Death toll from Hamas onslaught passes 1,200, as IDF steps up attacks on Hamas

October 11, 2023

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The Times of Israel and TOI Staff

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/death-toll-from-hamas-onslaught-passes-1000-idf-kills-terrorists-in-southern-israel/>

The death toll from Palestinian terror group Hamas’s shock attack on Israel on Saturday surpassed 1,200 on Wednesday, with over 3,000 injured and the fate of an estimated 150 people abducted and taken to the Gaza Strip still unclear.

According to Hebrew media reports, the death toll hit a grim 1,000 late Tuesday as security forces and Zaka, a volunteer group that handles human remains after terror attacks and other disasters, worked in southern Israeli communities to [clear and collect bodies.](https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-takes-foreign-journalists-to-see-massacre-site-in-kfar-aza/)

The military said that number climbed to 1,200 by Wednesday morning, according to the reports.

The Health Ministry said later that 3,007 people had been injured, including 28 critically and 345 seriously, with almost 500 still hospitalized.

[Funeral after funeral](https://www.timesofisrael.com/across-israel-mourners-bury-the-dead-as-nation-reels-from-still-climbing-toll/) was held across Israel on Tuesday for soldiers and civilians alike as the country reels from the mass infiltration and massacre on Saturday.

Security forces were also still battling terrorists in southern Israel in the pre-dawn hours of Wednesday.

IDF spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said troops had exchanged fire overnight with terrorists near Zikim twice; a tank killed a terrorist near the Erez Crossing; and paratrooper forces killed two terrorists near Mefalsim.

In a briefing around 8 a.m. on Wednesday, Hagari said Israeli forces had killed 18 Palestinian terrorists in Israeli territory during the previous 24 hours, as sweeps continued to root out the last Hamas infiltrators.

“These are the same terrorists who did not flee back to Gaza. They are in hiding places, near the border. That’s why the scans are [taking place] with a large number of troops. There are tens of thousands of [IDF] fighters in the area surrounding Gaza,” he said.

On Tuesday night, troops killed three Palestinian terrorists near the southern coastal city of Ashkelon. The military said troops of the 17th Battalion, along with a drone and a combat helicopter providing air support, clashed with the three gunmen close to the Ashkelon industrial zone, just outside the city.

The military said a fire broke out in the area during the incident.

The incidents continued on Wednesday, with the IDF saying forces had killed a Hamas diver trying to infiltrate via the sea in the early morning hours. The military added that the Khan Younis and Gaza City docks, used by Hamas “to carry out terror attacks on the Israeli coastline,” were hit by artillery fire from missile boats, combat helicopters and ground artillery.

Terrorists in Gaza were also continuing to launch rockets at Israeli cities and towns, with projectiles directly hitting at least four buildings in the southern city of Sderot on Wednesday morning. The Magen David Adom ambulance service said its medics were treating a man in his 40s who was moderately hurt by rocket shrapnel.

Terror groups have fired more than 5,000 rockets at Israel since Saturday, the IDF said.

The military said Air Force jets had hit over 70 Hamas targets in the Gaza City district of at-Tuffah as well as a military structure operated by Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

The military said the area served as a “terrorist nest” for Hamas and a center from which it carried out operations against Israel. A structure used by Palestinian Islamic Jihad was also targeted, the military said.

The military added that it had hit more than 80 sites in Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip Wednesday morning. Dozens of fighter jets carried out the strikes against the targets, which include two bank branches used by Hamas, an underground tunnel, several war rooms, and other military installations, the IDF said.

The overnight airstrikes also hit the home of relatives of Mohammad Deif, the senior Hamas military commander, in the Qizan an-Najjar neighborhood in Khan Younis, according to Palestinian reports cited by Hebrew media.

The jets were said to have struck the home of Deif’s father, killing the terrorist’s brother, his son, and the brother’s granddaughter.

Earlier, the IDF said it struck the home of Hamas’s military wing spokesman, who is known as Abu Obeida, in the Gaza Strip. The IDF’s Arabic-language spokesman, Avichay Adraee, said in a post on X that the spokesman was “working to direct terrorism against the State of Israel.”

The IDF also carried out [strikes in Syria and Lebanon](https://www.timesofisrael.com/15-rockets-anti-tank-missile-fired-from-lebanon-idf-shells-3-hezbollah-posts/) earlier Tuesday after a number of mortars were launched toward northern Israel.

The Israel Defense Forces said 15 rockets were fired from Lebanon at the Western Galilee, setting off sirens in several towns. Four projectiles were intercepted by the Iron Dome air defense system, while the rest landed in open areas, causing no damage or injuries, the IDF said.

The military initially said in a statement that it had launched artillery strikes in response to the rocket attack, and in a later statement, said tanks had shelled two posts belonging to the Hezbollah terror group.

Hamas later claimed responsibility for the rocket fire, and Hezbollah said it had carried out the antitank guided missile attack.

Later Tuesday, a number of mortars were fired from Syria at the Golan Heights. The IDF said several of the projectiles crossed into Israeli territory and landed in open areas, causing no damage.

The IDF said it carried out artillery strikes in Syria in response, targeting the origin of the mortar fire.

Throughout Tuesday, Israeli warplanes hammered the Gaza Strip neighborhood by neighborhood, reducing buildings to rubble and sending people scrambling to find safety in the sealed-off territory.

Israel has vowed to ensure Hamas would never be able to repeat its devastating weekend mass attack, in which hundreds of Israeli civilians were massacred.

Aid organizations pleaded for the creation of humanitarian corridors to get aid into Gaza, warning that hospitals overwhelmed with wounded were running out of supplies. Israel has stopped all entry of food, fuel and medicines into Gaza, as it seeks to destroy Hamas’s entire military capabilities, and the sole remaining access from Egypt shut down Tuesday after airstrikes hit near the border crossing.

Gaza’s Hamas-run health ministry says 950 people in the Palestinian enclave have been killed in retaliatory Israeli strikes. Israel says it is targeting terrorist infrastructure and all areas where Hamas operates or hides out. Jerusalem has also said its forces have killed some 1,500 Hamas terrorists who infiltrated into its territory since Saturday.

Wherever Hamas operates, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned on Monday night, “we will turn into a city of ruins.”

Netanyahu spoke with US President Joe Biden on Tuesday, telling him: “We’ve never seen such savagery in the history of the state” nor “since the Holocaust.”

“They took dozens of children, bound them up, burned them and executed them. They beheaded soldiers, they mowed down these youngsters who came to a nature festival, you know, put five jeeps around this depression in the soil and like Babyn Yar, they mowed them down, making sure that they killed everybody.”

“They’re even worse than ISIS and we need to treat them as such.”

In an [emotional live address to his nation](https://www.timesofisrael.com/biden-details-hamass-sheer-evil-pledges-to-ensure-israel-can-defend-itself/) on Tuesday, Biden promised to ensure that the Jewish state would have what it needs to respond to the shocking weekend onslaught and disclosed some unprecedented and explicit details of the “sheer evil” inflicted by Hamas against Israel.

“There are moments in this life — I mean this literally — when a pure unadulterated evil is unleashed on this world,” he said in a hushed voice during a speech shown live on many American and Israeli television channels. “This is an act of sheer evil.”

“Parents butchered, using their bodies to try to protect their children; stomach-turning reports of babies being killed; entire families slain; young people massacred while attending a musical festival… women raped, assaulted, paraded as trophies,” he recounted with horror.

“There are still so many families desperately waiting to hear the fate of their loved ones. Not knowing if they’re alive or dead or [being held] hostage. Infants in their mother’s arms, grandparents in wheelchairs, Holocaust survivors abducted and held hostage.”

“This is terrorism. But sadly, for the Jewish people, it’s not new,” Biden continued. “This attack has brought to the surface painful memories and the scars left by a millennia of antisemitism and genocide of the Jewish people,” he went on.

Also Tuesday, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant [said](https://www.timesofisrael.com/gallant-israel-moving-to-full-offense-gaza-will-never-go-back-to-what-it-once-was/) the IDF was moving to a “full offense” against the Gaza Strip, as sporadic clashes with Hamas terrorists in southern Israel continued for the fourth day.

“I have released all the restraints, we have [regained] control of the area, and we are moving to a full offense,” Gallant said in an address to troops along the Gaza border.

“You will have the ability to change the reality here. You have seen the prices [being paid], and you will get to see the change. Hamas wanted a change in Gaza; it will change 180 degrees from what it thought,” he said.

“They will regret this moment. Gaza will never go back to what it was,” Gallant continued. “Whoever comes to decapitate, murder women, Holocaust survivors, we will eliminate him with all our might, and without compromise.”

An Egyptian official told The Times of Israel on Tuesday that Cairo has been informed by Israel that it is readying for a monthslong ground campaign in Gaza.