



Forensic intelligence for those who act.

READER EDITION

March 29, 2026

ISRAEL BRIEF

Sunday, March 29

The Houthis enter the war, the budget reaches the plenum, and the question shifts from whether the campaign succeeds to what success costs when no one agrees on the exit.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE The vote margin — 44 of 51 — is veto-proof, which means the religious institution bill becomes law regardless of what Mamdani does. His political calculation is whether the cost of vetoing [and being overridden] exceeds the cost of signing [and alienating the activist base that put him in office]. The education bill at 30 votes is the more interesting number — four votes short of override, which means Mamdani can kill it with a veto. That's the bill that would formalize buffer zones around the campuses where anti-Israel mobs have been operating with impunity. The gap between 44 and 30 tells you which institutions New York's council is willing to protect and which ones it considers politically inconvenient.

CLASSIFICATION

Reader Edition

DISTRIBUTION

Open · Free to share with attribution

Shavua tov, friends.

IN THIS EDITION

Flash Brief	3
The War Today	4
Pentagon Drafts Ground Options as Diplomacy Stalls and Houthis Open a Fifth Front	4
IDF Expands Lebanon Security Zone as Hezbollah Rebuilds Under Fire .	6
Gaza Operations Grind Forward Along the Yellow Line	7
Inside Israel	7
Budget Survives — Coalition Buys Itself Six More Months	7
Death Penalty Bill Advances to Plenum	8
Chief of Staff Warns of Manpower Collapse	9
IDF Operations in Judea and Samaria Intensify	10
Israel and the World	10
UAE Pushes Multinational Naval Force to Break Iran's Hormuz Blockade	10
German Court Affirms Hamas Terrorist Designation in Landmark Ruling	11
NYC Council Passes Buffer Zone Bills — Mamdani's Veto Watch Begins .	12
Briefly Noted	12
Frontline & Security	12
Diplomacy & Geopolitics	12
Domestic & Law	13
Culture, Religion & Society	13

THE war's fifth week opened with two arrivals — a Houthi ballistic missile over the Negev and an 82nd Airborne brigade heading to the Gulf — and neither changed the trajectory so much as confirmed it. Israel is days from completing the destruction of Iran's military-industrial base. The Pentagon is drafting ground seizure plans for Kharg Island and Iran's nuclear sites. Tehran rejected the 15-point proposal, let ten tankers through Hormuz flying Pakistani flags, and lowered the minimum age for war participation to twelve. 12! And at home, the budget vote that determines whether elections come early reaches the plenum floor tonight.

Flash Brief

- **Pentagon ground options:** U.S. drafts weeks long plans for Kharg Island seizure, nuclear site raids, and Hormuz island operations as two Marine units and 82nd Airborne deploy.
 - **Iran rejects 15-point deal:** Tehran calls U.S. proposal "one-sided and unfair," demands war reparations, Hormuz sovereignty, and Hezbollah's inclusion in any agreement.
 - **Houthis enter the war:** First ballistic missile from Yemen since February 28 intercepted over the Negev; Houthis formally declare for Iran and announce Bab al-Mandab blockade plan.
 - **Military industry near collapse:** IDF reports 70% of Iran's military production struck, 90% of critical sites within days; 15,000 munitions fired since February 28.
 - **Lebanon: four divisions, 800 killed:** Expanded ground operations across southern Lebanon;
- Hezbollah admits rebuilding missiles, drones, and ground forces during the ceasefire.
 - **Sgt. Moshe Yitzchak Katz ז"ל falls in Lebanon:** Paratrooper from New Haven, Connecticut killed by Hezbollah rockets; 20+ soldiers wounded in separate attacks Saturday.
 - **Budget vote tonight:** NIS 850 billion budget reaches plenum Sunday evening; passage expected by early Monday — 48 hours before elections trigger.
 - **Chief of Staff: "IDF collapsing":** Zamir warns cabinet that conscription, reserve, and service-length legislation must pass or the military cannot sustain operations.
 - **UAE pushes Hormuz naval force:** Abu Dhabi offers its own navy for a multinational task force; France conditions participation on the war ending first.

Below: why Iran's ten-tanker "gift" is a diplomatic sorting mechanism designed to fracture the coalition, what Wafiq Safa's televised admission means for the ceasefire fight over Hezbollah, Zamir's warning that nobody in the cabinet answered, and the Turkey-Syria corridor that could cost Israel billions in trade revenue while everyone watches Hormuz.

THE war has entered the phase where success creates its own problems. Israel is nearing completion of the destruction of Iran's military-industrial

base — and the regime hasn't broken, the diplomatic track hasn't produced an exit, and the theater count just increased by one. Every measurable metric favors the coalition. Every strategic question remains open. That gap between operational dominance and political resolution is where what comes next gets decided.

The War Today

Pentagon Drafts Ground Options as Diplomacy Stalls and Houthis Open a Fifth Front

The Pentagon is developing military options for what officials describe as a “final blow” against Iran — including a massive bombing campaign, seizure of Kharg Island, ground operations to secure highly enriched uranium at nuclear sites, and the capture of Abu Musa and Larak Island to break Tehran's grip on the Strait of Hormuz. Four main scenarios are under discussion. Two Marine expeditionary units are deploying to the region alongside the command element of the 82nd Airborne Division with an infantry brigade numbering several thousand troops. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Trump is prepared to strike “harder than ever before” and that “the president doesn't bluff.” Iran rejected a U.S. 15-point proposal conveyed through Pakistan as “one-sided and unfair.” The proposal reportedly demands dismantling Iran's nuclear program, curbing missiles, and effectively handing over control of the Strait. Tehran has hardened its position: binding guarantees against future attack, war reparations, formal Hormuz sovereignty, and Lebanon's inclusion in any deal. Trump revealed Thursday that Iran authorized passage of 10 oil tankers — eight initially, then two more “to apologize for something they said” — through the Strait flying Pakistani flags, which he called proof that “we are dealing with the right people.” A Thai tanker and Malaysian vessels also transited after coordination with Tehran. Iran offered Spain the same arrangement. Special Envoy Steve Witkoff said there are “strong signs” of a deal and that Tehran appears to be “looking for an exit path,” though Trump described Iran as “great negotiators” and said he was “not sure” he was willing to make a deal. Oil hit \$105 a barrel Thursday. A Western diplomat said it was unclear whether Washington was seeking to end the war or to calm markets before a ground operation.

Simultaneously, the Houthis fired a ballistic missile at southern Israel Saturday morning — the first attack from Yemen since Operation Roaring Lion began a month ago. Air defenses intercepted the missile over the Negev with no casualties. The Houthis confirmed the strike and formally declared entry into the war on Iran's side, citing continued strikes on the “axis of resistance.” Houthi brigadier general Omar Ma'rabouni said Yemen's geographic position over the Red Sea, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Bab al-Mandab gives the group leverage over “military navigation movement.” The internationally recognized Yemeni government condemned the move as endangering national security and exposing Yemen to broader conflict. The IDF said the Houthis

“will pay the price” but characterized them as a distraction that will not divert operations against Iran. A total of two missiles and one UAV were launched from Yemen Saturday; all were intercepted.

Meanwhile, Israel and the U.S. conducted joint aerial refueling operations as the IAF struck nuclear, missile, naval, and weapons production infrastructure across three areas of Iran in three waves involving more than 50 fighter jets per wave. Targets included the heavy water plant at Arak, a yellowcake production facility in Yazd, Iran’s Marine Industries Organization headquarters in Tehran [responsible for surface and subsurface vessels, unmanned naval platforms, engines, and weapons], multiple ballistic missile production and storage sites, air defense systems, and observation posts. The IDF also struck temporary command centers in Tehran after detecting that the regime had relocated to mobile infrastructure following a month of precision strikes. Commanders operating within those mobile headquarters were eliminated. IDF Spokesman Brig. Gen. Effie Defrin said the military would complete targeting all “critical” assets of Iran’s military production industries “within a few days” — with approximately 70% of the sector struck and operations nearing 90% of key sites. The IAF has fired approximately 15,000 shells and missiles at Iran since February 28. Iran’s steel plants — partially IRGC-owned and integral to the missile production chain — sustained damage the defense establishment described as “extremely heavy,” effectively paralyzing the sector. Iran threatened to strike steel plants in Israel and five other Gulf countries in retaliation.

On the home front, an Iranian ballistic missile struck Eshtaol near Beit Shemesh, injuring 19 — the IAF is investigating why interception failed. Vyacheslav Vidmant, 52, from Ashdod, was killed by a rocket strike in Tel Aviv while guarding a building damaged at the war’s start. Sgt. Moshe Yitzhak HaCohen Katz ז”ל, 22, from New Haven, Connecticut, of the Paratroopers Brigade’s 890th Battalion, was killed in a Hezbollah rocket attack in southern Lebanon. Three soldiers were moderately wounded in the same attack. In a separate incident Saturday, approximately 20 soldiers were wounded — including seven moderately — by Hezbollah rockets, among them a lieutenant colonel from the Yahalom unit. A 4-kilogram fragment from an Iranian fragmentation missile was found in the attic of a private home in Savyon; bomb disposal teams responded and nearby streets were closed.

The IRGC issued a threat following a reported strike on Tehran University of Science and Technology: all Israeli and American universities in “West Asia” are now “legitimate targets” unless the U.S. officially condemns the bombing by noon Tuesday Tehran time. Iran also lowered the minimum age for participation in war-related activities to 12, with IRGC cultural official Rahim Nadali announcing on state media that the “For Iran” initiative recruits children for patrols, checkpoints, and logistics.

ASSESSMENT

On the military ledger, the campaign is succeeding at a pace even optimistic Israeli planners underestimated — 70% of Iran's military industry destroyed, 90% of critical assets within days, 15,000 munitions delivered, naval capacity gutted. On the diplomatic side, none of that has produced an Iranian exit. Tehran's now a regime that has internalized losses as sunk costs and is now playing for the ceasefire terms, not the battlefield. The Houthis entry stretches the military operation without really changing it. Yemen's geography gives the Houthis leverage over Bab al-Mandab the same way Iran uses Hormuz: as an economic weapon, not a military one. The Pentagon's ground options — Kharg Island, Larak, Abu Musa, nuclear site seizure — are the logical next step, but each one converts an air campaign with minimal American casualties into an occupation with substantial risk. Iran is recruiting 12-year-olds and threatening universities. That is a regime that has lost the capacity for conventional escalation and is reaching for whatever remains.

IDF Expands Lebanon Security Zone as Hezbollah Rebuilds Under Fire

Four IDF divisions — the 36th, 91st, 146th, and 162nd — are conducting expanded ground operations in southern Lebanon. Since March 2, the IDF has eliminated more than 800 Hezbollah operatives through air, sea, and ground action, including hundreds from the Radwan Force. Golani Brigade forces dismantled more than 100 terrorist infrastructure sites and more than 10 operational shafts. Hezbollah launched approximately 250 rockets over the past day — the vast majority targeting IDF troops inside Lebanon, with 23 projectiles crossing into Israeli territory. Shayetet 13 forces, operating in support of the Givati Brigade combat team in al-Khiyam, raided a school and discovered hundreds of weapons — anti-tank rockets, mortar shells, grenades, launchers, small arms, mines, explosive blocks, and detonation mechanisms — all found alongside UNHCR markings. In a separate engagement, 401st Brigade footage showed a Hezbollah operative emerging from an underground shaft near a church and opening fire on IDF troops; soldiers eliminated the attacker and found maps, weapons stockpiles, and equipment indicating preparations for extended stays. Three additional tunnel shafts constructed during the ceasefire period were discovered at the same site — which the IDF had last cleared in December 2024.

Wafiq Safa, a senior Hezbollah official, admits that “during this fifteen-month period... Hezbollah and the Islamic Resistance were working to rebuild their capabilities” — missiles, suicide drones, and ground forces “in both quantity and quality.” IDF Spokesman BG Effie Defrin reminded the Lebanese government that if they will not disarm Hezbollah, “the IDF will.” Troops from the Alpinist Unit under the 810th Brigade conducted a cross-border operation from the Syrian Hermon to the Mount Dov area, moving through deep snow to scan terrain, gather intelligence, and locate terrorist infrastructure.

The IDF eliminated Ali Hassan Shaib, a Hezbollah Radwan Force intelligence operative who posed as an Al-Manar journalist while systematically exposing IDF troop positions and maintaining operational coordination with Hezbollah elements. Senior communications operatives Ayyoub Hussein Yaacoub and Yasser Mohammad Mubarak — both linked to Hezbollah's rocket fire management — were also eliminated.

Hezbollah is pressing Iran to condition any ceasefire on a full halt to Israeli strikes against the group. Israel has told the United States that condition will not be accepted. Israeli officials view continued operational freedom against Hezbollah as essential — framing the 2026 objective as severing the Tehran-Beirut axis, the successor to the 2024 effort that disconnected the Gaza and Lebanon fronts.

ASSESSMENT

Wafiq Safa's televised admission that Hezbollah spent 15 months rebuilding missiles, drones, and ground forces "in both quantity and quality" — during a ceasefire the LAF reported as enforced — should be the obituary for UNSCR 1701. The weapons cache in al-Khiyam's school, found alongside UNHCR markings, is the material evidence of Hezbollah embedded military infrastructure in civilian institutions while the Lebanese army filed reports claiming the opposite. The ceasefire dispute is the most consequential diplomatic fight happening right now — and it's happening behind closed doors. If Iran secures a deal that freezes Israeli operations against Hezbollah, the group survives intact and rearmed. If Israel maintains operational freedom, the Tehran-Beirut pipeline stays under fire. Hezbollah's demand tells you what it values most: not territory, not prisoners, not reconstruction — protection from the strikes that are degrading its ability to reconstitute. That's the definition of a demand made from weakness, and it's exactly why Israel won't accept it.

Gaza Operations Grind Forward Along the Yellow Line

IDF soldiers from the 252nd Reserve Division and 143rd Gaza Division continue counterterrorism operations along the Yellow Line, destroying terror infrastructure, locating weapons, and eliminating operatives. The military reported killing over 60 terrorists in the past month who attempted attacks or crossed the Yellow Line — including armed Nukhba Force members, senior Hamas commanders, and a cell that participated in the October 7 massacre. Approximately eight kilometers of Hamas terror tunnels and underground infrastructure were destroyed, with a systematic drilling project underway to locate additional tunnel networks.

ASSESSMENT

Gaza is the front nobody is watching — which is exactly the condition under which Hamas rebuilds. The 60 kills and eight kilometers of tunnel destruction over a month are operationally significant but insufficient to contest the structural embedding we have already documented. The 15% truck tariffs. The tunnel refurbishment. The recruitment. Fortunately, the Yellow Line holds. What's growing behind it while every senior decision-maker in Jerusalem and Washington is focused on Iran and Hormuz? That's a different story.

Inside Israel

Budget Survives — Coalition Buys Itself Six More Months

The NIS 850 billion state budget is set for its second and third readings in the Knesset plenum tonight or very early Monday morning — barely 48 hours before the March 31 legal deadline that would trigger Knesset dissolution and

elections within 90 days. The coalition postponed debates originally scheduled for Thursday to today after concluding it could bypass the opposition's traditional filibuster strategy. The revised schedule opens plenum debate this morning, runs approximately 12 hours of opposition speeches, and begins voting around 9:00 p.m. with nearly all of the MKs present. The Finance Ministry estimates the voting process will take about four hours, projecting passage shortly after midnight. Opposition sources concede the coalition has the votes. The coalition secured the Haredi parties' support after allocating approximately NIS 5 billion for ultra-Orthodox schools — despite not finalizing the draft exemption legislation they had demanded.

ASSESSMENT

The budget will pass. The more interesting question is what it bought and what it cost. Netanyahu traded NIS 5 billion in Haredi funding for the votes that keep the coalition alive until October — the same parties that dropped their “non-negotiable” draft law demand the moment the money appeared. The Haredi parties’ leverage operates on a simple principle: threaten to collapse the government, extract payment, repeat.

Death Penalty Bill Advances to Plenum

The Knesset National Security Committee cleared the death penalty bill for terrorists for its final plenum votes — the first time such legislation has advanced this far. Sponsored by MK Limor Son Har-Melech of Otzma Yehudit [whose first husband was killed in a terror attack during the Second Intifada], the bill mandates death by hanging or life imprisonment for terrorists who intentionally kill with the aim of denying Israel's existence. The revised text gives judges discretion between the two sentences after the PMO pushed back on a mandatory death-only version. Execution must be carried out within 90 days — though the prime minister may postpone up to 180 days. Ben-Gvir called it “the most important bill the Knesset has enacted in recent years.” Yisrael Beytenu's Oded Forer conditioned support on Netanyahu personally appearing to vote.

ASSESSMENT

The bill's advance is historic in the procedural sense — no death penalty legislation has reached this stage — and logical in the substantive one. Israel has fought ten major wars and endured thousands of terror attacks under a legal framework that treats the mass murderer and the armed robber as inhabitants of the same sentencing universe. The revised text — judicial discretion between death and life imprisonment — is the version designed to survive both the plenum and the inevitable High Court challenge. The strategic logic is straightforward: as long as convicted terrorists sit in Israeli prisons alive, they are currency. Hamas traded one Gilad Shalit for 1,027 prisoners in 2011 — among them Yahya Sinwar. Every kidnapped Israeli, living or dead, becomes leverage for the next mass release. The death penalty removes the inventory that makes hostage-taking profitable. Jewish tradition makes this a genuinely difficult question — the rabbis of the Sanhedrin called a court that executed once in seventy years “destructive,” and the discomfort with state-administered death runs deep Jewish ethics and halacha. But the same tradition holds that whoever saves a life saves an entire world, and sometimes the math is brutal: saving the next Gilad Shalit means ensuring the next Yahya Sinwar never becomes a bargaining chip. Whether it passes? The coalition needs every vote. The margin is real but narrow, and the sequencing against the budget vote and Knesset recess compresses the window. If it passes, it's a statement of sovereign intent — and a structural change to the hostage calculus.

Chief of Staff Warns of Manpower Collapse

IDF Chief of Staff LTG Eyal Zamir warned the security cabinet that “the IDF is collapsing into itself” — citing the failure to pass conscription legislation, extend mandatory service to 36 months, or amend reserve duty laws. Under current law, mandatory service drops to 30 months next January unless legislation intervenes. “The reserves will not hold. I am raising 10 red flags,” Zamir said. Zamir also flagged rising violence in Judea and Samaria, noting the IDF deployed an additional battalion. A senior cabinet official disputed the framing, saying Zamir's warning specifically targeted legislative delays — not the army's overall capacity — and that all cabinet members support completing the three pending bills, with delays attributed to the legal advisory staff. The same official warned that enemy media are interpreting the remarks as evidence the army is nearing collapse “because of the enemy's prowess” — regardless of what the Chief of Staff intended.

ASSESSMENT

Zamir's warning is accurate on the mechanics and damaging on the optics — and the cabinet official's rebuttal makes the problem worse, not better. The substance is quite simple. The IDF is running a multi-front war with a conscription framework designed for two fronts and a reserve structure designed for three weeks, not three months. The mandatory service reduction to 30 months in January 2027 is the current law, and the legislation to override it hasn't moved. The Haredi draft remains unenforced. The cabinet's response — silence from the PM, then a background briefing blaming the legal advisory staff — is a masterclass in institutional deflection. Zamir said the army can't sustain its current posture. The cabinet heard him. Then it funded Haredi schools and advanced the death penalty bill. The priorities are visible.

IDF Operations in Judea and Samaria Intensify

IDF forces completed extensive operations across Judea and Samaria over the past week, arresting approximately 80 wanted individuals and 40 inciters — including bomb technicians, rocket launchers, and individuals promoting terrorism. Several firearms were confiscated: M4 and M16 rifles, shotguns, hunting rifles, and pistols. Forces seized over 100 drones and more than NIS 100,000 intended for terror financing. In a separate operation that we covered on Wednesday, Border Police raided a store in Kafr Qallil near Nablus and seized 111 drones. Near Harmala, a confrontation escalated after an outpost was established, evacuated, and then reestablished. Israel Police are investigating. The IDF diverted combat units from the northern front to Judea and Samaria to address rising violence. According to IDF sources, the troop transfer required special approval from Netanyahu. Zamir cautioned that the cabinet's decision to legalize dozens of outposts increases manpower demands the army is already struggling to meet.

ASSESSMENT

The 100-plus drone seizure — combined with the 111 drones in Kafr Qallil from Wednesday's brief — confirms what the IDF's November exercise exposed: a growing UAV threat in Judea and Samaria that its current force posture there cannot counter. The troop diversion from Lebanon to Judea and Samaria — requiring prime ministerial approval — illustrates Zamir's manpower warning in miniature: every battalion moved to one theater creates a gap in another. The army is unfortunately not short on missions. Though it is short on soldiers.

Israel and the World

UAE Pushes Multinational Naval Force to Break Iran's Hormuz Blockade

The UAE told Washington and Western allies it would deploy its own navy as part of a multinational maritime task force to reopen the Strait of Hormuz. Abu Dhabi is pushing dozens of countries to create a "Hormuz Security Force" to defend the strait and escort shipping. Senior Emirati official Sultan al-Jaber told U.S. Vice President JD Vance in Washington: "Iran holds Hormuz hostage, every nation pays the ransom — at the gas pump, at the grocery store, at the pharmacy." France held talks with approximately 35 countries seeking partners but conditioned participation on the end of U.S.-Israeli operations against Iran. Several U.S. allies rebuffed Trump's request for military support to reopen the waterway. UN Security Council members are negotiating resolutions to protect commercial shipping, including a Bahraini draft authorizing "all necessary means" — though Russia and China would likely veto it. Iran has effectively blocked the strait, which carries approximately 20% of global oil and LNG.

Ankara and Damascus are working to divert the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) away from Israel — originally planned to run through UAE ports, then by rail through Saudi Arabia and Jordan to Haifa and Ashdod — along a railway linking Saudi Arabia to Syria via Jordan, with oil pipelines

from northeastern Saudi Arabia to Syrian Mediterranean ports. If realized, the plan positions Syria as the primary “gateway to the sea” for Gulf states, potentially costing Israel billions in trade revenue over coming decades.

ASSESSMENT

The UAE is the only Gulf state that has converted rhetorical solidarity into operational commitment — deploying naval assets, freezing Iranian assets, absorbing more Iranian fire than any country including Israel, and now proposing the multinational force structure that Washington wants but won't build alone. France's precondition — participation only after U.S.-Israeli operations end — is the standard, weak European formula. Solidarity in principle, paralysis in practice. The Bahraini UNSC resolution will die to a Russian or Chinese veto, which means military action remains the only mechanism. The Turkey-Syria IMEC bypass deserves more attention than it's getting. Erdogan is exploiting the war's disruption to reroute a corridor that was designed to anchor Israel's economic centrality in the region. If Saudi Arabia agrees — and the incentive structure during a Hormuz closure makes the bypass attractive — Israel loses a strategic economic asset that was supposed to be one of normalization's dividends.

German Court Affirms Hamas Terrorist Designation in Landmark Ruling

A Berlin court affirmed for the first time that Hamas constitutes a foreign terrorist organization under German criminal law, sentencing four Lebanese-born operatives to prison terms of 4.5 to six years. The defendants — arrested in December 2023 — were stockpiling weapons for a Hamas attack on Jewish, Israeli, or other targets. The presiding judge stated that Hamas “undoubtedly fulfills the elements of the offense” under Sections 129a and 129b of the German Criminal Code. The ruling corrects a gap: while the EU listed Hamas as a terrorist organization years ago, German domestic law had not independently classified it as such until this verdict. The operatives had been personally tasked by a high-ranking Hamas official in Lebanon with locating underground weapons caches in Poland, Denmark, and Bulgaria, inspecting the stockpiles, and reburying them. German prosecutors are preparing additional indictments. On March 6, Cypriot authorities arrested another Lebanese suspect linked to Hamas weapons procurement in Germany.

ASSESSMENT

The ruling matters less for the four operatives — the sentences are completely insignificant — and more for the precedent. Germany's executive designation of Hamas in 2023 was a policy decision. This is a judicial ruling with case law weight, which means future attempts to reverse the classification face a higher legal barrier. The operational detail — weapons caches buried across Poland, Denmark, and Bulgaria, maintained by a network answering to a senior Hamas official in Beirut — maps the European infrastructure that Hamas has built for exactly the kind of attack the German agencies intercepted. Hamas maintained pre-positioned weapons in three European countries. The court acknowledged it — though they didn't punish it very much. Certainly, jihadists won't be dissuaded by the possibility of just four to six years of incarceration.

NYC Council Passes Buffer Zone Bills — Mamdani's Veto Watch Begins

The New York City Council passed legislation Thursday formalizing NYPD buffer zone procedures around religious institutions during protest activity, sending it to Mayor Zohran Mamdani. Council Speaker Julie Menin said the mayor “hasn’t indicated” he would veto her signature bill. The NYPD expressed “no objections” to the revised proposal. The bill passed 44–51, well above the two-thirds override threshold. A companion bill by Councilman Eric Dinowitz — extending similar protections to educational institutions — passed with only 30 votes, four short of veto-proof. Mamdani has refused to take a public position despite acknowledging concerns from left-wing activists in his base who have targeted synagogues and yeshivas with anti-Israel demonstrations.

ASSESSMENT

The vote margin — 44 of 51 — is veto-proof, which means the religious institution bill becomes law regardless of what Mamdani does. His political calculation is whether the cost of vetoing [and being overridden] exceeds the cost of signing [and alienating the activist base that put him in office]. The education bill at 30 votes is the more interesting number — four votes short of override, which means Mamdani can kill it with a veto. That’s the bill that would formalize buffer zones around the campuses where anti-Israel mobs have been operating with impunity. The gap between 44 and 30 tells you which institutions New York’s council is willing to protect and which ones it considers politically inconvenient.

Briefly Noted

Frontline & Security

- **HaShomer HaChadash:** The organization deployed 60 armored bomb shelters to Israeli farms and agricultural lands after a crowdfunding campaign launched when Operation Roaring Lion began, with a target of 100–120 shelters. The campaign is named for Omer Weinstein, murdered with four foreign workers while harvesting at his family orchard in Metula in October 2024 — farmers on the front line now have at least minimal protection while producing the country’s food supply.
- **FBI Indictment:** The FBI indicted a brother and sister after an IED was placed at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa — headquarters of both CENTCOM and USSOCOM — with the primary suspect charged with explosives offenses and currently in China. The target selection — the command hub for Operation Epic Fury and all U.S. special operations — is precise enough to suggest intent beyond amateur provocation.

Diplomacy & Geopolitics

- **International Law:** Iran’s Hormuz blockade violates the 1958 Geneva Convention on the Territorial Sea and customary international law on innocent passage — but no international court can assert jurisdiction without

Tehran's consent, and Russia and China will veto Bahrain's UNSC resolution authorizing "all necessary means."

Domestic & Law

- **Protests:** Thousands protested in Tel Aviv, Haifa, and Jerusalem Saturday under the banner "For all of our lives," directed against Netanyahu's war policy. Some of it got out of hand as police were forced to detain five in Tel Aviv, six in Haifa, approximately 250 at Paris Square near the PM's residence.

Culture, Religion & Society

- **Instagram Antisemitism:** The Combat Antisemitism Movement tracked 100 antisemitic posts over 96 hours that Instagram's own recommendation algorithm pushed into user feeds — generating 5.3 million likes, 3.8 million shares, and an estimated reach of 280 million users, including AI-generated fake "rabbi" accounts pushing Jewish-control conspiracy theories to over 2 million followers. Meta's platform is actively distributing Jew-hate at industrial scale while collecting advertising revenue on the engagement.
- **Birmingham Politics:** Political activist Akhmed Yakoob — filmed telling voters "the Zionists control everything" while campaigning ahead of local elections — stood by the remarks, insisting they are merely "anti-Zionist." Yakoob, who faces an upcoming money laundering trial and was arrested on suspicion of a racially aggravated offense during a demonstration, is organizing a slate of independent candidates to unseat Labour on Birmingham City Council.
- **South Africa:** Steven Gruz, 53, a senior journalist and researcher at the South African Institute of International Affairs and a prominent figure in Johannesburg's Jewish community, was kidnapped and murdered Saturday in the city center — five suspects arrested, his body found in a remote area hours later. Community security attributed the killing to an "express kidnapping" [a growing South African phenomenon] with "no current evidence of antisemitic motive," though the targeting of a visible Jewish communal figure, especially at this time, deserves scrutiny before that claim holds any water.
- **University of Pittsburgh:** Professor Jennifer Murtazashvili, stranded in Israel on a Fulbright Fellowship when the war began, described in a Washington Post op-ed what she calls the first "alt-war" — a conflict in which Americans consume AI-generated fake videos of Tel Aviv burning and Israeli refugees fleeing through mountains while she watches construction crews from her balcony. The liberal internationalist left and isolationist right, she argues, found common cause not in a policy position but in a psychological need to declare the war a failure because success conflicts with their views.
- **Passover Guidelines:** Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Kalman Meir Bar issued special Passover eve guidelines for observant Jews conducting bedikat chametz

under war conditions — covering procedures for evacuees, public bomb shelters, and what to do if an air-raid siren sounds mid-ritual. The halachic guide is a quiet reminder that Jewish life continues to operate on its own calendar, war or not.

- **Comedy Under Fire:** Anonymous Comedy TLV's "Live from the Mamad" series — English-language stand-up in the basement of a Florentin bar, 50 tickets per show under Home Front Command crowd-capacity rules — has raised NIS 180,000 through charity performances for Druze communities, reserve units, and emergency shelter organizations. The shows sell out consistently, sirens interrupt routines regularly, and the audience walks next door to the miklat and comes back for the rest of the set.

Five weeks in, the campaign's military scoreboard is unambiguous — 70% of Iran's military industry destroyed, naval capacity gutted, 15,000 munitions delivered — and none of it has produced an Iranian phone call. Tehran rejected the deal, let ten tankers through as a gesture, recruited 12-year-olds for uniformed service, and watched the Houthis open a fifth front it doesn't need to pay for. The budget will likely pass tonight. The army will hold because the soldiers have no choice. The question nobody in Jerusalem or Washington has answered — how does a war this successful end without someone deciding it's over — remains exactly where it was Thursday. Except now there's a Houthi missile trajectory in the file and an 82nd Airborne brigade on a transport ship, and neither one simplifies the math.

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.

PASSED ALONG TO YOU?

The daily Israel Brief is free at mitzpe.org. The operational layer — Closed Dossiers, Vantage, and Watchwords — is members-only. Become a member, gift a membership, or book a briefing at mitzpe.org.

Reader Edition · Free to share with attribution to Mitzpe Institute.