



This week's big news

DID YOU KNOW?

The Middle East has one of the youngest populations in the world, with 30% of people between ages 15 and 29.



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrives in 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 continues in Middle East

Fighting continued in the Middle East for a second week. The conflict is affecting millions of people in Israel and the Gaza Strip. As thousands of people have gathered across the US and the world to stage protests, mourn victims, and hold vigils, the US and other countries have stepped in to try to prevent the war from escalating further.

How did the fighting start?

On October 7, a Palestinian group called Hamas waged a violent terrorist attack on Israel. Hamas and Israel have fought many times before, due to disputes over who controls certain areas of land in the region. Their most recent conflict was in 2021, though the current outbreak of violence is the worst in many years. At least 1,400 people in Israel, including 30 Americans, were killed in their homes and communities, and 3,900 were wounded. Hamas took about 200 people hostage, and many more people are missing. In response, Israel vowed to eliminate Hamas and began firing missiles into Gaza, a densely populated territory of more than 2 million people that is controlled by Hamas. More than 3,000 Palestinians have been killed and more than 10,800 injured, according to



Palestinian officials. Israel declared a "complete siege" of Gaza, cutting off all supplies.

What is happening now?

Israel continues to bomb Gaza in an effort to weaken Hamas, and Hamas continues to aim airstrikes at Israel. The United Nations (UN, 193 nations working together), the World Health Organization, and many world leaders said Gaza is facing a dire humanitarian crisis. People are running out of food, water, fuel, and other essentials, and hospitals are unable to treat patients without electricity or medicine. On October 12, Israel ordered more than one million residents of northern Gaza to evacuate before it attacked the area. Hamas told people not to leave, but as of October 17, at least 600,000 people had fled south and were living in emergency shelters, schools, and outdoors. The only existing route in or out of Gaza is the Rafah Crossing to Egypt, which is closed.

How has the US reacted?

The US and many other countries said they strongly support Israel and are also concerned for people in Gaza. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and several members of Congress went to Israel to speak with its leaders, and Blinken also met with

leaders of six nearby Arab nations to discuss the situation. When *The Week Junior* went to press on October 17, the US and Israel were trying to reach an agreement to let humanitarian aid into Gaza and establish "safe zones" for people within the territory. The US and other nations were also working to evacuate their own citizens from the region. The US sent two large warships to the Mediterranean Sea to help Israel protect itself.

Why is the US involved?

The US is playing a central role in the current conflict because the US and Israel are strong allies. The US recognized Israel on the day it was established as a Jewish state in 1948, and Israel is an important strategic partner to the US in the Middle East. America has the largest Jewish population in the world outside Israel.

What will happen next?

Israel said it was preparing for a broader attack on Gaza. In what some experts are calling an "extraordinary" move, President Joe Biden planned to travel to Israel to meet with leaders on October 18, then to meet with the heads of Arab nations. The White House said Biden will show support for Israel while also pushing for a resolution to the conflict and the delivery of humanitarian aid. António Guterres, head of the UN, is set to travel to the region the following day to do the same.