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READER EDITION

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ISRAEL BRIEF

Friday, October 24

Borders hold, allies wobble, enemies reorganize. The war's quiet front is now paperwork and patience—and neither lasts forever.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE Economic control shapes political outcomes. If reconstruction cash routes through Sinai intermediaries and Chinese suppliers, Israel loses leverage and visibility while an Iran-aligned power embeds itself in Gaza's future governance structure.

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Israel Brief: Friday, October 24

Borders hold, allies wobble, enemies reorganize. The war's quiet front is now paperwork and patience—and neither lasts forever.

The War Today

HOSTAGES, RESTRAINT, AND RETRIBUTION: FIGHTING UNDER A MORAL TRAP

The IDF sustained casualties after Hamas weaponized “protected compounds” designated as off-limits due to suspected hostage presence. Meanwhile, Israeli forces have “eliminated eight of the October 7 abductors” through targeted operations. The Red Cross faced criticism for failing to demand accountability or access to captives. A stolen reservist vehicle was driven into Gaza and publicized online, highlighting security lapses.

ASSESSMENT

Israel operates under asymmetric rules where restraint becomes a vulnerability. The response requires tighter doctrine preserving operational flexibility while maintaining relentless, intelligence-driven targeting of those responsible for abductions. Enforcement gaps at home carry the same strategic cost as battlefield ones.

THE BATTLE FOR GAZA'S “DAY AFTER:” DIPLOMACY, DISARMAMENT, AND THE DANGER OF RECYCLING HAMAS

Hamas and the Palestinian Authority discussed Trump's Gaza reconstruction plan in Cairo, with the PA seeking control and Hamas demanding U.S. enforcement of the ceasefire. Washington proposed phased rebuilding in IDF-controlled zones contingent on disarmament, facing Arab opposition. An International Stabilization Force led by Azerbaijan and Indonesia will deploy after Israel rejected Turkish participation; Gulf states declined involvement.

Key complications: Egypt's delegation withdrew after failing to secure PA security roles. Italy offered police training; Jordan will post a ceasefire liaison. Within Gaza, Hamas operates underground detention centers and a new “Sahem Unit” crushing dissent during the ceasefire. U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff faces scrutiny over “financial ties to a \$2 billion Emirati venture.” His adviser admitted Hamas would “surrender only heavy weapons while retaining small arms for self-defense,” with handovers going to security forces partly staffed by Hamas itself. Qatar and Turkey are positioning to preserve Hamas influence under “stability” messaging.

In Judea and Samaria, forces discovered *Mein Kampf* and terror funds in a Hamas-linked charity. PA television honored a child-murderer as a national hero.

ASSESSMENT

The reconstruction framework risks becoming Hamas restoration disguised as governance. “Disarmament” under current definitions amounts to organizational rebranding—swapping rocket caches for political control. Foreign forces without enforcement capacity merely provide cover. Unless financial pipelines, ideology, and political networks sustaining Hamas are severed, every new structure built enables the next conflict.

IRAN’S NUCLEAR RECONSTRUCTION

Satellite imagery shows Tehran rebuilding struck facilities with new hardened structures and expanded underground work following Israeli operations. The regime is testing methods to protect nuclear sites while reconstituting AMAD program capabilities while limiting IAEA visibility.

Iran’s shadow-banking network moves billions through UAE and Singapore fronts. New defense pacts with Belarus and Russia expand its sanctions shield.

Why It Matters: Tehran iterates against Israeli airpower in real time. Disrupting this requires simultaneous targeting of both underground facilities and financial infrastructure before the regime completes hardening.

Inside Israel**SHAS QUILTS COALITION OVER HAREDI DRAFT LAW**

The ultra-Orthodox party suspended Knesset duties protesting the unresolved Haredi military exemption—repeating 2018, 2021, and July walkouts over identical demands. The IDF warns of manpower shortages after two years continuous combat. Shas insists on legislation protecting “yeshiva student status” and plans coordination with other religious factions.

The attorney general now mandates stricter enforcement, potentially reducing Shas’s leverage.

Bottom Line: Theatrical walkouts lose impact when operational necessity makes exemptions costly. Any draft framework must accommodate observant recruits’ religious requirements—parallel to how kashrut standards were managed—or integration remains theoretical.

HADERA’S CRIME CRISIS

A surge of shootings and grenade attacks has driven residents to demand national intervention. The mayor declared emergency status, pledging security budgets and patrols. Arab organized crime clans battling over protection rackets and construction tenders fuel the violence. Police accused city leaders of politicizing the crisis.

ASSESSMENT

This reflects systemic failure against Arab criminal networks dominating Israel’s periphery. Solutions require financial enforcement, sentencing reform, and dismantling money-laundering operations—not merely surveillance expansion.

HIGH COURT REVIEWS GAZA MEDIA BAN

Israel's High Court ordered the government to reconsider its two-year ban on foreign journalists entering Gaza, citing "substantially changed" conditions post-ceasefire. The Foreign Press Association argues the prohibition violates democratic principles; the state cites operational risk and troop safety.

Context: Israel faces a dilemma—independent access enables transparency but creates hostage/casualty risks; continued restriction fuels censorship allegations.

Israel and the World

UK PARLIAMENT CONFRONTS IRAN'S DRONE THREAT

British MPs viewed a downed Iranian Shahed-136 attack drone, warning Tehran's supply to Russia endangers the UK, Israel, and NATO. Organizers cited "tens of thousands" launched at Ukraine annually. Senior figures urged harder action against the IRGC and European operations, noting multiple foiled Iran-linked plots since 2022.

Significance: Recognizing Iran's drone export model as a multilateral threat may accelerate IRGC sanctions enforcement and network disruption beyond Middle Eastern contexts.

CHINA'S GAZA RECONSTRUCTION Foothold

Beijing-linked firms are winning U.N. reconstruction contracts for mobile housing with bids reportedly "40–60% below competitors." Chinese subsidies covering logistics and goods expenses create pricing advantages. Local Egyptian and Palestinian entities front bids while sourcing Chinese products, bypassing Israeli supply chains. Gaza's projected \$70 billion rebuild flows through Chinese pipelines.

ASSESSMENT

Economic control shapes political outcomes. If reconstruction cash routes through Sinai intermediaries and Chinese suppliers, Israel loses leverage and visibility while an Iran-aligned power embeds itself in Gaza's future governance structure.

EU LAWMAKERS PUSH UNRWA EXCLUSION

Twenty-two European Parliament members urged Brussels to exclude UNRWA from Gaza reconstruction, citing ties to Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. They warned against repeating "failures of the past." Sweden and the U.S. have suspended cooperation.

Implication: European accountability may finally challenge the UN agency's longstanding operational record in the region.

Briefly Noted

Security: IDF warned the treasury of unpreparedness for multi-front war without urgent budget increases. Forces arrested 44 terror suspects across Judea and Samaria, seizing weapons and disrupting planned attacks. Unit 504 stopped a Syria-Lebanon weapons smuggle near Mount Hermon.

International: Japan's new PM Sanae Takaichi signals closer Tokyo-Jerusalem links in tech/defense. Ireland's presidential frontrunner previously accused Israel of "Jewish supremacy" and argued Hamas should participate in Gaza governance.

Society: Five airlines resume Israel routes next week (British Airways, Iberia, Swiss, Eurowings, SAS) as fares drop.

Developments to Watch

- **Beqaa/Nabatieh airstrikes** – IAF hit sixteen Hezbollah targets including missile facilities and training compounds. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Larger Lebanon operation** – European sources indicate Israeli operation may be imminent. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Ceasefire breach** – Hamas operative approached IDF forces near Khan Yunis; airstrike followed warning shots. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Pakistan participation concerns** – Israeli officials flag Gaza force inclusion risks given Hamas ties
- **Smuggling interdiction** – Border Police seized quad-drone carrying 10kg narcotics near Kibbutz Hamadia
- **False alert dynamics** – Red alert near Mefalsim proved false, highlighting fragile ceasefire tensions

Closing Note: The pieces move toward enforcement rather than peace. Gaza's reconstruction risks becoming Hamas restoration. The north remains one mistake from escalation. Washington and Jerusalem race to preserve patience while time erodes it.

— Uri Zehavi, *Intelligence Editor with Modi Zehavi, Data + Research Analyst*

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