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READER EDITION

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ISRAEL BRIEF

Friday, October 17

Holding the line, tightening the screws: leverage at Rafah, pressure on Hamas's dead-of-night lies, and a clear map for the day after—without surrendering an inch.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

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Reader Edition

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Shalom, friends. Shabbat comes in tonight, which means we hand the news to the candles for 25 hours and come back Sunday morning. Before we step away, here's what you need to know:

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THE cabinet moved from outrage to mechanics—marking the *kav tzahov* inside Gaza, backing a policy of immediate response to violations, and pairing pressure on mediators with targeted aid curbs if Hamas keeps playing games with the dead. Washington is adding bounties for information on remains. Islamic Jihad says out loud it won't disarm. The Houthis just lost their chief of staff and still threaten Eilat.

On the home front, the state is wrestling with two hard issues at once: the Haredi draft and the Arab-sector crime wave that has allowed too many funerals.

Abroad, the “Holocaust survivor” propaganda stunt met the moral wall it deserved, and the “pay-for-slay” economy of murder is on full display.

Read this edition with three anchors in mind: the bodies must come home, disarmament is non-negotiable, and nobody imports “stabilization” forces we can't trust to the fence.

The War Today

Netanyahu to convene security cabinet to discuss remaining Gaza hostages
Prime Minister Netanyahu called an emergency security cabinet meeting to address Hamas's failure to return hostage remains, as Shas leader Arye Deri demanded suspension of aid and Rafah crossings until full compliance. Ministers warn that if Hamas stalls, Israel could resume military operations in Gaza.

Editor's note: At the emergency security cabinet meeting with the IDF, Mossad and Shin Bet chiefs, ministers backed Katz's “immediate response” policy for any breach and approved physical marking of the *kav tzahov* (Yellow Line) to firm up rules of engagement. Netanyahu told aides Israel “knows exactly” how many hostages and bodies Hamas holds and, in parallel with the Trump team, will escalate pressure—including targeted aid curbs—if remains aren't returned at pace.

Israel provides US, mediators with intel on hostage remains still in Gaza, source tells ‘Post’

Jerusalem shared specific locations and is pressing to complete Phase A of the Trump plan, with FM Gideon Sa'ar accusing Hamas of a “fundamental violation” by slow-walking bodies. Trump told CNN he could green-light a return to combat if Hamas doesn't comply.

Hamas starved hostages to film emaciated videos; pressure Israel - report
Hamas deliberately starved hostages to produce skeletal “proof-of-life” videos, then resumed feeding after filming to maximize psychological pressure on

Israel. The details, drawn from freed hostages and families, document systematic abuse and strengthen the case for sustained pressure on Hamas to return every captive and body.

Trump threatens to 'kill' Hamas if Gaza executions continue

President Trump warned that if Hamas continues public executions in Gaza, “we will have no choice but to go in and kill them,” after previously downplaying some killings as targeting gangs. The message raises stakes for enforcement of the truce and signals potential U.S. involvement if Hamas keeps executing civilians.

Qatar equipment entering Gaza sparks fears of Hamas reconstruction

Qatar has begun debris removal operations in Gaza, deploying bulldozers and heavy machinery under the banner of humanitarian aid. Israeli analysts warn the equipment could help Hamas rebuild its tunnel network and command posts under cover of “civil reconstruction.” Qatar-funded foundations are already active in the Strip, blurring the line between recovery and rearmament. Israel has blocked Turkey from importing equipment into Gaza.

IDF confirms Houthi chief of staff Muhammad al-Ghamari killed

The IDF confirmed that Muhammad Abd al-Karim al-Ghamari, the Houthis' chief of staff and one of Iran's senior military proxies, succumbed to wounds from an Israeli strike in late August. Ghamari oversaw the group's missile campaign toward Israel and had been sanctioned by both the UN and U.S. for destabilizing Yemen. Netanyahu hailed the operation as proof that Israel's reach is long and its deterrence active across the region.

Inside Israel

Inside Israel's hostage rescue operations: how IDF fought to free captives from Hamas

A detailed investigation chronicles Israel's two years of hostage-rescue missions in Gaza — from the success of Operation Arnon to tragedies like the failed attempt to save Sahar Baruch. The piece reveals the split-second command decisions, tunnel dangers, and political pressure that shaped each mission. Maj. Gen. (res.) Nitzan Alon's team coordinated dozens of rescues balancing military necessity with hostage survival — a window into the unseen front of Israel's longest war.

Three killed, six injured, three arrested in night of crime across Israel

A wave of shootings overnight left three Israelis dead and six injured—four of the injured were police officers—in both the Negev and the Galilee. The killings, centered in the Bedouin towns of Tel Sheva and Rahat and the Arab village of Ibtin, stemmed from clan feuds and criminal rivalries within Israel's Arab sector, which has suffered a record 210 homicides this year. The

violence underscores how lawlessness in Arab and Bedouin communities—often fueled by illegal weapons, weak policing, and clan justice codes—remains one of Israel’s deepest internal security failures.

Bismuth submits controversial haredi draft law outline in bid for Shas return to gov’t

Knesset Defense Committee chair Boaz Bismuth unveiled an outline that would draft half of eligible *haredim* within five years, set exemption age at 26, and gradually add penalties for noncompliance. The proposal, backed by Netanyahu and coordinated with Shas, could pave the way for ultra-Orthodox parties to rejoin the coalition.

Haredi mob breaks into Beit Shemesh mayor’s home in second attack this year

Dozens of extremists smashed the gates, cut power, and vandalized the sukkah at Mayor Shmuel Greenberg’s home during *Chol Hamoed* Sukkot, seven months after a mob overturned his car and injured his son. Greenberg vows to keep governing and not yield to violence. The article notes the clashes track an earlier demolition of an illegal synagogue tied to a fringe sect; this is not representative of most Haredim in Beit Shemesh. The story matters because political intimidation at officials’ homes corrodes civic life and risks wider religious–secular backlash if we fail to isolate the extremists from the community they claim to speak for.

Bar’s faith and the tzitzit from captivity

Julie Kuperstein, mother of freed hostage Bar Kuperstein, recounted the torture, starvation, and psychological abuse her son endured in Hamas captivity, describing how he survived through faith and mental discipline. After release, Bar requested *tzitzit* and prayer books, saying his suffering had deepened his connection to G-d.

Israel and the World

‘160 newly released Palestinian terrorists likely millionaires’ thanks to pay-for-slay system

An Israeli NGO says more than half of the 250 terrorists freed in the Gaza ceasefire deal have become millionaires through the Palestinian Authority’s “pay-for-slay” stipends. The PA reportedly paid the group over \$229 million, with one bomber now worth nearly £1.7 million. The revelations spotlight how the PA’s incentive system for murder still rewards blood over peace.

Post-ceasefire trend sees Gazans claiming: ‘I am a Holocaust survivor’

After the ceasefire, Gazan activists launched a social-media trend declaring themselves “Holocaust survivors,” spreading the slogan through viral Instagram filters that accuse Israel of genocide. Jewish organizations and historians called the campaign a desecration of Holocaust memory and a deliberate distortion of history. The International March of the Living and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum both denounced the effort as antisemitic propaganda that weaponizes the Shoah for political theater.

Deputy FM: Turkey and Qatar hold the key to peace in Gaza

Speaking at an Abraham Accords anniversary conference in Berlin, Deputy Foreign Minister Sharren Haskel urged reforming Gaza’s education system “to teach truth, not hate,” and said Turkey and Qatar could determine whether peace takes root. Her comments signaled Israel’s conditional openness to regional involvement under clear moral terms.

Court strikes down Irish police decision not to investigate Airbnb over Israeli settlements

Ireland’s High Court quashed the police decision to avoid looking into whether Airbnb’s Judea and Samaria listings violate Irish law, ordering the force to reconsider jurisdiction and the merits. It doesn’t mandate an investigation, but it re-opens a favored lawfare vector against doing business with Israelis beyond the Green Line.

UK police block Israeli fans from Europa League game citing safety risks

Local authorities in Birmingham barred Maccabi Tel Aviv supporters from the Nov. 6 match at Aston Villa, citing “high-risk” conditions after last year’s Amsterdam antisemitic riots at an Ajax–Maccabi game. West Midlands Police said protests and hate-crime concerns drove the restriction; UEFA has yet to respond.

Briefly Noted

- *Jerusalem Post*: Iran summoned Poland’s envoy after Warsaw’s foreign minister displayed an Iranian-made drone in London to highlight Tehran’s role in Russia’s Ukraine strikes, deepening Iran’s diplomatic isolation as Europe links its drones to two wars.
- *Jewish Insider*: Maine’s Democratic Senate primary is turning into a proxy fight over Israel, with Gov. Janet Mills facing Graham Platner, a self-described “communist” oyster farmer who built his campaign on anti-Israel rhetoric.
- *Jewish Insider*: Rep. Seth Moulton, running against Sen. Ed Markey, said he’ll return AIPAC donations and refuse future support—a bow to the far-left flank as Democrats test their Israel line in 2026.

- *Algemeiner*: UN human rights rapporteurs attacked the Trump-brokered Gaza ceasefire for not creating a “Palestinian state,” prompting an op-ed accusing the UN of bias and preferring perpetual conflict over compromise.
- *Times of Israel*: Former U.S. national security adviser John Bolton was indicted under the Espionage Act for sharing classified material with relatives for a book project—the latest DOJ case against a Trump critic.
- *Times of Israel*: Greece and Egypt finalized a deal preserving St. Catherine’s Monastery’s status at Mount Sinai, ensuring its protection from tourism development plans.
- *Israel National News*: A US judge lifted travel restrictions on anti-Israel activist Mahmoud Khalil, letting him resume speaking nationwide even as he appeals a deportation order; Khalil has defended Hamas’s Oct 7 massacre.
- *JNS*: A group calling itself “Turkish hacker Cyber Islam” hijacked PA systems and screens at four North American airports to broadcast pro-Hamas propaganda; investigations are underway in the U.S. and Canada.
- *Israel National News*: Microsoft’s 2025 cyber threat report ranks Israel as the world’s third most targeted nation for digital attacks, with 64% of Iranian offensive operations aimed at Israeli systems.
- *Jewish News*: UK PM Keir Starmer urged police to use existing laws against antisemitic chants and pledged £10 million for community security and an NHS antisemitism review.
- *Jewish Chronicle*: An NHS doctor previously suspended for antisemitic comments called for a public “list of Zionist doctors” so patients could refuse treatment, comparing Chabad to extremists.
- *Jewish Journal*: Scholar Naya Lekht traces modern anti-Zionism to Soviet propaganda that recast Jew-hatred as “progressive anti-imperialism,” arguing this ideological virus still fuels Western self-loathing.
- *Jewish Currents*: A Swedish documentary built from 1958–1989 state TV archives traces how public broadcasters shifted from sympathy for Israel to platforming radical anti-Zionists — a case study in Europe’s long media drift.
- *JNS*: Masha Gabriel argues journalism “died in Gaza” when major outlets amplified Hamas propaganda after the 2023 hospital hoax, replacing verification with activism.
- *Times of Israel*: New York mayoral frontrunner Zohran Mamdani again accused Israel of “genocide” during a debate and clashed with Andrew Cuomo over Hamas and Jewish concerns.
- *Jewish Chronicle*: British police arrested and suspended an Oxford student who led chants to “put the Zios in the ground”; firearms were later seized from his family home in Kent amid an ongoing hate-crime probe.
- *Times of Israel*: A Parisian venue canceled Israeli singer Liraz Charhi’s show under pressure, then apologized as a new hall stepped in; meanwhile, Malmö’s Jewish film festival still can’t find a cinema willing to host.

Developments to Watch

- **Bounties for remains tips** – The U.S. will offer financial rewards to Gazans who help locate the bodies of slain Israeli hostages, adding a new lever on Hamas's foot-dragging over returns. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Multinational recovery team forming** – Turkey, Egypt, Qatar and the UAE are preparing personnel for a remains-recovery/monitoring task force staged from Israel; Jerusalem says all personnel and equipment will be vetted to prevent cover for "resistance" activity.
- **PIJ rejects disarmament** – Islamic Jihad's deputy chief told Al Jazeera that "resistance factions" never agreed to disarm and won't accept forced disarmament, telegraphing a spoiler role vis-à-vis the ceasefire framework. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Coalition friction over remains** – Israeli and U.S. officials worry far-right ministers will use Hamas's delays on bodies to push aid cutoffs and a return to combat; Katz pledged "an immediate response" for each violation. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Yellow Line physically marked** – Defense Minister Katz ordered visible boundary markers along the IDF's new "Yellow Line" inside Gaza to clarify the defensive strip and signal that any crossing will draw fire.
- **Judea and Samaria sovereignty vote** – The Knesset is slated to vote next week on applying Israeli sovereignty in Judea and Samaria with anxiety in Netanyahu's office that passage may strain ties with Washington. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Arab donors set conditions** – Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain warned Washington they won't fund Gaza reconstruction unless Hamas is disarmed and held to the deal, tightening regional pressure on the terror group.
- **Aid convoys disrupted** – Tzav 9 activists blocked trucks bound for Kerem Shalom, demanding humanitarian shipments halt until all hostages' remains are returned; police are weighing charges against organizers.
- **Drone gun-running foiled** – IDF troops intercepted a cross-border drone carrying handguns and magazines into Israel; the payload was seized and handed to the ISA for mapping the smuggling cell.
- **Death-penalty track readied** – Justice officials completed prep to indict Nukhba perpetrators under offenses that can carry the death penalty; the decision now sits with the prime minister.
- **Lebanon stiff-arms direct talks** – Beirut's FM reiterated no direct negotiations with Israel, limiting a de-escalation channel on the northern file.
- **Qabatiya raid** – An attacker throwing explosives at IDF troops in northern *Shomron* was shot and killed; no Israeli injuries.

- **Syrian ask in Moscow** – Damascus seeks Russian military police redeployment in the south to blunt an expanded demilitarized zone request from Israel.

HERE is the bottom line before we light. The ceasefire only holds if Hamas hands over every body and puts every rifle on the floor. If not, Israel is ready to move.

After Shabbat, watch three pressure points: that the returns of the fallen speed up under the new bounty track; that the Knesset advances sovereignty in Judea and Samaria—long overdue, and a truthful answer to the dead-end fantasy of “two states”; and that Hezbollah does not mistake our quiet for weakness.

We will outsource neither our security nor our conscience. Back in your inboxes Sunday morning. Until then: hold fast, keep dignity, and welcome the rest.

— *Uri Zehavi · Intelligence Editor With Modi Zehavi · Data + Research Analyst*

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.

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