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READER EDITION

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ISRAEL BRIEF

Monday, October 20

Ceasefire on paper, deterrence in practice. Israel enforces the line, Hamas tests it, and the world shows its tells.

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Reader Edition

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The War Today

Hamas attacks Israeli troops in Rafah, prompting IDF airstrikes, shaking ceasefire

HAMAS gunmen fired beyond the Gaza “yellow line,” triggering Israeli airstrikes in Rafah and destabilizing the new truce. The group asserts commitment to the deal while blaming Israel, even as Washington reported credible intelligence about an impending Hamas attack on Gazan civilians.

Two Nahal Brigade soldiers fell in southern Gaza

Major Yaniv Kula, age 26, and Staff Sergeant Itay Yavetz, age 21, were killed in Rafah when Hamas terrorists emerged from a tunnel and fired an anti-tank missile—violating the ceasefire agreement. The IDF returned fire and struck the area. Both men from Modi’in-Maccabim-Reut were remembered as principled fighters who defended Israel.

Senior Nukhba commander eliminated

Israeli strikes reportedly killed Yahya al-Mabhouh, a senior Hamas elite unit commander, hours after terrorists attacked IDF forces near Rafah with an anti-tank missile and sniper fire. The operation signals Israel’s determination to punish ceasefire violators and degrade the cadre responsible for October 7 atrocities.

Israel halts Gaza aid after Hamas ceasefire breach, then reverses course under US pressure

After Hamas fired a missile killing two Israeli soldiers near Rafah, Jerusalem briefly suspended humanitarian aid to Gaza, then restored deliveries following American intervention. The brief pause exposed the fragility of the Trump-brokered truce and Israel’s struggle balancing deterrence with diplomacy.

Hamas says it located deceased Gaza hostage, to return remains today if conditions ‘suitable’

Hamas claims it found the body of a slain hostage and might return the remains if “field conditions” allow, while warning that Israeli strikes could delay searches. The group continues bargaining with grief, using bodies as leverage even as Israel targets Rafah following truce violations.

Inside Israel

The 16 hostages whose bodies are still held in Gaza

AFTER the final living hostages came home last week, 16 Israelis and two foreign nationals remain in Gaza as bodies, denying their families burial and closure. Hamas claims some remains are unreachable or unlocated; Israel disputes that and maintains pressure, with names like Lt. Hadar Goldin

and Cpt. Omer Neutra reminding the country that proper burial is part of bringing them home.

Behind the medical decision: Why some hostages were released from hospitals earlier than others

Doctors caring for freed hostages say recovery must move at the patient's pace, not the headlines'. Each survivor's discharge is decided individually, balancing malnutrition, injury, and trauma recovery, with some continuing therapy in residential facilities for months.

Netanyahu Confirms He Will Run in Israel's 2026 Election

Prime Minister Netanyahu announced his intention to seek reelection, calling the Gaza campaign "the war of rebirth" and pledging to fight until all hostages are freed and Hamas disarmed. He credited coordination with Donald Trump for recent gains and claimed Biden delayed arms deliveries.

Israel targets Arab crime networks under terror law

The government approved new measures allowing major crime syndicates to be designated as terrorist groups, granting expanded investigative powers and harsher penalties. Netanyahu said the goal is to "stop the raging crime," following record violence in Arab communities this year.

Two police officers injured during Haredi protests against draft dodger arrests

Police clashed with hundreds of Haredi demonstrators in Jerusalem's Mea Shearim after arrests of draft dodgers, with fires lit and stones thrown. Officers used crowd control measures as protests spread to Beit Shemesh, signaling renewed tension over Israel's conscription law.

Police cancel Tel Aviv soccer derby after fans riot; 13 arrested, 3 cops injured

The long-awaited Tel Aviv derby between Hapoel and Maccabi collapsed into chaos when fans hurled flares and smoke bombs, injuring police and a 13-year-old boy. Authorities evacuated 30,000 spectators and canceled the match.

Israel and the World

Canada's Carney says he would uphold ICC warrant if Netanyahu were to enter country

CANADIAN Prime Minister Mark Carney said he would arrest Netanyahu under the ICC's disputed warrant and accused Israel of blocking a Palestinian state—aligning Ottawa with anti-Israel European governments. The statement drew outrage from Jewish leaders and praise from the far left.

Netanyahu's top Trump whisperer: How PM's closest adviser helped shape US-backed war deal

Ron Dermer, Netanyahu's closest adviser and longtime Washington operator, is credited with steering Israel's pro-Trump strategy and helping broker the

Gaza ceasefire largely on Jerusalem's terms. His role deepened Israel's alignment with America's right and evangelical base—securing Trump's backing but widening the partisan gulf in U.S.-Israel relations.

Centrist Rodrigo Paz wins Bolivian presidency, ending nearly 20 years of leftist rule

Bolivia elected centrist senator Rodrigo Paz Pereira, breaking the Socialist MAS party's two-decade grip on power. Paz's victory reflects voter fatigue with economic decline and promises a pragmatic shift toward renewed Western ties and market reforms. Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar congratulated Paz and said Jerusalem looks forward to restoring diplomatic relations—cut by Bolivia's previous regime after Hamas's October 7 attack.

Israeli deputy FM kicks off historic visit to Pacific

Deputy Foreign Minister Sharren Haskel began a six-day trip through the Philippines, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and New Zealand—the first official Israeli visit to the latter two nations. Her mission strengthens ties with Pacific allies that have recently opened embassies in Jerusalem, underscoring Israel's growing partnerships in the Global South and among Christian nations.

China's role in the anti-Israel coalition

Beijing has emerged as a quiet adversary in Israel's wars, amplifying anti-Israel propaganda through state media and supplying Iran and its proxies with weapons components. Its alliance with Tehran, rooted in oil dependence and anti-American rivalry, has turned China into a silent funder and enabler of the region's anti-Israel bloc.

Syria arrests Assad relative tied to \$2 billion Captagon empire

Syria's new transitional government arrested Namir Badi' Assad, cousin of the ousted dictator, in a crackdown on the Assad family's narcotics network that bankrolled terror and proxy wars for years. Captagon—the amphetamine found in Hamas gunmen's pockets on Oct. 7—was a regime export worth billions; its collapse signals a reckoning long overdue.

Briefly Noted

- U.S. Vice President JD Vance, walking back the timing of his visit, said he or another senior official will visit Israel “in the next few days” to monitor the ceasefire's stability, describing the path to peace as “hills and valleys.”
- IHH, a banned Hamas-linked Turkish GONGO, now operating inside Gaza raises red flags about Ankara's footprint and the “day after,” where “aid” and Islamism mix.
- Satellite images show a new UAE-linked airstrip on Yemen's Zuqar Island, part of a network of Red Sea bases countering Iran-backed Houthis.
- Yemen's Houthis detained 20 UN workers, claiming they spied for Israel—a conspiracy so absurd even the UN noticed.

- Qatar's expanding air power—with F-15s, Rafales, and Typhoons—raises concerns about Western technology supporting Israel's adversaries and eroding Israel's qualitative military edge. The U.S. plan to host Qatari pilots for training in Idaho rightfully sharpens those concerns.
- Israel's Foreign Ministry launched a billboard blitz in Times Square exposing Hamas for executing Gazans during the ceasefire and demanding Gaza's demilitarization. The message—"Hamas must go"—aims to remind Americans that Hamas's cruelty extends to its own people.
- Israelis divided over Kushner and Witkoff's accounts of the Doha strike, previewed on 60 Minutes, with each portraying different motives behind the September attack on Hamas leaders.
- Democratic Congressman Tom Suozzi broke with many in his party by praising President Trump for the hostage deal and taking a firm stand against anti-Israel voices in New York politics. His stance shows that old-school, pro-Israel centrism still has a foothold in the Democratic ranks.
- A Hamas commander freed in February's hostage deal will speak at a Greek university alongside PFLP-linked activists—a European reminder that "solidarity" often doubles as rehabilitation for terror.
- European Parliament head Roberta Metsola honored Oct. 7 victims and warned against tolerating Hamas slogans on EU campuses—a rare moral backbone moment in Brussels.
- After pro-Palestinian activists raised hybrid Scotland–Palestine flags across Glasgow, angry residents began tearing them down while the city council looked away. The campaign's sponsors openly glorify terrorists like Leila Khaled, exposing how "solidarity" branding in Europe often masks support for violent extremism.
- Britain's Labour government abandoned its proposed Islamophobia definition after critics warned it could criminalize criticism of Islam.
- The Blue Sky Warden—a new light strike and reconnaissance aircraft jointly developed by Israel Aerospace Industries and the U.S. firm L3Harris—offers Israel a cheap, durable border patrol platform filling the gap between drones and fighter jets.
- A string of arson attacks on hay barns across Israel has disrupted the dairy supply chain and threatens a nationwide milk shortage. Officials blame protection rackets for the escalating fires.
- Israel ranks just behind Japan, Switzerland, and Spain in life expectancy—83.8 years—despite spending barely two-thirds of what most European nations invest in healthcare. A small miracle of efficiency and Mediterranean stubbornness.

Developments to Watch

- **Yellow Line breaches multiply** – The IDF reported at least three Hamas infiltration attempts east of the Yellow Line, with snipers and raiders probing IDF positions near Rafah and Beit Lahia. Arabic-language warnings told Gazans to stay west of the line as Israel steps up aerial and ground surveillance. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Nuseirat tunnel campaign widens** – Israel geared strikes toward underground networks in Nuseirat and central camps that had been off-limits while live hostages were present. Officials say the renewed freedom of action will focus on tunnels and cells operating under ceasefire cover.
- **Hezbollah operative killed in south Lebanon** – Israeli action reportedly eliminated Ahmad Baalbek, tied to Hezbollah activity near the border. The tally of Hezbollah losses since the “ceasefire” continues to climb, keeping the northern front hot even as Gaza dominates headlines. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Houthi missile threat tonight** – Yemen’s Iran-backed Houthis warned they would hit “deep in the occupation” in response to Israeli strikes on Hamas. Air-defense crews will treat this as a live threat window over the Red Sea and Eilat. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Samaria raid targets terror cell** – Border Police undercover forces in Nablus (Al-Ain camp) killed a terrorist who threatened troops during an arrest operation, then completed detentions without Israeli casualties. Expect revenge chatter from “Al-Quds Brigades West Bank,” which vowed retaliation after Tubas losses.
- **Near-Gaza security dialed down** – Despite Hamas violations, the IDF reduced reservist staffing in city security squads around the Gaza envelope; local councils are demanding a reversal. That’s a preventable gap in readiness on the very day the truce cracked.
- **Mass infiltration caught near Lachish** – Border Police intercepted 122 “Palestinians” from the Hebron area trying to slip deeper into Israel overnight. Most are job-seekers or criminal runners, but one terrorist is all it takes; patrols along Judea foothills need tightening.
- **Shots fired at Hadera Chabad** – Gunfire pierced the Chabad House windows while people learned inside. No injuries, thank G-d. Israeli Police are treating it as a targeted attack; expect an uptick in security around shuls and Chabad centers.
- **Iran hangs alleged Mossad asset** – Tehran executed a man it accused of spying for Israel and leaking classified data. It’s classic regime theater and a pressure signal to Jerusalem and Washington.
- **Gaza governance track forming** – A senior U.S. official says the Gaza Civil-Military Coordination Center began initial work Friday in Israel to organize aid and is planning for an international force; France floated an EU role to help stand up a Palestinian police presence in Gaza.

- **PM trial paused** – Netanyahu’s trial is off for several days due to judges’ exposure to classified material and a panel member’s personal reasons.
 - **ISIS plotter gets 4.5 years** – A Tayibe resident who pledged to ISIS and planned to bomb Tel Aviv’s Azrieli Towers received a light sentence, raising eyebrows about deterrence.
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Closing

THE day resolves to this: Hamas violated the deal, Israel enforced it, and everyone else took a position. Enforcement worked; it also raised the price of the next test.

Watch for another strike package if probes continue east of the Yellow Line, a Hezbollah “gesture” that tries to cash in on Gaza’s heat, and whether the hostages’ bodies move on schedule or stall.

Teach the difference between a ceasefire and a shield for terror. Support the families of the fallen. Clarity wins when we refuse to borrow Hamas’s language for Hamas’s crimes.

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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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