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Bodies are left in the streets, and dozens of hostages are feared seized

'To all civilians in Gaza, I say, get out of there,' Israeli leader pleads

Death toll continues to climb as sides unleash fusillade of airstrikes, rockets

## Israel 'at war' after Hamas attack

### Sneak assault at dawn stokes fear, shock, bitter rage

BY NOGA TARNOPOLSKY, SHIRA RUBIN AND MIRIAM BERGER

JERUSALEM — Around dawn Saturday morning, as most of the country slept, thousands of rockets rained down on Israel, as far north as Tel Aviv and as far east as Jerusalem. Then came the infiltrators, who stormed unsuspecting towns in the south, killing civilians and taking hostages.

The combined land, sea and air attack was spearheaded by Hamas, the Islamist militant group that rules the Gaza Strip, and supported by Palestinian Islamic Jihad, a smaller Gaza-based group that has fought with Israel in the past.

Israelis are accustomed to conflict, but they had never experienced a day like this. Two hundred fifty are dead and more than 1,000 are wounded, the country's emergency services said.

The attack caught Israel's vaunted military and intelligence services off guard, and it sparked bitter recriminations after months of warnings from security officials about the country's deteriorating capacity for deterrence.

"Israel was humiliated and defeated today," wrote Yossi Verter, a columnist in the left-leaning Haaretz newspaper. "Even if Gaza is destroyed... that will not atone for the most serious security failure since the Yom Kippur war," he

SEE ISRAEL ON A12

### Onslaught may imperil Biden's diplomacy efforts

BY KAREN DEYOUNG

The Biden administration moved quickly into crisis mode Saturday in response to Hamas's surprise attack against Israel, condemning the "terrorist" assault from Gaza and reiterating "rock solid" U.S. support for Israeli security in public statements and calls to officials in Jerusalem.

"The United States stands with Israel," President Biden said in brief remarks after he phoned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. "We will not ever fail to have their back. We'll make sure they have the help their citizens need so they can continue to defend themselves. ... Israel has the right to defend itself and its people. Full stop."

A somber Secretary of State Antony Blinken stood at Biden's side as he spoke. Blinken and other top officials gathered at the White House as the situation developed with incoming video of exploding buildings and captured Israeli soldiers. CIA Director William J. Burns canceled a scheduled talk at a security conference on the Georgia seacoast to stay in Washington "to help provide support to the President and national security discussions as the crisis in Israel unfolds," a CIA spokesperson said.

Among a flurry of administration calls, Biden spoke with Jordan's King Abdullah II, Blinken

SEE GAZA ON A14



SAID KHATIB/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Rockets fired from Gaza head toward Israel early Saturday. Israeli media was flooded with pleas from families looking for loved ones.



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■ Cities hit by rocket fire, airstrikes



Source: Reuters THE WASHINGTON POST

**ABOVE:** Palestinians inspect the damage Saturday in Gaza's Al-Rimal neighborhood after the Israeli air force launched airstrikes throughout the area. **RIGHT:** Survivors in Tel Aviv mourn Saturday at the site where a rocket landed.

**Grist for U.S. politics:** Republicans pin blame on Biden's policies. **A11**

**How it unfolded:** A look at the surprise operation by Hamas. **A15**



ITAI RON/REUTERS

### Hundreds killed; Netanyahu readies reprisals

This article is by Noga Tarnopolsky, Claire Parker, Shira Rubin, Hazem Balousha and Deolin Barrett

JERUSALEM — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared Saturday that "we are at war" after Hamas militants from Gaza launched a surprise, multi-pronged attack across central and southern Israel, killing an estimated 250 Israelis and wounding 1,000 more.

The assault began early Saturday when Hamas launched thousands of rockets toward Israeli cities and sent militants into Israeli territory overland and by using paragliders and speedboats. Gunmen seized control of pockets of southern Israel, taking hostages and leaving bodies of civilians in the streets.

The Israeli air force launched airstrikes throughout the Gaza Strip. The Palestinian Health Ministry said at least 232 people were killed and 1,697 wounded in Gaza.

As night fell, the death toll kept climbing and Hamas said it fired a fresh fusillade of roughly 150 rockets at Tel Aviv.

Israel ordered residents of towns along the Gaza border to remain inside, as gun battles raged through the day. There were active hostage situations in the southern communities of Kibbutz Beeri and Ofakim, according to the Israeli military, which said militants were holding civilians in their homes and at a community dining hall.

Earlier, Palestinian militants claimed to have taken dozens of Israelis captive — including senior military officers, Hamas deputy chief Saleh al-Arouri told Al Jazeera. He indicated that Hamas wants to trade its hostages for militants imprisoned in Israel.

Israeli social media and radio stations were flooded with desperate pleas from families looking for loved ones.

Tom Weintraub Louk, 30, told The Washington Post that her first cousin, Shani Louk, was missing after militants overran an outdoor dance party near Kibbutz Urim on Saturday morning.

As news of the attack circulated, family members tried to contact Shani, who is in her early 20s. "We knew she was in the party. She didn't answer," said Louk. Family members also failed to get through to her Mexican boyfriend.

Later in the morning, as videos of hostage-takings flew across social media, another cousin recognized Shani in one of them — in the back of a pickup truck, surrounded by armed militants. Louk has not been able to bring herself to watch the video, but Shani's parents have. "We recognized her by the tattoos, and she has long dreadlocks," she said.

The family is still waiting for news. "We have some kind of hope," Louk said. "Hamas is responsible for her and the others."

A photograph released by SEE ATTACK ON A14

### IMPERFECT UNION

## Illinois Democrats drew new congressional maps. The changes pushed the state GOP right.

BY KEVIN SULLIVAN AND CLARA ENCE MORSE

TAYLORVILLE, ILL. — On a warm Friday night in the St. Mary's Catholic Church parking lot, sweating men sipping cold beers dipped fish fillets into bubbling deep fryers as children played on the bouncy castle.

This down-home fish fry used to be a regular stop for U.S. Rep.

### Such gerrymandering strengthens the parties' fringes, experts say

Rodney Davis, a moderate Republican who grew up in this former coal town in Central Illinois. But that was before new district lines drawn in 2021 pushed him into far more con-

servative terrain — and into competition with a fellow GOP incumbent.

To keep his job in Congress, Davis had to square off with Rep. Mary E. Miller, a member of the right-wing Freedom Caucus who closely aligned herself with former president Donald Trump. In the primary campaign, she assailed Davis for his willingness to compromise with Democrats and

to acknowledge Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 presidential election.

Miller, the hard-liner, won the 2022 race. Davis, the consensus-seeker, was out.

The bitter Republican feuding was not merely a symptom of the broader civil war in the national party. Rather, it was prompted by the actions of Illinois Democrats, who used their supermajority in

the legislature to redraw district lines in a way that would strengthen their already titanium-solid lock on power.

The strategy worked, adding one Democratic seat to the Illinois delegation and trimming two Republican ones as GOP voters were packed into fewer districts.

The new map also accomplished what experts say gerry-

mandering does with ruthless efficiency, regardless of whether Democrats or Republicans are responsible: hollowing out the moderate political center and driving both parties further toward the ideological fringes.

"Gerrymandering undermines a key element of democracy, which is competition," said Harvard University government

SEE GERRYMANDERING ON A6

ARTS & STYLE.....E1  
BOOK WORLD.....B1  
BUSINESS.....G1

CLASSIFIEDS.....G8  
COMICS.....INSERT  
METRO.....C1

OBITUARIES.....C6  
OPINION PAGES.....A21  
SPORTS.....D1

TRAVEL.....F1  
WEATHER.....C10  
WORLD.....A16

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0 70628 21100 3