger, from Jerusalem;

Sgt. First Class (res.) Cydrick Garin, from Tel Aviv;

Sgt. Maj. (res.) Rafael Elias Mosheyoff, from Pardes Hanna-Karkur;

Sgt. Maj. (res.) Barak Haim Ben Valid, from Rishon Letzion;

Sgt. First Class (res.) Ahmad Abu Latif, from Rahat;

Capt. (res.) Nir Binyamin, from Givatayim;

Master Sgt. (res.) Elkana Vizel, from Bnei Dakalim;

Sgt. First Class (res.) Israel Socol, from Karnei Shomron;

Capt. (res.) Ariel Mordechay Wollfstal, from Elazar;

Sgt. First Class (res.) Sagi Idan, from Rosh Ha’ayin;

Sgt. Maj. Mark Kononovich, from Herzliya;

Sgt. Maj. (res.) Itamar Tal, from Mesilot;

Sgt. Maj. (res.) Adam Bismut, from Karnei Shomron;

Sgt. Maj. (res.) Shay Biton Hayun, from Zichron Yaakov; and

Sgt. Maj. (res.) Daniel Kasau Zegeye, from Yokne’am Illit.

The three soldiers killed in action in the southern Gaza Strip are:

Maj. David Nati Alfasi, from Beersheva; Maj. Ilay Levy, from Tel Aviv; and Capt. Eyal Mevorach Twito, from Beit Gamliel.

A total of 221 [soldiers](https://www.idf.il/%D7%90%D7%AA%D7%A8%D7%99-%D7%99%D7%97%D7%99%D7%93%D7%95%D7%AA/%D7%99%D7%95%D7%9E%D7%9F-%D7%94%D7%9E%D7%9C%D7%97%D7%9E%D7%94/%D7%97%D7%9C%D7%9C%D7%99-%D7%95%D7%A4%D7%A6%D7%95%D7%A2%D7%99-%D7%A6%D7%94-%D7%9C-%D7%91%D7%9E%D7%9C%D7%97%D7%9E%D7%94/) have been killed since the start of Gaza ground operations on Oct. 27, and 556 have been killed on all fronts since the start of the war on Oct. 7.

**Israeli forces encircle Khan Yunis**

Dozens of Hamas terrorists were killed in the past 24 hours as Israeli ground forces encircled [Khan Yunis](https://www.jns.org/idf-kicks-off-fierce-battle-in-western-khan-yunis/), the IDF said on Tuesday.

Khan Yunis is Gaza’s second largest city and is regarded as a personal stronghold of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, whose family lives there.

Over the past day, IDF ground troops engaged in close-quarters combat, directed air strikes, and used intelligence to coordinate fire, resulting in the deaths of dozens of terrorists.

The IDF targeted terrorist cells carrying RPGs near the troops, those launching anti-tank missiles, and terror operatives who had rigged compounds with explosives. Ready-to-launch rockets, military compounds, shafts and numerous weapons were located during the activity.

The activities are part of a major offensive in Khan Yunis that was preceded by airstrikes on Sunday night and was expected to last several days. It includes parts of the IDF’s Givati Infantry Brigade, 7th Armored Brigade, paratroopers and commando forces.

Israeli forces killed more than 50 terrorists, including a Hamas company commander, at the start of the military assault, the IDF said on Monday evening.