



## **BRIEFING**

**Tuesday October 10, 2023**

### **ISRAEL: STATE OF THE PLAY AT 15:00 GMT**

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#### **FOCUS**

##### **Benjamin Netanyahu in the hot seat... after the war**

The controversy over the failure of Israeli intelligence to detect Hamas's preparations, which lasted months, and the failure of the army to react quickly last Saturday (according to numerous local sources, civilians were left to fend for themselves for hours, or even a whole day, before the first soldiers arrived) has now spread to politics.

Was Benjamin Netanyahu aware that a Hamas attack was being planned? According to an Egyptian intelligence official quoted by the American news agency AP. According to this source, the Egyptian intelligence services contacted the Israeli Prime Minister ten days before the surprise Hamas attack to warn him of "unusual developments".

A "terrible operation" could occur "from the direction of Gaza", the head of intelligence in the neighboring country, which often acts as a mediator between Israel and Hamas, reportedly told the authorities in Tel Aviv. "We warned them that the situation would explode very soon, and that it would be significant. But they underestimated these warnings", said the Egyptian official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

After the Israeli newspaper Yedioth Ahranoth, the Hebrew state's largest daily in terms of circulation, picked up the story, the Israeli Prime Minister's office issued a full denial on Monday.

However, it is certain that when the war is over, a parliamentary commission of enquiry will examine all the failings that led to the tragedy.

As a reminder, in the year following the Yom Kippur War (1973), Prime Minister Golda Meir was forced to resign.

## A/ On the ground

- The latest death toll on the Israeli side is at least **900, with 2,806 injured**, 535 of whom were still in hospital at midday on Tuesday.
- The **bodies of 108 Israelis were found in Kibbutz Be'eri**, near Israel's border with Gaza, after Hamas' infiltration two days earlier, the Zaka emergency rescue organization said Monday. According to the rescue organization, whose members arrived at the kibbutz accompanied by Israeli soldiers, many bodies of Hamas militants were also found. Searches inside homes in the community are continuing on Tuesday.
- Israel's emergency war room, made up of representatives from the IDF, Shin Bet, Police, PM's office and more, announced on Tuesday they had found 30 missing people near Kibbutz Ein Hashlosha (South).
- France mourns the tragic deaths of two more French nationals, bringing to four the number of French victims of the terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas against Israel.
- Three days after the surprise Hamas attack, the Israeli war machine is in full swing. In towns close to the Palestinian territory, life has been punctuated since Saturday by the roar of aerial bombardments. But this is only the first act of Operation Iron Sword. Along Route 34, between the towns of Sderot and Netivot, troop movements are constant. Merkava tanks were being brought in by lorry, ready to move to the front. In the fields, bulldozers prepare firing positions for the artillery. The guns are already pointed at the Gaza Strip. For the moment, they remain silent. "We are fighting human animals, and we behave accordingly", declared Yoav Gallant, the Defence Minister.
- The Israeli army suggested on Tuesday that Palestinians fleeing its air strikes in the Gaza Strip were heading for Egypt, which also borders the blockaded enclave. However, Egypt has closed the Rafah crossing for fear of terrorist infiltration or an uncontrollable influx of refugees.
- Closed since Sunday, schools will not reopen on Wednesday.
- On Tuesday morning, **new rocket strikes fired from Gaza hit southern and central Israel**. In the early afternoon, sirens sounded in Tel Aviv (centre) and in Beer Sheva (Negev desert, south) and Ashdod, rockets were fired and some hit the ground.
- Magen David Adom emergency services reports that **3 foreign workers, all in their 30s, were hit in the Neguev desert by rockets fired from Gaza**. One of them died from his wounds and two are in critical condition. Rockets fired from Gaza towards Israel caused several injuries near Talmei Eliyahu, a moshav located near the Gaza border. According to Magen David Adom emergency services, one of the wounded is in critical condition.
- Also on Tuesday afternoon, Hamas called on the inhabitants of Ashkelon (in the south, 10 km from the Gaza Strip) to leave the town, announcing possible new rocket attacks.
- "Following reports of hostile aircraft infiltrating the surrounding area, Tsahal identified a target heading towards the territory of the State of Israel and launched an interceptor.

An examination showed that it was not a hostile aircraft and that it posed no threat to the inhabitants," said the IDF in a statement.

- Tashal announces the **elimination of Jawad Abu Shaman, Hamas Minister for the Economy**, who was killed during the night. He was responsible for financing the organisation's terrorist activities. **One of the officials in the Ministry of International Relations, Zakaria Maamar, is also believed to have been killed.**
- At least **a hundred targets are believed to have been treated** in the last 24 hours in Gaza.
- Egypt has made requests to allow aid trucks into the Gaza Strip. Israel has not approved any requests and has announced that if the lorries try to get through, "they will suffer the consequences" - alluding to the fact that the lorries will be bombed.
- Restriction on food purchases: Up to three cartons of milk and two loaves of bread; "Shufersal" supermarkets announced a purchase limit due to high demand following recommendations from the Home Front Command asking the population to bring three days' worth of foodstuffs.
- Israel Police announced that **13 residents of East Jerusalem were arrested on suspicion of inciting violence** and supporting Hamas.
- The deadly conflict is having a devastating impact on civilian populations, including Palestinians. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) announced on X that the war has caused the massive displacement of more than "187,518 people" in the last 24 hours. This figure is "expected to rise further".

## **B/ Hostages**

- The police are asking families **not to disconnect the phones of their missing or kidnapped relatives**: "In recent hours, misleading recommendations have been distributed to the families of the missing to disconnect the phone lines of their loved ones via mobile phone companies. This information is misleading and could thwart their tracing."
- Early on Monday evening, **Hamas announced, in reaction to the strikes on Gaza, that one of the Israeli hostages it was holding would be executed** each time an Israeli bombardment, without warning, hit civilian homes in Gaza.
- Speaking on the fringes of a Franco-German meeting in Hamburg, Emmanuel Macron denounced "unbearable blackmail" by Hamas over the hostages it is holding. "It is odious and unacceptable", the French President condemned, while Hamas has declared that it will kill a hostage every time Israel strikes civilian positions without warning.

## **C/ Possible involvement of Iran**

- Speaking to RTL radio, **Israel's ambassador to France, Raphaël Morav**, commented on Iran's involvement in Hamas's surprise attack. He said that "**without Iran, Hamas**

**would never have been able to attack Israel**". It is "well known" that Iran has been "funding, arming and training Hamas" for years.

- **Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's highest authority, denied on Tuesday that his country was behind the massive attack** launched by Hamas against Israel on Saturday, while reaffirming Iran's support "for Palestine". "Supporters of the Zionist regime and others have been spreading rumors over the past two or three days, including that Islamic Iran was behind this action. They are false", Ayatollah Khamenei declared in a speech to a military academy.
- **US President Joe Biden, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni** on Monday evening called for "no expansion of the conflict beyond Gaza" following the Hamas attack on Israel. "We call on other extremist groups, or any state that might seek to take advantage of the situation, **in particular Iran**, not to seek to exploit this situation for other ends, nor to extend the conflict beyond Gaza", said a joint statement issued by the Élysée Palace. The Élysée later amended its communiqué to align itself with the version issued by the other capitals, which did not mention Iran.
- On the sidelines of a Franco-German meeting in Hamburg, **President Macron said it was "likely" that Hamas had received "aid"** in its operation against Israel, while stressing that **he had no "formal trace" of "direct involvement" by Iran**. "It is likely that there has been aid given to Hamas and cooperation", he said at a joint press conference with Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Hamburg in northern Germany. "I have no comment to make on the direct involvement of Iran, of which we have no formal trace", he added.

#### **D/ International aid to the Palestinians**

- France is "not in favour of suspending aid that directly benefits the Palestinian people", the French Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday, adding that it had "made this known to the European Commission". This statement comes after one of the European Commissioners, Olivér Várhelyi, announced on Monday that all payments under this development aid scheme would be suspended. The Commission then announced that it was launching "an urgent review of European Union assistance to Palestine".

#### **E/ Exporting the conflict outside Israel**

- **France:** On the social network X (formerly Twitter), the Association France Palestine Solidarité has called for a rally in Paris on Thursday 12 October at 6.30pm, Place de la République, "in support of the Palestinian people". On the Facebook page for the event, the organisation wrote: "Stop the fire and the massacres! The same pro-Palestinian association, but this time from the Loire-Atlantique département, has also called for a rally this Wednesday 11 October at 5pm. In its press release, it called on "France and the European Union to intervene urgently to protect civilians, and to tackle the root causes of these cycles of violence".

- **France:** Suspension of a lecturer for "indecent remarks" at the University of Paris-Panthéon-Assas, "reminder of the law" to a student union at the EHESS: sanctions were taken on Tuesday in higher education, a few days after the Hamas attacks on Israel. On Monday evening, the Minister for Higher Education, Sylvie Retailleau, called on the heads of universities and post-baccalaureate establishments to "take all necessary measures" to "ensure respect for the law and republican principles" in the face of "abuses": "Apology for terrorism, incitement to hatred, violence or discrimination are prohibited by law and must be punished. They are not ideas but intolerable transgressions of our republican framework".
- **France:** While the LFI MP's (far left) have refrained from describing the Hamas attacks as "terrorist", LR senator Stéphane Le Rudulier called for the movement to be dissolved in a letter to the Prime Minister on Monday. LFI is not the only organisation concerned by this request. The NPA, Indigènes de la République, La Jeune Garde and Révolution permanente are also being targeted.
- **United States:** New York on Gaza's side" and "Israel, go to hell": several hundred pro-Palestinian and very hostile to Israel demonstrators gathered in the heart of Manhattan on Monday, demanding that the United States stop helping its ally in the Middle East.
- **Australia:** Australian police announced on Tuesday that they were investigating suspicions of anti-Semitic remarks made during a demonstration in support of Palestine outside the Sydney Opera House on Monday evening, reports Reuters. Around 1,000 pro-Palestinian supporters marched through the city centre to the iconic Sydney Opera House, which was lit up in the colours of the Israeli flag. Unverified images shared by the Australian Jewish Association and broadcast on Sky News appear to show a small group lighting flares and chanting "Gas the Jews". Prime Minister Anthony Albanese described reports of anti-Semitic slogans as "horrific". We are a tolerant multicultural nation," he said. I understand that people have strong views on issues relating to the Middle East conflict, but here in Australia we need to approach political discourse in a respectful way."

## **F/ International reactions**

- **France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States** will "support Israel's efforts to defend itself" and condemn "without any possible ambiguity Hamas and its appalling acts of terrorism", according to a joint statement published on Monday evening after a meeting between the leaders of the five countries. "All of us recognise the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people and believe that Israelis and Palestinians are equally entitled to justice and freedom. But let us make no mistake: Hamas does not represent these aspirations and it offers the Palestinian people nothing but more terror and bloodshed", wrote German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, US President Joe Biden, French President Emmanuel Macron, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, in a text circulated by the White House.
- **United States:** Washington has "no intention of sending troops" after the Hamas attack on Israel, which killed at least 11 American citizens, a spokesman for the US National Security Council said on Monday night.

- **Cyprus** is ready to help with the evacuation of nationals from third countries who might want to leave Israel, its foreign ministry said on Tuesday, after an unexpected assault by Hamas militants on Israel over the weekend.
- **Germany:** The German justice system has opened an investigation following the Hamas attacks in Israel on suspicion of murder and kidnapping of German citizens, the Federal Prosecutor's Office announced on Tuesday.
- **Russia:** "This is a clear example of the failure of US policy in the Middle East", said Vladimir Putin during a meeting at the Kremlin in Moscow with Iraqi Prime Minister Mohamed Chia al-Soudani.
- **Saudi Arabia:** Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed Ben Salman (MBS) told Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas that he was working to prevent "an expansion" of the conflict following Hamas' surprise attack on Israel, Saudi state media reported on Tuesday. The Crown Prince also told Mr Abbas that the Gulf kingdom continued to "support the Palestinian people so that they can exercise their legitimate rights to a decent life, realise their hopes and aspirations, and achieve a just and lasting peace", the official Saudi news agency reported.
- **Venezuela:** Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro on Monday accused Israel of "genocide" against the Palestinians, after announcing a "total siege" of the Gaza Strip. "The UN Secretary General has issued a statement that we have read carefully, a statement of alert, of alarm, in the face of the genocide that has begun against the Palestinian people in Gaza", Nicolas Maduro said on television.
- **China:** Beijing "condemns" acts that harm civilians in the conflict between the Hamas militant group and Israel, and calls for an immediate ceasefire, said Zhai Jun, China's special envoy on the Middle East. "China is deeply concerned about the current escalation of tension and violence between the Palestinian and Israeli sides, and is saddened by the large number of civilian casualties caused by the conflict," Zhai said on Tuesday. "We oppose and condemn acts that harm civilians and call for an immediate ceasefire."

## **G/ International organisations**

- **ICC:** According to Israeli media outlet i24NEWS, a senior source at the International Criminal Court has said that there is a mechanism in place to hold the Palestinians responsible for war crimes under international law. However, as Israel is not a signatory to the ICC (it has signed the Rome Statute but not ratified it), there could be obstacles. In 2021, the Court nevertheless declared itself competent to judge Israel's actions in Gaza during the operation carried out in 2014.
- **ICRC:** The International Committee of the Red Cross says it is "ready to help reunite families and loved ones, clarify the fate of missing persons, and evacuate the injured" in coordination with the Palestinian Red Crescent and Magen David Adom, the Israeli equivalent of the Red Cross, it said in a press release.
- **U.N.:** "The imposition of sieges that endanger the lives of civilians by depriving them of goods essential to their survival is prohibited by international humanitarian law",

declared the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, in a press release.

- **WHO:** The World Health Organisation (WHO) is calling for the opening of a humanitarian corridor to the Gaza Strip.

## **H/ Impact on the global economy**

The Governor of the Banque de France spoke on France info on Tuesday morning about the "human tragedy" that has occurred in Israel. François Villeroy de Galhau said he was "vigilant" about the economic consequences, which are still difficult to pinpoint precisely. "It would be pretentious two days later to say exactly what [this new war] may entail", he admitted, while explaining that, whatever the case, this situation in the Middle East "adds to the economic uncertainty". Oil prices are under particular scrutiny. "Prices have risen moderately on world markets, but we obviously need to be very reassuring", explained the Governor of the Banque de France. The senior official believes that the risk of a "regionalisation of the conflict" weighs particularly heavily on oil prices.

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