



Forensic intelligence for those who act.

READER EDITION

September 16, 2025

ISRAEL BRIEF

Tuesday, September 16

From Gaza's battlefield to Beverly Hills hotels, the war over Israel's survival plays out in combat, politics, and culture — with hostages, allies, and enemies all shaping tomorrow's headlines.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

CLASSIFICATION

Reader Edition

DISTRIBUTION

Open · Free to share with attribution

IN THIS EDITION

The War Today	3
Inside Israel	3
Israel and the World	4
Briefly Noted	4
Developments to Watch	5

The War Today

IDF launches second phase of Operation Gideon's Chariots in Gaza City

THE military has committed two divisions with a third en route to encircle Gaza City as part of an expanded campaign. High-rise structures used by Hamas have been targeted through airstrikes, tank fire, and artillery. The operation involves rotating 130,000 reservists through the front by early 2026. Israeli commanders assert that Hamas prevents civilian departures and uses residents as human protection, while emphasizing its distribution of humanitarian aid and shelter for displaced persons.

Striking Hamas Leaders in Qatar Is 100% Legal Under International Law

Legal scholar Daniel Pomerantz argues in *The Algemeiner* that Israel's actions in Doha were lawful under international conventions. He contends that Qatar abandoned neutrality by facilitating Hamas command operations, thereby justifying Israeli self-defense measures within the Hague Conventions and UN Charter framework.

Atrocities against Syrian Druze 'exceeded October 7,' Netanyahu says

Speaking before a large bipartisan U.S. delegation in Jerusalem, Netanyahu compared Druze massacres in Syria to October 7 atrocities, describing some incidents as potentially worse. He detailed militia violence against civilians in Sweida and linked the assaults to Iranian operations. A Druze member of Knesset proposed extending full Israeli citizenship to Golan Druze residents.

Hostage families protest at PM's residence amid Gaza ground operation

As Operation Gideon's Chariots II progressed, families of hostages established a permanent demonstration site at the prime minister's residence, declaring an "emergency situation." They called on Netanyahu to prevent sacrificing hostages or soldiers without decisive Hamas defeat, with nightly protests planned as operations intensify.

Inside Israel

'No need to turn country upside down over corpses,' Likud MK says in Knesset debate on hostages

FINANCE Committee chair Hanoach Milwidsky dismissed prioritizing recovery of deceased hostages' remains, stating Israel ought not "turn the country upside down over corpses." Opposition member Naor Shiri condemned governmental failure toward families of Hadar Goldin and Oron Shaul, whose bodies have remained in Gaza since 2014. The exchange underscores persistent divisiveness surrounding hostage matters.

In cry for help, combat vets toss piles of pills at Knesset meeting on suicide

At a parliamentary hearing, combat-traumatized veterans deposited medication bags on the table demanding action against escalating suicide rates. The Defense Ministry acknowledged “significant gaps” while expanding crisis hotlines, stress-management units, and mental-health personnel. The state bears responsibility for safeguarding those bearing warfare’s psychological weight.

Reichman University leaders warn of crisis at counterterrorism summit

At the 25th Shabtai Shavit Counterterrorism Summit, university officials warned that October 7 fractured Israel’s national vision. Founders Uriel Reichman and president Boaz Ganor accused authorities of embedding extremist ideology, ignoring security recommendations, and allowing war objectives to become unclear. While praising military heroism, they cautioned that Israel faces defeat in global delegitimization battles.

Israel and the World

Three-quarters of Jewish students worldwide hide their religious identities — survey

AN ADL and WUJS report reveals most Jewish students conceal their Jewish and Zionist identities, with documented increases in threats, assaults, and discrimination. *Times of Israel* coverage emphasizes widespread fear, particularly among Orthodox and women students. University administrators should enforce protections through meaningful action.

The holes in Qatar’s plan for revenge on Israel

Israel Hayom contends Qatar possesses limited military options despite diplomatic maneuvering and European influence. With Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey remaining noncommittal, any retaliation appears symbolic and risks counterproductive outcomes. Qatar may advance delegitimization campaigns but cannot establish a military confrontation.

California lawmakers approve narrowed bill targeting antisemitism in schools

California’s legislature passed groundbreaking legislation establishing a statewide antisemitism coordinator for public schools despite teachers union opposition. Supported by 70 Jewish organizations, the measure promotes educator training, incident documentation, and institutional accountability. Gubernatorial approval determines whether this model could expand nationally.

Briefly Noted

- *Israel Hayom* reported recordings where ex-Mossad chief Yossi Cohen described Qatari funding to Hamas as “a blessing,” contradicting subsequent denials.

- *Times of Israel* noted Netanyahu ally Tzachi Braverman's selection as UK ambassador, pending cabinet ratification, amid police investigation into alleged October 7 record tampering.
- *Jerusalem Post* live coverage documented Netanyahu's Tel Aviv trial session addressing gift-related allegations; judges extended hearing durations while accommodating wartime scheduling.
- *Forward* reported Beverly Hills Rabbi Pini Dunner's petition against High Holiday services at a Qatar-owned hotel, characterizing it as image rehabilitation for Hamas's financial backers.
- *i24* covered Emmy Awards speakers, including Javier Bardem and Hannah Einbinder, using platform access to condemn Israel's Gaza operations and encourage Hollywood boycotts.
- *Forward* documented an Ohio auction house withdrawing two 17th-century paintings after Nazi theft confirmation; rightful heirs may soon recover them.

Developments to Watch

- **IDF expands Gaza City offensive** — Operation Gideon's Chariots II progresses with mandatory and reserve forces. The IAF targeted more than 850 terror sites weekly. Netanyahu confirmed intensified operations. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Katz: "Gaza is burning"** — Defense Minister pledged complete devastation of Hamas infrastructure absent hostage release and disarmament.
- **Hostage exchange pressure** — Israel estimates 20 of 48 hostages remain alive. Hamas demands complete ceasefire, withdrawal, and prisoner exchanges. Officials contend only military action secures returns. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Egypt cautions on peace treaty** — President al-Sisi warned that Israeli actions threaten the peace agreement's viability. Egyptian officials later characterized his statements as cautionary rather than threatening.
- **Arab-Islamic Summit backs Qatar** — The Doha conference condemned Israel's strike and pledged complete solidarity with Qatar, rejecting threatened actions.
- **Egypt deploys advanced air defense** — Cairo repositioned Chinese HQ-9B missile systems within Sinai while cautioning that crisis could invalidate peace arrangements. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Lebanon spy network exposed** — Lebanese authorities arrested a Palestinian officer carrying \$400,000 and communications equipment, revealing an eight-person Israeli intelligence operation.

- **Spanish arms deal canceled** — Spain terminated a €700 million Elbit Systems contract under anti-Israel pressure despite European defense needs. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **IED hidden in IDF vehicle** — Soldiers discovered a cellphone-detonated device disguised as a fire extinguisher during maintenance that had survived operational use.
- **Uman draft arrests** — Police detained eight draft-avoiding ultra-Orthodox individuals at Ben Gurion Airport. UTJ leadership condemned the apprehensions.
- **High Court nixes IDF pension perk** — Judges ruled the chief-of-staff supplemental retirement allowance terminates in 2026 absent legislative reauthorization.
- **Gaza aid theft on video** — The Ma'tasib militia distributed footage displaying commandeering of humanitarian supply trucks.
- **Hamas "red on red" executions** — Hamas' Sahm unit announced executing three Gazans on espionage accusations, bringing monthly internal killings to ten. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **IDF adjusts for religious soldiers** — Updated protocols expand prayer accommodations, grant earlier Shabbat releases, and limit *kohanim* cemetery exposure to specific circumstances.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Uriel Zehavi

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR · MITZPE INSTITUTE

Uriel Zehavi is the executive director of Mitzpe Institute, where he writes the daily Israel Brief and co-directs its Institutional Intelligence practice with Modi Zehavi. He is the author of four books from Mitzpe Press and advises Israeli and allied clients on strategic communications for Western audiences.



ABOUT MITZPE INSTITUTE

Mitzpe Institute is an intelligence and strategy organization focused on Israeli security, diaspora threat assessment, and the strategic challenges confronting the Jewish people and the West. We produce daily intelligence, forensic analyses, strategic assessments, and tactical briefings read by policymakers, military leaders, and institutional decision-makers across more than 90 countries and all 50 US states — from the Knesset and the US Congress to allied governments, major policy institutions, and Jewish organizational leadership worldwide.

PASSED ALONG TO YOU?

The daily Israel Brief is free at mitzpe.org. The operational layer — Closed Dossiers, Vantage, and Watchwords — is members-only. Become a member, gift a membership, or book a briefing at mitzpe.org.

Reader Edition · Free to share with attribution to Mitzpe Institute.