

Armed Conflict



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Israel SITUATION UPDATE: Hamas officials' indication on June 4 that group requires ceasefire guarantees reduces prospects of breakthrough, as tensions rise in northern Israel vis-a-vis Hezbollah

MAX Security Israel/MENA Situation Update

MAX Security routinely sends an in-depth update on the Israel-Hamas war and the impact on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The frequency of the report is determined in accordance with the developments in the region. At the current time, the report will be issued every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. The pace of reporting will continue to be adjusted as the war evolves into the next phases.

Executive Summary:

- On June 4, a senior Hamas official indicated that the group could not agree to a deal without a guarantee of an Israeli commitment to a permanent ceasefire and withdrawal of IDF troops.
- Together with opposition to elements of the plan among Israeli officials, this rhetoric reduces the prospects of a breakthrough.
- On June 4, Israeli PM Netanyahu and IDF Chief of Staff HaLevy reiterated Israel's preparedness for

an intensification of military action in Lebanon. This comes amid rising tensions and increased hostilities with Hezbollah in recent days.

- While an imminent expansion of the IDF's operation is unlikely, domestic pressure will increase further in light of the perception that northern Israel has been "abandoned".

Current Situation:

Northern Israel/Lebanon:

- Naim Qassem, Hezbollah's deputy secretary-general, on June 4 stated that Hezbollah's interest was not to have an all-out war with Israel but stressed that the Shiite group was ready for such a scenario if imposed by Israel.
- IDF Chief of Staff Herzl Halevy on June 4 visited the Northern Command's Gilboa Base. He indicated that Israel "is getting closer to the point of needing to make a decision" regarding Hezbollah. He stressed the IDF's preparedness for a large-scale military operation in Lebanon.
- On June 4, Prime Minister (PM) Benjamin Netanyahu visited northern Israel's Kiryat Shmona and stated that Israel is "prepared for a very strong action in the north", warning that "whoever thinks that he will hurt us and we will sit idly by is making a big mistake". He added that "one way or another we will restore security to the north".
- A report from a Hezbollah-aligned Lebanese outlet on June 4 indicated that the UK has reportedly warned Lebanon of a potential Israeli offensive against Hezbollah in mid-June. Lebanese Caretaker Prime Minister (PM) Najib Mikati denied the reports.
- An Israeli report on June 5 indicated that Lebanese media had increased its coverage of Israeli officials' rhetoric regarding intensified hostilities with Hezbollah in recent days.
- An individual attempting to cross the Israel-Jordan border from Jordan around Emek HaYarden Regional Council was shot dead by the IDF, according to Israel's public broadcasting channel on June 4.
- On June 4, the IDF announced that its forces conducted an airstrike that killed a Hezbollah operative in southern Lebanon's Naqoura area. Additional strikes targeted militant sites in Aita as-Shab and Odaisseh.
- During the afternoon hours of June 4, air defenses were activated over Safed (Tzfat) following a false identification of a suspected aerial target. Fragments of interceptors fell in the area and moderately injured a soldier.
- Between June 3-4, the Israel Fire & Rescue Authorities announced that firefighting operations were being carried out across multiple localities, including Kiryat Shmona, Ami'ad, and the Golan Heights, due to fires sparked by aerial attacks from Lebanon.
- During the afternoon hours of June 3, the IAF announced that it struck a Hezbollah operative in southern Lebanon's Naqoura and a building used by the group in Hanine.
- On June 3, the IDF announced that it had targeted and killed a Hezbollah leader named Ali Hossein Sabara, involved in Hezbollah's air defense program. Lebanese media reported that the strike occurred near Sidon's Kauthariyet El Rez. The IAF also struck buildings used by Hezbollah's aerial unit in southern Lebanon's Qotrani.
- During the evening hours of June 3, Color Red sirens were sounded in the Southern Golan Heights.

Southern Israel & Gaza Strip

- The IDF launched a new operation against Hamas in central Gaza's al-Bureij on June 4. The air force and on-ground forces are both involved in this operation.
- The IDF stated that it concluded an operation meant to clear Hamas infrastructure in the al-Zahra (Sabra) neighborhood near the [Netzarim] Corridor on June 4. This included the destruction of an underground route that was one and a half km long.
- On June 4, the IAF stated that it struck over 65 targets throughout the Gaza Strip over the past day, including weapons sites and depots, launching sites, observation posts, and armed militants.

The IAF carried out a strike targeting Hamas operatives gathered inside UNRWA's Abu Alhilu school in al-Bureij camp.

Central Israel

- During the morning hours of [June 5](#), activists demonstrated in multiple locations of Israel to demand that the government advance the suggested truce deal and release the Israeli hostages held in the Gaza Strip. Protesters called for a day of rage and blocked HaKfar HaYarok Interchange on Highway 5. Additional protests occurred in Tel Aviv, including on Dizengoff Square. Activists are also planning to march from HaBima Square in Tel Aviv during the evening hours.

West Bank

- The IDF arrested 24 militant suspects across the West Bank in a counter-militancy operation over June 3-4.
- During the overnight hours of June 3-4, the IDF killed two Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade (AAMB) militants in Tulkarem who attempted to carry out a shooting attack on communities beyond the Green Line. The two were eulogized by a grouping called the "AAMB's Youth of Revenge and Liberation."
- On June 3, Israeli security forces conducted an operation in Nablus' Balata Refugee Camp, killing a wanted terrorist.
- According to reports dated June 3, the Shin Bet announced the foiling of a suicide bombing attack in central Israel by a Palestinian resident of Jordan who was arrested in Nablus in March. The individual was affiliated with Hamas and possessed a 12 kg explosive. He received orders from Hamas' command structure in Turkey.

Syria

- Iranian news agencies reported on June 3 that the Israeli airstrike targeting Aleppo [the evening prior](#) killed an Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) adviser, Saeed Abyar.

Iraq

- On [June 3](#), senior Kataib Hezbollah (KH) official Abu Ali al-Askari issued a statement calling upon Iraq's public to "boycott and expel" US-linked enterprises and businesses, which he accused of serving as American "espionage agents".
- Later on June 3, rioters stormed branches of two US restaurant chains in central Baghdad, prompting security forces to deploy riot dispersal measures, reportedly including live fire. At least 12 suspects were detained.

General Developments:

- Israel has reportedly authorized an increase in the number of IDF reservists available for draft from 300,000 to 350,000, per June 5 reports.
- Israel's war cabinet convened on June 4. According to a report by Israel's public broadcaster, the cabinet decided to demand US guarantees that Israel will be allowed to resume the military offensive against Hamas if the group violates the terms of a mutually agreed upon hostages-for-ceasefire agreement.
- Reports indicate that Hamas official Osama Hamdan on June 4 stated that the group could not agree to any deal with Israel unless the latter committed clearly to a permanent cessation of fighting and a complete withdrawal of IDF troops from the Gaza Strip.
- On June 4, US National Security advisor Jake Sullivan stated that the "ball was in Hamas' court" and that Washington was waiting for the group's official response concerning the ceasefire outline.
- Senior Hamas official Ghazi Hamad On June 4 stated in an interview with a pro-Hezbollah news

outlet that the “ball was in Israel’s court,” rather than in Hamas’ court. He indicated that Hamas did not have any new proposals to agree to, and that the movement expected Israel to greenlight the ceasefire outline. He also stated that the Israeli government remains conflicted over the ceasefire outline.

- According to an unconfirmed report, some Israeli officials voiced concerns that PM Netanyahu’s stressing that Israel would maintain the goal to destroy Hamas reduced the prospect of a ceasefire agreement. This was because his remarks would induce Hamas to seek clarification on the terms of the truce outline and eliminate the draft’s vague language that Washington likely included intentionally to enable both parties to agree to the first phase of the ceasefire deal.
- On June 4, the Ultra-Orthodox Shas and United Torah Judaism (UTJ) parties, which are both part of Prime Minister Netanyahu’s coalition, pledged their support for a ceasefire deal to secure the release of Israeli hostages held captive by Hamas in the Gaza Strip.
- Reports from June 4 indicate that CIA director William Burns and Brett McGurk, President Biden’s senior Middle East adviser, embarked on a visit to the Middle East, including to Qatar and Egypt, to push for a hostage and ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas.
- The IDF signed a deal with the US to procure 25 F-35 fighter aircraft worth three billion USD, per June 4 reports. The planes will begin to be delivered by 2028.
- On June 3, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu briefed a Knesset committee and denied reports that the government had given up its war objectives to agree to a ceasefire.
- On June 3, the IDF confirmed the deaths of four Israeli hostages whose bodies continue to be held by Hamas.

Home Front Command Guidelines

- The IDF’s Home Front Command (HFC) released its updated guidelines on June 2. They will be in place until June 6 at 18:00.



Home Front Command Guidelines

From 02.06.2024 at 18:00 until 06.06.2024 at 18:00

Gaza Envelope (except: Nirim, Kerem Shalom, Nir Oz, Kissufim, Ein HaShlosha, Sufa, Holit, Netiv HaAssara, Nachal Oz, Kfar Azza)



Gatherings and Services

Outdoors - up to 100 people.
Indoors - up to 300 people.
Beaches will be closed to the public.



Workplaces

It is possible to operate indoors or in a place from which a standard protected space can be reached within the time available to reach shelter.



Educational Activities

Activities can be held in a place from which a standard protected space can be reached within the time available to reach shelter.

Confrontation line



Gatherings and Services

Outdoors - up to 50 people
Indoors - up to 300 people
Beaches will be closed to the public.



Workplaces

It is possible to operate indoors or in a place from which a standard protected space can be reached within the time available to reach shelter.



Educational Activities

Activities can be held in a place from which a standard protected space can be reached within the time available to reach shelter subject to the guidelines of the Northern Command.

All other parts of the country



Gatherings and Services

Gatherings may be held without restrictions.
*Ashkelon, Netivot - up to 15,000 people



Workplaces

Operating without restrictions



Educational Activities

Educational activities can be held without restrictions

Search for the relevant guidelines that apply to your area in the National Emergency Portal: oref.org.il/en

Current Territorial Control - Gaza Strip



Assessments & Forecast:

Israel, Hamas' insistence on irreconcilable preconditions for ceasefire agreement renders breakthrough unlikely

1. The pessimistic statements by the senior Hamas officials, which follow opposition to the truce outline among some elements in Israel, indicate that the likelihood of an imminent breakthrough concerning the US-proposed ceasefire remains slim. Hamas seeks unequivocal guarantees that a hostage/ceasefire agreement will compel the IDF to completely withdraw from the Gaza Strip and foreclose any leeway for Israel to resume its military operations. In addition, Hamad's statement indicates that the group expects the Israeli government to approve the ceasefire agreement first. This likely an attempt to increase international pressure on and condemnation of Israel if it rejects the proposal and is perceived to be the actor preventing a deal. Hamas also likely seeks to gain indications of Israel's posture before making a final decision.
2. As highlighted by the Israeli war cabinet's June 4 decision to demand guarantees that Israel will be permitted to resume operations if Hamas fails to deliver on its commitments, the parties' positions appear to be irreconcilable given that both seek guarantees that fundamentally conflict with the other's red lines. In other words, Israel seeks guarantees that it can resume its military operation to eliminate Hamas and strategically remove it from power while Hamas seeks guarantees that Israel will not resume its operations in order for it to survive and remain in power.
3. It is plausible that the wording of President Biden's publicized ceasefire outline was intentionally vague and omitted many details to propel Israel and Hamas into at least agreeing to Phase 1 of the proposed three-phase truce. **FORECAST:** The fact that both parties continue to publicly insist on their preconditions for an agreement reduces the likelihood that they will soften their stance and reach an understanding over the coming days.
4. For PM Netanyahu, conflicting positions within the coalition remain a paramount challenge. The decision by his Ultra-Orthodox coalition partners to back a hostage return deal will strengthen the position of the more centrist elements within Netanyahu's war cabinet, including Benny Gantz, who has previously threatened to resign by [June 8](#). The development will also provide additional momentum to civil society groups pressuring the government for a deal to release the hostages, as indicated by recent calls for [protest](#). However, Netanyahu's far-right coalition partners Bezalel

Smotrich and Itamar Ben Gvir are unlikely to withdraw their threat to collapse the government coalition if the war cabinet agrees to the ceasefire. This is because they likely assess that they possess significant leverage vis-a-vis Netanyahu. As [previously assessed](#), this is because their withdrawal from the coalition would likely result in new elections, and they are broadly considered ideologues who are willing to sacrifice power to achieve their fundamental goals.

Israeli officials' statements reflect mounting pressure to expand operations against Hezbollah

1. Hostilities have intensified between Israel and Hezbollah in recent weeks, marked by Hezbollah's increased use of UAVs, a higher volume of attacks on Israeli border communities, and an occasional geographical expansion of attacks targeting deeper inside Israeli territory. This has resulted in increasing disruption to business operations and civilian life within 20km of the Israel-Lebanon border, which has been compounded by secondary risks associated with successful or intercepted Hezbollah attacks that ignite dry land and trigger fires. This has been recorded on several occasions in recent days, both along the border in Kiryat Shmona and areas deeper inside Israel such as the Safed area and Katzrin. This has exacerbated concerns among both displaced Israeli civilians and officials regarding the continued threat posed by Hezbollah, which remains significant. This is despite an eight-month period of persistent IDF attacks on Hezbollah positions, commanders, and assets aimed at degrading the Iran-backed group's capabilities.
2. These concerns, particularly regarding the secondary risks of fires, will persist throughout the upcoming summer months. The optics that emerge from such large-scale fires will also likely increase the perception within Israel that these border towns and cities have been abandoned. This will prompt additional pressure from civilians and local officials for Israel to take a stronger course of action along its northern frontier to restore security. This is reflected in PM Netanyahu and IDF Chief of Staff Halevi's statements, while the reported increased IDF draft authorization points to Israel's efforts to enhance its preparedness for such an eventuality.
3. **FORECAST:** While these developments are not necessarily indicative of an imminent escalation, they nonetheless highlight rising tensions that increase the risk of miscalculation or the prospect of a decision, most likely by Israel at this stage, to expand operations. As indicated by the Hezbollah deputy leader, the group remains ready for such a scenario, which could lead to a snowball effect into an expansion of the conflict in the coming weeks.

Recommendations:

Israel

Travel

1. Due to the continued conflict in the Gaza Strip and ongoing tensions between Israel and Hezbollah, consider the necessity of travel to Israel at the current time.
2. Those operating or residing within Israel are advised to continuously prepare, update, and review contingency plans due to the volatile security situation.
3. Avoid travel to within ten km (six miles) of the Gaza Strip due to the continued threat of rocket and mortar attacks as well as the minimal time to reach bomb shelters. Those operating or residing in this area are advised to minimize nonessential outdoor movement and remain close to bomb shelters/safe rooms.
4. Avoid travel to within ten km of the Lebanese and Syrian borders. Those operating or residing in this area are advised to minimize nonessential outdoor movement and remain close to bomb shelters/safe rooms.
5. In Eilat, be aware of the possibility of UAV and missile attacks by the Houthis and other Iranian proxies. Familiarize yourself with the location of safe rooms and bomb shelters. Adhere to all safety precautions regarding early warning sirens.

6. Remain cognizant of the potential for localized protests throughout the country due to high political tensions. Albeit currently less likely, unrest is possible in Jerusalem, mixed Jewish-Arab locales, such as Haifa, Jaffa, Lod, Ramla, and Akko, as well as Arab-populated cities and towns.
7. Avoid all travel to the West Bank and East Jerusalem due to the risk of armed clashes and militant attacks.
8. Those operating or residing throughout Israel, particularly in major cities and crowded areas, are advised to maintain vigilance due to the currently heightened threat of terrorist attacks.

General

1. Adhere to all safety precautions regarding early warning sirens for incoming rockets. Rocket sirens may be heard throughout the country.
2. Ensure that working environments are within reach of bomb shelters/safe rooms.
3. When a Color Red siren is sounded: if a designated shelter exists, immediately go there. If not, go to a room with as few external walls, windows, and openings as possible, sit on the floor below the window line, and near an internal wall.
4. In an open area, lay down on the ground and cover your head with your hands.
5. When driving, safely pull over and follow the above instructions.
6. Remain cognizant of the circulation of rumors and fake news at the current time on social media and messaging platforms. Adhere only to official announcements by authorities.
7. Avoid political conversations or criticism of the government or the IDF to avoid unpleasant interactions given the high tensions in Israeli society. Similarly, avoid making pro-Palestinian statements in public, which could lead to aggressive interactions.
8. **MAX Security has strong on-ground capabilities in Israel, including contingency consultation and planning. Contact us at operations@max-security.com or +44 20-3540-0434.**

Lebanon

1. It is advised to defer all travel to Lebanon until further notice due to the continued cross-border hostilities along the Israel-Lebanon border and the potential for a broader escalation.
2. Those operating or residing in Lebanon are advised to continue to avoid travel to within 20km of the border with Israel due to ongoing hostilities.
3. In Beirut, remain abreast of spontaneous protest activity and avoid unruly demonstrations.
4. Avoid travel to Beirut's southern Dahiyeh neighborhood due to the entrenchment of Hezbollah activists and infrastructure in the area and the subsequent elevated anti-Western sentiments and potential for security incidents.

Syria

1. Avoid the vicinity of military installations throughout Syria as well as the Syria-Israel border area due to the persistent risk of Israeli strikes.

Iraq

1. Avoid nonessential travel to all US-linked locations or military bases hosting US troops as Iran-backed Shiite militias frequently conduct aerial (including UAV and rocket) attacks against these facilities in Baghdad, including the Green Zone and Baghdad International Airport, as well as in Erbil.
2. Westerners are advised to maintain a low profile and travel only with trained security personnel.
3. Avoid any political discussions, especially relating to the US military presence in Iraq, the Israel-Hamas war, and Iranian influence in Iraq.