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ISRAEL BRIEF

Thursday, October 30

Truce on Paper, Pressure in Practice — the frontlines hold, the covenant buckles, and the reckoning over service and sovereignty begins.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE The World Zionist Congress has become a mirror of the Jewish world itself—fractured yet still bound by shared peril. With antisemitism surging and Diaspora trust shaken, Jerusalem has once again become the proving ground of Jewish solidarity. Whether that solidarity can outlast ideology will decide not only how Israel rebuilds—but whether world Jewry still recognizes itself as one people.

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Israel Brief: Thursday, October 30

Truce on Paper, Pressure in Practice — the frontlines hold, the covenant buckles, and the reckoning over service and sovereignty begins.

Shalom, friends.

The ceasefire is now a shape-shifter — quiet by day, lethal by exception. In Rafah, a Hamas sniper killed an IDF reservist and turned the “humanitarian corridor” into a combat trap; Israel answered with precision strikes on thirty targets, then holstered its guns long enough for diplomats to call it restraint. Up north, IDF raids in Blida cracked open another Hezbollah tunnel and another layer of fiction that this border is frozen. The UN looks away. Cairo and Washington keep talking about calm, but every actor is now defining it differently.

Inside Israel, the real explosion is political. Jerusalem braces for a mass Haredi protest that will choke the city’s arteries while reservists and bereaved families march in the opposite direction, demanding equality in service. More on that later today in this week’s Dossier.

Meanwhile, Defense Minister Katz cut off the Red Cross after intelligence proved it was functioning as Hamas’s courier service — another reminder that institutions built to police morality now launder complicity. And as Iran accelerates its enrichment line, Washington whispers “calibration” while Tehran measures opportunity in centrifuge speed.

The War Today

MANAGED WAR, UNMANAGED PEACE: THE GAZA TRUCE AS STRATEGY AND STAGECRAFT

Israel’s precision campaign under the U.S.-brokered ceasefire has become a running contradiction — part counterterrorism, part political theater. After a Hamas sniper attack in Rafah killed an IDF reservist, the army struck across Gaza, killing dozens of commanders, including three battalion chiefs, two deputies, and sixteen officers linked to the October 7 massacre. Washington publicly endorsed the “imminent threat” standard, with Trump, Vance, and Rubio each insisting the strikes did not violate the truce. The Qatari prime minister, speaking in New York, admitted Hamas was behind the ceasefire breach and claimed Doha is pressing for disarmament—even as he accused Israel of prisoner abuse and condemned its strike on Qatari soil.

Behind the scenes, Trump’s 20-point Gaza plan is fraying. Its first phase—hostage return and prisoner release—was never fully honored, and the documents underpinning it weren’t actually signed. Hamas exploits that ambiguity to re- rather than dis-arm and to rebuild control in Gaza, using Qatari and Turkish protection as diplomatic armor. The United States continues to hold the truce together, while Arab states back away from Washington’s proposed stabilization force; the plan to enlist Saudi, Emirati, and Egyptian troops has collapsed, forcing Trump’s team to solicit Singapore and other

non-Arab nations for participation. Israel and the Gulf states oppose Turkey's entry outright, viewing Erdoğan's ambition to embed troops or NGOs in Gaza as a replay of Cyprus-style "peacekeeping by occupation."

Beyond Gaza, regional flashpoints multiply. Iran is rebuilding its ballistic missile plants with Chinese assistance, importing 2,000 tons of sodium perchlorate—enough for 500 ballistic missiles—in defiance of reimposed sanctions. China and Russia blocked enforcement, deepening the new strategic bloc opposed to Israel and the West. Meanwhile, Syria and Israel are negotiating a U.S.-backed security pact to stabilize the Golan frontier after Assad's fall—one of the few quiet arenas in an otherwise restless map.

On the ground, Hamas's grip on its population is hardening, not breaking. A new poll shows 60% of Palestinians support Hamas's conduct in the war, with 70% rejecting disarmament and half endorsing jihad as the only path.

Why It Matters: The "ceasefire" has mutated into a framework for selective warfare under diplomatic supervision. Israel fights by exception, America arbitrates by illusion, and Hamas endures by exploitation. The more Washington insists the plan is intact, the more the region adapts around it—Turkey seeking a foothold, Qatar cashing influence, Iran rebuilding capacity, and Hamas turning delay into leverage. What began as a peace mechanism is now a management regime for permanent instability, one that risks hardening into the region's next status quo.

NORTHERN FRONT REAWAKENS: HEZBOLLAH TESTS THE CEASEFIRE LINE

Israeli forces conducted overnight raids and precision airstrikes deep inside southern Lebanon, targeting Hezbollah launchers, tunnel shafts, and arms smugglers operating in violation of the 2024 truce. The IDF confirmed strikes in Mahmudiyah, Naqoura, and Blida, killing several operatives tied to Iranian logistical networks and neutralizing infrastructure hidden beneath civilian sites, including a municipal building used as a Hezbollah command post. During one raid, Israeli troops shot a suspect identified as an "immediate threat" inside the Blida town hall; Lebanese state media later claimed the man was a municipal employee. In response, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun ordered the army to confront any Israeli incursion, even as the Lebanese Armed Forces arrived only after Israel's withdrawal. Hezbollah, meanwhile, openly rejects disarmament, with deputy leader Naim Qassem declaring the group "rebuilt, recovered, and ready."

The diplomatic arena mirrors the battlefield: Washington and Cairo are pressing Beirut to implement its own "disarmament plan" or face isolation. U.S. envoy Morgan Ortagus warned that failure to bring all weapons under state control would leave Lebanon "to its fate." Egypt has offered to mediate, though officials privately admit Hezbollah's entrenchment makes civilian oversight impossible. Iran, for its part, is rearming Hezbollah at a brisk pace, exploiting the lull to move precision munitions through Syria despite Israeli interdictions. The UNIFIL mission remains paralyzed (except when Paris orders Israeli UAVs shot down), issuing statements but unwilling to access key areas south of the Litani or confront Hezbollah.

ASSESSMENT

The northern front has entered a managed escalation—a steady rhythm of Israeli preemption and Hezbollah defiance under the shadow of a paper ceasefire. Israel now treats “ceasefire violations” as a permanent operating lane, striking infrastructure the moment it reappears while avoiding symbolic targets that could trigger full war. Hezbollah’s hybrid posture—claiming legitimacy while rebuilding for the next conflict—suggests Tehran is betting on cumulative attrition, not open confrontation. Washington’s disarmament rhetoric buys time, not compliance; Beirut lacks both will and power. The frontier is no longer quiet but curated: a strip of controlled volatility, where each raid delays the inevitable reckoning over who governs the border—the Lebanese state, or Iran’s army in disguise.

Inside Israel

DRAFT LINES DRAWN: HAREDI EXEMPTIONS IGNITE SECURITY, JUDICIAL, AND POLITICAL FAULT LINES

Israel’s long-suppressed conscription crisis has again erupted into open confrontation — in the streets, in court, and in the Knesset. Tens of thousands of ultra-Orthodox Israelis are expected to rally in Jerusalem today against mandatory enlistment, even as IDF reservists, bereaved families, and wounded veterans stage a counter-demonstration demanding equal service. The High Court, visibly impatient after years of government deferrals, rebuked the coalition for failing to enforce conscription following the lapse of legal exemptions, noting that less than 3,500 of 78,000 eligible Haredim reported to IDF offices, and only 931 actually enlisted. Judges warned that “the army needs 12,000 combatants now — yesterday,” pressing for arrests, sanctions, and measurable results.

Inside the Knesset, the coalition has fused legal reform with political survival, passing in preliminary vote a bill to split the powers of the Attorney General — a move backed by Haredi factions in exchange for expanded rabbinical court authority and greater leniency on the draft. Justice Minister Yariv Levin and MK Simcha Rothman framed the measure as a correction to “a corrupt legal system,” while opposition leaders called it an attempt to neuter Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara amid Prime Minister Netanyahu’s corruption trial. In parallel, Likud purged MK Yuli Edelstein from the Defense Committee for opposing a softened Haredi enlistment bill by MK Boaz Bismuth, which redefines national service, lowers penalties for evasion, and restores age-based exemptions. Edelstein’s dismissal — condemned by Benny Gantz and Avigdor Liberman — underscores the widening split between Likud loyalists and security-minded pragmatists.

Even the World Zionist Congress, meeting in Jerusalem, was forced to move its closing plenary ahead of the protests amid reports that some Haredi delegates plan to join anti-draft marches, sparking intra-Zionist outrage over “anti-Zionist participation on Zionist funds.”

ASSESSMENT

Israel has entered a moment of raw civic exposure — where the question of who serves has become the question of who belongs. The government is no longer managing a policy dispute but a legitimacy crisis: a collapsing draft regime, a paralyzed coalition, and a judiciary trying to enforce equality by force of law. Reservists and bereaved families now form a counter-establishment with moral authority that the state itself lacks. What began as a budget quarrel over yeshiva stipends has become a test of national cohesion under fire. The full reckoning—the roots, the remedies, and the architecture of a new service covenant—will follow in this week’s Dossier: From Deferment to Duty that will show up in your inboxes shortly.

SOFT POWER, HARD EDGES: LEVERAGE ABROAD, RESILIENCE AT HOME, RISKS WITHIN

Israel has more than missiles to shape outcomes. Former Mossad chief Yossi Cohen put it bluntly: trade life-saving intelligence for concrete backing, not polite thank-yous—as when a Mossad tip stopped the Etihad bomb plot while the same capitals toy with “Palestine.” That leverage sits atop real capacity: ZAKA’s Oct 7 playbook just briefed the NYPD, and the Marcus National Blood Services Center—built to run through missile, chemical, and biological attack—kept blood moving during Iran’s barrage and the Gaza war. Culturally, Israel has strength to share as well: freed hostage Alon Ohel played “Under the Sky” on primetime with a patch over his injured eye—a human receipt for Hamas’s cruelty. But strength has seams. A JPPI poll finds majority fear of another political assassination and broad agreement that incitement goes unchecked. And in Hadera, residents fighting yet another coal-plant extension warn of dozens to hundreds of premature deaths a year—proof that energy and public health are security policy in practice.

ASSESSMENT

Israel has tools beyond airpower. Intelligence reciprocity can become policy leverage, not charity—quietly tie critical tips and joint ops to baseline diplomatic backing and a clean bill of moral legitimacy when Israel defends itself. On the narrative front, documented humanitarian reality (blood logistics, rescue models, patient care) undercuts the libels; pairing that with voices like Ohel’s keeps the cost of Hamas—and the value of Israel—human and visible. At home, capacity is strong (ZAKA, MDA, IDU, hospitals) but cohesion is brittle—assassination fears, draft politics, and environmental negligence all erode national stamina if left to fester. Energy and public-health choices are security choices; shuttering dirty coal on schedule and increasing generation capacity without undue pollution improves wartime resilience and public trust. Bottom Line: Trade intel for concrete support, flood the zone with verifiable humanitarian fact, invest in civil protection, and turn the temperature down. That mix preserves freedom of action abroad and durability at home.

SDE TEIMAN LEAK CRISIS: MILITARY JUSTICE ROCKED, POLITICS POUNCE

A criminal probe into the leak of surveillance footage from the Sde Teiman detention facility has been handed to Israel Police, with investigators examining involvement inside the Military Advocate General’s office; in response, MAG Maj. Gen. Yifat Tomer-Yerushalmi went on leave as the IDF confirmed she “won’t return during the investigation,” while ministers Israel Katz, Bezalel Smotrich, and Itamar Ben-Gvir blasted the MAG corps and called the case

a “blood libel” against soldiers. The affair traces back to a July 2024 CID raid, ensuing riots at IDF bases, and an August 2024 leaked video aired on TV that allegedly showed severe abuse of a detainee—now a court case with indictments against five reservists—even as defense lawyers claim editing and context manipulation. With no named acting MAG yet and Col. Gal Asael expected to step in, the IDF’s legal firewall against ICC/ICJ exposure is in flux; the incident underscores how discipline, due process, and wartime legitimacy live or die together.

ASSESSMENT

If the army cannot police leaks and punish abuse while also shielding troops from politicized smears, Israel’s operational freedom and legal standing erode in The Hague and in allied capitals. Move quickly: appoint an acting MAG, wall off the leak investigation from the abuse prosecution, publish a clear timeline, and charge or clear on the facts—no theater. The political pile-on plays well online but weakens command authority and hands adversaries a talking point. The right answer is clean process, visible consequences, and a steady message: soldiers get backing; criminals get courtrooms; leaks get handcuffs.

Israel and the World

HUMANITARIAN NEUTRALITY SHATTERED: ISRAEL BARS RED CROSS AFTER CEASEFIRE ABUSE

Defense Minister Israel Katz has formally barred the International Red Cross from visiting Palestinian security prisoners, including Hamas terrorists captured on October 7, after Shin Bet intelligence confirmed the organization’s visits were being used as a covert communications conduit—allowing imprisoned operatives to pass messages, coordinate activity, and maintain command links with terror networks outside the prisons. The order applies to all detainees classified as “unlawful combatants” and follows weeks of internal debate that pitted Katz and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir—who demanded a total ban—against the National Security Council, which had quietly favored partial access. Katz overruled after direct warnings from Prison Service Commissioner Kobi Yaakov that the visits posed a “severe security risk.” The ministry said the move was based on “professional assessments from the Shin Bet,” ending decades of ritual coordination that Hamas had turned into a live channel for command and control.

Jerusalem’s frustration runs deeper than one breach. For nearly two years of war and ceasefire, the Red Cross failed to visit or deliver aid to Israeli hostages in Gaza, an omission Israelis now read as proof of moral collapse. “Until the organization fulfills its humanitarian obligations toward Israeli captives, it has no standing to demand access to convicted terrorists,” Katz said. The decision signals a new Israeli doctrine: humanitarian access is now reciprocal, not automatic. Cooperation with international institutions will depend on verifiable integrity, not slogans about neutrality.

That collapse of credibility extends far beyond Geneva. Across Europe, “humanitarian” and “anti-racist” institutions have become conduits for disinformation, intimidation, and antisemitic propaganda. In Paris, three Bulgarians are on trial for spray-painting red handprints on the city’s Holocaust Memorial, an operation French intelligence ties directly to a Russian campaign to destabilize Western societies. The same networks that fund Gaza “solidarity” vandalism have staged coffin-drops at the Eiffel Tower, defaced synagogues, and flooded social media with Kremlin-aligned narratives equating Israel with fascism. In London, police refused to prosecute protesters chanting “Zionist scum off our streets” at an “anti-racism” rally; at University College London, mobs besieged a Jewish-history lecture, trapping students inside while chanting “intifada revolution.” In Germany, the moral rot runs through academia itself. Once the guardians of Holocaust memory, German universities now host a new breed of scholar-activist who brands Israel “the Wehrmacht of our time.”

ASSESSMENT

Israel’s decision to cut off the Red Cross is an overdue recalibration. The West’s moral infrastructure has been hijacked by ideologues, propagandists, and states that weaponize empathy to criminalize Jewish self-defense. Jerusalem’s move reclaims sovereignty over its own ethics: humanitarian cooperation will be earned by conduct. Expect ritual outrage from Brussels and Geneva, hedged sympathy from Washington, and quiet agreement from allies who face the same corrosion.

DIASPORA DIVIDE AND RENEWAL: WORLD ZIONIST CONGRESS MEETS IN A TIME OF STRAIN

Jerusalem this week became the stage for both solidarity and schism as the World Zionist Congress and Jewish Agency leadership convened amid record antisemitism, a fatigued Israel, and a reshuffled global Jewish balance of power. Over 500 delegates from 40 countries gathered to debate how to rebuild Israel’s war-ravaged north and south, restore Diaspora confidence, and decide who speaks for world Jewry in an era of ideological fracture.

At the Jewish Agency’s Board of Governors, Chairman Maj. Gen. (res.) Doron Almog called for a “long journey of repair and reconstruction,” while the Agency’s new initiatives—JReady resilience networks and Community Security Funds—outlined how global Jewry will help fortify Israeli communities and protect Jewish life abroad. Simultaneously, inside the World Zionist Congress, power shifted decisively: religious and conservative factions now hold a working majority for the first time in modern history, overturning decades of Progressive dominance. The change triggered fierce backlash from liberal delegates, who accused bureaucratic insiders of diluting their agenda, while Orthodox leaders such as Rabbi Pesach Lerner (Eretz Hakodesh) declared the result “an overdue correction.”

A symbolic leadership handover crystallized the tension: Rabbi Doron Perez, father of a soldier killed on October 7, was chosen as World Zionist Organization chair, representing the Mizrachi movement in a power-sharing rotation with Yesh Atid—whose MK Meir Cohen will chair the Jewish National Fund. Meanwhile, Yair Netanyahu quietly secured a board seat at the WZO,

and Otzma Yehudit erupted at Likud's decision to exclude it from the governing coalition, calling the move "a betrayal of the nationalist majority." The Congress floor reflected these divides: Progressive delegates staged protests against Israel's Gaza campaign, while Orthodox and traditional blocs rallied around Zionist unity, settlement expansion, and Jewish education.

ASSESSMENT

The World Zionist Congress has become a mirror of the Jewish world itself—fractured yet still bound by shared peril. With antisemitism surging and Diaspora trust shaken, Jerusalem has once again become the proving ground of Jewish solidarity. Whether that solidarity can outlast ideology will decide not only how Israel rebuilds—but whether world Jewry still recognizes itself as one people.

Briefly Noted

FRONTLINE & SECURITY

- **Turkey signed an £8 billion deal with Britain for 20 Eurofighter Typhoon jets**, including advanced air-to-air and ground-attack missiles, as Ankara seeks to close the capability gap with Israel and reassert military parity in the region.
- **Israeli forces arrested a terrorist in Bethlehem** who had been freed in a recent hostage deal and was allegedly preparing a bombing at Rachel's Tomb, thwarting what police described as a "massive terror attack."
- **Israeli and Western cybersecurity experts warned of a surge** in Iranian and Russian-linked ransomware attacks targeting small businesses, part of a global shift to hit civilian infrastructure for economic and strategic disruption.
- **Qatar's prime minister expressed frustration** over renewed violence in Gaza and said Doha is pressing Hamas to disarm, as Washington reaffirmed that Israel's response to the killing of an IDF soldier was justified under the ceasefire terms.
- **A media watchdog accused the BBC of a two-year cover-up** of Hamas's war tactics, saying the network ignored extensive evidence of Hamas's use of hospitals, tunnels, and civilians as shields and only acknowledged violations once the ceasefire took hold.

DIPLOMACY & GEOPOLITICS

- **Trump administration envoys are pressuring Lebanon** to open direct talks with Israel and commit to disarming Hezbollah, warning Beirut that failure to act will leave it "to its fate."
- **The Supreme Druze Religious Council submitted evidence to the UN** accusing jihadist groups and the Syrian Interim Government of genocidal attacks on Druze communities in Sweida, documenting thousands killed and entire villages destroyed.
- **Indonesia's President Prabowo Subianto is edging toward potential normalization** with Israel, balancing public hostility at home against the chance

to join Trump's Gaza peace framework and deepen ties with Washington; Jakarta's move hinges on progress toward a Palestinian state.

- **UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer urged all parties** to uphold Trump's "fragile" Gaza peace plan, calling the destruction in Gaza "unimaginable" while insisting British efforts focus on keeping aid flowing and preventing the ceasefire's collapse.

DOMESTIC & LAW

- **Israel's High Court heard petitions** demanding the reinstatement of Red Cross access to Palestinian prisoners, as the government defended its ban citing Shin Bet intelligence that visits were exploited for Hamas communications and operational coordination.
- **Police arrested and questioned a prominent rabbi** and another suspect for allegedly inciting violence against Palestinians following the murder of an Israeli woman near Jenin; both were later released after interrogation.
- **The Knesset's National Security Committee reported nearly 6,000 illegal Palestinian crossings** into Israel this year, with authorities arresting 88% of infiltrators and tightening enforcement on employers hiring them.
- **A 70-year-old bus driver in Netanya was stabbed multiple times** by three teenagers during his shift, sparking a drivers' strike and renewed demands for government action against violence targeting transport workers.

Developments to Watch

NORTHERN FRONT (LEBANON / SYRIA)

- **Blida Raid Fallout** – Overnight IDF raids in Blida hit Hezbollah's tunnel and launcher network; one Lebanese municipal employee killed during combat inside a commandeered building. UNIFIL silence deepens the vacuum. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Hezbollah Arms Surge** – Israeli intelligence tracks continued Iranian weapons shipments through Syria despite ceasefire "understandings." Smuggling corridors near Qusayr and Baalbek now fully reactivated. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

GAZA & SOUTHERN THEATER

- **Rafah Sniper and RPG Ambush** – Hamas gunmen killed an IDF reservist and struck an excavator and armored vehicle inside the Yellow Line, breaching the ceasefire; Israel responded with precision strikes on more than 30 targets before the paper truce resumed. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Beit Lahia Weapons Depot Destroyed** – IDF jets leveled a northern Gaza arms site used to stage aerial drones and munitions for an "imminent" attack; Hamas lost mid-tier field leadership.
- **Staged Body 'Recovery' Exposed** – Verified IDF footage showed Hamas re-burying Ofir Tzarfati's remains to stage a "discovery" for Red Cross observers, then halting further returns. Israel now weighing tougher enforcement inside Gaza's control zone. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

- **Search Corridors Compromised** – Humanitarian convoys and ICRC teams in Gaza reportedly used by Hamas for weapons reconnaissance. Military engineers propose expanding the Yellow Line to secure the lanes and audit future missions.

REGIONAL AXIS (IRAN, HOUTHIS, MILITIAS)

- **Iran Expands 60% Enrichment Line** – Construction at Kolang-e Gazla adds centrifuge capacity sufficient for 400 kg of enriched uranium—compressing breakout time and tightening Tehran’s leverage window. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Houthis Threaten Intervention** – A Yemeni broadcaster tied to Iran warned that any Israeli strike in Lebanon would trigger “a full-scale attack from Yemen.” Intelligence sees coordination cues between Houthi naval cells and Hezbollah media. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

DIPLOMATIC & LEGAL

- **U.S. Defines Operational Ceiling** – American envoys privately told Jerusalem not to restart full-scale war in Gaza, urging “calibrated deterrence.” The message narrows Israel’s strike latitude under the current truce architecture.
- **Red Cross Ban Formalized** – Israel’s defense ministry froze ICRC prison access after proof it served as a Hamas comms conduit; Geneva protests expected but allies privately acknowledge the breach of neutrality.

HOME FRONT & POLITICS

- **Jerusalem Gridlock Expected Thursday** – Tens of thousands of Haredim will rally against the draft near the capital’s western entrance; police closing Route 1 and rail access through noon. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Shin Bet Under Internal Probe** – A criminal investigation now targets leaks inside the agency linked to the Sde Teiman affair, including alleged obstruction by a senior officer. Morale and credibility both on trial.
- **Re-Arrest Drive Floated** – Finance Minister Smotrich pushed to detain terrorists freed under the hostage deal; raids in Bethlehem or Hebron could ignite direct clashes with PA security forces. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

The next phase won’t announce itself. It will start with a funeral in the Negev, a headline in The Hague, or a judge’s ruling in Jerusalem. Each will test whether Israel still governs by conviction or by crisis management. The north hums, the south smolders, and the center of gravity has shifted inward — to the argument over what kind of country Israel intends to be once the shooting really pauses.

— *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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