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READER EDITION

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ISRAEL BRIEF

Friday, October 31

Closure Without Calm — Israel buries its dead while the cease-fire keeps breathing through borrowed time.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE The mask hasn't been on for awhile, and on this Halloween it doesn't seem like people are bothering to put it back on. Western institutions that once preached moral universalism now run on selective outrage—excusing jihadism, laundering antisemitism as “anti-Zionism,” and criminalizing Jewish self-defense. The UN fires at Israeli drones while sheltering Iran's proxies; European parties campaign on slogans dripping with Jew-hate; American academia funds conspiracies about “Zionist elites.” Israel's enemies no longer need to invent propaganda — the West's moral confusion provides it free of charge. The counter-strategy must match the scale of decay: expose bias as corruption; weaponize lawfare and media literacy to punish institutional complicity; and rally allies—religious, democratic, and cultural—who still recognize truth as a virtue. Israel and her allies (looking at all those large Jewish organizations) must step up and fight the propaganda wars.

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THE week closes with ceremony, not peace. Israel received two murdered hostages for burial while Hamas calls the gesture “goodwill.” The message from Jerusalem was defiant: if foreign force won’t disarm Hamas, Israel will handle it. In the north, the IDF is shifting tempo from precision denial to sustained attrition after confirming Iranian embeds at Hezbollah missile sites. And at home, a so-called “million man” rally against the draft turned politics into tragedy when a young man fell to his death.

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*Starting today, I'm testing a new opening format — the **Flash Brief**. It's your daily situation report in under 90 seconds: the key fronts, the pressure points, the signal beneath the noise. For those who like to read everything, the full analysis still follows as always. For those who just want the essentials before coffee — this part's for you.*

Here's the field before Shabbat:

Flash Brief

- **Gaza:** Israel received the bodies of hostages Amiram Cooper, z"l, and Sahar Baruch, z"l, after Hamas delayed their return for days; eleven remain unreturned. *See The War Today.*
- **Lebanon:** Foreign Minister Sa'ar confirmed a planned increase in IDF strike tempo after Tehran's rearmament of Hezbollah networks. *See Northern Front.*
- **Jerusalem:** 200,000 Haredim rallied against the draft; a teenager died in a fall during the protest, deepening national grief. *See Inside Israel.*
- **Iran:** Western intelligence confirmed over 2,000 tons of Chinese oxidizer imported for missile fuel — enough for 500 ballistic weapons. *See Developments to Watch.*
- **Washington:** U.S. Energy Secretary Chris Wright canceled his Israel visit after Eli Cohen refused a \$35 billion gas-export deal to Egypt without domestic price guarantees. *See Diplomacy & Geopolitics.*
- **Red Cross:** Israel formalized the suspension of ICRC prison access after proof of Hamas communications abuse; Geneva's protests already drafted. *See Israel and the World.*
- **Beirut Skies:** Israeli jets and drones overflew Lebanon's capital as U.S. envoy Tom Barrack canceled his trip, signaling a frozen channel. *See Developments to Watch.*

Those are the movements on the surface — now here's what they mean once you follow the fault lines beneath.

The War Today

Closure Without Calm — Israel Buries Its Hostages, Not the War

Israel received the bodies of Amiram Cooper, z"l, 84, and Sahar Baruch, z"l, 25 — two of the hostages murdered and held in Gaza. The handover, conducted through the International Red Cross, came days of Hamas delay after its staged "discovery" of Ofir Tzarfati's remains earlier this week. As the coffins crossed into Israel, Prime Minister Netanyahu told graduating IDF officers that if foreign forces fail to disarm Hamas, "we will." Defense Minister Israel Katz and Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir repeated the doctrine: the war's final phase is the demilitarization of Gaza and the dismantling of Hamas. Eleven Israeli hostages remain unreturned. In parallel, Trump's administration continues pushing its multinational stabilization force, while Hamas and Fatah jockey in Cairo to dominate the "technocratic" committee meant to govern Gaza's ruins. Polling shows most Israelis believe Hamas will never

relinquish control and that foreign oversight will collapse on contact. The IDF remains at high readiness along the Yellow Line and Lebanon frontier, even as Iran and its proxies rearm under cover of ceasefire rhetoric. The funerals for Cooper and Baruch offered closure to families but no pause to the state's resolve.

ASSESSMENT

Hamas's partial return of the dead was not a humanitarian act but a psychological move — a gesture calibrated to slow Israeli momentum and sustain its bargaining position. If necessary, (and, sadly, history shows it will be) Israel alone will complete the war's objectives as its partners hesitate. The ceasefire functions as cover for selective operations and political preparation for a wider campaign. Washington's technocratic blueprint for "New Gaza" is eroding under the same reality that shattered its predecessors — armed tribes don't yield to committees. The IDF has reset to a standing posture of pressure, ready to strike in short bursts until Hamas loses its last semblance of utility as a negotiating partner and its capacity as a force. What returned to Israel yesterday were two bodies — and a reminder that peace is a prize not yet won.

Northern Front Reheats: Blida Raid, UNIFIL Rebuke, Cabinet on Alert

The Blida raid marks a pivot in tempo, not just tactics. Following weeks of IAF precision hits in the Beqaa and south, UNIFIL's public rebuke, and Lebanon's own troop reinforcements, Jerusalem has notified Washington it will raise its strike cadence across Hezbollah's network—moving from episodic interdictions to sustained attrition. Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar confirmed the shift, warning that Hezbollah is rebuilding under Iranian sponsorship and that Israel will target those rebuild nodes directly. Reporting points to IRGC embeds at missile sites, re-opened logistics corridors, and Tehran's deepening control over Hezbollah's operational infrastructure. On the ground, the Blida incursion exposed that Hezbollah's "civil" sites remain dual-use command nodes. Lebanon's president ordered troops to confront incursions, UNIFIL labeled the raid a Blue Line breach, and Israel opened a procedural review—but vowed to keep denying rebuilds before they metastasize.

ASSESSMENT

Israel is executing a deliberate shift from reactive strikes to active denial—a rolling campaign of attrition calibrated to bleed Hezbollah's capacity without crossing into full war. The U.S. has been pre-briefed to manage friction, signaling tacit acceptance of an accelerated tempo so long as escalation remains bounded. Beirut recycles the old dodge: condemn Israel's operations while ignoring Hezbollah's weapons. UNIFIL manages optics, not enforcement, and the IRGC's proximity means any contact can spiral fast. Expect deeper Beqaa strikes, short, surgical ground touches where targets hide in "civilian" shells, and harder border defenses against the likely kidnapping gambit Hezbollah will attempt to restore prestige.

Inside Israel

Fault Lines Exposed: The Draft Crisis Turns from Protest to Parody

Jerusalem locked down under the weight of a “million man” Haredi protest that snarled trains, shut roads, and ended in tragedy when 20-year-old Menachem Mendel Litzman, z”l, fell to his death from a construction site. The rally—nominally a “prayer gathering” but unmistakably a mass stand against the draft—saw more than 200,000 ultra-Orthodox men block the capital’s western entrance, forcing Israel Railways to close the Navon station amid security fears and crowd-control failures. Inside the Knesset, Shas leader Arye Deri demanded Itamar Ben-Gvir’s intervention to reopen transit lines, calling the closure “illegitimate.” At the same time, the Hostages and Missing Families Forum filed legal action against the Ateret Shlomo yeshiva for hijacking its “Bring Them Home” campaign to demand the release of jailed draft dodgers—using identical yellow-ribbon imagery and the slogan “Until the Last Hostage.” The forum called it “a cynical and profane misuse of national grief,” underscoring how the exemption fight has metastasized into a battle over moral ownership of sacrifice itself.

ASSESSMENT

Israel’s civic contract is fraying under the strain of unequal duty. The Haredi establishment has turned defiance into ritual—commandeering hostage imagery and mass prayer protests to sanctify a political privilege that no modern state can sustain. Their fear of conscription without halachic protection is understandable; their insistence on total exemption while drawing public funds is indefensible. Torah study is sacred, but so is the defense of Jewish life. The government’s indulgence—soft policing, coalition blackmail, and endless legal improvisation—signals weakness to those who still shoulder the load. The path forward is clear and humane: a real universal-service law that guards observance, ends blanket exemptions, and restores equality as both moral duty and national necessity. Anything less is surrender masquerading as compassion.

Israel and the World

Moral Inversion Abroad: From UN Corruption to Western Complicity

Israel’s diplomatic battlefield shows no sign of shrinking—from the UN’s corridors to Western campuses and buses. At the United Nations, Israeli ambassador Danny Danon accused UNIFIL of violating its mandate after peacekeepers shot down an Israeli drone over Kfar Kila, calling the act “an admission of mandate breach” and warning that “UNIFIL’s time is up.” The backdrop is one of institutional rot: Karim Khan, the suspended ICC chief prosecutor who sought arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant, now faces further credible sexual abuse allegations from staffers—an irony not lost on Israeli officials who have long accused the Court of moral theater.

In the media arena, ABC News interviewed a Hamas operative—Mahmoud Bassal, of Gaza’s Civil Defense—without disclosing his direct role in Hamas’s Zeitoun Battalion, an omission that turned the broadcast into propaganda.

Across Europe, the rot is showing up in its elections. In Denmark, the Independent Greens are running under the slogan “Free Copenhagen from Zionism”—a campaign rightly denounced by Jewish leaders as “a call to purge Jews by another name.” And in the United States, Cornell’s graduate-student union advanced a BDS resolution accusing Jews of “weaponizing antisemitism,” while threatening to fire Ph.D. students who object to paying mandatory union dues funding the movement.

Even in religious and civic spheres, moral corrosion runs deep. A misguided synagogue in Pennsylvania taught children a “Palestinian Perspectives” lesson on Yom HaZikaron—portraying Jews as colonial usurpers and Israel as an occupier—using materials from a group financed by the New Israel Fund and Bend the Arc. In London, a bus driver locked an Orthodox passenger inside and told him, “I don’t like Jews”; in New York, mayoral frontrunner Zohran Mamdani now faces federal complaints for allegedly taking illegal foreign donations from Dubai and Turkey. Meanwhile, Mandela’s granddaughters—after visiting Gaza and Israel—offered a rare antidote: a humanitarian mission that affirmed coexistence, condemned hate, and said, “We saw the truth with our own eyes.”

ASSESSMENT

The mask hasn’t been on for awhile, and on this Halloween it doesn’t seem like people are bothering to put it back on. Western institutions that once preached moral universalism now run on selective outrage—excusing jihadism, laundering antisemitism as “anti-Zionism,” and criminalizing Jewish self-defense. The UN fires at Israeli drones while sheltering Iran’s proxies; European parties campaign on slogans dripping with Jew-hate; American academia funds conspiracies about “Zionist elites.” Israel’s enemies no longer need to invent propaganda — the West’s moral confusion provides it free of charge. The counter-strategy must match the scale of decay: expose bias as corruption; weaponize lawfare and media literacy to punish institutional complicity; and rally allies—religious, democratic, and cultural—who still recognize truth as a virtue. Israel and her allies (looking at all those large Jewish organizations) must step up and fight the propaganda wars.

Briefly Noted

Frontline & Security

- The IDF and Mossad remain on alert for a multi-front strike from Iran-backed Iraqi militias using missiles and drones, mirroring the proxy assault from the conflict’s opening phase.
- India is preparing to authorize approximately \$3.7 billion in Israeli air-defense and rocket acquisitions, establishing co-production frameworks that extend Israel’s defensive capabilities into the Indo-Pacific region.
- A Lod court sentenced Muhammad Awadeh to 36 years imprisonment for the 2023 terror stabbing of two IDF soldiers near Tzrifin, reflecting the judiciary’s firm stance on premeditated knife assaults within Israeli territory.

Diplomacy & Geopolitics

- U.S. Energy Secretary Chris Wright canceled his Israel visit after Energy Minister Eli Cohen declined to approve a \$35 billion gas-export accord to Egypt lacking domestic price safeguards—a case of energy policy intersecting with national sovereignty.
- Far-left U.S. lawmakers and activists have criticized alleged UAE backing of Sudan's RSF while overlooking the rival SAF's Muslim Brotherhood connections and support from Iran, Russia, Turkey, and Egypt—an oversight with tangible regional ramifications.
- Bipartisan senators urged the Trump administration to intensify measures against Sudan's RSF, with Senate Foreign Relations Committee leadership weighing Foreign Terrorist Organization designation following El-Fasher's collapse and documented mass killings.
- The UK now permits certain Gazan scholarship students to bring family members, prompting a security caution from Priti Patel regarding admissions from a Hamas-controlled territory.
- Hungary's leading conservative research institute chief stated Budapest remains the EU's "last remaining ally" of Israel, pledging to obstruct anti-Israel initiatives in Brussels and advance Trump-Netanyahu-Orbán ceasefire and security proposals.
- A U.S. campaign-finance oversight organization detailed allegations that foreign contributions entered NYC mayoral contender Zohran Mamdani's campaign—claims that, if deliberate, could entail criminal jeopardy.
- IsraAID deployed personnel to Jamaica following Category-5 Hurricane Melissa, mobilizing Israeli water, sanitation, hygiene, and trauma response units for swift relief operations and diplomatic engagement.

Domestic & Law

- A retired Israeli law-enforcement officer with post-traumatic stress disorder self-immolated outside the Defense Ministry's psychological rehabilitation chief's residence, as veteran support organizations warned of a rehabilitation framework falling short for the psychologically damaged.
- Haaretz dismissed senior journalist Chaim Levinson after revelations he received at minimum NIS 200,000 from a Netanyahu aide implicated in "Qatargate," posing difficult concerns regarding press integrity amid wartime diplomacy.

Culture, Religion & Society

- The mayor of Nice, France, Christian Estrosi, defied threats and judicial orders to champion Israel—displaying flags, posting a hostage memorial, and constructing a Holocaust memorial—asserting, "Don't be afraid to be Jewish in Nice."
- The World Zionist Congress enacted major antisemitism and pluralism measures while departures from religious and right-wing factions prevented an E1 anti-settlement resolution from advancing.

- Hungary will rescind the academic funding of a foreign student who disrupted an Israeli scholar's speaking engagement and tighten rules to withdraw support from recipients who disrupt civic order—Budapest establishing a firm boundary.
- CAIR advocated for Congressional intervention to prevent a U.S. investor consortium—incorporating Larry Ellison—from acquiring TikTok, asserting it would suppress anti-Israel material, revealing who has profited from the current algorithmic environment's biases.

Developments to Watch

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

- **Strike Tempo to Rise** – Israel informed Washington it will intensify precision strikes in southern Lebanon after confirming Hezbollah's renewed arms flow and IRGC embeds at missile sites. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Beirut Overflights Surge** – IDF fighter jets and UAVs conducted heavy surveillance runs over Beirut and Dahieh, coinciding with U.S. envoy Tom Barrack's aborted visit. Lebanese officials warn panic could spark "unplanned engagement." **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Hezbollah Facility Destroyed in Lida** – IDF special forces demolished a Hezbollah command building disguised as civilian infrastructure; Lebanese state media confirmed secondary explosions, indicating munitions storage.

Gaza & Southern Theater

- **Ceasefire Enforcement Deadline** – Hamas faces an 8 p.m. ultimatum to withdraw militants from behind the Yellow Line; failure will trigger expanded Israeli strikes. Field units already on pre-clearance standby. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Tunnel-Clearance Campaign Expands** – Combat engineers have begun systematic demolition in Khan Younis and Nuseirat sectors, prioritizing deep-link tunnels under IDF-controlled zones.
- **Hamas Re-arrest Drive** – IDF and Shin Bet units are targeting terrorists freed in prior hostage deals who have returned to operational activity; first raids reported in Bethlehem and Rafah corridors. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

- **Iran-China Missile Fuel Pipeline** – Western intelligence confirms 2,000 tons of sodium perchlorate shipped from China to Iran enough for 500 ballistic missiles, signaling a rebuilt production line under sanctions cover. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Mossad Signal Leak from Tehran** – Farsi-language Mossad-linked account claims IRGC generals Hejazi and Pakpour sidelined Khamenei in strategic decisions, leaving Iran's air-defense network "defenseless."

Judea & Samaria

- **Rachel's Tomb Plot Foiled** – Police arrested a 16-year-old Bethlehem bomb-maker, freed in an earlier hostage exchange, who was rebuilding IEDs for an attack on Rachel's Tomb this Shabbat. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Qabatiya IED Ambush** – An improvised explosive detonated against IDF forces during a raid south of Jenin; no casualties reported, but intel suggests a new explosives workshop cell emerging in the town. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

Home Front & Politics

- **Draft Protests Aftermath** – Crowd estimates over 200,000 in Jerusalem's Haredi rally; security services bracing for copy-cat demonstrations in Bnei Brak and Ashdod as yeshiva factions test police tolerance. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Shin Bet Leak Probe Widens** – Investigators now suspect coordination between agency insiders and journalists in the Sde Teiman leak; disciplinary hearings expected within 48 hours.
- **Fuel Price Cut Masks Budget Strain** – Treasury confirmed a ₪0.16 per-liter gasoline reduction beginning Nov 1 to blunt protest optics; economists warn the subsidy drains defense-contingency reserves.

Israel ends this week with clarity earned in sorrow. Hamas's return of two bodies was a measurement — testing how much humiliation Israel will absorb before being forced to act. Up north, Hezbollah rehearses defiance under Iranian supervision, and Jerusalem prepares to bleed it slowly rather than wait for a single decisive blow. At home, the Haredi draft revolt exposed the same fracture Hamas studies from afar: who bears the burden of defense, and who hides behind ritual. The ceasefire still exists, but only as a convenience; every actor now uses it as camouflage for preparation.

The coming days will decide if restraint remains strategy or illusion. Israel can't outsource its security, or its conscience. Both must be defended — actively, daily, and without apology.

— *Uri Zehavi · Intelligence Editor With Modi Zehavi · Data + Research Analyst*

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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.

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