



# EXPLAINER: THE RESIGNATION OF IDF CHIEF HERZI HALEVI AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE GAZA WAR

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## Why did the IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi resign and are other senior security officials expected to follow suit?

On January 21, Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi sent his [letter of resignation](#) to Defense Minister Israel Katz, taking responsibility for the IDF's failure to protect Israeli citizens on October 7, stating: "under my command, the IDF failed in its mission to protect Israel's citizens." "This decision to resign was made long ago," Halevi writes. "Now, with the IDF holding the upper hand in all theaters of combat and with another hostage return agreement underway, the time has come." Halevi's resignation will take effect on March 6 – one day before the end of the first phase of the Gaza ceasefire.

Halevi had been expected to resign since last month, after Defense Minister Katz [barred](#) him from appointing new generals and [ordered](#) Halevi to submit the findings of the IDF's internal October 7 investigation; Halevi had previously [stated](#) that he would resign at the conclusion of the investigation.

Regarding the timing of the chief of staff's departure, an anonymous former [senior IDF official](#) interestingly surmises that "Halevi did not believe that the second phase, in which the war would end and the rest of the hostages would return, would happen. He's saying, you're not going to make me fight again, in the second phase."

The head of the IDF Southern Command, Maj. Gen. Yaron Finkelman joined Halevi in resigning over October 7. "I failed in my duty to protect the Western Negev," Finkelman wrote in his [resignation letter](#). Further resignations are [expected](#) in the Israeli military, including from the Air Force and Navy chiefs, the head of the Northern Command, and the intelligence officer of the Gaza Division.

## How is the Netanyahu government reacting to Halevi's resignation?

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu – in contrast to Halevi – has not publicly taken any responsibility for the failures of October 7, and indeed [blamed](#) security services and intelligence agencies while [refusing](#) to establish a state commission of inquiry. Halevi's resignation is [perceived](#) by former Israeli officials as being part of a wider effort by Netanyahu to purge the security establishment of his critics and replace them with political loyalists. For example, Netanyahu's former defense minister, Yoav Gallant was [fired](#) last year for criticizing the prime minister and [replaced](#) by Israel Katz – a Netanyahu loyalist with limited military experience. Gallant criticized Netanyahu for prioritizing the "[nonsense](#)" goal of "total victory" against Hamas in Gaza over a ceasefire and hostage deal.

Shin Bet chief Ronen Bar, who was instrumental in securing the Gaza ceasefire, is [rumored](#) to be forced to resign next, as Netanyahu seeks to remove any opposition from within and potentially restart the war after phase one of the ceasefire.

Netanyahu's far-right ally Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who had previously [called](#) for the IDF chief of staff to resign, welcomed Halevi's departure. "The coming period will be marked by the replacement of the senior military command as part of preparations for the renewal of the war, this time in the name of not ending the war until total victory," Smotrich [said](#). In addition to his own ideological commitments, Netanyahu depends on Smotrich and other far-right members of his coalition to remain in power.

### **How is the Israeli public reacting to Halevi's resignation?**

The organization representing the family members of October 7 victims, the October 7 Family Council, called Halevi's resignation an "[excellent start](#)," and urged other IDF and government officials to follow suit. Yonatan Shamriz, brother of hostage Alon Shamriz whom the IDF [accidentally killed](#) in December 2023, [demanded](#) the resignation of "the entire senior military echelon, the entire political echelon, the entire security echelon." Members of the October 7 Family Council [reacted](#) by insisting upon a state commission of inquiry, while the hawkish Tikvah Forum representing hostage families criticized Halevi's conduct throughout the Gaza war as "[unsatisfactory](#)."

### **What to watch for in the coming weeks?**

Halevi's resignation raises questions about the future of the Israel-Hamas ceasefire agreement, the Gaza war, and by extension whether Netanyahu can keep his coalition together. On the 16th day of the ceasefire agreement, February 3, negotiations for phase two of the ceasefire are scheduled to begin. Should the ceasefire agreement proceed to phase two with the withdrawal of the IDF from Gaza, essentially foreclosing on the opportunity to resume the war, Minister Smotrich may [follow the lead](#) of his far-right ally National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir and quit the Netanyahu government.

If Smotrich leaves the coalition, this could lead to the collapse of the government, as Netanyahu would not have enough votes to pass the budget by the March 31 deadline. Failure to pass the budget by this deadline would [trigger](#) new elections. While it is possible that the budget deadline could be postponed to prevent new elections, Smotrich would need to cooperate with Netanyahu in this scenario. For these reasons, Netanyahu is under immense political pressure to resume the war. Simultaneously, he is under pressure from Egypt, Qatar, as well as the new US government, whose representatives have already begun [preparations](#) for phase two negotiations.

Defense Minister Katz has [announced](#) that he will begin interviewing three candidates for the next IDF chief of staff, beginning this upcoming Sunday. Those candidates are:

- Maj. Gen. (res.) Eyal Zamir, reportedly Netanyahu's [favored](#) candidate and the current Director General of the Israeli Ministry of Defense and a former IDF deputy chief of staff.
- Maj. Gen. Amir Baram, Halevi's outgoing deputy, who [tendered](#) his resignation earlier this month.
- Maj. Gen. Tamir Yadai, the former head of the IDF Ground Forces Command, who also [resigned](#) back in September.