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READER EDITION

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ISRAEL BRIEF

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Paper offers multiply while enemies do real work. Hamas probes the contact zone, Iran protects survivability, Washington gets asked to choose its scope.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE This is presence denial by a thousand cuts: if you can make “Israeli” unprintable on a menu, you don’t need to win an argument about a border—you’ve already trained the institution to treat Jewish normalcy as an offense that requires apology. The campus pipeline is governance capture—student governments passing foreign-policy cosplay, faculty turning illegal encampments into pedagogy, and administrators trying to retrofit viewpoint diversity only after federal money gets threatened. The right frame is not “education,” it’s enforcement. Policies that treat targeted intimidation as misconduct, donor and accreditation pressure that punishes ideological monoculture, and leadership that refuses to apologize for Israel’s mere existence.

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Flash Brief

- **Hamas Probes:** Hamas probes near the Yellow Line using civilians; Southern Command drafts renewed disarmament-by-force options.
- **Iran File:** Netanyahu meets Trump as Tehran offers inspections, seals Esfahan entrances, refuses missile limits.
- **Air Defense:** THAAD deploys in eastern Jordan; U.S. missiles stay on trucks at Al-Udeid.
- **Judea & Samaria Cell:** Lebanon-based handlers recruit operatives via gaming apps; indictments filed after surveillance and training.
- **Citizenship Revocation:** Israel strips citizenship from two convicted Israeli terrorists and signs expulsion to Gaza.
- **October 7 File:** New timeline details fuel demands for criminal probes and deepen civil-military mistrust.
- **Force Build:** IDF creates 38th maneuver division as Gaza-envelope rehabilitation audit finds execution failures.

The War Today

Gaza “Phase II” Stalls As Hamas Rebuilds Under Ceasefire Cover

Along Gaza’s “Yellow Line,” field commanders report near-daily line tests: attempted infiltrations, armed operatives approaching positions, and a deliberate Hamas tactic of pushing women and children forward to map Israeli reaction thresholds while keeping terrorists in the second wave for follow-on contact. Southern Command is drawing up options for a renewed, larger-scale campaign whose stated purpose is disarming Hamas by force—explicitly premised on the judgment that Hamas will not surrender weapons voluntarily and that a return to major maneuver is no longer hostage-constrained, including potential operations in areas previously avoided (Deir al-Balah and the Mawasi). Israel is holding roughly 53% of Gaza and treating withdrawal and reconstruction approvals as conditional on disarmament. Troops describe tunnel demolition inside IDF-held space as “endless” and assess that at least ~60% of Hamas’s tunnel network remains intact (with the real number possibly higher due to unknown routes). After the Rafah tunnel-shaft incident earlier this week, IDF/ISA follow-on targeting continued, including the elimination of Ahmad Hasan—identified as head of the sniper array in Hamas’s Beit Hanoun Battalion—linked by Israel to multiple lethal attacks on IDF forces and assessed as actively advancing new attack plans. The U.S.-backed “National Committee for the Administration of Gaza” remains a paper mechanism. Members still have not entered Gaza nearly a month after announcement. The delay is largely due to internal Palestinian frictions and Hamas behavior that contradicts any real handover—including appointments of deputy ministers, directors-general, and senior figures in Hamas security bodies (i.e., staffing the same regime while marketing “transfer”).

ASSESSMENT

Hamas is running a cruel, effective drill: use women and children as tripwires to force IDF hesitation, then exploit the hesitation window for armed probes, sniper set-ups, and the one headline Hamas still dreams of—an Israeli dragged underground or a position overrun on camera. That tactic survives every ceasefire because it's not a "violation" to Hamas—it's doctrine. Meanwhile, the technocrats committee is the familiar foreign-policy costume: a board, a title, a budget discussion in Washington, and zero coercive authority inside Gaza—because no one wants the only job that matters, which is disarming Hamas. Hamas understands this better than the donors: it can keep hiring "deputy ministers" while it keeps rifles, tunnels, and internal security.

Iran Offers Inspections, Seals Sites, And Keeps Missiles Off The Table

In Washington, Netanyahu arrived for talks with President Trump as Israel presses contingency planning. Trump publicly set the terms in blunt language—no Iranian nuclear weapon and no missiles—and warning “very harsh action” if no agreement is reached. U.S. deliberations reportedly considered seizing additional Iranian oil tankers and then backed off over escalation and oil-price fears. Regional air defenses are being wired for mobility and endurance: missile loads kept on truck-mounted launchers at Al-Udeid enable rapid repositioning, a full THAAD package is now deployed at Muwaffaq al-Salti in eastern Jordan (a base Iranian media explicitly threatens). Israeli air-defense units are also describing elevated readiness cycles in anticipation of the next round. Tehran’s messaging signals openness to inspections meant to “prove” it isn’t seeking a weapon while simultaneously rejecting any missile limits as non-negotiable, pairing diplomatic outreach while committing rhetorical attacks and an internal posture that assumes confrontation is coming. All tunnel entrances at Iran’s Esfahan nuclear complex are now fully buried and sealed—an obvious hardening move against strike/raid scenarios. A Turkish disclosure claims the U.S. passed a rapid warning to Iran via Ankara ahead of the June 2025 Israeli strike (“something could happen within hours”), reinforcing Tehran’s paranoia that “talks” can coexist with imminent action. Iran’s own system is also tightening internally with reported pressure on detainees’ families to attend regime rallies under verifiable proof demands.

ASSESSMENT

Iran is offering transparency theater on the nuclear issue while locking the delivery system behind a steel door, and daring the West to call that “de-escalation.” Esfahan’s sealed entrances show Tehran is not projecting confidence. The U.S. posture is simultaneously credible and compromised: mobile defenses, THAAD in Jordan, carrier talk, contingency planning—paired with a visible aversion to anything that might spike oil prices, like tanker seizures. Bibi’s job in Washington is to force a deadline with enforcement, and refuse any “nuclear-only” sprint deal that leaves missiles intact and proxies empowered.

Israel Moves To Close Terror Loopholes From Samaria To Gaza Exile

Israeli security services rolled up a Lebanon-directed terror infrastructure in Judea and Samaria that recruited and ran local operatives via social media

and gaming apps, pushed them through shooting training, had them document a Jewish settlement for targeting, and steered weapons procurement using designated funds. Indictments were filed against five suspects, and the network is described as led by a Lebanon-based figure linked to Hamas and Hezbollah with additional handlers communicating through online channels. Israel applied, for the first time, a law authorizing revocation of citizenship and expulsion of terrorists to Gaza: two convicted Israeli terrorists—one jailed for shooting attacks and weapons purchasing/planning, another jailed for a 2016 stabbing—had citizenship revoked and expulsion signed as a response to Palestinian Authority “rewards” for attacks. Separately, police operations in Arab-Israeli localities arrested a hit squad in the Triangle area (with weapons, parts for explosive devices, drugs and cash, including stolen IDF ammunition). And police, in another case, discovered an improvised submachine gun alongside drugs during a search in Shfaram.

ASSESSMENT

The expulsion move targets a core Palestinian incentive structure: “attack, get paid, become a future swap asset.” Revoking citizenship and pushing terrorists out to Gaza closes a loophole—especially in an era when every long-term prisoner is treated by the enemy as an investment instrument. Meanwhile, stolen IDF ammunition and improvised automatics in the Triangle are not “just crime.” Every illegal rifle is a future terror rifle, every explosive component is a future roadside bomb, and every cash stash is oxygen for the next hit squad.

Inside Israel

Netanyahu’s Critics Weaponize Intelligence, Then Demand Police Action

Fresh reporting on the first hours of October 7 paints a dysfunction chain that is no longer just “intelligence failure,” but a top-level communication breakdown shaped by prewar distrust. The account describes (as Hamas’s attack started at 6:29 a.m.) the IDF’s command “pit” without any generals present early on, with midlevel officers shouting as the picture remained incomplete—about 40% of penetrations understood by 7:30 a.m., roughly 60% by 10:00 a.m., and top commanders only really stabilizing national defense management around 1:00 p.m. The prime minister, defense minister, and chief of staff reportedly did not speak directly until nearly four hours into the war—despite being at headquarters—amid confusion over who called whom, staff relays, etc. The same reporting details a pre-dawn warning chain in which the Shin Bet chief ordered updates to the prime minister around 5:15 a.m., staff executed the order at 6:13 a.m., and the prime minister was not woken because the system still assessed the threat as limited. Intelligence reporting describing Hamas’s large-scale raid blueprint was reportedly circulated to senior leadership channels as early as April 2018, framing a coordinated assault concept involving ~3,000 fighters and multiple simultaneous raids—material later folded into what became known as the “Jericho’s Walls” file.

ASSESSMENT

Every side is trying to win the narrative war before a commission, before elections, before the next round. The new indict the system's ability to behave like a state under stress. If the country's top security decision-makers can sit within walking distance of each other while the border burns and still not connect directly for hours, that's not "fog of war"—that's institutional rot meeting personal mistrust and calling it procedure.

Force Design Advances While Gaza-Envelope Recovery Lags Behind

Two lines of state activity are moving in opposite gears. The security system is building for the next shock while the civilian recovery from the last one is still dragging. The IDF has begun forming a new multi-theater maneuvering division—the 38th Division, the first new maneuvering division since 1956—designed to consolidate multiple training and force-generation frameworks under a deployable wartime command. The division will integrate key training brigades and schools (armored, artillery training reactivation, engineering, and officer/commander training pipelines), operate its headquarters from Julis, and already has roughly 1,200 reservists assigned; over the next year it will run major exercises, including a full divisional drill, while preparing rapid-response plans for an Oct. 7-style surprise attack scenario. Meanwhile, the state comptroller has issued a sharply critical audit of Gaza-border rehabilitation: Tekuma's multi-year plan update was delayed, priorities after budget cuts were not clearly explained, education support mechanisms were uneven and under-implemented, teacher incentive funding was barely used, and local authority capacity-building funds sat unused due to failed execution and responsibility handoffs. Environmental rehabilitation lacks a coordinating mechanism, transparency and budget monitoring are inadequate, and the government still lacks an orderly comprehensive solution for residents who cannot return home despite public messaging pushing "return to normal."

ASSESSMENT

Israel is trying to grow ground-force capacity, shorten the path from training infrastructure to deployable combat mass, and ensure the next border shock meets a unit that exists to move now. But Tekuma's lag is a legitimacy bomb.

Farmers, Ben-Gvir, And Planning Wars Expose A Fraying Rule-Of-Law Baseline

Dairy farmers escalated their protest theatrics into a public "funeral" for Israeli agriculture outside government institutions, including a staged grave made of manure, a wreath declaring the industry "dead," and a Kaddish recitation—an effort to frame tariff and market reform as a food-security and national-character threat. In the policing arena, the national security minister has asked a district court to freeze implementation of a ruling ordering the promotion (and backdating) of a senior investigator's rank, ahead of a Supreme Court appeal. The underlying ruling held that the minister's refusal to promote—despite professional prerequisites and command support—was unlawful and tainted by extraneous considerations, with the attorney-general's office and

police leadership backing the petitioners. Separately, an administrative petition seeks to freeze advancement of a plan that would legalize over 3,000 illegally built housing units in Umm al-Fahm (and add thousands more), arguing the planning system is normalizing a double standard—fast legalization for mass violations while law-abiding citizens absorb the cost and delay of compliance—turning “housing tools” into a laundering mechanism for illegality.

ASSESSMENT

The farmers are not wrong that food systems are strategic. They are wrong that (1) sabotage theater should be treated as a legitimate negotiating language and (2) monopolies are acceptable. Ben-Gvir’s argument—that courts can’t run police promotions by injunction—has a coherent principle behind it: governance cannot be outsourced to administrative judges without turning ministers into ceremonial signatures.

Israel and the World

Israel Rewires Exports Toward Asia As Europe Adds Conditions

Israel used the Singapore Airshow to signal a strategic export and partnership pivot deeper into Asia and the Pacific, with an 11-company defense delegation showcasing operationally proven systems across unmanned platforms, missile defense, electro-optics, cyber, counter-UAV, and AI-enabled robotics, explicitly framing the pitch as “battle-tested” tech validated across multiple active fronts. The move reflects a two-track reality: Europe remains the largest market by volume, but political constraints and scrutiny over Gaza-linked use are driving Israeli firms to diversify toward Asian buyers where demand for air defense, missiles, and drones is rising and conditionality is often lower—while also shifting emphasis from pure sales to co-development, tech transfer, and local production models (shared IP, local assembly, joint labs) that help Asian states build indigenous capacity. Singapore’s appetite sits squarely in that lane, with Israeli-made UAV platforms already integrated into its force structure and a publicly stated expansion of both drone usage and counter-drone shielding against low-cost swarm threats. At the show, an Israeli firm also signed a strategic partnership with a major Singapore engineering/defense company around an uncrewed electric VTOL platform, reflecting the “dual-use but war-relevant” direction of the market. In parallel, Israel quietly widened its energy and diplomatic options: Venezuela reportedly sent its first crude shipment to Israel in years—handled via Israel’s refining/shipping ecosystem and kept out of public view consistent with Israel’s practice on import sourcing—marking a practical thaw after ties were severed in 2009 and following Israel’s recent engagement with Venezuela’s democratic opposition leadership.

ASSESSMENT

Europe is trying to make Israeli capability a moral argument. Asia is buying it as an engineering solution. Israel's export pivot is rational—diversify customers, diversify political veto points, and attach partnerships to long-horizon industrial leverage—but it comes with two sharp costs: first, tech-transfer structures increase leakage risk in a region where Chinese influence and competitive intelligence are not hobbies. Second, activist pressure does not stop at the Suez—Singapore already saw pre-show agitation, and the same reputational-war templates will follow every Israeli pavilion that dares to exist.

Antisemitism Normalizes Through Institutions, Not Just Mobs

A major U.S. Jewish communal survey found that one in three American Jews reported being personally targeted by an antisemitic incident in 2025—flat versus 2024—while a majority reported avoiding specific behaviors out of fear, and two-thirds said Jews in the United States are less secure than a year ago. Respondents also split sharply on approval of Trump's antisemitism response along partisan lines, signaling the community is living inside a threat environment that is both persistent and politically polarized. The same "new normal" is playing out through institutional mechanisms rather than street theatrics alone: at Columbia, a provost-led academic review committee recommended expanding and refocusing Middle East studies instruction to add sustained teaching on modern Israel (including visiting appointments and joint searches tied to Israel and Jewish studies) after internal findings flagged a lack of tenure-line expertise not explicitly anti-Zionist—yet, simultaneously, a finalist for the university's flagship modern Arab studies chair was reported to have been placed on probation at Princeton for holding class inside an illegal anti-Israel encampment, while still receiving tenure, illustrating how activism gets laundered into career advancement. Students for Justice in Palestine at the University of Maryland introduced a fourth anti-Israel divestment resolution of the academic year—after three prior resolutions passed overwhelmingly, including votes staged on Jewish holidays—explicitly targeting defense and industrial firms connected to Israel's self-defense. The cultural front is now as petty as it is revealing: a student association at a New York public university issued a formal apology for labeling a falafel bar "Israeli," treating the word itself as "offensive" and scrubbing the identity to restore campus quiet. In New York City, the only Ethiopian-Israeli restaurant shifted away from regular dine-in hours toward pre-booked cultural events after sustained harassment tied to being Israeli and going kosher. And Israeli athletes described the Olympics becoming another stage for selective morality—booing Israelis for nationality while athletes from far more abusive regimes compete under moral silence—fueled by social-media compression that replaces history with slogans.

ASSESSMENT

This is presence denial by a thousand cuts: if you can make “Israeli” unprintable on a menu, you don’t need to win an argument about a border—you’ve already trained the institution to treat Jewish normalcy as an offense that requires apology. The campus pipeline is governance capture—student governments passing foreign-policy cosplay, faculty turning illegal encampments into pedagogy, and administrators trying to retrofit viewpoint diversity only after federal money gets threatened. The right frame is not “education,” it’s enforcement. Policies that treat targeted intimidation as misconduct, donor and accreditation pressure that punishes ideological monoculture, and leadership that refuses to apologize for Israel’s mere existence.

Briefly Noted

Frontline & Security

- **UNRWA reopened a medical center in Al-Bureij** as the Rafah Crossing operates, allowing medical exits and entries. Aid infrastructure is inching back online under Israeli watch even as Jerusalem maintains that UNRWA and their facilities were complicit with Hamas.
- **Iran International reports that Iranian diplomats used diplomatic passports** to fly suitcases of cash to Beirut for Hezbollah’s rehabilitation, tying senior figures—including Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi—to the cash pipeline.
- **COGAT publicly rejected Doctors Without Borders’ claim** that Israel is creating a Gaza water crisis and said Gaza is receiving sufficient water, as Israel moves to end MSF’s Gaza activity over registration and transparency violations.
- **Thirty-five municipal leaders from the Seam Zone and Judea and Samaria urged Netanyahu** to revive and fund a stalled 2023 plan to curb trash burning in Palestinian Authority-governed areas, citing Environment Ministry figures tying it to most carcinogenic air pollutants and a large share of fine particulates. Either Jerusalem forces enforcement and budgets the fix, or it tacitly accepts toxic smoke as the cheapest, dumbest form of cross-border attack.

Diplomacy & Geopolitics

- **Ali Ahmad Khomeini told Lebanese TV** that Islamic nations have a “duty” to erase Israel and would repeat October 7 if they gain the capability. That’s the regime’s ideology in plain language, and it’s why deterrence—not wishful diplomacy—sets the regional temperature.
- **Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese told President Isaac Herzog** that Canberra expects criminal charges over the April 2024 Israeli strike that killed seven World Central Kitchen workers, including Australian Zomi Frankcom, during Herzog’s visit amid mass anti-Israel protests. Australia is signaling it’s willing to turn a wartime tragedy into a bilateral pressure

campaign, testing how far Western allies will push lawfare against Jerusalem while hosting a head of state comforting Jews after a massacre.

- **Israel's cabinet said new measures in Judea and Samaria** were triggered by repeated Palestinian Authority violations of existing agreements, framing the move as a response to diplomatic and legal breaches rather than expansionism. Jerusalem is making clear that PA unilateralism carries a price tag.

Domestic & Law

- **The Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions plans to sue Israel** for roughly \$9 billion on behalf of 225,000 PA Arab workers who lost jobs in Israel after October 7, citing unpaid wages and social benefits.

Economy, Tech & Infrastructure

- **EU antitrust regulators cleared Google's \$32 billion acquisition** of cloud-security firm Wiz, the biggest-ever buyout of an Israeli-founded company, with further approvals still pending elsewhere.

Culture, Religion & Society

- **Former hostage Alon Ohel played a sold-out Tel Aviv benefit concert** with leading Israeli musicians, raising proceeds for his rehabilitation after his October 2025 release from Hamas captivity.
- **A UK-based Times journalist posted an AI-generated fake photo** implying President Isaac Herzog appeared with Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell, then deleted it and apologized after verification showed it was fabricated.

Developments to Watch

Judea & Samaria

- **Trash-smoke enforcement pressure returns** — Thirty-five municipal heads from the Seam Zone and Judea & Samaria urged Netanyahu to revive and fund the stalled 2023 plan against trash burning in PA areas.

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

- **Hezbollah rebuild funded via "diplomats"** — Iranian diplomats used diplomatic passports to fly suitcases of cash into Beirut for Hezbollah rehabilitation.

Gaza & Southern Theater

- **Phase II declared dead in Washington** — An Israeli official says Netanyahu will tell Trump Phase II isn't progressing and another Gaza operation is necessary.

- **MSF lane tightened into a policy fight** — COGAT rejected Doctors Without Borders' "water crisis" claims and Israel is moving to end MSF's Gaza activity over registration/transparency violations.

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

- **Carrier option put on the table** — Trump told Channel 12 he's considering sending another aircraft carrier and additional forces and warned "very harsh action" if no Iran deal emerges.
- **Esfahan entrances buried shut** — Satellite imagery analysis assessed all tunnel entrances at Iran's Esfahan complex are fully sealed and covered.
- **U.S. warning channel exposed** — Turkey's FM says Rubio asked Ankara to warn Iran "something could happen within hours" before the June 2025 Israeli strike.
- **Revolution rally coercion tells on regime nerves** — Reporting says IRGC/intel officials are pressuring detainees' families to attend February 11 anniversary rallies with photo/video proof demands.
- **Uniform meets suit, publicly** — Senior Iranian army commanders, including the commander-in-chief, visited the Foreign Ministry and met Araghchi. When the uniformed chain and diplomatic chain synchronize on camera, assume the retaliation narrative and tasking are already being aligned.

The next days hinge on what comes out of Washington: either a defined scope with real enforcement, or another permission slip for Iran's missile machine to keep running. In Gaza, Hamas will keep hunting for the one moment that resets everything—a filmed overrun or a soldier dragged underground—because that's the only leverage it reliably converts into outside pressure.

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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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