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ISRAEL BRIEF

Sunday, October 26

Borders humming, patience thinning — the ceasefire talks like peace while the IDF readies for the next round.

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THE BOTTOM LINE This represents a values conflict with operational implications. The hostile side executes a familiar playbook: normalize Holocaust inversion, intimidate Jews on campus, and conceal actions behind “academic freedom” rhetoric. Countermeasures require more than complaint: tie funding and accreditation to basic civil rights enforcement, use governmental oversight to eliminate administrative bargaining with bigotry, and expand alliances among faith-based and mission-driven universities teaching Western canon without apology—while welcoming non-Jewish students into proud, pro-Israel civic culture.

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Israel Brief: Sunday, October 26

Borders humming, patience thinning — the ceasefire talks like peace while the IDF readies for the next round.

The War Today

CEASEFIRE ON LIFE SUPPORT: FOREIGN CONTROL RISES AS HAMAS STONEWALLS ON HOSTAGE REMAINS

A U.S.-led command center in Kiryat Gat now serves as the operational hub for the truce, with Secretary of State Marco Rubio stating there is no alternative plan. An Egyptian team has entered Gaza to locate remains of 13 slain hostages, as President Trump issued a 48-hour ultimatum for Hamas to return bodies. The IDF conducted strikes on Palestinian Islamic Jihad operatives amid ceasefire framework discussions. Hamas is reasserting control through intimidation while international actors pursue competing agendas: Erdogan demands sanctions and weapons embargoes; Saudi Arabia and UAE condition reconstruction on disarmament; Qatar seeks rapid rebuilding to preserve influence.

Notably, 154 deported terror convicts are reportedly staying at a five-star Cairo hotel—the Marriott Renaissance Cairo Mirage—highlighting what observers describe as moral inconsistency in a ceasefire that benefits killers while families await remains. Activists blocked aid convoys at Kissufim for three hours in protest, citing Hamas's refusal to return bodies and concerns that humanitarian assistance may enable rearmament.

ASSESSMENT

The ceasefire depends on American enforcement directed more stringently at Israel than at Hamas. The terror group continues stalling, concealing bodies, and quietly rebuilding influence while multinational oversight structures—Egyptian recovery teams, Gulf funding, Turkish pressure—shift Gaza's stabilization away from Israeli hands into committee-based management that Hamas can exploit incrementally.

THE DAY AFTER, CONTESTED: LOCAL MILITIAS, FOREIGN "STABILIZERS," AND AN EGYPT-ISRAEL RESET

Anti-Hamas militias operating beyond the Yellow Line oppose Turkish and Qatari participation in stabilization efforts, vowing cooperation only with actors committed to Hamas's dismantling. Reporting describes "Project New Gaza," where four anti-Hamas militias—including those led by Hossam al-Astal and Yasser Abu Shabab—receive indirect Israeli support through vehicles, ammunition, and logistical access via Kerem Shalom to administer enclaves and establish post-Hamas governance.

Netanyahu met quietly with Egyptian intelligence chief Hassan Rashad to elevate security coordination to the strategic level, including tech-enabled control of Rafah and the Philadelphi Corridor and potential updates to military agreements allowing stronger deployments on both sides of the border. The diplomatic landscape remains fractured: Qatar seeks central influence;

Turkey demands leverage; and Mahmoud Abbas's mixed messaging about "prisoners of war" undermines trust in any PA-led governance framework.

The U.S. has pursued enforcement against Iran's weapons pipelines, with a Pakistani smuggler receiving a 40-year sentence for moving IRGC-supplied missile components to Houthis. Inside Israel, agricultural hawks press for reduced food imports and borderland farming investment as preparations for the next conflict escalate.

ASSESSMENT

The emerging "day after" operates on three tracks. Local coercive control comes first: clan-based militias, operating with Israel's cautious approval, are establishing facts on the ground in IDF-buffered zones through neighborhood policing and aid distribution, sketching civil order that excludes Hamas. Egypt-Israel statecraft follows: both countries are aligning on border security and smuggling denial as foundational elements, signaling willingness to upgrade force deployments and surveillance technology. The multinational framework complicates matters: Washington's stabilization scheme succeeds only if Turkish and Qatari ambitions remain constrained; expanding their role invites Hamas air cover and leverage while Israel absorbs consequences. Legitimizing the PA remains problematic given Abbas's rhetoric celebrating "resistance," which contaminates any governance claim.

NORTH FRONT RESET: IDF REHEARSES MASS-INFILTRATION DEFENSE AND RAPID HOSTAGE RESCUE

The IDF completed a five-day multidomain drill along the Lebanon border integrating air, sea, and ground forces with civilian responders and municipal councils to defend against swarm infiltrations and execute offensive transitions. The training explicitly simulated "October 7-style" mass attacks from Lebanon, including community takeovers, base breaches, and kidnapping prevention with cross-border exfiltration denial. Medical units practiced casualty evacuation under fire conditions.

This readiness exercise followed targeted strikes on Hezbollah infrastructure, eliminating the group's Southern Front logistics commander and a Radwan platoon commander, demonstrating parallel tracks of preparedness rehearsal and precision attrition.

ASSESSMENT

The northern sector no longer represents a slow-burn engagement. The IDF now plans for concurrent mass breaches, coordinated kidnappings, and multi-sector shocks with instant pivots from defense to decisive counteroffensive. Comprehensive drills that integrate hostage prevention, rapid retrieval, casualty evacuation under fire, and whole-of-society municipal coordination indicate the military has absorbed October 7 lessons operationally. Simultaneous targeted strikes removing logistics hubs and assault units compress Hezbollah's maneuver capacity, meaning Israel rehearses combat while actively degrading the adversary's execution capability.

Inside Israel

CONSTRAINED CHESSBOARD: COALITION FRACTURES, US RED LINES, AND PRE-ELECTION POWER PLAYS

Jerusalem's political apparatus faces mounting pressure from multiple directions. Leaked audio reveals top Shas rabbis criticizing Arye Deri and calling Netanyahu an "atheist" over the stalled Haredi draft exemption bill, with the party suspending Knesset participation and threatening elections if exemptions aren't secured. Washington's redlines remain rigid: Vice President JD Vance called a preliminary annexation vote an "insult"; Trump warned annexation would cost Israel "all support." Netanyahu scrambled to distance himself from coalition ministers' annexation rhetoric and remarks about Saudi Arabia that angered the White House.

Lawfare has returned to prominence with the "Qatargate" case, where Yonatan Urlich alleges prosecutors withheld discovery before charging decisions. The state counters that delays stem from defense strategy, signaling an indictment battle that will bleed into campaign season. A ministerial bill designed to force Naftali Bennett to settle old party debts before launching a new political list spotlights preemptive ballot engineering, with coalition support uncertain and Bennett calling it "anti-democratic."

ASSESSMENT

Three choke points control the path to elections: Haredi draft exemptions, annexation theater, and lawfare targeting various political figures. Shas's coalition revolt makes the draft law the critical pivot for government survival. Washington's annexation veto—with Trump claiming personal ownership of Gaza policy—constrains Netanyahu's maneuver space while tying normalization prospects to message discipline. Legal actions like Qatargate and debt-related bills aren't peripheral; they shape the electoral battlefield before voting begins. The underlying reality: watch actions rather than rhetoric as the landscape shifts, and expect a campaign fought on identity and grievance while U.S. red lines and coalition arithmetic determine actual outcomes.

SOVEREIGNTY POLITICS MEETS STREET FRICTION: ANNEXATION CAMPAIGNS, JUDEA-SAMARIA UNREST, AND JERUSALEM'S SOUTHERN GROWTH

Judea and Samaria residents faced coordinated rock attacks and riots in the Binyamin region, with reports of "leftist" activists aiding masked Arab mobs; medics treated head injuries with no arrests reported. In Jerusalem, Har Homa (Homat Shmuel)—once a diplomatic flashpoint beyond the Green Line—has matured into a 25,000-resident neighborhood featuring schools, synagogues, and established community life, demonstrating how "temporary" facts become permanent urban reality.

MK Bezalel Smotrich urges weekly "Sovereignty Square" rallies modeled on the hostage families campaign to reverse U.S. opposition to annexation of Judea and Samaria, arguing mass mobilization can reshape Washington's calculations.

ASSESSMENT

Israel's internal struggle over sovereignty represents the front line of national security. In Judea and Samaria, organized mobs and activist allies test Israeli control limits; in Jerusalem, neighborhoods like Har Homa demonstrate that permanence functions as the strongest deterrent. Leaving security gaps or ambiguous sovereignty invites catastrophe, as historical experience repeatedly confirms. A Palestinian state positioned between the mountains and Mediterranean coast would not bring peace but instead create a launchpad and pincer position encircling Israel's heartland. Stability emerges not from hesitation but from unmistakable control preventing enemies from mistaking proximity for weakness.

RECKONING AND REALIGNMENT: IDF'S OCT 7 PROBE COLLIDES WITH ELECTION-SEASON POLITICS

A senior review panel will deliver October 7 failure findings to Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir, triggering decisions on command accountability and systemic reform spanning intelligence gaps, operational control, readiness, and decision-making discipline. The panel, led by Maj. Gen. (ret.) Sami Turgeman, audited internal reviews and places Maj. Gen. Shlomi Binder in focus. Zamir has signaled preference for stability and implementation over extensive personnel changes, with the General Staff Forum viewing conclusions before personnel decisions.

This institutional reckoning lands as Israel heads toward a campaign season defined by Netanyahu—a leader who built a durable right-wing coalition through media mastery, message discipline, and turnout mechanics—pivoting from “secure peace” branding toward annexation rhetoric, with bloc politics as the real center of gravity.

ASSESSMENT

The October 7 investigation now intersects with electoral politics, turning a process meant for military self-correction into campaign weaponry. Accountability matters; politicized accountability corrodes institutional integrity. When every disciplinary step becomes a factional tool, reform becomes theater and commanders learn to read polling rather than battle maps. Success measures not on resignation timing before elections but on whether orders flow with sufficient speed when the next alarm sounds.

Israel and the World

LAWFARE OFFENSIVE: CRIMINALIZING ISRAELI DEFENSE, TARGETING DIASPORA, AND SQUEEZING SUPPLY CHAINS

A coordinated lawfare front expands across courts, unions, and politics. In Germany, the Hind Rajab Foundation pursued arrest of a German-Israeli combat engineer over Gaza-war social media posts. In the UK, the International Center for Justice for Palestinians tests the Foreign Enlistment Act to prosecute British-Israeli IDF reservists, aiming to criminalize Israeli military service under British law.

Economic pressure intensifies: Spain's High Court opened investigation into steelmaker Sidenor for allegedly supplying material to Israel Military Industries, escalating commercial compliance into “crimes against humanity/genocide” allegations against executives. U.S. political hypocrisy surfaces: Rep. Seth Moulton renounced AIPAC funds during a Senate campaign yet remained

silent regarding Qatar-linked funding and government-funded travel, despite Doha's role as Hamas's primary patron.

Offsetting this trend, the Senate education panel chair pressed the American Federation of Teachers over leadership dismissing antisemitism and opposing Israel aid, warning the union fosters a hostile climate for Jewish members.

ASSESSMENT

This represents a coordinated ecosystem weaponizing civil society against Jews and Israel. The formula simplifies readily: brand Israeli self-defense as genocide, chill diaspora volunteers through arrest traps abroad, and choke supply chains by criminalizing routine commerce. Unions and professional bodies supply veneer, European prosecutors bring enforcement, and Qatar's funding greases mechanisms. Effective responses require lawfare done correctly: funding legal shields for reservists and dual nationals, locking bilateral protections recognizing lawful IDF service, and fortifying export compliance so Madrid-style actions don't frighten legitimate vendors. Secondary consideration: U.S. oversight of captured institutions—particularly education unions—and transparency regarding foreign influence (Qatar, Turkey) aren't cultural distractions but combat-shaping operations. Israeli freedom of action tomorrow requires fighting these battles today.

CAMPUS TEST: ANTISEMITISM, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND A VALUES REBOOT IN US-UK ACADEMIA

Campus dynamics split into two narratives. Yeshiva University's president Ari Berman argues that campus antisemitism reflects deeper American and biblical values collapse, with faith-based institutions attracting students seeking moral clarity and proud Zionist identity. Northwestern University's provost announced resignation as the school faces federal investigations into Jew-hatred—Jewish leaders note “something went terribly wrong” in Evanston.

At Cornell, a student newspaper published an anti-Israel essay featuring a Nazi SS symbol inside a bloodied Star of David; editors briefly removed then republished the piece while defending Nazi-Israel comparisons—classic Holocaust inversion reaching mainstream platforms. In Britain, after masked protesters attempted silencing an Israeli professor at City University, over 1,500 academics signed a letter defending academic freedom and Jewish safety, suggesting a previously silent majority might finally voice support.

ASSESSMENT

This represents a values conflict with operational implications. The hostile side executes a familiar playbook: normalize Holocaust inversion, intimidate Jews on campus, and conceal actions behind “academic freedom” rhetoric. Countermeasures require more than complaint: tie funding and accreditation to basic civil rights enforcement, use governmental oversight to eliminate administrative bargaining with bigotry, and expand alliances among faith-based and mission-driven universities teaching Western canon without apology—while welcoming non-Jewish students into proud, pro-Israel civic culture.

Briefly Noted

Antisemitism & Culture

- Jewish children in a Chicago suburb were shot with gel pellets and threatened on Sukkot; Skokie police confirmed the hate crime as families press for transparency and accountability.
- Senator Ted Cruz warned of a “growing cancer” of right-wing antisemitism at a CUFI event, urging church leaders to confront this trend.

Politics & Propaganda

- Brazil’s Lula labeled the UN “stopped working” while again accusing Israel of genocide, positioning himself ahead of likely Trump engagement.
- Analysis identifies Iran, Qatar, and Turkey running AI-amplified influence operations seeding anti-Israel narratives in Western politics and academia—a policy challenge beyond public relations.
- Palestinian Authority messaging treats imprisoned terrorists as “lawful fighters,” with official social media whitewashing murder.
- Commentary critiques the National Endowment for the Humanities’ \$10.4 million grant to the Tikvah Fund as recentralizing neoconservative “Judeo-Christian” politics amid right-wing infighting over Israel.

Technology & Economy

- Nvidia will triple its Beersheva R&D footprint and hire hundreds for AI networking and data-center operations by mid-2026, reflecting confidence in Israel’s tech sector.
- Israel approved a 2 billion shekel exporter-funded pipeline to deliver approximately 6 billion cubic meters annually of natural gas to Egypt, deepening energy partnerships and boosting state revenues.
- Nebraska’s governor will lead a trade mission to Israel promoting kosher beef and agricultural technology links while discussing defense-industry cooperation.

Developments to Watch

- **Hezbollah command under Israeli pressure** – The IAF eliminated Hezbollah’s Southern Front logistics chief and Radwan Force commander in successive strikes across southern Lebanon, crippling re-armament lines. *LIKELY TO ESCALATE*
- **Iranian officers embedded in Lebanon** – Security sources confirm senior IRGC personnel now accompany Hezbollah decision-makers at missile facilities, tightening Iran’s operational grip on the northern front. *LIKELY TO ESCALATE*
- **Beqaa Valley strike wave** – Israeli aircraft hit multiple Hezbollah sites in Baalbek and the Beqaa, including training grounds and precision-missile workshops, signaling preemptive deterrence. *LIKELY TO ESCALATE*
- **Lebanese warnings of imminent attack** – Local authorities urged residents to prepare for IDF operations in the Beqaa area as Israeli overflights and cross-border complaints exceed 1,700. *LIKELY TO ESCALATE*

- **Hostage-body transfer still stalled** – Despite Cairo coordination, Hamas has yet to return any of the 13 slain hostages; Trump warned the group faces collective action if delays extend beyond 48 hours. *LIKELY TO ESCALATE*
- **Tunnel destruction now top mission** – Defense Minister Katz ordered the IDF to prioritize eliminating Hamas's remaining tunnel network in the "yellow zone," combining military action with U.S. coordination.
- **Reserve call-up expansion** – Thousands of previously exempt Israelis have received mandatory reserve summons for November, aimed at reinforcing home-front and combat-support units.
- **Marwan Barghouti floated, rejected** – Trump suggested imprisoned Fatah leader Barghouti as a superior alternative to Abbas; Israeli ministers across the political spectrum rejected the idea as rewarding a convicted murderer.
- **Hezbollah rockets intercepted** – Two launches from southern Lebanon were shot down recently; IDF bases in the north raised alert levels amid fears of coordinated retaliatory fire. *LIKELY TO ESCALATE*
- **Syrian regime-Druze clashes** – Heavy gunfire reported in the As-Suwayda region as Assad's forces target Druze villages resisting conscription and taxation; U.S. coalition troops simultaneously raided ISIS cells in Deir ez-Zor.
- **Barak MX deployed to Cyprus** – Israel positioned its long-range air-defense system on the island to protect Mediterranean lanes and energy infrastructure, extending interception range 400 kilometers across hostile airspace.

Closing Statement:

The week begins with an unresolved question: who enforces the ceasefire when enforcers disagree? Hamas delays, Hezbollah reloads, and the United States attempts refereeing both while rewriting rules. Israel's task simplifies—maintain readiness, protect sovereignty, and act faster than committees convene. The next escalation won't start with rhetoric; it begins when someone decides waiting signals weakness. That clock ticks continuously.

—Uri Zehavi • Intelligence Editor With Modi Zehavi • Data + Research Analyst

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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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