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September 29, 2025

ISRAEL BRIEF

Monday, September 29

Maps, missiles, and leverage: Gaza tightens, Iran bristles, and the home front argues with clear eyes.

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Reader Edition

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TODAY's briefing follows a tightening ring around Gaza City and the approach to Shati, where commanders expect the hardest urban fight yet. The picture on the map matters: the IDF holds more than half the city while pressing tunnels and strongpoints that still shelter Hamas. In parallel, Hamas rolls out a familiar hostage ploy and demands a 24-hour pause. Read it as leverage, not mercy.

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Beyond Gaza, the region hums. While snapback sanctions returned on Iran, Moscow and Beijing shrugged. Another Houthi missile aimed at Israel's center was intercepted overnight. On the Trump-front, Smotrich set red lines while a possible deal creeps forward. In Europe and the Americas, the EU scolded over Allenby, the Colombian president lost his US visa after calling for a foreign "army," and a French MP left the flotilla then posed with PFLP figures. The information fight is real as well. Iran's AI-powered disinformation machine is now documented in depth.

What to watch closely: the tempo into Shati, any concrete movement on the hostages beyond statements, the Allenby cargo reopening under new screening, and whether the "selfie flotilla" times its arrival for Yom Kippur. Keep an eye on Iran's readiness chatter and on Jerusalem's quiet signals that options remain on the table.

The War Today

IDF controls over half of Gaza City as 800,000 residents flee the area – Southern Command

The IDF now holds more than half of Gaza City, with some 800,000 residents—out of roughly one million—having evacuated since the ground campaign began. Southern Command officials credit coordinated multi-division maneuvers under Operation Gideon's Chariots II, supported by nightly strikes on 140-plus targets. The army has taken Tel al-Hawa, Sheikh Ajleen, Zeitoun, Shuja'iya, and Tuffah while Al-Rimal, the Old City, Shati camp, and Sabra remain contested.

'We will crush them from above and below': IDF readies for major battle in Gaza's Shati camp

The IDF has completed its encirclement of Gaza City's Shati camp, preparing for what commanders say could be the fiercest battle yet of Operation Gideon's Chariots II. The neighborhood, now a Hamas stronghold with tunnels, explosives, and regrouped fighters, is expected to take months to clear. Commanders insist hostage rescue and dismantling Hamas go hand in hand, stressing that pressure on the terror group is yielding results.

Hamas claims it lost communication with Gaza group holding two hostages
Hamas claimed it "lost contact" with the group holding two hostages in Gaza during IDF operations and demanded Israel halt air missions for 24 hours to allow a supposed rescue attempt. The terror group has floated similar claims before, likely bait meant to lure Israel into reducing pressure or to endanger rescue units. Hamas's military wing has already said it will not protect hostages while Israel fights, underscoring again that it views human lives only as leverage.

IDF soldier killed by gunfire during car-ramming in northern Judea and Samaria

Staff Sgt. Inbar Avraham Kav, 20, was fatally wounded when a terrorist rammed troops at Jit Junction near Kedumim; soldiers shot the attacker, a resident of Nablus, and the IDF sealed nearby areas. The army says Kav was also hit by gunfire as forces engaged the driver, while Hamas praised the attack.

Inside Israel

Smotrich's boundaries for the Netanyahu-Trump summit

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich laid out six “red lines” ahead of Prime Minister Netanyahu’s White House meeting with President Trump. His demands include Hamas’s total removal, permanent IDF presence in Gaza including the Philadelphi Corridor, no Palestinian Authority or statehood role, exclusion of Qatar, and free exit for Gazans via Egypt. Smotrich also pressed to anchor Judea and Samaria as inseparable parts of sovereign Israel, rejecting any future partition.

Shin Bet probes intelligence failures in Qatar strike against Hamas leaders

Shin Bet has opened an internal review after a failed Israeli strike in Doha, where Hamas leaders were believed to be hiding. Unlike past overseas operations run by Mossad, this attack was based on Shin Bet intelligence and used precision munitions that only partially destroyed the building, with the targets escaping. The failure has fueled calls to bar Qatar from any role in Gaza’s postwar reconstruction, with senior officials insisting that Doha has long bankrolled Hamas and should not be allowed to rebuild its infrastructure.

Efrat Council head: We’re creating sovereignty ‘on the ground’ without waiting for declarations

Dovi Shefler, head of the Efrat Council, declared that construction already underway in Efrat is effectively applying Israeli sovereignty in Judea and Samaria, regardless of formal government declarations. Speaking as part of a Yesha Council delegation to the U.S., Shefler said the expansion doubles Efrat’s population and connects it more tightly to Jerusalem, creating a “protective barrier” against a territorial link between Hebron and Bethlehem. His comments came in direct response to President Trump’s statement that he will not allow annexation, underscoring the grassroots push for sovereignty even as formal politics lag.

Israel and the World

EU condemns Israeli closure of Allenby Crossing, completely ignoring deadly attack

The European Union blasted Israel for briefly shutting the Allenby (King Hussein) Bridge after a terror attack, citing disruptions to travel and aid. Jerusalem countered that two Israelis were murdered by a Jordanian aid-truck driver in the assault and accused the EU of one-sided bias for omitting this fact. The Foreign Ministry stressed that aid continues to flow through multiple routes, but security cannot be compromised.

US revokes Colombian leader's visa after he calls for global army to fight in Gaza

The US State Department pulled President Gustavo Petro's visa after he urged a "global army" larger than America's to fight in Gaza and called on US troops to disobey President Trump. Petro, who severed ties with Israel in 2024 and backs the ICJ "genocide" case, said he'll recruit Colombian volunteers and leaned on Beijing to "dare" join—an escalatory stunt that underscores how anti-Israel grandstanding is warping regional diplomacy.

French MP quits Gaza flotilla for 'personal reasons', flies to meet PFLP reps in Lebanon

La France Insoumise MP Thomas Portes dropped out of the Gaza flotilla citing "family emergencies," but within days was in Beirut meeting Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine leaders, including convicted terrorists. French Jewish politician Shannon Seban blasted the visit as a "political trip marked by meetings with figures of international terrorism." The PFLP is banned as a terror group by the EU, U.S., Canada, and Japan, raising questions about Portes's conduct.

A third of US college students think Palestinians better ally than Israel – poll
A Buckley Institute survey of 820 undergraduates found 33% view the "Palestinians" as a better U.S. ally than Israel, while 29% picked Israel and 38% were unsure. Liberal students and some minority groups leaned heavily toward the "Palestinians," while conservatives favored Israel. The poll also showed most students believe antisemitism is a real issue on campus, yet many expressed willingness to shout down or even justify violence against speech they find offensive, underscoring a volatile climate shaping young Americans' views of Israel.

The first AI war in history: How Iran spread misinformation

Iran weaponized artificial intelligence to flood social media with fake videos and images during June's Israel-Iran war. Over 70% of the false content twisted real footage out of context, while about a fifth was AI-generated, including clips of "downed" Israeli jets and explosions at Ben-Gurion Airport. The campaign aimed less at claiming victimhood than at projecting Iranian military power, with Israel's weak fact-checking ecosystem leaving the public vulnerable to manipulation.

Briefly Noted

- **Israel National News:** Four left-wing activists were indicted for staging a “ring of fire” arson attack near the prime minister’s Jerusalem residence, setting recycling bins ablaze with gasoline during protests earlier this month.
- **Israel National News:** Security officials told the Knesset they will boost IDF and police presence in Judea and Samaria during the olive harvest, which has become a cover for Arab riots and provocations organized by PA-linked activists.
- **JNS:** Former U.S. National Guardsman Adam Scott Hastings was charged with trying to sell weapons and manuals to Al-Qaeda, allegedly offering 3-D printed guns and praising tunnel warfare tactics aligned with Hamas methods—another reminder that jihadist strategies circulate globally, including within America’s security apparatus.
- **Jerusalem Post:** *Son of Hamas* Mosab Hassan Yousef urges a peaceful “counter-flotilla” to expose Gaza convoy theatrics.
- **JNS:** A 67-year-old Jewish man, Gilles Cohen, was beaten in Yerres, France, while walking home from the *mikveh*. His attacker shouted antisemitic slurs before fleeing; no arrests have been made. Israel’s Foreign Ministry condemned the assault as part of France’s rise in antisemitism since October 7.
- **WPLG Local 10 (Miami):** Police arrested a 25-year-old who allegedly circled Temple Moses on a scooter, shouting hostile slogans and antisemitic remarks; prosecutors filed felony and misdemeanor counts for disrupting a religious assembly and bias harassment—another instance of diaspora Jewish communities experiencing spillover hatred.
- **JNS:** Kedumim Mayor Oziel Vatik said he was cursed and threatened in New York while on a Yesha Council trip, linking the harassment to historical antisemitism his family endured in Europe and urging sovereignty in Judea and Samaria as the only guarantee of Jewish safety.
- **Jewish Chronicle:** A London club cancelled Israeli DJ Roi Perez’s performance after activist protests, with organizers claiming they would not amplify Israeli voices during what they labeled a genocide. The decision illustrates how cultural boycotts target Israeli citizens across Europe, regardless of personal perspective or politics.
- **Jerusalem Post:** A Yemeni rights group reports that Iran-backed Houthi operatives arrested 1,063 Yemenis over two years for marking the 1962 September Revolution, with families often unaware of detainees’ whereabouts.
- **Jerusalem Post:** Archaeologists and the Israel Nature and Parks Authority are reviving 1,400-year-old Negev grape varieties at Shivta National Park, replanting seeds found in Byzantine ruins using ancient vine techniques once mentioned in the Talmud.

- **Ynet:** Israeli startup AIR says it will launch a two-seat electric flying car in the U.S. by 2026, touting foldable wings, multiple redundant motors, and a parachute system for safety, with both civilian and defense applications.
- **JNS (opinion):** An essay compares the vilification of Jabotinsky and the Altalena affair to today's attacks on Netanyahu, arguing Israel's left has long sought to delegitimize Revisionist Zionism and its heirs.
- **Jerusalem Post:** Hamas expert Eyal Ofer warned the terror group is planning to outlast the war and eventually seize control of the Palestinian Authority within five to ten years, saying expectations that Hamas will disappear are detached from reality.

Developments to Watch

- **Snapback sanctions collide** – The UN “snapback” restored the full 2006–2010 sanctions stack on Iran (arms embargo, uranium ban, missile prohibitions, asset freezes, travel bans, search authority). Moscow and Beijing say they won't comply; a Russian heavy transport already landed in Iran as Tehran vows to keep enriching. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE.**
- **Tehran on max alert** – Iran put forces nationwide on maximum readiness while senior regime figures threatened a larger war “using all capacities” if Israel strikes again; Jerusalem says it knows where Iran's enriched stockpile sits and pointedly won't rule out action. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE.**
- **Missiles, nukes, proxies** – Israeli security chiefs assess Iran still fields thousands of operational ballistic missiles, is rebuilding nuclear throughput, and is cueing Hezbollah, Iraqi militias, and Houthis for a potential multi-front round. Prepare for testing fires at the seams. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE.**
- **Houthi shot at the center** – Overnight Israel intercepted a Houthi ballistic missile aimed at the Tel Aviv area; the group claims a cluster-warhead shot and “sensitive targets.” Expect more long-range harassment from Yemen's Iran arm.
- **German line on ‘genocide’** – Germany's chancellor rejected the “genocide” libel, saying Hamas can end the war “in a few hours” by freeing hostages and laying down arms—useful diplomatic ballast when lawfare heats up.
- **Iranian plot targets family** – Shin Bet says Iranian operatives tried to lure National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir's 17-year-old daughter via a fake celebrity invite; the service warned the minister's staff they are being targeted as well. Threat vectors now include families.
- **Drone gun-running from Egypt** – The IDF downed a drone that ferried rifles over the Sinai border. Smuggling attempts by UAV—both into Gaza and into Israel—are becoming routine; expect tighter air and ground interdiction along the Negev/Sinai seam.
- **Allenby cargo to reopen** – Ten days after the terror attack by a Jordanian aid-truck driver, the Allenby/King Hussein Bridge will reopen for supply

trucks to Gaza under reinforced security. Humanitarian lanes continue, with sharper screening.

- **Terror death-penalty advances** – The Knesset National Security Committee passed a first reading to enable capital punishment for convicted terrorists. Supporters say justice and deterrence; opponents warn of hostage risk calculus shifts.
- **PM stay may stretch** – Netanyahu’s Washington visit is likely to extend as Trump touts a Gaza deal in “final stages,” while Hamas publicly denies receiving proposals. Watch for text, timelines, and who guarantees what.
- **UNGA side-meeting** – Syria’s President Ahmad al-Sharaa met WJC head Ronald Lauder in New York—an unusual channel worth tracking for any follow-on signals.
- **Flotilla ETA Yom Kippur** – The 50-boat “selfie flotilla” reports ~400 km out, likely aiming to reach Gaza on Yom Kippur; escorts include Italian and Spanish navy ships.
- **Uman deserters arrested** – Eight *haredi* army deserters were detained on arrival back from Uman and sent to Prison 10—small but telling of manpower strains and enforcement.

THREE takeaways. **First**, momentum inside Gaza City is real, but the hardest blocks lie ahead. The army’s goal is not symbolic. Break the battalions, strip the tunnels, bring our people home. **Second**, Tehran tests boundaries while rebuilding capacity. Sanctions on paper matter only if backed by enforcement and deterrence in the air and at sea. **Third**, politics at home and abroad remain tools, not creeds. Use every lawful coalition and every honest ally to free the hostages and end the war on terms that keep Israelis safe. Press leaders for a clear day-after that denies Hamas (and any “unity” fig leaf) the keys to Gaza or to Ramallah.

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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.

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