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READER EDITION

October 19, 2025

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ISRAEL BRIEF

# Sunday, October 19

*Twenty targets, one message: Hamas breaks the truce again, Katz orders decisive strikes, and Israel reminds Gaza what 'cease-fire' means.*

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CLASSIFICATION

Reader Edition

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**Shavua tov, friends.** The new week begins with clarity delivered by jet engines. Hamas violated the ceasefire with anti-tank fire and gunmen near Rafah; Israel answered across Gaza—twenty targets hit and counting. Defense Minister Israel Katz said it plain: Hamas will “learn the hard way” that the IDF protects its soldiers and answers every shot.

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THIS is enforcement rather than escalation for its own sake. The ceasefire was written in good faith; Hamas read it as opportunity. Now, every violation redraws the line in fire. The question is not whether Israel will respond—it's how many times Hamas wants to test the proof.

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## The War Today

IDF strikes in Rafah after Hamas targets military vehicles in violation of Gaza ceasefire

The IDF struck Hamas positions in Rafah after terrorists fired an anti-tank missile and gunfire at Israeli engineering vehicles, confirming the group's clearest violation of the ceasefire so far. Prime Minister Netanyahu convened a security assessment with Defense Minister Israel Katz and IDF Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir as Hamas accused Israel of "fabrications" while continuing its internal killing spree in Gaza. The attack followed reports of Hamas gunmen emerging from tunnel shafts in Khan Younis and Rafah, where soldiers neutralized advancing terrorists under ceasefire rules of engagement. The message is simple: Israel will not tolerate attacks dressed up as peace.

Hamas planning imminent attack on Gazans in violation of ceasefire, US warns

The US State Department notified ceasefire guarantors of "credible reports" that Hamas plans an imminent assault on Gazan civilians, pledging measures to protect them if the terror group proceeds. The warning lands as Hamas resumes internal purges, stalls the return of bodies, and Israeli forces strike gunmen who emerged from tunnels and opened fire near Rafah—proof the threat to Gazans comes first from Hamas.

Hamas says will hand over two hostages' bodies to Israel

Hamas told mediators it will transfer two more bodies tonight, while Israel identified the remains returned Friday as Eliyahu "Churchill" Margalit of Nir Oz. The group is still far short of the deal's first-phase obligation and has threatened to slow further returns over the Rafah closure, even as it used the Red Cross to pass another coffin. Jerusalem insists Hamas knows the locations of additional bodies; a multinational recovery team is being readied to find the rest using Israeli intelligence.

Iran declares no longer bound by nuclear deal

Tehran said it is no longer constrained by the 2015 JCPOA nuclear accord after its expiration, declaring all restrictions void while claiming continued "commitment to diplomacy." The announcement follows the June U.S.-Israel campaign that struck Iran's nuclear infrastructure and the UN's recent reimposition of sanctions. The collapse formalizes what has long been reality: Iran is back in the open nuclear business.

IDF Brig.-Gen. reassures northern communities after Lebanese civilians approach Israeli border

Galilee Division commander Brig.-Gen. Yuval Gez told residents that rules of engagement have not changed and forces are pushing back would-be spotters edging as close as 80 meters from the fence during the olive harvest. He said Division 91 is striking Hezbollah rebuild efforts daily and will run its largest drill since the war began. Border vigilance continues while the truce holds.

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## Inside Israel

Hundreds pay tribute to ‘pink angel’ Inbar Haiman as slain hostage is laid to rest

Hundreds attended the funeral of Inbar Haiman, 27, the last female hostage held in Gaza, whose body was returned this week. Family, friends, and President Herzog eulogized her as an artist and “free spirit,” while her mother called her “my pink angel.”

Freed hostage Alon Ohel back at the piano after two years in Hamas captivity

Pianist and former hostage Alon Ohel played again for the first time at Rabin Medical Center, days after his release from Gaza. Ohel was abducted from the Nova festival, held in tunnels for months—he says he relied on imagined melodies to survive captivity. His recovery (and reunion with fellow hostages) has become a symbol of endurance and spirit.

Coalition pushes new format for October 7 inquiry, to probe anti-government protest movement too

Facing a High Court clock, the coalition is drafting legislation for a “national commission” on the October 7 failures that would be chaired by a mutually agreed judge and include members from both sides. The design could widen the probe’s scope to pre-war politics and the protest movement, triggering pushback from bereaved families who demand a full, independent state inquiry with maximal powers.

Rothman said planning to fast-track bill that would split AG’s role into 2 jobs

Religious Zionism MK Simcha Rothman aims to advance a bill dividing the attorney general’s powers between a legal adviser and a newly created prosecutor general appointed by the coalition. The split would fix structural conflicts of interest.

### Netanyahu pushes for official war name change to War of Revival

The cabinet will vote Sunday to rename “Iron Swords” as “Milhemet HaTkuma” (the War of Revival). The PM and Defense Minister Israel Katz say the permanent name reflects a seven-front conflict and a national turning point. Opposition leader Yair Lapid blasted the move as spin.

### MKs Almog Cohen and Tzvi Succot attacked in Bir Hadaj and refuse to evacuate

Deputy Minister Almog Cohen and MK Tzvi Succot toured the illegal Bedouin encampment of Bir Hadaj to probe Egypt–Negev drone smuggling and were attacked by locals; they completed the visit despite police arriving late. The tour follows intelligence on folding-arm drones used for weapons runs—reiterating how the intersection of Bedouin clan crime and border smuggling can work together and affect national security in the Negev.

### Ex-hostage says Ben Gvir’s comments on prisoners led captors to beat them unconscious

A freed Israeli hostage told relatives that Hamas guards beat detainees after watching Itamar Ben Gvir on TV discuss tighter rules for convicted terrorists in Israeli prisons. That is Hamas weaponizing Israeli headlines as an excuse for torture. The blame sits entirely with Hamas: Israel runs a lawful prison system under judicial and medical oversight; Hamas runs cages, horsewhips, and terror.

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## Israel and the World

### ICC rejects Israeli appeal of Netanyahu, Gallant arrest warrants

The International Criminal Court refused Israel’s procedural appeal to quash arrest warrants for the prime minister and former defense minister, saying the filing wasn’t appealable, while a broader jurisdiction challenge is still pending. The charges are a political farce that ignores Israel’s unprecedented aid corridors and civilian warnings while Hamas hides behind human shields.

### EU freezes plan to sanction Israel after ceasefire deal with Hamas

Brussels shelved moves to curb trade ties and blacklist Ministers Itamar Ben Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich after the US-brokered Gaza ceasefire, with Germany, Hungary and others blocking unanimity. Belgium fumed, while officials signaled the package won’t be withdrawn but is now parked as capitals “wait and see.”

## Trump claims Saudis told him ‘yesterday’ they’re willing to join Abraham Accords

President Trump said Saudi officials indicated “as recently as yesterday” they’re ready to normalize with Israel, adding that once Riyadh moves “everybody goes in.” Riyadh has publicly tied normalization to an irreversible path to a “Palestinian” state; Trump’s own plan nods to a political horizon, even as he avoids endorsing two states.

## Witkoff ‘confident’ that all hostages will return from Gaza Strip

US special envoy Steve Witkoff told a Holocaust Museum audience the administration will keep expanding the Abraham Accords and press for the return of every fallen Israeli, saying families’ right to bury their loved ones is sacred. He reiterated that Hamas must disarm and has no future ruling Gaza.

## UAE buys land for permanent embassy in Israel

Abu Dhabi purchased a plot in Israel to build a permanent embassy, replacing leased space and underscoring that normalization survived two years of war. The Israel Land Authority and the Prime Minister’s Office facilitated the deal; the mission remains listed in Tel Aviv as ties keep deepening in trade, tourism, and tech.

## Ofcom rules BBC Gaza documentary was ‘materially misleading’

UK regulator Ofcom found the BBC committed a “serious breach” by failing to disclose that the narrator of its film *Gaza: How to Survive a Warzone* is the son of a Hamas deputy minister. Ofcom ordered a prime-time statement on BBC Two; the BBC apologized and accepted the ruling, saying it will comply.

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## Briefly Noted

- **London’s Met Police detained a Jewish lawyer** for wearing a Star of David near a “pro-Palestinian” rally, calling it “antagonizing” — a case study in two-tier policing where open Jew-hate skates while Jewish identity is treated as provocation.
- **Dozens of UK student groups rejected the Gaza ceasefire** and commemorated Hamas chief Yahya Sinwar as a “martyr,” drawing condemnation from Jewish leaders and government officials amid surging campus anti-semitism.
- **NYC mayoral frontrunner Zohran Mamdani faced backlash** for posing with an imam tied to the 1993 World Trade Center bombing; Jewish groups called for Democrats to denounce him.
- **Brighton & Hove Council tried to bar a Jewish speaker** from mentioning Oct. 7 or Hamas while passing a motion to probe divestment from Israel—censorship dressed up as “procedure.”

- **South African President Cyril Ramaphosa told parliament** the US-backed truce “will have no bearing” on Pretoria’s case—baseless lawfare.
- **Ben Cohen urges dismantling the UN’s CEIRPP committee** and defunding one-sided anti-Israel organs on the 50th year since the UN’s “Zionism is racism” libel—because as long as the UN entertains erasing the world’s only Jewish state, peace is theater.
- **Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado told Netanyahu** she backs Israel’s campaign against Hamas and the Iranian axis, and congratulated him on the hostage-release deal.
- **Portugal’s parliament backed a Chega bill** to ban face veils in most public spaces, pending the president’s sign-off — another EU state moving toward niqab/burqa restrictions that shape Europe’s debate over religious dress and security.
- **A tanker fire in the Gulf of Aden** and renewed Houthi denials show how Iran’s proxies remain a regional threat despite the Gaza truce.
- **A rare whale shark nicknamed “Ofek”** was likely hunted by fishermen from Gaza and filmed being dragged ashore. The endangered species had been sighted for weeks along Israel’s Mediterranean coast before its death.
- **A newly opened Knesset Museum in Jerusalem’s restored “Old Knesset”** tells the story of Israel’s democratic foundations through restored chambers, original furniture, and interactive exhibits linking the Declaration of Independence to the Sanhedrin’s legacy.
- **A Milan mural honoring the Bibas family hostages** was vandalized during a synagogue commemoration.
- **A viral clip shows a man tearing down a poster** of slain hostages in Tel Aviv before being confronted by its owner. The Hostages and Missing Families Forum condemned the act as “a moral and national disgrace,” stressing unity until all bodies are returned.
- **Tzav 9 activists blocked humanitarian aid trucks** bound for Gaza, demanding Hamas return the bodies of fallen hostages before any further transfers. Police cleared the roads after an hour-long standoff.

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## Developments to Watch

- **Israeli response underway** – Following Hamas’s anti-tank fire in Rafah, the prime minister ordered a preplanned “strong” strike package from a ready target bank. The IDF is hitting command sites and tunnel nodes with precision airstrikes, signaling that violations of the ceasefire will draw real fire. Expect follow-on waves, localized comms blackouts, and tight operational control. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

- **Ceasefire narrative fight** – Hamas denied involvement, claiming it “has no contact” with its Rafah units and “no knowledge” of any clash. It’s a calculated information op—deny, delay, and muddy accountability while keeping leverage on the hostages’ bodies. Watch for inflated casualty claims and coordinated pressure on mediators.
- **Rafah leverage hardens** – With strikes active, the closure of Rafah becomes leverage, not logistics. Any reopening will now depend on both verified quiet along the Yellow Line and the continued return of remains. Expect tighter screening of aid convoys and heavy-equipment transfers.
- **Hostage bodies track under fire** – The strikes will test whether Hamas “finds” more hostages’ remains or deepens its stall. The planned multinational recovery team remains on the table, but Israeli intelligence will vet every participant and piece of gear.
- **Hamas breach pattern** – The anti-tank fire and recent tunnel-emergence attacks form a clear trend of probing under the ceasefire’s cover. The IDF will likely release footage to prove sequence and justification, exposing Hamas’s tactical deceit. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Northern miscalculation risk** – Hezbollah may try to “honor” Gaza’s escalation with its own gestures. Expect monitoring and preemption around quarry and “Green Without Borders” rebuild zones already struck, especially during this week’s large northern drill. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Drone smuggling on Egypt border** – IDF units downed multiple drones ferrying rifles, magazines, and contraband from Sinai overnight, then found another at dawn. Locals say more get through than are caught. Expect expanded aerial interdiction and tighter counter-UAS deployment. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Route 60 shooting, Samaria** – Gunmen from Ein Yabrud opened fire on a car between Ofra and Givat Assaf. Two rounds hit the vehicle; the Israeli driver escaped injury. Reinforcements are hunting the cell, and patrols along the artery have been increased.
- **Tubas explosive ambush** – Three soldiers were wounded by an IED in the Al-Far’a-Tubas corridor. Follow-up raids destroyed an explosives lab, and further entry operations are expected tonight.
- **US vice president inbound** – JD Vance lands Monday for talks on completing Phase A (return of remains) and enforcing disarmament. Expect statements balancing U.S. mediation with support for Israel’s response.
- **Turkey widens Syria footprint** – Ankara plans a 30-kilometer strike zone north of Aleppo, moving drones and air defenses while backing President al-Sharaa and courting economic reset with Israel. That complicates southern Syria demilitarization and could ripple toward the Golan. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Property flight in Dahieh** – Residents of Hezbollah’s Beirut stronghold are reportedly selling homes, fearing renewed conflict or pinpoint Israeli strikes now that Gaza’s front is active again.

- **Moody's turns positive** – The rater projects Israeli GDP growth at 2.5% this year and 4.5% next, assuming the Rafah escalation stays limited. Markets are watching whether security pressure can coexist with fiscal restraint.
- **Domestic flashpoints** – The renewed Gaza strikes and the hostage-body debate may trigger protest waves and counter-rallies. Police will lock down key junctions and crossings; activists from Tzav 9 hint they'll resume road blockages at Kerem Shalom.
- **Polling swings, early-election chatter** – New surveys show Likud climbing while several factions flirt with the threshold; the calendar could move if coalition math shifts.

THE strike waves mark a shift from patience to demonstration. Israel is showing the region that it still sets the tempo, that deterrence doesn't sleep through truces. Katz's warning—"the intensity of the responses will continue to increase"—is policy Hamas continues to want to test.

Watch three tracks in the coming days: whether Hamas blinks and halts its probing attacks; whether Hezbollah mirrors Gaza's flare; and whether the U.S. backs Israel's right to finish what Hamas keeps restarting.

Stay alert, stay grounded, and remember—clarity is an Israeli export worth defending.

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