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READER EDITION

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ISRAEL BRIEF

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Muscat opens as Tehran keeps its missiles and proxies “out of scope.” Israel is forced to fight multiple enemies and one temptation: letting paperwork replace capability removal.

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THE BOTTOM LINE Intimidate. Delegitimize. Institutionalize. All laundered through “values.” The encouraging news is that some authorities are rediscovering civic principles. IHRA adoption at the municipal level is boring, but in the best way. Definitions are enforcement infrastructure. The word “Zionist” is now treated like contraband even among Jews who still support Israel’s existence—that is an own-goal gift-wrapped for every movement that wants “Zionist” to mean “fair game.” If Jews won’t define the term, enemies will—loudly, violently, and with institutional help.

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DIPLOMACY runs in Oman under carrier pressure while Iran keeps demonstrating it still intends to fight with missiles, proxies, and maritime disruption. Gaza proves *again* that “managed” anything is meaningless when Hamas controls movement, uniforms, and ambulances. Inside Israel, the fissures are getting wider. Today’s exemplars are smuggling into Gaza for profit and Iranian recruitment for cash—while the Oct. 7 accountability fight turns into a Shin Bet vs. political leadership knife match.

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Flash Brief

- **Muscat Talks:** U.S.–Iran talks open without either missiles or proxies sitting on the table.
- **IRGC Signaling:** Missile tests continue and two tankers are seized as talks run.
- **Gaza Line:** Gunfire at IDF near the Yellow Line triggers a precise strike overnight.
- **Medical Abuse:** Drone footage shows ambulances moving armed men and weapons between a hospital and school.
- **Lebanon Strikes:** Israel hits Hezbollah weapons shafts and secondary blasts confirm stockpiles still active.
- **Internal Politics:** Oct. 7 inquiry fight intensifies as prosecutors indict Gaza-route smugglers and Iran recruits.

T EHRAN wants a narrow nuclear channel while keeping every other weapon loaded, Hamas wants civilian cover to function as a weapons shuttle, and Hezbollah wants disarmament language without disarmament work. So, really, not much has changed.

The War Today

Iran Reopens Negotiations, Then Tries To Shrink Them Mid-Handshake

U.S.–Iran negotiations have now formally opened in Muscat with Oman shuttling between rooms as U.S. envoy Witkoff runs the channel and CENTCOM commander Brad Cooper arrives into the talks—an unmistakable tell this is coercive diplomacy. The claimed “rescue” compromise centers the nuclear file while also addressing ballistic missiles and Iran’s militia/proxy system. Tehran immediately denied agreeing to any such expansion and repeated “nuclear-only” terms. Reported U.S. asks are maximalist on paper—zero enrichment, a missile-range cap around 500 km, and an end to support for regional terror proxies—while Iran simultaneously conducts missile tests, touts “hypersonic” capability claims around Khorramshahr-4, and broadcasts threat language that any U.S. strike triggers retaliation “first” against Israel and then against U.S. bases. Washington stacked leverage around the room: unusual concentrations of strategic airlift into the region, carrier footage and messaging that Tehran is negotiating because it fears being hit, plus a fresh “Leave Iran now” advisory that explicitly anticipates internal clamp-downs and communications blackouts. Tehran answered with maritime enforcement theater and with regime-stability signaling, including reported executions across multiple prisons. Israel, meanwhile, is treating the Iran issue as both an external strike-clock and an internal security problem. The cabinet is focused on Iran deliberations. Israeli officials are briefing that Muscat is likely to fail. Security services are continuing to move on Iranian recruitment lanes with arrests for suspected espionage.

ASSESSMENT

Tehran's move stays consistent—shrink the agenda to uranium while keeping missiles, proxies, and maritime disruption as live leverage, then dare the West to call that “progress.” We should not be surprised. Washington is trying to jam everything back into one framework because even U.S. policymakers can do basic arithmetic: a nuclear-only arrangement with an intact missile arsenal and intact proxy franchises is a paperwork ceasefire with its weapons factory still humming along. Missile tests during negotiations are not “mixed signals.” Israel's interest is not in whether a meeting happened, but whether capability is being removed. If Washington accepts anything less than verifiable rollback across enrichment and the delivery/proxy system, Israel maintains the same threats, just with a fresh diplomatic shield draped over it—exactly the kind that slows action and speeds Iranian reconstitution.

Israel Tests Proxy Levers In Gaza As Ceasefire Violations Continue

Gaza's “ceasefire” kept doing what it does. Hamas fired on IDF troops near the Yellow Line in the north (no injuries reported), prompting a precise strike on terror infrastructure, while in the south IDF forces eliminated a terrorist who approached Israeli troops in a manner assessed as an immediate threat. The IDF also released aerial surveillance showing Hamas using ambulances to move armed operatives and weapons from a hospital to a school near the Yellow Line—medical cover repurposed as a logistics lane, again. Israel continues quietly funding and arming anti-Hamas clan militias inside Gaza—cash, rifles, equipment, supplies, and even treatment in Israeli hospitals—costing tens of millions of shekels and operating close to IDF positions inside the Yellow Line zone. While this is “anti-Hamas” to be sure, it's also classic kicking the can down the road—fragmented groups (some criminal, some PA-linked) with no conversion to “pro-Israel” sentiment, operating under Hamas hunt-and-execute pressure for alleged collaboration... what could go wrong? On Israel's side of the line, the public is getting fed up with the status quo—forcing IDF and police to divert attention after hundreds of Nachala activists pushed into a closed military zone near the Gaza border and a small number crossed into Gaza before being apprehended and returned.

ASSESSMENT

Control is enforced at the contact line and in the logistics plumbing, not in conference rooms. The militia-proxy play is an improvisation. Armed locals to absorb friction near IDF positions and complicate Hamas's monopoly without paying the full price in Israeli bodies every time a tunnel mouth opens. It can work tactically. Unfortunately, it can also rot quickly into a criminal fiefdom with a future grievance list. Israel's margin here depends on discipline and supervision: strict tasking, strict monitoring, strict termination when lines are crossed, and zero illusions that “anti-Hamas” equals “aligned.” And while I am extremely sympathetic to Nachala's frustration, I am opposed to distractions at the fence during active operations. They should bring the pressure to the political echelon rather than risk their lives and those of the security services.

Northern Enforcement Reasserts: Strikes, Clearance, And No Patience For Hezbollah

Israel struck Hezbollah military sites across Lebanon, targeting tunnel shafts used for weapons storage and identifying secondary explosions consistent

with weapons present—more enforcement after months of Hezbollah activity in violation of ceasefire understandings. The strikes land amid widening skepticism about Lebanon’s willingness to execute real disarmament. U.S. Senator Graham publicly cut short a meeting with Lebanon’s army chief after the commander refused to label Hezbollah a terrorist organization “in the context of Lebanon”—undercutting the credibility of any “state monopoly on arms” narrative while Hezbollah’s Iran-linked posture remains intact. Israel’s border-denial measures are drawing predictable blowback. In response to Israel’s herbicide efforts, Lebanon and UNIFIL accused Israel of aerially spraying an “unknown chemical” near the Blue Line—threatening UN escalation.

ASSESSMENT

When Lebanon’s top uniform can’t say “Hezbollah is a terrorist organization” without adding a context clause, the entire “disarmament plan” reads like a brochure. Operationally, Israel should keep doing the boring work—strike storage, deny rebuild, clear sightlines, and ignore moral posturing when performed by terrorists and their sympathizers.

Inside Israel

Poll Shows Deadlock As Netanyahu Pushes “Equitable” Commission

In a closed Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee session, Prime Minister Netanyahu said a Shin Bet document summarizing the night’s Gaza warnings on October 7 was issued at 5:15 a.m. but reached his office only at 9:47 a.m., and he alleged the Shin Bet later “added” an instruction to update the prime minister—calling it a forged insertion attributed to then-Shin Bet chief Ronen Bar. He said he forwarded the information to State Comptroller Matanyahu Englman and the room reacted with shock, before the session devolved into a political brawl and opposition members walked out complaining they were turned into an audience for old cabinet protocols and not allowed questions. Netanyahu then publicly released his response to the comptroller’s Oct. 7 failures probe and demanded the High Court lift its interim freeze on the comptroller’s work, while calling for a national commission of inquiry he described as “democratic and equitable,” with half the members selected by the coalition and half by the opposition, and stating he would be the first to testify. A fresh poll underscores why this is now being fought as pre-election terrain: neither bloc reaches a governing majority, with Likud projected at 26 seats and Bennett at 24, and the remaining mandates spread across mid-sized parties such that any coalition path runs through defectors or reliance on Arab parties.

ASSESSMENT

This is Israel's post-Oct. 7 "who owns the story" phase turning into structural war—security bureaucracy vs. political leadership, and the High Court/AG layer hovering over both like a self-appointed air-traffic controller. Netanyahu is trying to preempt an "inquiry" that becomes a judicial instrument, not a truth mechanism, and therefore produces maximum bitterness with minimum operational repair. If the Shin Bet forgery allegation is substantiated, it's beyond mere scandal... an institutional felony against democratic command authority. Either way, trust drains—and in a country living on reserve readiness and public compliance, trust is not a soft variable. The poll math makes the timing obvious: deadlock means every institution is already maneuvering for the next coalition architecture, and the budget/manpower fights we've been tracking become bargaining chips.

Sovereignty Machinery Advances In Judea And Samaria

The government advanced two parallel sovereignty tracks in Judea and Samaria. The Interior Ministry granted formal recognition ("settlement symbols") to five additional communities—Havat Gilad, Eival, Ma'oz Tzvi, Tamar, and Neve Gedid (Gadi Camp)—completing long-running regularization processes after Central Command finalized jurisdictional boundaries, and enabling direct state budgeting, regulated utility hookups, standardized security coordination, and full civil-service provisioning. Smotrich framed the move as an explicit blow against Palestinian statehood. In the Knesset, a committee approved moving forward with a bill to create a dedicated heritage/archaeology authority for the area—approved 7–5—tasked with excavation, preservation, site management, and public accessibility, with an estimated NIS 30 million budget and a council appointed by the heritage minister. The underlying driver is the live contest over legal and narrative control as the Palestinian Authority pursues UNESCO recognition for additional sites and Israel moves to prevent heritage assets from being defined internationally as "Palestinian" by default. Alongside the formal track, activist pressure is also rising: hundreds of Israelis attempted to approach—and some briefly crossed—into the Gaza Strip from a closed military zone in a protest demanding renewed settlements, forcing IDF and police intervention and drawing explicit condemnation for diverting commanders from operational missions.

ASSESSMENT

Israel is shifting (in fits and starts) from improvisation to administrative permanence—budgets, borders, utilities, security standards, statutory authorities—the boring stuff that outlives headlines and foreign tantrums. The heritage authority bill tries to move a core domain (land, expropriation-adjacent powers, excavation authority, enforcement) from military administration to a civilian ministry. That's annexation mechanics even when everyone pretends it's "site preservation." Fine—just don't be surprised when external pressure accelerates, because the world understands the mechanism better than some Israeli politicians do. The strategic mistake would be doing this as a stack of tactical moves without a coherent national doctrine. You invite international lawfare, internal legal sabotage, and coalition blackmail all at once. The second mistake is letting freelance activism in closed zones become a substitute for state strategy. If Israel is going to move toward sovereignty (and it should), it needs disciplined execution, clean legal architecture, and a refusal to let NGOs, foreign ministries, or UNESCO committees define Jewish history as contraband.

Crime And Espionage Expose Gaps In Home-Front Discipline

Domestic enforcement flashpoints widened across crime, counterintelligence, and wartime integrity. In the Negev, police seized handguns, ammunition, M16 magazines, and an explosive device from a school compound in Lakiya during a planned operation—alongside a hydraulic breaching tool suspected stolen from emergency services—underscoring how illegal weapons caches are now comfortable hiding inside civilian institutions. The Arab crime wave reached Jerusalem with two men critically wounded in a shooting in the east of the city pronounced dead, with one identified as a senior figure in a criminal organization. Iranian influence operations remain pointed inward: two 20-year-old Israelis from the Jerusalem area were arrested on suspicion of espionage for Iran with payment routed through digital wallets, and a Beit Shemesh resident in a separate case was sentenced to three years for spying for Iran.

ASSESSMENT

Israel keeps treating “internal security” as a set of separate problems—Arab crime here, Bedouin weapons there, Gaza smuggling over there, Iran recruitment as a Shin Bet press release—and then acts surprised when it all converges into the same outcome: weakened state authority and a public that feels the rules apply selectively. A gun cache in a school is beyond mere criminality (to say nothing of a play ripped out of Hamas’s book). And Iran’s use of low-cost human recruitment via digital payment rails is the cheap version of strategic deterrence: it aims to make Israeli society feel penetrable, purchasable, and paranoid. The fix? Ruthless enforcement and visible consequences. Seize weapons aggressively, dismantle criminal finance, treat convoy/crossing corruption as a national-security crime (because it is), and make Iran-agent work socially and legally radioactive. When the state is already asking a shrinking share of Israelis to do more reserve duty with less slack, it doesn’t get to tolerate freelancing—whether by smugglers, gangs, or “useful idiots” cashing Tehran’s digital checks.

Israel and the World

Ireland’s Settlement Ban Hits Legal Reality, As U.S. States Hit Back With Terminology

Ireland’s long-delayed settlement-trade bill is running into its own structural problem: when Dublin explores expanding restrictions from goods to *services*, its top legal advice flags “significant” legal and practical obstacles in a single EU member state trying to regulate services trade tied to territory outside the EU—an implicit admission that the services option would be more complex, more litigable, and more economically radioactive. The goods-only version would barely move the needle in raw trade value; the services version would risk entangling multinationals and Ireland-based tech exposure. In parallel, the counter-move is coming from below the federal line in the U.S.: Oklahoma lawmakers are advancing legislation that directs official usage of “Judea and Samaria” rather than the rival terminology (Jordan’s propagandist “West Bank”), positioning Oklahoma to become the second state after

Arkansas to formalize that naming choice—an explicit attempt to choke off narrative warfare at the bureaucratic source code level.

ASSESSMENT

Europe's settlement-lawfare habit always wants to feel costless—virtue signaling with someone else's risk. Services bans collide with EU competence, corporate lawyers, and the small complication that Ireland hosts a lot of the very firms that would get dragged into the blast radius. That legal advice is Dublin quietly realizing that if you weaponize trade rules as foreign policy, you also inherit the lawsuits, the compliance chaos, and the investment questions. Meanwhile the U.S. state-level terminology bills look "small" until you understand how narratives harden: what gets written into government language becomes what gets repeated in schools, procurement documents, and institutional default settings.

Diaspora Institutions Start Enforcing Lines, While "Zionist" Becomes A Third Rail

Across the diaspora, a few institutions are finally choosing enforcement over performance. A Philadelphia-area college permanently banned a non-affiliated protester who used a bullhorn to shut down an Israeli journalist's campus talk and issued explicit threat rhetoric—treating the incident as a policy violation rather than "activism." In Florida, a city commission unanimously adopted the IHRA working definition of antisemitism into its municipal code framework to guide hate-crime and enforcement decisions. In Europe, Jewish leaders in Finland and Austria describe the post-Oct. 7 environment as a sustained pressure campaign: daily "genocide" heckling near synagogues, boycotts and BDS in supermarkets and universities, harsher media posture, and a lived sense that Jews are held responsible for Israel as a condition of social acceptance. Meanwhile, the intra-Jewish argument in the U.S. is being quantified: a major communal survey found only about a third of American Jews self-identify as "Zionist" even as an overwhelming majority still affirm Israel's right to exist as a Jewish and democratic state—evidence that the label is being redefined in the public mind into something many supporters refuse to wear.

ASSESSMENT

Intimidate. Delegitimize. Institutionalize. All laundered through "values." The encouraging news is that some authorities are rediscovering civic principles. IHRA adoption at the municipal level is boring, but in the best way. Definitions are enforcement infrastructure. The word "Zionist" is now treated like contraband even among Jews who still support Israel's existence—that is an own-goal gift-wrapped for every movement that wants "Zionist" to mean "fair game." If Jews won't define the term, enemies will—loudly, violently, and with institutional help.

Briefly Noted

Frontline & Security

- *Jerusalem Post*: A Russian neurotech firm says it's begun real-world trials of "bio-drones" — pigeons fitted with neural interfaces, cameras, and guidance hardware. This is dual-use tech begging to be repurposed for surveillance, sabotage, or worse — and "we swear it's for logistics" is not a safety standard.

Diplomacy & Geopolitics

- *Israel National News*: Mahmoud Abbas received a draft "provisional constitution" for a putative "State of Palestine" and declared 2026 the "Year of Democracy," with plans for multiple elections (interesting from someone whose term expired long ago). It's statehood theater aimed at lubricating international pressure and securing postwar Gaza relevance without first proving the PA can govern anything except donor spreadsheets.
- *Jerusalem Post*: Turkey is pitching Saudi Arabia on investing in its Kaan "5th-generation" fighter program as Ankara tries to bypass the West after getting itself kicked out of the F-35 club.
- *Times of Israel*: Anti-Israel activists announced plans for a March flotilla of 100+ boats — plus a land convoy — to "break the blockade" of Gaza. A floating propaganda campaign designed to bait an interception and launder Hamas talking points through "civil society."

Culture, Religion & Society

- *Forward*: Tucker Carlson and U.S. Ambassador Mike Huckabee agreed to an interview after Carlson attacked Huckabee over Israel and tried to stir up Christian grievances.

Developments to Watch

Judea & Samaria

- **Explosives Cells Rolled Up** — Security forces arrested roughly 60 wanted suspects and seized firearms and parts, including operatives tied to explosives manufacturing.

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

- **Hezbollah Caches Still Detonate** — Strikes on Hezbollah tunnel-shaft storage sites produced secondary explosions, signaling real stockpiles still sitting in place under a ceasefire that's supposed to mean "disarm." Expect more enforcement waves and Hezbollah attempts to re-hide inventory before the next strike cycle.

Gaza & Southern Theater

- **Fence Breach Activism** — Hundreds of Israelis pushed into a closed military zone near Gaza and some crossed into the Strip before being apprehended and returned.

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

- **Egypt Buildup Put On Docket** — Netanyahu flagged Egypt's strengthening army and said Israel must monitor and prevent an arms buildup. When senior leadership starts saying this in public, assume quiet channels are already active—and that Cairo will test how serious Jerusalem is about enforcement lines.

Diplomatic & Legal

- **Turkey Plays Mossad Card** — Turkish intelligence announced arrests in Istanbul of two people accused of spying for Israel. Ankara will use this as leverage and theater; Israelis traveling through Turkey are the easiest collateral to squeeze.

Home Front & Politics

- **Arrangements Bill Held Hostage** — The Arrangements Law vote was postponed to Monday under Haredi pressure tied to the Draft Law. This is coalition blackmail, *again*.
- **Smuggling Case Hits Insider Circles** — Prosecutors indicted 12 suspects and a company in the Gaza-aid smuggling network and flagged a separate indictment expected for the Shin Bet chief's brother.
- **Ramat Gan Crash Under Probe** — A bus collision in Ramat Gan injured 11, including one critical; the driver was detained for questioning as investigators work the scene.

Israel's job is to keep every front expensive—especially the ones that hide behind paperwork, commerce, or “humanitarian” logistics.

— *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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