A dark year: 760 soldiers, 834 civilians killed since last Memorial Day

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One thousand five hundred and ninety-four soldiers and civilians were killed since Israel’s last Memorial Day, according to figures released by authorities on Thursday, marking the deadliest year for the country’s security forces and civilians in five decades, and bringing the total tally of casualties of war and terror to 30,134

According to the Defense Ministry, 760 soldiers were killed while serving in the military during the past year. Another 61 disabled veterans died due to complications from injuries sustained during their service in previous years, the ministry said.

The numbers brought the total to 25,034 of those who have died during service to the country since 1860, the year from which Israel, and before it the Jewish community in the region, began counting its fallen soldiers.

The annual figures include all soldiers, police officers, Shin Bet agents, and civilian security officers who died in the past year, whether in the line of duty, or as a result of an accident, illness, or suicide.

Amid the ongoing war which began on October 7 with the Hamas terror group’s onslaught in southern Israel, 711 soldiers and members of security forces have been killed. They include 598 IDF soldiers, 39 local security officers, 68 police officers, and six Shin Bet members.

The vast majority of the deaths came amid the terror onslaught and during Israel’s ongoing ground offensive against Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The last time Israel dealt with such a high number of fatalities among security forces in one year was during the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

A Defense Ministry official said his unit, charged with the commemoration of fallen troops, dealt with a high volume of burials that would have normally been approximately a 15-year total.

“Unfortunately, since the outbreak of hostilities, we have conducted many respectful funerals, in some places under rocket fire and fear of terrorist infiltration; we have expanded cemeteries within moments, with the clear goal of bringing the fallen to their final resting place with respect,” said Aryeh Moalem.

According to the National Insurance Institute, 834 names were also added to the list of civilian terror victims who perished in attacks during the past year, the vast majority of them during the October 7 massacre, bringing the total to 5,100 since 1851.

Amid the war, mostly during the October 7 onslaught, 822 civilians — 531 men and 291 women — have been killed, according to the institute’s figures, marking the highest number of civilian deaths in many decades.

They included 40 children under the age of 18, and 68 foreign nationals, it said.

The institute said 12 of those killed over the past year were in terror attacks before the war, including one person, [Chana Tova Chaya Nachenberg](https://www.timesofisrael.com/woman-critically-injured-in-palestinian-terror-attack-22-years-ago-dies-of-wounds/), who was critically wounded in an infamously deadly Palestinian terror attack on the Sbarro pizzeria in Jerusalem in 2001 and succumbed to her wounds last year.

Hamas also abducted 252 civilians and soldiers during its onslaught on October 7, and that 128 of them remain in captivity, not all of them alive.

The terror group is also holding the bodies of IDF soldiers Oron Shaul and Hadar Goldin since 2014, as well as two Israeli civilians, Avera Mengistu and Hisham al-Sayed, who are both thought to be alive after entering the Strip of their own accord in 2014 and 2015 respectively.

During a weeklong truce in late November, 105 civilians were released from Hamas captivity. Before the truce, another four hostages were released. Three hostages have been rescued by troops alive, and the bodies of 12 hostages have also been recovered, including three mistakenly killed by the military.

According to the institute, 65 of the remaining hostages in Gaza are civilians. The other 67 are IDF troops, police officers, and members of local security teams in the southern communities that were attacked by Hamas.

The Israeli military has confirmed the deaths of 36 of those still held by Hamas, citing new intelligence and findings obtained by troops operating in Gaza.

Israel’s Memorial Day will commence next Monday evening when a one-minute siren will blare across the country. On Tuesday morning, a two-minute siren will sound ahead of national memorial ceremonies at Israel’s 53 military cemeteries.

Memorial Day is one of Israel’s few national, non-religious holidays, during which large swaths of the Israeli public typically visit the graves of loved ones and comrades.

Some politicians and family members of victims of the October 7 Hamas massacre have asked government ministers and lawmakers [to refrain from speaking](https://www.timesofisrael.com/bereaved-families-irked-by-far-right-ministers-planned-role-in-memorial-day-events/) at the various ceremonies on May 12-13, citing concerns that the day will be tainted by the presence of politicians whom many blame for the failures surrounding the unprecedented Hamas terror assault.

Amid safety concerns, the number of attendees at the annual Memorial Day ceremony on Mount Herzl will be reduced to 25,000 people, down by about 5,000 from 2023, Hebrew media has reported.

The Defense Ministry on Thursday said it called on the public to give priority to members of bereaved families and soldiers at cemeteries across the country on Memorial Day, as it expected a “particularly high number” of people visiting the graves of their loved ones.