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READER EDITION

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ISRAEL BRIEF

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Tehran's killing cycle meets Washington's decision cycle, while Hamas tries to turn 'governance' into immunity. Inside Israel, courts and conscription politics collide. Again.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE The domestic math is ugly: Israel is simultaneously talking about materially expanding defense investment over the coming decade, and finance officials are warning that replacing annual aid shortfalls will land on Israeli taxpayers via higher taxes or reduced spending—while also noting that the finance ministry was not meaningfully prepared for the declaration. India is attractive precisely because it offers scale, co-production, and a durable democratic alignment without trying to turn every operational necessity into a moral seminar. Washington, meanwhile, hears you admit you can live without the money and responds “great—sooner.” Using aid phaseout as trade leverage may be tactically smart in the room, but it is strategically dangerous if Israel doesn’t build the domestic fiscal and industrial scaffolding first—munition stockpiles, production lines, and long-term procurement that doesn’t depend on foreign goodwill.

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Flash Brief

- **Iran:** Internet stays down while calls return; Israel raises alert as Washington weighs strike and cyber options.
- **Gaza:** Rafah firefight kills two gunmen; Hamas runs leadership vote from Doha and keeps Ran as leverage.
- **Judea & Samaria:** IDF arrests suspects who impersonated soldiers during robberies near Hebron; copycat risk rises.
- **Courts:** Coalition leaders urge defiance in Ben-Gvir case; High Court expands panel and signals early action.
- **October 7 Trials:** Knesset advances prosecution bill, barring releases and mandating public, recorded proceedings.
- **UN & Allies:** U.S. funding bill withholds U.N. money over anti-Israel bias; Jerusalem cuts ties with more bodies.
- **Diaspora:** Synagogues get tagged and threats get prosecuted; elite culture stages tantrums for Oct. 7 apologists.

The War Today

Rafah Contact, Doha Ballots, And Gaza's "Day After" Mirage

In Gaza, the ceasefire functions as a low-cost engagement window for Hamas. IDF observers identified six armed terrorists near troops in western Rafah—tanks moved in, terrorists fired at a tank, and the exchange escalated into targeted aerial strikes—two terrorists were killed initially, searches led to finding the other four who provoked neutralization.

At the strategic level, Hamas is trying to formalize continuity. A secret leadership vote is underway to replace its eliminated leader, with leading contenders operating from Qatar. Inside Israel, Ran Gvili's mother, backing IDF pressure, explicitly warns against normalization and insists there is no "day after" until Ran returns. She rejects the fiction that Hamas "lost" his location and frames his body as a deliberate bargaining chip.

The national-camp "day after" discourse is shifting from slogans to permanence language—full Israeli security control, sovereignty frameworks, talk of a Jewish presence in the Strip, and blunt warnings from a released hostage that Hamas is already resuming tunnel construction, still retains large rocket capacity, and can stockpile enough food to endure.

ASSESSMENT

Gaza shoots on the margins when it senses fatigue, reorganizes leadership abroad, and sells paperwork as if paperwork disarms brigades. A secret vote from Doha isn't "governance"—it's survivability engineering. Hamas is keeping their chain-of-command intact, keeping their guns at any cost, and keeping the hostage issue as a valve to extract concessions. Gaza's only real "day after" is the day after Hamas loses coercive control—cashflow, tunnels, weapons, commanders. Everything else is fiction.

Trump's Option Set Tightens; Israel Hardens For Iran Spillover

Iran's crackdown has moved past "unrest" into regime survival violence. Phone service appears to be partially returning while the national internet remains choked, satellite links are being hunted and jammed, and verification is deliberately obstructed—producing conflicting casualty reporting. The most accepted figure seems to be around 12,000, though credible claims reach up to 20,000.

Against this, Washington is publicly and privately widening its menu: military strike packages, cyber and psychological operations intended to disrupt command-and-control and state media, and target sets reportedly ranging from internal repression organs to missile and nuclear infrastructure. External pressure is hardening: additional U.S. economic penalties aimed at third-party trade with Iran, European coordination toward unified sanctions, and a rapidly escalating wave of departure advisories from multiple governments telling citizens to leave by land routes immediately.

Israel, remembering this past summer's Iranian salvo, is checking shelters and supplies. Home Front Command is issuing instructions, air defenses are redeploying across the country, standby levels have been raised, and cabinet deliberations are tightening—because Tehran will retaliate if struck, or may strike out of desperation to sell the lie that "Zionists" caused its internal collapse. Gulf actors are simultaneously pushing Washington to slow-roll major strikes and warning of "catastrophic" outcomes, which is just another way of saying: everyone wants the ayatollah gone but nobody wants to pay the bill.

ASSESSMENT

When a regime turns off the internet, it's confessing two things: it's killing, and it's afraid of witnesses. Trump's expanding option set—economic punishment, cyber disruption, psychological warfare, kinetic targets—needs decisions before Tehran lashes out. Israel's posture treats missile-defense leakage as a known cost. It will continue to harden the home front, keep airspace and readiness assumptions pessimistic, and prepare for retaliation pathways that don't require Tehran to "win," only to make life ugly for a week and claim deterrence. Gulf pressure to delay action is self-interest, but doesn't change the central fact that Tehran's survival instinct often expresses itself in rockets and proxies.

Inside Israel

The High Court Fight Spreads From Ben-Gvir To The Draft

Coalition faction heads formally urged the prime minister not to comply with any High Court order that would require the dismissal of the national security minister, framing judicial removal of a sitting minister—absent an indictment—as an "undemocratic coup." The attorney general's position argues the minister repeatedly crossed the statutory line between setting policy and influencing operational policing, appointments, and enforcement priorities.

The court postponed the scheduled hearing on petitions seeking the minister's removal, ordered the matter transferred to an expanded five-justice panel, and explicitly noted the absence of a substantive response from the prime minister as a reason the original hearing had "no practical purpose," while signaling the expanded panel may consider issuing a conditional order as early as the beginning of February and set a new hearing date by the end of March.

Another senior lawmaker publicly urged the government not to obey potential High Court rulings regarding a future draft-exemption framework. Opposition figures warned that open noncompliance erodes Israel's external legal defenses and increases risk to soldiers facing international harassment and litigation abroad.

ASSESSMENT

When you call the court illegitimate in one "exceptional" case, you normalize defiance. The immediate trigger might be the police portfolio, but it has long been simmering. Meanwhile, the draft fight ensures the same collision repeats—only this time the stakes are more immediate to the broader public. Israel can argue sovereignty, reform, and elected authority without lighting a bonfire under its own legitimacy architecture.

Nukhba Trials Move Toward Maximum Deterrence

The Knesset advanced a dedicated prosecution framework for October 7 perpetrators in a first reading that passed without opposition, creating a specialized track designed to handle the scale and evidentiary complexity of the atrocities while tightening future leverage points.

The bill routes indictments to a military court authorized to hear the full spectrum of severe offenses—ranging from core terror offenses to applicable state-level crimes—while importing civilian evidentiary and procedural rules as the baseline, then explicitly allowing defined exceptions and additional deviation authority in exceptional cases. It establishes a special judicial panel structure that includes retired district-court judges, mandates public hearings that are broadcast and fully documented, regulates legal representation, and—critically—bars anyone charged or convicted under the law from inclusion in any future terrorist-release decisions tied to diplomatic or political negotiations. It also creates a prosecution-policy steering mechanism chaired by the prime minister and including key ministers, and authorizes the court to impose the death penalty.

ASSESSMENT

This bill is trying to end the old Israeli loop where mass murderers become bargaining inventory after the cameras leave. The "no future release" clause is the load-bearing wall. Without it, Hamas and its cousins learn (again) that atrocities yield long-term trade value. The broadcasting requirement turns the trials into a national record, not an opaque administrative process that foreign activists can rewrite later as "opaque" or "unfair."

The Negev Becomes A Sovereignty Audit

The Negev is being described—correctly—as a live test of whether Israel governs territory or merely visits it with periodic raids. Years of episodic policing, uneven planning enforcement, and slow court timelines have created the exact vacuum that criminal clans, protection rackets, weapons traffickers, and parallel power structures flourish in. It has been a governance failure that leaves law-abiding Bedouin and Jewish citizens exposed.

The recommended correction is a long-duration state strategy that treats the Negev as strategic depth—critical infrastructure, bases, routes, and population growth—integrating daily law enforcement with education, welfare, housing, healthcare, and employment policy under one coherent doctrine. A specific internal accelerant is being called out bluntly: persistent polygamy, illegal under Israeli law but widely tolerated in parts of Bedouin society, operating as a poverty-and-crime engine that locks women into dependence, degrades child welfare and schooling, and increases the pool of young men pulled into violent criminal structures—an equality and sovereignty issue disguised as “cultural sensitivity.”

ASSESSMENT

The Negev is the domestic version of a familiar strategic pathology: you can hold a border line militarily and still hemorrhage authority if parallel systems are allowed to run daily life. The fix is boring and therefore hard: enforcement that stays after the headlines fade, planning rules that are actually implemented, protection for law-abiding locals, and opportunity pathways that let families exit clan dependence.

Israel and the World

UN Money, NGO Letters, And Politics Converge On One Word

A single vocabulary weapon is being institutionalized across the West: “genocide” as credential, not conclusion. The coercion is now being admitted openly inside American politics: a legislator described feeling forced to publicly accuse Israel of “genocide” even while believing the charge is untrue, because media and activist ecosystems treat the word itself as the price of admission to be heard.

The new U.S. State Department funding package puts a financial bite behind long-running U.N. dysfunction—by withholding a slice of contributions until agencies can demonstrate concrete anti-Israel-bias and antisemitism countermeasures, donor transparency, credible staff vetting for terror ties, and tougher oversight—while maintaining bans on UNRWA funding and on supporting U.N. bodies that have specialized in turning Israel into a permanent defendant.

Israel’s foreign minister ordered immediate severing of contact with additional U.N.-linked bodies described as anti-Israel platforms, bureaucratic waste

factories, or sovereignty-eroding migration forums—expanding a list of organizations Israel has already disengaged from after repeated bias and institutional failure.

Parallel to all of this, the NGO-celebrity complex is still running unabashed: a letter signed by high-profile entertainers, international organizations, and hard-left NGOs accuses Israel of deliberately “inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about destruction” and demands unfettered access and movement.

ASSESSMENT

First, you make the libel a litmus test. Then you require institutions to launder it into “investigation,” “accountability,” and “humanitarian access.” Then you punish anyone who won’t recite it. Budget conditionality is the first real tool applied at scale to the U.N. ecosystem—money finally following behavior. Israel’s move to cut off dysfunctional bodies is the matching response. Stop paying dues to venues that exist to convert process into constraint. The celebrity letter campaign carves genocide-language into the administrative record so that courts, parliaments, and HR departments can treat Israelis as a liability category. When legislators admit they’re saying “genocide” to stay socially employable you’re not watching “debate.”

Synagogues Get Tagged, Festivals Collapse, States Test Enforcement

In Canada, an Edmonton man was charged over online threats aimed at the Jewish community and released under restrictive conditions, including staying away from Jewish houses of worship, community centers, and events within a defined perimeter—an example of the state treating threat behavior as behavior, not “speech.”

In California, the rubble of a synagogue destroyed in last year’s wildfire was vandalized with anti-Zionist graffiti—because even after a building burns down, the urge to mark Jews for intimidation apparently survives.

In Australia, the same “safety” language is being used in two directions at once: parliament is preparing a sweeping hate-and-extremism package with new offenses and enforcement tools, while a major writers’ festival imploded after it disinvited a Palestinian author who praised October 7 and called for making spaces “unsafe” for Zionists. Hundreds of writers boycotted, leadership resigned, and the event was canceled.

ASSESSMENT

The key variable is not whether the host state treats antisemitism as a security problem or as a public-relations weather pattern. The Canadian case shows enforcement is possible when officials decide it is—though a one-off should not be misconstrued as Canada getting its act together. “Anti-zionism” is still a permission slip to target Jewish communal space—apparently even when there’s nothing left to “protest” except ashes. Australia’s festival implosion is the same moral rot—people who wouldn’t share an elevator with a KKK pamphlet will resign in solidarity over an Oct. 7 celebrant, because the prestige class has rebranded jihadist apologetics as “dissent.” Meanwhile, governments talk about hate-speech crackdowns after terror attacks, and the only question that matters is whether enforcement will be symmetrical—or whether Jews will be managed as “provocation” while their intimidators get treated as an authenticity movement.

India Scales Capability As Washington Prices Everything

Israel–India cooperation is being framed as a long-horizon strategic partnership shifting from procurement into joint development and co-production across defense, technology, and applied resilience—missiles, drones, radar, cyber, plus spillovers in agriculture, water management, and innovation corridors that trade Israeli edge for Indian scale and manufacturing depth.

In contrast, the U.S. relationship is moving deeper into explicit transaction: Israel is in late-stage talks seeking tariff relief after Washington imposed a 15% tariff on Israeli goods, and government sources are now openly conceding that the prime minister’s surprise declaration—ending U.S. military aid within a decade—was not ideology but bargaining posture.

ASSESSMENT

The domestic math is ugly: Israel is simultaneously talking about materially expanding defense investment over the coming decade, and finance officials are warning that replacing annual aid shortfalls will land on Israeli taxpayers via higher taxes or reduced spending—while also noting that the finance ministry was not meaningfully prepared for the declaration. India is attractive precisely because it offers scale, co-production, and a durable democratic alignment without trying to turn every operational necessity into a moral seminar. Washington, meanwhile, hears you admit you can live without the money and responds “great—sooner.” Using aid phaseout as trade leverage may be tactically smart in the room, but it is strategically dangerous if Israel doesn’t build the domestic fiscal and industrial scaffolding first—munition stockpiles, production lines, and long-term procurement that doesn’t depend on foreign goodwill.

Briefly Noted

Frontline & Security

- **JNS:** Israel Police told the Knesset it will block Hamas attempts to stage “victory” displays on the Temple Mount during Ramadan, treating the period as a war-linked security event.

Diplomacy & Geopolitics

- **Jerusalem Post:** Pro-Scottish independence accounts reportedly went quiet during Iran’s internet shutdown, fueling claims some were Iranian influence assets posing as domestic activists. Tehran exports instability the way it exports missiles: cheap, deniable, and aimed at weakening Western cohesion.
- **Ynet:** South Africa’s culture minister said he blocked a covert Qatari attempt to shape the country’s Venice Biennale pavilion into an anti-Israel “genocide” narrative via indirect financial incentives. Qatar doesn’t need to win arguments — it just needs to rent institutions long enough to turn propaganda into “culture.”

Culture, Religion & Society

- **YourErie:** A Pennsylvania man pleaded guilty to antisemitic threats against a public official and lying to the FBI about firearm access. The point isn't the slur inventory — it's that the threats come with capability, and too many systems still treat that as "online drama."
- **Israel National News:** Anti-Israel protest movements are structurally resistant to reason because identity, status incentives, and group dynamics override facts. Translation: stop treating mobs like debate clubs and start treating them like pressure machines.
- **The Jewish Chronicle:** A senior Iranian cultural official urged a Maduro-style capture of the U.S. president and suggested sabotage on U.S. soil could be "acceptable." Regimes that talk like this are not negotiating — they're advertising intent and testing whether the West still recognizes threats as threats.
- **JFeed:** An Argentine resident physician was suspended and investigated after posting calls to murder Jews.
- **Daily Wire:** A Brooklyn judge released a suspect accused of assaulting and threatening an Orthodox Jewish family with hate-crime charges. When the state signals "we'll see," mobs hear "go ahead."

Developments to Watch

Judea & Samaria

- **Impersonator Robbery** — Armed suspects (a Palestinian and two Bedouins) impersonating IDF troops carried out robberies near Ad-Dhahiriya, triggering a manhunt and arrests.
- **Seam Line Reinforcement Ahead Of Ramadan** — Security forces are prepositioning and running preventative detentions ahead of Ramadan (mid-February through mid-March this year), with tighter controls expected for entries from Judea and Samaria into Jerusalem. Hamas treats religious traffic as an incitement delivery system, so the preemptive posture is the only non-stupid option.

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

- **UNIFIL "Near-Miss" Theater** — UNIFIL reported tank shells landing within a few hundred meters of a Spanish patrol and cited laser tracking, prompting a withdrawal.
- **Lebanon FM Admits Its Problem** — Lebanon's foreign minister openly said Israel can keep striking as long as Hezbollah is not fully disarmed—admitting Beirut has no sovereignty vis-a-vis Hezbollah.

Gaza & Southern Theater

- **Ramadan Victory-Optics** — Police and security bodies are preparing to block Hamas “victory” displays in Jerusalem.

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

- **Iran Cellular Return, Internet Still Choked** — Iran’s cellular network is reportedly coming back for voice-calls only—while the broader internet remains shut down and satellite links are jammed.
- **Executions Clock Meets Trump Options** — Reports say executions of detainees could begin imminently as Trump weighs expanded military/cyber options and publicly signals “very strong action” if hangings proceed. Tehran’s survival playbook at this stage is retaliation signaling and proxy activation to raise the cost of outside intervention. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Airspace Closures Around Iran Corridor** — Airspace between Baghdad and Iran was closed by aviation directives. The region is clearing lanes and reducing surprise friction ahead of a potential strike cycle.
- **Iran Threat Narrative Hardens** — Iran’s army chief called the “Zionist threat” existential and said preparations are underway, while Tehran also claims it arrested an Israel-directed cell entering from Pakistan.

Diplomatic & Legal

- **Evacuation Advisories Pile Up** — Multiple governments are urging citizens to leave Iran immediately, some explicitly via overland routes, as flights remain disrupted.
- **Tariff War On Iran’s Trading Partners** — Trump’s new 25% tariff penalty on countries trading with Iran is a blunt secondary-sanctions accelerator.

Home Front & Politics

- **Air Defense Mobility, Cabinet Tightens** — Israel raised alert levels, moved air-defense assets, and convened cabinet consultations focused on Iran contingencies. The operational risk isn’t only incoming fire, but fatigue—weeks of high alert degrade readiness and decision discipline faster than officials admit.

Closing Statement

THE next steps in each major arena hinge on a few decisions. Whether Washington acts as Tehran signals executions. Whether Hamas tries to stabilize its rule through ballots abroad and provocation at home. And whether Israel’s institutions keep functioning as institutions instead of factions. Every actor is testing whether consequences are real.

— 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.

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