The Brandenburg Gate in Germany is lit up in support of Israel.

If you feel worried

It's understandable that you might feel upset about what's happening in the Middle East. If you do, talk with a trusted adult, share your feelings, and ask questions about things you're concerned about. Limit your exposure to news, and continue to do things you enjoy. Talk to your family about what you can do to help others.

War breaks out in Israel and Gaza

On October 7, a Palestinian militant group called Hamas launched a massive surprise attack against Israel, in the Middle East. It was some of the worst violence in Israel in 50 years. In response, Israel declared war against Hamas.

What is the history of Israel and Hamas?

Israel was created in 1948 as a Jewish state, after 6 million Jews were killed in the Holocaust during World War II (1939–1945). Palestinians are Arab people who have lived in the region since before Israel was created. Hamas is one of two major Palestinian political parties and is considered a terrorist group by Israel, the US, the European Union, and other nations. In a 1967 war, Israel seized control of two territories, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Israelis and Palestinians have been fighting over them ever since, and tens of thousands of people have died. Israel currently occupies the West Bank, but in 2007, Hamas took over Gaza, an area of about 140 square miles where more than 2 million people live. Gaza gets most of its food, water, fuel, and supplies from Israel. But after Hamas took control, Israel put Gaza under a blockade, which severely restricts people and goods going in and out and has created dire living conditions for people there.

What happened on October 7?

The attacks occurred early in the morning on Saturday, which was the Jewish Sabbath (holy day) and the holiday of Simchat Torah. Hamas launched thousands of rockets and invaded at least 20 Israeli towns and cities. More than 1,000 people were killed, including 14 Americans, and more than 2,500 were injured. At least 150 people were taken hostage, with some Americans among them, and many more are missing. Most of those killed or captured were civilians (not in the military). Hamas said the attacks were in protest of Israel's blockade of Gaza and occupation of the West Bank.

How did Israel respond?

Benjamin Netanyahu, the prime minister of Israel, said, "We are at war." The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF, the nation's army) launched airstrikes against Gaza that killed more than 900 people and injured more than 4,500, most of whom were civilians. Israel's defense minister, Yoav Gallant, ordered the Gaza blockade to be tightened. "Nothing is allowed in or out," he said. "There will be no fuel, electricity, or food supplies." People in Gaza were told to evacuate, and the United Nations (UN) said more than 187,000 people were displaced.

How is the world reacting?

"The people of Israel are under attack," said President Joe Biden. "I want to say to them and to the world, and to terrorists everywhere, that the United States stands with Israel." António Guterres, head of the UN, condemned the attacks "in the strongest terms" and called for an end to the violence on both sides. He also said he was "deeply distressed" by the tightening of the blockade in Gaza and asked Israel to allow humanitarian relief in the region. Peace vigils were held around the world. Many landmark buildings, including the Empire State Building in New York City and the Eiffel Tower in Paris, were lit in blue and white to show support for Israel.

What is being done to help people?

Individuals and humanitarian groups in Israel and Gaza are offering help to those in need. They are securing transportation and shelter for people who are fleeing and providing food, clothing, and medical care. Nonprofit groups are accepting donations to help Israelis and Palestinians.

What will happen next?

When *The Week Junior* went to press, the fighting was ongoing. The US pledged to provide weapons and other aid to Israel. Netanyahu said Israel will use all its strength to destroy Hamas. "This war will take time," he said. "It will be difficult."