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ISRAEL BRIEF

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Muscat stays 'on' as Washington builds options and Jerusalem prepares for the bill.

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THE BOTTOM LINE The anti-Israel movement's primary objective is "presence denial"—excluding Israeli officials, litigating companies into oblivion, and treating Israeli symbols as contraband in "inclusive spaces." Israel creates alternatives and holds ground. New diplomatic-economic nodes like Somaliland plus maintaining public flag visibility in mob-targeted arenas represents normal operations defense. "The isolation machine can't stand that kind of normal."

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Flash Brief

- **Iran Talks:** Reports alternate between canceled and Muscat-scheduled as Tehran constrains agenda scope.
 - **Force Package:** U.S. assets mobilize while Israel signals operational readiness against strategic programs.
 - **Red Sea Lane:** Houthis are moving missile and drone facilities, preparing maritime attacks if Iran is targeted.
 - **Gaza Contact:** Gunfire near Yellow Line triggers strikes eliminating Hamas and PIJ commanders from Oct. 7.
 - **Gaza Cover:** Video documents ambulance use for weapons transport; prosecutors indict smuggling network.
 - **Budget + Manpower:** Haredi coalition parties block votes; reserve readiness cuts reduce preparation timelines.
 - **Diaspora + Presence:** UK campus intimidation intensifies; Somaliland explores Israeli trade; Israeli flag at Milan-Cortina.
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The War Today

Talks As A Timing Weapon: Oman Feints, Force Buildup, And A Multi-Front Retaliation Stack

Reporting shifted from claims talks were “canceled”—after Iran refused nuclear-agenda expansion and demanded location/format changes—to Iranian messaging insisting discussions remain “scheduled in Muscat.” U.S. signaling stayed conditional: urgency combined with firm requirement that missiles become negotiating elements, accompanied by escalating signals that military action grows probable if Tehran maintains narrow parameters. Iran’s military rhetoric emphasized offense and asymmetric warfare; state television postponed a planned missile-complex presentation citing “security.”

Israel and Washington signaled diverging operational timelines. Israel indicated readiness for immediate strikes on Iran’s strategic programs—explicitly including ballistic missiles—while Washington urged restraint pending nominal diplomacy, simultaneously assembling expanded force posture including carrier positioning attempts. Pre-strike warnings circulated: anti-Houthi Yemeni reporting indicated the Houthis are “relocating missile/drone depots and preparing to resume attacks on U.S. shipping if Iran is struck.” Israel refreshed Yemen targeting accordingly. Israel also expanded officer security protections abroad. Shin Bet cautioned Israelis being recruited by Iranian agents for financial compensation.

ASSESSMENT

The environment mirrors pre-strike conditions where each party waits for the other to yield. Tehran's "nuclear-only" position functions as capabilities protection—preserving missiles, proxies, and maritime disruption as leverage while offering narrow diplomatic theater without genuine concessions. Washington maintains wide options using "ongoing talks" as restraint mechanism while assembling credible coercive posture. Israel preserves operational freedom and prepares for inevitable reality: "retaliation and pressure will be multi-front by default."

Smuggling, Ambulances, And Militias Show Who Still Holds Gaza

Terrorists fired on IDF forces in northern Gaza, severely wounding a reserve company commander during routine Yellow Line activity in eastern Gaza City. Israel executed targeted strikes against rebuild leadership. Hamas Nukhba commander Bilal Abu Assi—who led Oct. 7 Nir Oz infiltration—was eliminated. Hamas cell head Muhammad Issam Hassan al-Habil, whose interrogation tied him to observer Corporal Noa Marciano's murder in captivity, was eliminated. Islamic Jihad's Northern Gaza Brigade commander Ali Raziana—involved in force deployment, brigade defense, hostage detention, Hamas coordination, and post-ceasefire reconstitution—was eliminated. IDF released footage showing Hamas repeatedly using ambulances to transport armed personnel and weapons from hospital to school near Yellow Line. Prosecutors filed indictments against organized smuggling network moving prohibited goods into Gaza via crossing exploitation and ceasefire logistics, using military clothing, false cover narratives, convoy access, and attempted reservist bribery. Anti-Hamas armed factions captured a Hamas commander in Israeli-held Rafah, handing him to Israeli authorities. IDF planners openly prepared for intermittent operations as "durable new normal." Hamas actively rebuilds rocket, weapons, and explosive caches while replacing brigade-level commanders and conducting Yellow Line probes. Evacuation planning addresses potential larger ground operations later this year in areas like Nu-seirat and Deir al-Balah.

ASSESSMENT

Hamas retains power through armed units, policing capacity, and logistics cashflow—regardless of committee announcements or credential displays. Kill-chain strikes on Oct. 7 perpetrators and rebuild commanders are necessary but insufficient strategy. The smuggling case presents self-inflicted damage: if Israeli reservists accept payments to facilitate contraband through crossing vulnerabilities, Hamas gains "back-office revenue department" capacity. Ambulance footage highlights Western institutional humiliation—hospital exceptionalism treated as "moral force-field while jihadists treat it as routing system."

Inside Israel**Budget Hostage-Taking Meets Reserve Cuts And A Draft Reality Check**

Coalition standoff exploded the budget process when Haredi parties refused Arrangements Bill votes—conditioning movement on Draft Law "progress."

Negotiations failed; voting postponed to Monday despite direct Prime Minister involvement. Simultaneously, the IDF's 2026 reserve-readiness directive triggered open fury. Reserve battalion commanders report retroactive preparation-time reduction (to three days), emergency-depot readiness cuts (to single day), and cancellation of post-deployment processing. Senior reservists warned this is “turning off the tap on maneuver forces”—damaging readiness, logistics, and mental resilience. The army admits manpower shortage forces structural trade-offs, institutionalizing Haredi-specific accommodation and force insulation.

ASSESSMENT

Haredi parties openly exchange votes for service exemptions. The IDF, denied enlistment scaling fix, reaches for damaging substitute: cut reserve support days, shrink prep cycles. This approach “costs more money, more lives, and pushes cost into operational failure and family collapse.”

Milk As A Weapon And Policing As A Talking Point

Israel's dairy dispute escalated from policy into public disruption: hundreds of farmers drove vehicle convoys to Jerusalem, blocked Highway 1, dumped milk onto traffic, scattered hay, clashed with police, and breached Finance Ministry outer gates. Production slowdowns and halted distribution lines created visible market shortages with supermarket purchase limits on dairy products. Government pushed competition through tariff reduction and import openings. Producers warned of farm collapse and strategic dependence. The underlying structure involves state-managed quotas down to individual liters, set pricing, concentrated processing, and steep import barriers—allowing throughput chokepoint actors to punish the public rapidly. Ben-Gvir moved to block police “skunk” spray use and crowd-control measures, rejecting senior police pressure and arguing disproportionate use against Haredi and Judea/Samaria Jewish demonstrators.

ASSESSMENT

When state coercive tools become politicized, “everyone starts freelancing.” Farmers discovered they can leverage supply control; politicians cannot credibly defend uneven enforcement, so they attempt police tool disarming. This approach pulls the deterrent into debate before protests begin. Smotrich correctly identifies structural disease: cartelized, quota-ridden systems with high protection invite “hostage tactics and cost-of-living pain.” Reform alone proves insufficient; the state must enforce bright-line rules: protest is legitimate, supply sabotage is not. On policing, “selective enforcement is a real legitimacy toxin”—fixed through equal application and clear engagement rules, not tool removal and politeness hopes.

Shelters, Hospitals, Tourism, And A Decade-Long Airport Bet

A major readiness audit found millions lacking standard-compliant protection—especially older housing—with Bedouin Negev communities flagged for absent public shelters and local authority deficiencies in shelter maintenance and oversight. The health system showed “protection gaps particularly in

geriatric and psychiatric facilities”—estimated at billions of shekels to address. The Defense Ministry tightened civilian coordination by appointing national emergency authority head and publicly emphasizing “no grace days.” In economic-cohesion strategy, Israel restarted normal life: the tourism sector’s main trade fair drew increased traffic and practical deal-making—explicitly targeting U.S. pro-Israel audiences, evangelical Christian pilgrims, and Jewish communities for inbound demand rebuilding. The government selected Ziklag in the Negev between Rahat and Netivot as supplementary international airport site—a multibillion-shekel project pitched as “strategic growth engine for the south.”

ASSESSMENT

Israel attempts “welcome back” marketing while state comptroller emphasizes pre-1991 concrete conditions remain. It represents the Israeli condition: “build under threat.” Unmaintained shelters, hospitals unable to function under impact, and structurally exposed communities increase future psychological costs—manifesting in reserve attrition, internal migration, and political rage. Tourism reboot shows smart targeting: “loyal markets move first,” and faith travel represents stubborn demand. The Ziklag airport decision may favor periphery development, but decade-long construction cannot substitute for immediate protection upgrades and enforceable readiness governance.

Israel and the World

Lawfare And Intimidation Tighten The Noose Around Diaspora Jews

On UK campuses, faculty describe de facto “purity test” requiring affirmation that Gaza conflict constitutes “genocide,” with deviations punished through “isolation and career damage.” One professor faced masked activist removal demands over IDF service history, with “Zionists off campus” agitation, classroom disruptions, and reported “beheading threat”—coupled with student social policing, door graffiti (“f Jews”), and “Zionist entity” litmus tests in dormitories. This enforcement pattern spreads through British institutions: a Greenwich activist pursues judicial review forcing council pension divestment after the council reportedly conceded “anti-boycott clause” unlawfulness, reframing municipal fiduciary duty into “foreign-policy warfare by lawsuit.” Birmingham’s venue cancellation of “zio eradication” group launch—advertised as pro-“armed resistance” and anti-“Jewish supremacy”—did not prevent speaker participation; it merely forced alternative venue location. A UK jury acquitted multiple activists over a ram-and-smash raid on Israeli defense facility causing roughly “£1 million in damage”—the legal system telegraphed that “political motive can soften consequences.” In the U.S., the pipeline appears as raw threat and institutional decay: a NYC student faced arrest after emailing “Kill all the Jews” to 300+ students. A New Jersey police officer sued after enduring routine departmental antisemitic remarks (“Hebrew 500,” “cheap Jew”), a book titled “The Jew” placed on his locker, and retaliation following his report.

ASSESSMENT

Universities laundering ideology through DEI frameworks manufacture “hierarchy of protected hate where Jews are the one group you’re allowed to ostracize as moral ritual.” Explicit school threats and institutional antisemitism with retaliation against reporting represents the mapped process—“two-tier policing, captured institutions, and values as shield for extremists.”

Israel Builds New Nodes At The Red Sea Chokepoint

Israel widens external options and refuses global public-space disappearance. Somaliland’s president confirmed plans to travel to Israel for trade deal pursuit, explicitly pitching Israeli investment and commercial engagement while highlighting resource base—minerals, oil/gas, marine and agricultural potential—and leveraging “strategic location at Red Sea mouth,” treating “non-recognition politics as optional when interests align.” Simultaneously, Israel’s flag flies at Milano Cortina Winter Olympics and Paralympics with nine Olympians and one Paralympian under heightened security—spanning figure skating, bobsleigh, alpine skiing, skeleton, and cross-country skiing.

ASSESSMENT

The anti-Israel movement’s primary objective is “presence denial”—excluding Israeli officials, litigating companies into oblivion, and treating Israeli symbols as contraband in “inclusive spaces.” Israel creates alternatives and holds ground. New diplomatic-economic nodes like Somaliland plus maintaining public flag visibility in mob-targeted arenas represents normal operations defense. “The isolation machine can’t stand that kind of normal.”

Briefly Noted

Domestic & Law

- **Israel National News:** Honenu reports police in northern Israel arrested Shiloh yeshiva head and three students after an Arab mob attacked them during school trip—potentially teaching “Jewish kids that calling for help is how you end up in cuffs.”
- **Ynet:** Three men shot dead near Shefa-Amr in latest Arab sector incident; local leaders cite 33 murders since 2026 start with residents reporting unsolved police cases.

Diplomacy & Geopolitics

- **Jerusalem Post:** Iranian documents describe pre-planned crackdown playbook—internet shutdowns, pre-positioned IRGC forces, rapid lethal escalation. This regime scripts “kill boxes in advance,” indicating hardening for survival rather than wobbling toward reform, resulting in “more internal terror and more external mischief.”

Economy, Tech & Infrastructure

- **Jewish Insider:** Google Cloud AI partnership with Al Jazeera powers network's "AJ-LLM" initiative using Google platforms, drawing national security warnings about legitimizing Qatar-backed outlet accused of Hamas-sympathetic coverage. Once propaganda gains "AI accelerator, the just a platform alibi becomes even more dishonest."

Culture, Religion & Society

- **Jerusalem Post:** Social media algorithms amplify Jew-hate at scale, normalizing dehumanization and feeding "offline harassment and violence." The diagnosis proves correct, but calling it Holocaust represents "cheap rhetorical malpractice" muddying solvable, profit-driven hate into "apocalyptic fog," letting platforms "keep cashing checks."

Developments to Watch

Judea & Samaria

- **Route 443 stone-throw:** A young Israeli woman suffered rock-throwing injuries near Maccabim checkpoint. When commuter arteries face targeting again, "assume the next step is escalation from stones to rifles because cheap attacks are how cells rehearse."

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

- **Syrian "revenge" chatter:** Hezbollah-linked reporting indicates Syria's new leadership signals payback against Hezbollah, spiking Beirut border concerns.
- **Druze liaison becomes an indicator:** The IDF creates dedicated Druze regional liaison role under Northern Command.

Gaza & Southern Theater

- **Ceasefire enforcement:** After Yellow Line gunfire wounded an IDF reservist, Israel eliminated senior Hamas/PIJ figures tied to Oct. 7, hostage-holding, and rebuild efforts.
- **Medical cover as transport:** IDF footage shows Hamas moving armed personnel and weapons via ambulances from hospital to school near Yellow Line, setting up next fight: strikes near "protected sites" followed by NGO/UN lawfare theater and Hamas weaponizing outrage.

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

- **Negotiation whiplash, strike math:** Reports indicate U.S.-Iran talks collapsed over scope, then Iran pivots back to "still scheduled" messaging while Washington maintains missiles/proxies as litmus test.

- **Houthi rearm for the spoiler role:** Sourcing warns Houthi missile/drone depots are being relocated with planning underway to hit U.S. shipping if Iran is struck; Israel already refreshing Yemen target banks.

Diplomatic & Legal

- **“Restraint” pressure meets hard deadlines:** Washington requests Israeli restraint “while talks are ongoing,” even as senior messaging insists missiles must be included for meaningful outcomes. If Tehran stalls again, expect either sharper U.S. ultimatum or another pause request—both “telegraph hesitation Tehran will exploit.”

Home Front & Politics

- **Iran shifts to people and payoffs:** Israel expands senior officer security as Shin Bet flags Israelis initiating Iranian handler contact for money. Expect arrests, travel-security tightening, and overseas targeting aimed at “shaping Israeli decision-making cheaper than missiles, harder to deter.”

Closing Assessment

THE key change is ambiguity becoming a weapon across multiple arenas simultaneously: Muscat as delay lever, Yemen as spoiler lane, Gaza logistics as rearm pipeline, and domestic politics as enforcement drag. Watch for one trigger collapsing the “maybe” phase—an Iran decision-point event, maritime incident forcing U.S. response, or Gaza line-test designed to produce Israeli casualties or international optics. Israel can treat this as individual issues or “manage it as one connected campaign.”

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

P.S.

GIFT to “the reader who heard talks are scheduled and assumed the missile issue went on vacation.”

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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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