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READER EDITION

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ISRAEL BRIEF

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Washington's strike math is visible in fuel, ISR, and electronic warfare. Tehran's Tel Aviv threats are aimed at everyone with something to lose—airlines, capitals, markets.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE The hate ecosystem is maturing. Indoctrination in schools, intimidation in academia, normalization by “community safety” theater, and distribution through frictionless digital pipes of AI and social platforms. The Chicago move brings a workable definition into enforcement infrastructure—IHRA is a wrench, not a poem—and once it’s codified, bureaucrats can’t pretend they “didn’t know what it was.” But a definition won’t stop a car from hitting 770, and it won’t stop Iran’s proxies from laundering Jew-hate into “anti-Zionism” for Western consumption. As for AI, if the models can’t reliably call the anti-Zionist mutations what they are, they’ll mass-produce at scale.

CLASSIFICATION

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THREE arenas are vying for attention today. Iran strike readiness. Gaza’s aid pipeline. Israel’s internal manpower-and-governance fights. The hostage issue may be resolved, but the “what replaces Hamas control” question is now being fought in truck counts, gate rules, and enforcement capacity. Meanwhile the region is well into the quiet pre-impact phase—VIP departures, airspace warnings, and legal tools getting readied.

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Flash Brief

- **Iran Strike Package:** VIP flights depart as Rivet Joint, tankers, and Growlers stack near Al-Udeid. *See The War Today.*
- **Hormuz Watch:** Triton patrols the Strait as Iran closes Jask airfield and reinforces Qeshm/Bandar Abbas. *See The War Today.*
- **Europe Legal Tools:** EU leaders signal momentum on IRGC terror listing and asset-freeze enforcement inside Europe. *See The War Today.*
- **Gaza Aid Control:** Truck volume hits about 600 daily as Israel urges cuts and limits Rafah to people. *See The War Today.*
- **Gaza Internal Violence:** Armed gangs target Hamas security officers, forcing route changes and stricter communications discipline. *See The War Today.*
- **Northern Front Politics:** Hezbollah declares loyalty to Khamenei as Lebanese lawmakers openly reject being Tehran's shield. *See The War Today.*
- **Inside Israel:** Budget vote advances on Haredi conditions as draft legislation and High Court media fights converge. *See Inside Israel.*

The War Today

U.S. Builds First-Week Strike Depth While Tehran Threatens Tel Aviv

Officials and diplomats began to visibly decamp the region as multiple VIP flights departed the Middle East, while the U.S. posture around Iran thickened into an overtly operational package. A Rivet Joint arrived at Al-Udeid, roughly 19 aerial refueling tankers were assessed on station there, and additional electronic-warfare aircraft were inbound as U.S. long-range surveillance continued over Hormuz. Iran tightened readiness signals on the coastline—reinforcing positions around Qeshm and Bandar Abbas, issuing a NOTAM closing the strategic Jask airfield window, and keeping its drone carrier anchored at Bandar Abbas. Senior Iranian figures warned any U.S. strike would be treated as the start of a war and explicitly threatened “the heart of Tel Aviv.” Regime-linked reporting claimed Iran sees Washington’s demands—ending enrichment, limiting missiles, cutting proxies, and effectively conceding legitimacy—as costlier than conflict. European positioning shifted toward alignment against the IRGC: leadership statements signaled terrorist designation momentum and maximum-pressure intent, though there were conflicting claims about whether EU consensus is already secured versus still being finalized.

ASSESSMENT

Tehran's threat language is not meant to convince Washington—its goal is to paralyze everyone else—airlines, investors, and weak governments—so they start pressuring Israel to “avoid escalation” while Iran keeps its nuclear program and missile workshops intact. The West's recurring disease is treating time as neutral. Every extra day is more coastal hardening, more proxy activation planning, more internal repression, and more Iranian confidence while others debate what “regime change” even means. The only realistic near-term objective is capability removal and constraint. The nuclear program's usable margins, the missile production tempo, and the IRGC's ability to finance, procure, and move. Those all have to go. Europe's sudden appetite to call the IRGC a terrorist entity helps only if it turns into seizures, freezes, and prosecutions—not merely another round of solemn statements.

Aid Volume, Rafah Mechanics, And Gangs Expose The Next Hamas Survival Plan

Gaza's post-hostage phase (expectedly) snapped into a contest between slogans and mechanics. Hamas officials again stated they never agreed to hand over weapons and insisted any governing arrangements require Hamas consent. Washington's UN posture shifted from rhetoric to a formal “buyback and reintegration” concept under international monitoring and a transitional stabilization force. Israeli officials publicly framed the scale of the remaining armory—tens of thousands of rifles, rockets, and anti-tank weapons—while the IDF simultaneously warned that Hamas is measurably strengthening under current humanitarian flows and smuggling. Roughly 600 trucks per day are entering Gaza now, far above prewar rhythms and above stated humanitarian baselines, with diversion and illicit inflows extending beyond trucks into crossings, border gaps, and contractor cover. IDF sources recommended shifting Phase II down to no more than 200 trucks/day, arguing surplus volume is effectively captured by Hamas to solidify control, and urged that Rafah's expected reopening be limited to movement of people only—not goods—given Rafah's historical role as Hamas's primary strengthening artery. Anti-Hamas armed gangs (they're still jihadists though, so don't get too excited) reportedly escalated from opportunistic clashes to targeted assassinations of Hamas security personnel (captured with body cameras) using suppressed pistols, prompting Hamas to harden personal security routines (route changes, phone discipline, vigilance). These gangs present themselves as an alternative power layer and have obtained heavier weapons. Separately, renewed internal Israeli accountability warfare resurfaced via a report alleging the prime minister declined multiple opportunities to eliminate Hamas's Sinwar in early 2023. The prime minister's office denied this and blamed security leadership—an unresolved dispute—as Phase II decisions are made.

ASSESSMENT

The buyback idea will function as a subsidy for the terror tunnel network. They'll keep what's in good condition and turn in surplus and damaged stock. "Decommissioning" weapons under international monitoring is only disarmament if someone is willing to kick in doors, seize caches, dismantle command chains, and enforce consequences when the guns don't show up. That "someone" will not be a rotating cast of foreign monitors (some of whom openly back Hamas). Meanwhile, 600 trucks/day is a logistics system which intentionally has excess built in for Hamas to divert for its own ends. If Phase II keeps the volume and opens Rafah for goods, Israel will be told to clap for "stability" while the next war gets closer and deadlier. Hamas's strongest fear is not speeches about demilitarization—it has a well oiled international patronage network. Currently, their practical fear revolves around the armed rivals who can kill security officers at whim. Israel cannot romanticize these actors—most are criminals, opportunists, and jihadists. Finally, the resurfaced pre-Oct. 7 targeting dispute— not operationally useful as gossip—is operationally relevant as doctrine. If Israeli decision-making again becomes hostage to risk aversion, optics management, or bureaucratic blame games, Phase II will end the same way Phase I did—Hamas alive and armed.

Inside Israel

Haredi Parties Offer "Support" Now, Hostages Later

The coalition inched the 2026 budget toward first-reading passage after ultra-Orthodox factions signaled conditional support. Degel HaTorah and Shas indicated they would back the initial vote while demanding the conscription bill be completed before the second and third readings. The package sets state spending at roughly NIS 662 billion (excluding debt servicing) and a deficit ceiling of 3.9% of GDP, with the central bank governor warning the ceiling is already too high and must not "creep" given the likelihood of additional security outlays. The Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee chair confirmed the Haredi conscription legislation is now cleared at committee level and ready to advance to Knesset votes after months of stall tactics, with planned committee amendment sessions abruptly canceled once the political green light was given. Roughly 80,000 Haredi men of draft age are believed eligible yet un-enlisted and the IDF is openly short at least 12,000 recruits.

ASSESSMENT

A first-reading budget vote bought with a "we'll insist later" clause is just deferred extortion. The Haredi parties are openly planning on sandblasting the draft law into something the public cannot accept, won't close the IDF gap, and that the High Court will eventually shred. The government should stop pretending this is some sort of cultural dispute. If this coalition wants to survive, it needs to decouple the budget from exemption bargaining and pass a draft framework that scales what already works on the ground—because the IDF's manpower deficit is not an opinion.

High Court Turns Army Radio And Haaretz Into Governance Tests

The attorney-general urged the High Court to convert an interim ruling into a final order blocking government steps to sever state ties with a major newspaper group—steps that began as directors-general instructions to halt advertising, subscriptions, and other engagements and were later reinforced by a cabinet decision—arguing the move was unlawful, procedurally defective under procurement rules, and constitutionally corrosive as a state-financed punishment mechanism. At the same time, the High Court opened its first hearing on the government’s planned closure of Army Radio, freezing implementation while probing both sides. Justices challenged petitioners insisting a shutdown requires primary legislation, but also signaled serious concern that ministers publicly pushed for closure before an advisory committee even convened—raising the specter of a “committee” built to launder a predetermined political outcome.

ASSESSMENT

If the government wants to reshape the media landscape, it should do it like a government: legislate cleanly and stop handing the judiciary easy procedural wins. Starving hostile outlets via state procurement is tactically tempting, emotionally rewarding, and strategically stupid. It invites the courts to constitutionalize the fight and cast the government as using the public purse as a cudgel. Meanwhile, Army Radio is the perfect absurdity. A military broadcaster, that is no longer needed in the modern era, treated as a political trophy. The deeper issue is the same one Israel keeps tripping over—constitutional vacuum, Basic Laws doing acrobatics, and every major decision forced into High Court posture.

Courts, Diggers, And Permits Collide With Demography

Senior banking leadership argued Israel must double infrastructure investment over the coming decade from roughly NIS 40–50 billion annually, citing a national capital stock estimated around 35% of GDP—well below peer developed countries—and a projected population surge that makes “average” investment rates mathematically insufficient to close the gap. The choke point, rather than the financing, is the state itself—planning, permits, municipal and environmental hurdles, and a political culture that avoids projects whose payoff arrives after the next election. The High Court upheld eviction orders affecting dozens of Palestinian families in Silwan, with residents given until around the end of Ramadan (mid-March) to leave. Locals described buyout offers (including “blank check” style inducements) and warned of displacement pressures in an area adjacent to the Temple Mount flashpoint. Separately, friction in the Hebron area escalated after assaults and theft triggered clashes. An Israeli civilian and several Palestinians were injured, arrests followed, and an IDF officer was assaulted during crowd disorder.

ASSESSMENT

Israel can win wars faster than it can approve a rail line. Infrastructure is sovereignty—movement, density, response times, economic throughput, and the ability to keep a growing country functioning under pressure. If planning and permits remain a national hobby in self-sabotage, demographics become a tax on stability.

Israel and the World

From Schoolyards To AI, The Anti-Jewish Feed Gets Industrial

In New York, a driver rammed a car into an entrance of Chabad's world headquarters at 770 Eastern Parkway during a major commemorative event. Fortunately, no injuries were reported and the suspect was arrested on scene. In Chicago, the City Council unanimously amended the municipal code to codify the IHRA definition of antisemitism as a working standard for discrimination—explicitly rejecting vague formulations that let “anti-Zionist” Jew-hatred hide in plain sight. In London, renewed calls are mounting to shut a school linked to the Iranian regime—serving children of embassy staff—after footage previously showed pupils singing an IRGC-affiliated anthem that includes references to killing Jews. Meanwhile, Europe's campuses keep manufacturing “consensus” by intimidation. Accounts describe scholars coerced into endorsing the genocide accusation as a career-protection ritual. And because reality now routes through machines, the Anti-Defamation League's first AI index tested six major language models across 25,000+ interactions and found the systems generally spot classic antisemitic tropes more reliably than anti-Zionist and extremist narratives; one model (Claude) performed best overall, while others lagged badly.

ASSESSMENT

The hate ecosystem is maturing. Indoctrination in schools, intimidation in academia, normalization by “community safety” theater, and distribution through frictionless digital pipes of AI and social platforms. The Chicago move brings a workable definition into enforcement infrastructure—IHRA is a wrench, not a poem—and once it's codified, bureaucrats can't pretend they “didn't know what it was.” But a definition won't stop a car from hitting 770, and it won't stop Iran's proxies from laundering Jew-hate into “anti-Zionism” for Western consumption. As for AI, if the models can't reliably call the anti-Zionist mutations what they are, they'll mass-produce at scale.

Briefly Noted

Diplomacy & Geopolitics

- *Jerusalem Post*: A Saudi-aligned influence campaign has been branding the UAE as an “Israeli Trojan horse” for signing the Abraham Accords. If normalization partners get hung out to dry the moment the region's loudmouths start barking, the Accords become a liability rather than an asset.

Culture, Religion & Society

- *The Free Press*: Columbia replaced its DOJ-approved antisemitism monitor Bart Schwartz with Charles Cooper after disputes over access, scope, and budget, with sources alleging the university withheld key DEI/antisemitism

materials. When a monitorship can be “administratively” swapped the second it asks for receipts, the message to every Jew-hater in academia is to lawyer up and stall while the public pressure blows over.

- *Jerusalem Post*: A Sydney hospital assigned Bondi terror-attack survivor Rosalia Shikhberg an alias and removed her Jewish identity from records without her consent, prompting criticism and official acknowledgment that communication and procedure failed. If “security protocol” means disguising Jews inside public hospitals, the problem isn’t paperwork.
- *JNS*: Antisemitic Rapper Macklemore told followers that “Gaza and Minneapolis are not separate stories,” and the ADL blasted his output as Israel-vilifying and trope-heavy.
- *Jewish Chronicle*: Israeli journalist Amir Tibon won the UK’s 2026 Wingate Prize for *The Gates of Gaza*, recounting his family’s October 7 rescue and the attack on Kibbutz Nahal Oz.

Frontline & Security

- *Jerusalem Post*: Israeli cybersecurity and quantum-tech leaders warned that adversaries—including Iranian-linked actors—are already “harvesting” encrypted data now to decrypt later as quantum capabilities mature.
- *Jerusalem Post*: Regardless of their public statements, the Palestinian Authority is still funneling “pay-for-slay” stipends to terrorists and “families of martyrs”—even in places like Lebanon and Jordan—via a rebranded welfare channel. Rebranding terror salaries as social services is the PA’s core competency.
- *Los Angeles Times*: A Long Beach man pleaded guilty to sending money to Islamic State fighters overseas while holding a nail-and-ball-bearing improvised bomb and a firearm (despite a prior felony conviction). ISIS may be degraded, but the money still flows and homegrown zealots still work—and every time counterterror officials gets lazy, Israel and the Jewish community inherit the blowback.

Domestic & Law

- *Jerusalem Post*: Opposition leader Yair Golan warned that Netanyahu’s government might try to “sabotage” the next election and said his party will deploy monitors to every polling station to guard the process. This is preemptive delegitimization dressed up as civic virtue—prime material for a political tantrum if the results don’t flatter the self-appointed guardians.

Developments to Watch

Judea & Samaria

- **Tunnel Checkpoint knife probe** — A would-be attacker pulled a knife during an ID check at the Tunnels checkpoint south of Jerusalem and was neutralized; no Israeli injuries.

- **Ad-Dhahiriya friction turns lethal** — IDF troops shot and killed a Molotov-thrower in ad-Dhahiriya and fired at another rock-thrower. South Hebron is back in “cheap attacks, expensive response” mode.

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

- **Hezbollah keeps options open** — Hezbollah’s chief says the group is “not neutral” if Iran is attacked and will decide “in due course” how to act. Translation: a calibrated “token” strike from Lebanon can be ordered to prove loyalty without signing up for full war.

Gaza & Southern Theater

- **Yellow Line breaches** — IDF reports killing a terror operative who crossed the Gaza ceasefire line in the south and approached troops, posing an immediate threat.

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

- **Decision-point consultations in Washington** — Senior Israeli and Saudi officials are in D.C. as Trump threatens a “far worse” strike and U.S. officials describe a nearing-complete buildup.
- **Atlantic tanker bridge enables EW layer** — Open-source tracking shows KC-46 movements staging through Spain to support trans-Atlantic movement of EA-18G Growlers and other assets. That’s electronic-warfare coverage getting delivered to the theater.

Diplomatic & Legal

- **Europe moves from speeches to tools** — EU foreign-policy chief Kaja Kallas says she expects agreement to list the IRGC as a terrorist entity, while Germany’s Merz is openly talking countdown.
- **Evacuation moves** — Italy has renewed calls for citizens to leave Iran, and OSINT flight tracking shows VIP departures from parts of the region. Governments don’t generally do this for the drama.

Home Front & Politics

- **Shin Bet-IDF coordination** — Shin Bet chief David Zini hosted IDF Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir for “essential coordination” amid a “sensitive period.” Expect quiet shifts in domestic posture—aviation, cyber, internal readiness—before the public sees any guideline change.

Expect Tehran’s cheapest answers to show up first: Hormuz disruption attempts, proxy “loyalty” fire, and cyber pressure on soft infrastructure—because those don’t require permission slips. In Gaza, the aid pipeline is opening into a fight. Keep it at 600 trucks each day and you fund the next round. Control it and you force real choices. Inside Israel, the budget-for-exemptions trade is approaching a collision that coalition choreography cannot solve.

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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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