

America-Eurasia Center



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## “We Are At War”



*An Israeli airstrike struck Gaza City on Saturday after Hamas militants executed a surprise attack on Israel Photo Credit: AP Photo/Fatima Shbair*

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## Israel-Gaza Explodes into War After Hamas Attacks Israel



*A man looks out into the rubble of a building in Ashkelon that was damaged by rockets fired by Hamas from Gaza Photo Credit: Amir Cohen/Reuters*

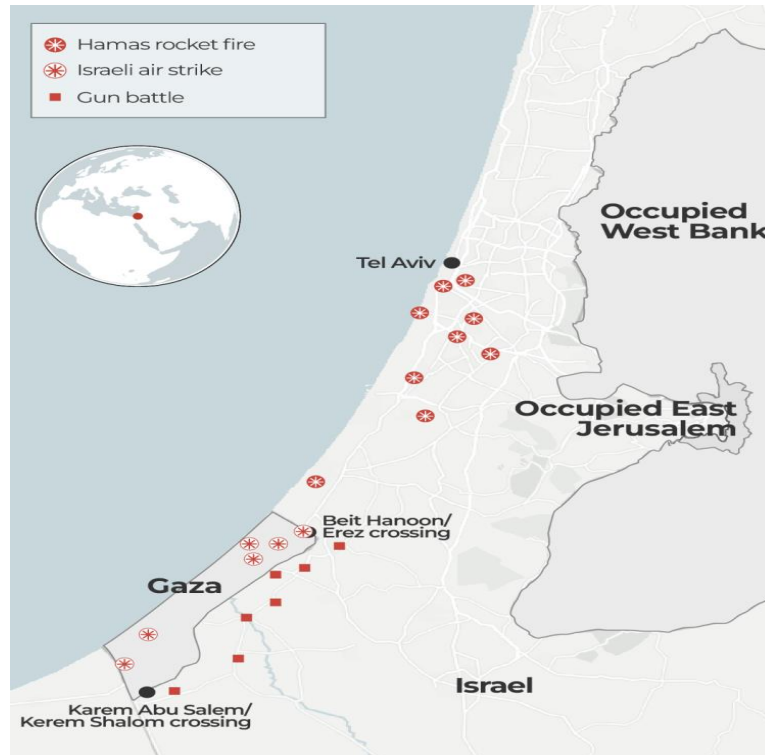
At 6:30 in the morning on October 7, 2023, Israelis woke up to alarms ushering them into bomb shelters and air raid shelters, ahead of thousands of incoming rockets launched by Hamas, the militant Islamist terrorist group that controls Gaza. By October 9th, the death toll had topped 1,500, with over 2,000 wounded on both the Israeli and Palestinian sides and continued to rise steadily. Hamas declared this attack, dubbed Al-Aqsa Storm, to be in response to the increase in Israeli provocations at Al-Aqsa Mosque, one of the holiest sites in Islam, and to Israeli violence over the past decades toward Palestinians.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the rocket attacks - Hamas claiming 5,000 rockets, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) saying 2,500 - Hamas also launched a sophisticated ground raid, using hundreds of guerillas against at least 22 locations in Israel, shocking Israel's vaunted intelligence services.<sup>2</sup> Innocent Israeli civilians as were killed while going about their daily lives, and even four days later, the death toll continues to grow as Israeli soldiers and their families grimly search for their loved ones. Children, women, the elderly, and men all have been victims of these egregious crimes.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "What Is Happening in Israel and Gaza? A Look at the War with Hamas." *News / Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 9 Oct. 2023, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/9/what-is-happening-in-israel-and-gaza-a-look-at-the-war-with-hamas](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/9/what-is-happening-in-israel-and-gaza-a-look-at-the-war-with-hamas).

<sup>2</sup> "What Is Happening in Israel and Gaza? A Look at the War with Hamas." *News / Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 9 Oct. 2023, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/9/what-is-happening-in-israel-and-gaza-a-look-at-the-war-with-hamas](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/10/9/what-is-happening-in-israel-and-gaza-a-look-at-the-war-with-hamas).

<sup>3</sup> Times, The New York. "Hamas Leaves Trail of Terror in Israel." *The New York Times*, 10 Oct. 2023, [www.nytimes.com/2023/10/10/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-war-hamas-deaths-killings.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/10/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-war-hamas-deaths-killings.html).



*A map of where Hamas attacked Israel and where Israel responded in Gaza through the use of air strikes and shootings Image Credit: Al Jazeera*

In response to the attacks, Israel has declared war on Hamas, launching multiple air strikes at suspected Hamas targets in Gaza, killing at least 687 Palestinians as of October 9, 2023. Many of these casualties appear to be collateral damage in the extremely densely-populated Gaza, where Hamas has embedded much of its military apparatus among the civilian population. Hamas militants broke through the steel and concrete wall that kept Palestinians inside Gaza and proceeded to attack from land, sky, and water, going on a killing and kidnapping frenzy, including parading the hostages through the streets as trophies. Hamas has claimed to have at least 150 Israeli hostages.<sup>4</sup>

Israel has made it clear that Hamas will pay a very heavy price for this attack, an attack unprecedented in both scale and sophistication. Israeli ministers have called for a “complete siege” of Gaza.<sup>5</sup> Israel is expected to launch a ground attack on Gaza this week with 300,000 troops along the Gaza

<sup>4</sup> “Israel-Hamas War Death Toll Tops 1,500 as Gaza Strip Is Bombed and Gun Battles Rage for a Third Day.” *CBS News*, CBS Interactive, [www.cbsnews.com/news/israel-hamas-war-death-toll-gaza-strip-palestinians-israelis-latest-news-day-3/](http://www.cbsnews.com/news/israel-hamas-war-death-toll-gaza-strip-palestinians-israelis-latest-news-day-3/). Accessed 9 Oct. 2023.

<sup>5</sup> “Israel-Gaza Live Updates: Israel Mobilizes a Record 300,000 Reservists; Gaza under ‘Complete Siege.’” *CNBC*, *CNBC*, 10 Oct. 2023, [www.cnbc.com/2023/10/09/israel-hamas-live-updates.html](http://www.cnbc.com/2023/10/09/israel-hamas-live-updates.html).

border; Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant declared, "Nothing is allowed in or out. Without fuel, electricity, or food supplies, we fight animals in human form and proceed accordingly."<sup>6</sup> In addition to a blockage of supplies to Gaza, Israel Katz, Israeli infrastructure minister, tweeted that he had "ordered to immediately cut off the water supply from Israel to Gaza," along with fuel and electricity to more than 2 million Gazans.<sup>7</sup> Israelis and Palestinians now search for a safety that cannot be found, and in heart-wrenching uncertainty about how to proceed with this new normal.



*Palestinians search for victims under a house that was destroyed after an Israeli response attack in Khan Younis in the Gaza Strip Photo Credits: Ibraheem Abu Mustafa/Reuters*

Israel has been in a consistent state of violent conflict with Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups for decades. Hamas formed after the first Intifada (uprising) in late 1987, with its greatest strength in Gaza and some support in the West Bank. The group calls for a recognized Islamic-Palestinian state, to the exclusion of the State of Israel. Hamas is considered a terrorist organization by the United States and numerous other nations, having waged a multi-year campaign of terror against Israeli border communities and beyond, especially since becoming the dominant political power in Gaza in 2006.<sup>8</sup> On October 10, the White House addressed the conflict, condemning the actions of Hamas, which was echoed by the rest of the world. The White House has also tried to reach out to all of its allies in the Middle East to intervene with Hamas in an attempt to negotiate hostage rescue, including American citizens being held by Hamas.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> "Israel-Hamas War Death Toll Tops 1,500 as Gaza Strip Is Bombed and Gun Battles Rage for a Third Day." *CBS News*, CBS Interactive, [www.cbsnews.com/news/israel-hamas-war-death-toll-gaza-strip-palestinians-israelis-latest-news-day-3/](http://www.cbsnews.com/news/israel-hamas-war-death-toll-gaza-strip-palestinians-israelis-latest-news-day-3/). Accessed 9 Oct. 2023.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Nctc. "National Counterterrorism Center: Groups." *National Counterterrorism Center / Groups*, [www.dni.gov/nctc/groups/hamas.html](http://www.dni.gov/nctc/groups/hamas.html). Accessed 9 Oct. 2023.

<sup>9</sup> News, A. B. C. "How Will America Respond to the Attack against Israel?" *ABC News*, 7 Oct. 2023, [abcnews.go.com/International/america-respond-attack-israel/story?id=103807416](http://abcnews.go.com/International/america-respond-attack-israel/story?id=103807416). Accessed 11 Oct. 2023.

For many years, Israeli officials felt that there was a possibility to live side-by-side with Hamas; however, this recent attack reinforces the need to eradicate Hamas from the area for the sake of Israel's future security measures and the well-being of Palestinians. According to The United Nations Human Rights Office the High Commissioner is currently working on a report that addresses the unfortunate aggression by all sides. It is collecting evidence and analyzing the violations to the international laws, especially the withholding of water, food and electricity that will impact innocent civilians in the Gaza strip. The Commission “emphasizes that the only path towards ending violence and achieving sustainable peace” is through tackling the root causes and “ending the illegal occupation of Palestinian territory” whilst recognizing Palestinians’ rights to self-determination.<sup>10</sup>

Saturday’s events were unexpected, and its gravity and damage were felt worldwide, shocking people with reminders of 9/11 in the United States. The global community abhors terrorism, and Israel is receiving unwavering support while Hamas is unequivocally denounced for its massacre of innocent civilians.



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<sup>10</sup> “Commission of Inquiry Collecting Evidence of War Crimes Committed by All Sides in Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories since 7 October 2023.” *United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner* , 10 Oct. 2023, [www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/10/commission-inquiry-collecting-evidence-war-crimes-committed-all-sides-israel](http://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/10/commission-inquiry-collecting-evidence-war-crimes-committed-all-sides-israel).