



Forensic intelligence for those who act.

READER EDITION

October 23, 2025

ISRAEL BRIEF

Thursday, October 23

Ceasefire by clipboard. Deterrence by habit.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE A secular, Muslim-majority partner on the ground challenges the “occupation” narrative while reducing Western-uniform dependency. A stabilization force with clear mandate and enforceable rules of engagement could gain international diplomatic legitimacy through Azerbaijani participation.

CLASSIFICATION

Reader Edition

DISTRIBUTION

Open · Free to share with attribution

IN THIS EDITION

Israel Brief: Thursday, October 23	3
Ceasefire by clipboard. Deterrence by habit.	3
The War Today	3
US officials arrive for ‘Bibi-sitting’ as Washington tightens ceasefire oversight of Israel	3
Nearly a year after truce, women in south Lebanon say war never ended	3
Thousands of Arabs slip into Israel from PA monthly, officials warn .	4
Inside Israel	4
Lacking majority, coalition pulls bills from Knesset agenda, freezing legislation	4
Knesset passes Judea, Samaria sovereignty bills in preliminary reading	4
Israel and the World	4
World Court rejects Israel’s claims UNRWA tied to Hamas, orders to permit UN aid into Gaza	5
Experts: Azerbaijan’s role in Gaza stabilization force could strengthen Israel	5
Top UAE adviser calls for compromise to settle Israel-Palestinian conflict	5
Briefly Noted	5
Defense and Strategy	6
Governance and Economy	6
Diplomacy and Lawfare	6
Antisemitism and Culture	6
Developments to Watch	7
Closing Assessment	7

Israel Brief: Thursday, October 23

Ceasefire by clipboard. Deterrence by habit.

By Uriel Zehavi • אוריאל זחאבי Oct 23, 2025

The War Today

US OFFICIALS ARRIVE FOR 'BIBI-SITTING' AS WASHINGTON TIGHTENS CEASE-FIRE OVERSIGHT OF ISRAEL

Washington is establishing enforcement mechanisms through a multinational hub in Kiryat Gat with approximately 200 troops to verify the truce, recover hostage remains, vet Gaza governance structures, and prevent reconstruction funds from reaching Hamas. High-level American delegations—Vice President Vance and Secretary of State Rubio—visited with CENTCOM planners to advance a stabilization force concept. Israel rejected Turkish or Qatari participation and retained personnel vetting authority.

The push includes recruitment of Saudi and Gulf funding support. Bereaved families requested postponement of “Phase 2” until all remains are returned; Vance acknowledged some bodies remain underground and recovery requires time. CENTCOM is developing a dedicated multinational unit for recovery operations.

ASSESSMENT

The American engagement pace suggests sustained involvement. Success depends on actual results—recovering the fallen, constraining Hamas, excluding foreign spoilers—rather than procedural focus. Israelis may tolerate international presence if outcomes materialize; prolonged bureaucracy risks friction and Israeli corrective measures.

NEARLY A YEAR AFTER TRUCE, WOMEN IN SOUTH LEBANON SAY WAR NEVER ENDED

Tens of thousands remain displaced in southern Lebanon almost one year after the November 2024 ceasefire. Israeli precision operations persist as Hezbollah reestablishes positions along the border. Reconstruction funding remains blocked pending the group's disarmament.

The northern front sustained operational tempo despite formal truce arrangements. Lebanon's prime minister has publicly called for Hezbollah disarmament and political-only status—an unusual acknowledgment of national exhaustion with the organization's parallel state structure. U.S. Senate investigations documented Hezbollah's drug and money-laundering operations across Latin America, with active operatives inside the United States.

Why it matters: The Iran-Hezbollah axis constitutes a transnational threat beyond border security. Displaced civilians will not return safely until the organization redeploys north of the Litani River, surrenders its arsenal, and loses access to foreign revenue. Israeli deterrence operations will continue until these conditions are met.

THOUSANDS OF ARABS SLIP INTO ISRAEL FROM PA MONTHLY, OFFICIALS WARN

Security officials estimate approximately 40,000 Palestinian Authority residents breach the security barrier monthly through gaps and inadequate surveillance. Most cross for employment, though incidents like the 122 suspects apprehended near Lachish demonstrate how identical breaches enable reconnaissance and terrorist operations.

Local councils reported staffing shortages and unrepaired fence sections; the IDF and Border Police attributed arrests to their efforts. The assessment emphasizes secure barriers, prosecution of Israeli facilitators, patrol surge capacity, and sensor deployment as live security imperatives rather than labor market accommodations.

Inside Israel

LACKING MAJORITY, COALITION PULLS BILLS FROM KNESSET AGENDA, FREEZING LEGISLATION

The coalition withdrew members' bills rather than risk parliamentary defeat as ultra-Orthodox parties boycott votes over the stalled draft-exemption law. With only 60 seats, the government cannot pass routine measures while opposition initiatives—including sovereignty proposals—remain on the agenda. Otzma Yehudit threatened coalition departure if the death-penalty-for-terror bill stalls.

Analysis: Legislative gridlock stems from the draft crisis intersecting with razor-thin coalition mathematics. Genuine service frameworks requiring quotas, timelines, sanctions, and Haredi accommodation pathways are necessary. Until implemented, governance dysfunction persists while military personnel shoulder disproportionate burdens.

KNESSET PASSES JUDEA, SAMARIA SOVEREIGNTY BILLS IN PRELIMINARY READING

Opposition-sponsored sovereignty measures advanced: Avigdor Liberman's Ma'ale Adumim annexation proposal and Avi Maoz's broader Judea and Samaria sovereignty bill. Likud ministers departed per prime ministerial directive citing timing and opposition sponsorship concerns, while Religious Zionism and Otzma Yehudit supported both. Bills advance to committee for further readings.

ASSESSMENT

Three decades of concessions yielded terrorism in response. The name "Judea" derives from this ancient homeland; controlling this elevated terrain protects the coastal plain and Ben-Gurion Airport. Secretary of State Rubio has already signaled American opposition to sovereignty moves. Expect escalating pressure preceding second and third readings. These preliminary votes reflect public sentiment viewing the heartland as permanent territory, not negotiable leverage.

Israel and the World

WORLD COURT REJECTS ISRAEL'S CLAIMS UNRWA TIED TO HAMAS, ORDERS TO PERMIT UN AID INTO GAZA

The International Court of Justice issued a non-binding advisory opinion requiring Israel to ensure civilian basic needs and facilitate UN relief operations, including UNRWA. The court rejected Israel's assertions regarding systematic Hamas infiltration—despite nine UNRWA staff being dismissed for October 7 participation—and criticized prior aid restrictions. Jerusalem rejected the findings while reiterating documented evidence of UNRWA's terror connections.

Significance: This intersects with the U.S.-brokered ceasefire permitting 600 daily aid trucks and Israel's documented evidence of UNRWA-Hamas collaboration. Lawfare intensity will increase: courts issue opinions amplified by adversaries while Israel absorbs the cost. Israeli skepticism toward UN agencies requiring self-policing remains policy-based rather than obstinate.

EXPERTS: AZERBAIJAN'S ROLE IN GAZA STABILIZATION FORCE COULD STRENGTHEN ISRAEL

International reports suggest Azerbaijan could participate in a multinational Gaza stabilization force alongside other Muslim-majority partners. Analysts note Baku's established security relationships with Israel, battlefield experience, and shared deterrence interests against Iranian proxy networks strengthen Azerbaijani credibility. Economic integration—Azerbaijani oil flowing to Israel and SOCAR's Tamar gas field stake—deepens strategic interdependence across energy, security, and diplomatic dimensions.

ASSESSMENT

A secular, Muslim-majority partner on the ground challenges the "occupation" narrative while reducing Western-uniform dependency. A stabilization force with clear mandate and enforceable rules of engagement could gain international diplomatic legitimacy through Azerbaijani participation.

TOP UAE ADVISER CALLS FOR COMPROMISE TO SETTLE ISRAEL-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

UAE presidential adviser Anwar Gargash advocated a "divided land" framework—Israeli security guarantees with Palestinian state viability—characterizing the Gaza ceasefire as a diplomatic reset opening. He flagged Judea and Samaria annexation as a UAE red line despite Abu Dhabi's normalization and reconstruction positioning. The underlying message emphasizes Hamas disarmament, unlocked Gulf financing, and expanded Abraham Accords development.

Analysis: Two-state frameworks lack domestic Israeli support extending into the foreseeable future; October 7 foreclosed that pathway. Genuine compromise requires Hamas disarmament and intact Israeli security architecture. Gulf capitals can contribute by reducing Islamist financing and supporting governance prioritizing order over terrorism.

Briefly Noted

DEFENSE AND STRATEGY

- **Globes:** Germany's €2 billion Spike missile procurement demonstrates sustained European military reliance on Israeli defense technology despite political exclusions from certain defense forums.
- **Jerusalem Post:** Shield AI unveiled the X-BAT autonomous combat jet featuring long-range VTOL capability and runway-independent launching. Western airpower increasingly shifts toward attritable, runway-independent platforms complicating enemy targeting.
- **Israel National News:** U.S. sanctions targeting Rosneft, Lukoil, and subsidiaries pressure allies toward Putin's oil revenue containment while advocating Ukraine ceasefire.

GOVERNANCE AND ECONOMY

- **Jerusalem Post:** The Knesset State Control Committee rejected 6-4 a State Commission of Inquiry into October 7 failures; the chair pledged a revote as the High Court demands government timeline.
- **Israel National News:** Venture capitalist Michael Eisenberg advocated a "million Olim" immigration initiative at a Ministry of Aliyah conference, followed by government-business charter pledging pre-arrival hiring, mentoring, and immigrant advocacy. Framing Aliyah as national growth policy rather than ceremonial.
- **Ynet:** Three months post-pledge of NIS 1 billion-plus for northern rehabilitation, the government has transferred no funds, leaving border communities short on housing and security projects. Ministry disputes explain delays.

DIPLOMACY AND LAWFARE

- **JNS:** A report documents Western-funded Gaza aid NGOs cultivating Hamas relationships through hospital co-location and access arrangements, urging donor governments demand transparency and defund organizations amplifying Hamas narratives.
- **Times of Israel:** Twelve UN staff detained by Iran-backed Houthis in Sanaa received release; 53 employees remain "arbitrarily detained" amid fabricated espionage allegations.
- **Times of Israel:** The IOC instructed international federations against staging events in Indonesia and froze Olympic hosting discussions following Jakarta's Israeli gymnast ban, citing core non-discrimination principles.

ANTISEMITISM AND CULTURE

- **JNS:** Watchdog StopAntisemitism reports 400 of 1,000 profiled antisemites have faced termination for IHRA-defined Jew-hatred; many dismissals follow public pressure.
- **Israel National News:** Malmö cinemas refused Jewish Film Festival hosting and Brussels canceled a pro-Israel concert, reflecting European Jewish cultural marginalization amid "multicultural" frameworks.

- **The Jewish Chronicle:** Birmingham's away fan ban rewarded Islamist intimidation over equal protection; Britain requires confronting Islamist extremism rather than appeasement.

Developments to Watch

- **Gaza control line division:** U.S. and Israeli discussions explore temporary Gaza zoning under Israeli versus Hamas control, restricting reconstruction to Israeli-controlled zones pending disarmament. Hardens territorial facts while blocking Hamas funding. **Likely to escalate**
- **Ein Qana targeting:** IAF eliminated Issa Ahmad Karbala, a Radwan squad commander, maintaining pressure on Hezbollah's invasion cadre during the formal truce. Beirut cannot enforce its own authority; Israel continues enforcement operations. **Likely to escalate**
- **Saudi Lebanese funding halt:** Saudi Arabia declined Lebanese Army funding, deeming it ineffective against Hezbollah and scrapping Paris conference support recruitment. Removes financial alibis for Beirut and Hezbollah buffer capacity reduction.
- **Bab al-Mandab seizure:** Yemen's recognized government intercepted a smuggling vessel carrying Russian ATGMs and drone components destined for Houthis. The Iran-Houthi supply pipeline persists; each seizure extends shipping lane viability.
- **Houthi defense minister deterioration:** The Houthi defense minister struck weeks ago by Israel reportedly faces rapid medical decline. Demonstrates deterrence reaching distant leadership and long-range capability extensions beyond Gaza.
- **Samaria post-Evyatar operations:** Following Saturday's Evyatar shooting attempt, IDF units raided Fatah-dominant villages, arrested suspects, and recovered weapons from hideouts. Rapid operations deny terror cells recovery intervals.
- **Lachish crossing arrests:** Border Police and IDF apprehended 122 illegal crossers from Hebron area near Lachish; councils reported fence gaps and thin patrols. Illegal crossing sites require live security prioritization rather than labor market accommodation.
- **Husan bypass sabotage:** Oil spill on the Husan bypass toward Beitar and Tzur Hadassah produced chain-reaction crashes; the road remains hazardous. Low-technology sabotage on commuter arteries requires adjusted patrol patterns and camera coverage.
- **Jerusalem-Gush Etzion stone-throwing:** Stone-throwing near Al-Khader continued affecting cars on the Jerusalem corridor. Recurring violence demands sustained presence and tactical response beyond temporary clearance.

Closing Assessment

Enforcement functions because implementation exists. The IDF maintains Hezbollah pressure while Beirut operates in conditional language. Domestic

sovereignty votes reveal public positioning; international resistance demonstrates early cost arrival. Court advisory opinions advise; they lack command authority.

Continued monitoring of the security frontier, lawfare escalation, and border dynamics remains essential. Resolve maintenance proves foundational.

— 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.

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.