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READER EDITION

March 30, 2026

ISRAEL BRIEF

Monday, March 30

The budget passed at midnight with NIS 800 million the Attorney General tried to block and 109 votes the opposition meant not to cast. The coalition survives.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE The Jallad appointment is the UN's institutional antibody response working in reverse — the system identified the more qualified candidate, ranked her first, and then overrode the process to install someone whose primary qualification is ideological alignment with the body's existing bias. The rapporteur post itself — born from a 2014 Iran-sponsored resolution, funded by China, Russia, and Qatar — exists to launder authoritarian grievances as human rights discourse. Jallad's appointment does not change the post's function. The UK Greens' failed vote is a reprieve, not a resolution. The motion will return, the membership that supports it hasn't gone anywhere, and the party leader's framing — Zionism equals whatever Israel's current government does — lets you smear it by tying it to any policy you dislike.

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Flash Brief

- **Regime change abandoned:** Israel pivots airstrikes from destabilization targets to Iran's military-industrial base after Kurdish invasion plan collapses and opposition fails to materialize; one Israeli source: "a better place, but not a win."
- **40 weapons facilities struck in Tehran:** IAF deploys 80+ munitions against missile assembly, engine R&D, and anti-tank component manufacturing in a single wave; U.S. B-1 and B-52 bombers hit IRGC command centers overnight; Arak heavy water plant confirmed non-operational.
- **Security zone expands — years, not months:** Netanyahu orders deeper push in southern Lebanon; IDF reaches Ras al-Bayada, eight kilometers north of the border; officials say presence expected "for several months and possibly years."
- **Sgt. Liran Ben Zion ז"ל killed in Lebanon:** 19-year-old fighter from the 401st Brigade killed by anti-tank missile; three soldiers seriously wounded in separate attacks; Hezbollah "super launch" turns Haifa skies yellow.
- **Cluster warhead hits Haifa refinery:** Iranian ballistic missile strikes oil refinery with cluster munition; Energy Minister confirms no production damage; Negev chemical plant fire and hazmat incident after separate missile impact near Beersheba.
- **Budget passes 62–55 with midnight Haredi maneuver:** NIS 850.6 billion budget clears the Knesset; coalition slips NIS 800 million to Haredi schools in procedural amendment the opposition voted for without realizing; Finance Ministry DG Rom steps down.
- **Netzach Yisrael suspended — Bismuth demands reversal:** Chief of Staff suspends Haredi reserve battalion after CNN incident in Samaria; committee chairman accuses Zamir of undermining morale and arming enemy narratives.
- **Iran's ambassador still in Beirut:** Expulsion deadline passed; Saar calls Lebanon "a virtual country occupied by Iran"; Spain closes airspace to aircraft involved in the campaign — another European operational obstruction.
- **UN installs pro-Hamas academic as rapporteur:** UNHRC bypasses top-ranked candidate to appoint Zeina Jallad, who justified October 7 and called for suspending Israel from international organizations.

THE WAR TODAY

Israel Abandons Regime Change, Races to Degrade Iran's Military before Trump Calls Time

Israel shifted the majority of its airstrikes from regime destabilization targets to Iran's military-industrial base after concluding that internal collapse will not materialize under current conditions and that Trump may announce a halt within days. So, Israel moved from targeting the IRGC's repression apparatus to inflicting maximum damage on military capabilities ahead of any prospective deal. The recalibration follows the collapse of the Kurdish

invasion plan — a joint U.S.-Israeli operation years in the making. Tens of thousands of armed Kurdish fighters from all six Iranian Kurdish factions were set to cross from Iraq under massive U.S.-Israeli air cover in the war's opening days. The IDF and U.S. struck IRGC bases, police stations, and Basij sites across Iran's northwest to ease their path. But the plan unraveled in sequence: Fox News leaked the operation on March 4, Iran reinforced its northwestern defenses, Erdogan told Trump he would not tolerate Kurdish independence anywhere in the region, Gulf states warned partition could destabilize the entire Middle East, and the Kurds themselves — burned by Washington's abandonment in Syria — began demanding political guarantees instead of just air cover. Trump pulled the plug. IDF Military Intelligence had assessed the plan's chances as "slim" from the start. Some senior officials described it as "imaginary" and "full of holes." Netanyahu is reportedly "disappointed" at its failure. Meanwhile, the strike campaign continues at extraordinary scale. Over the past 48 hours, the Israeli Air Force struck approximately 40 weapons production and research facilities in Tehran, deploying more than 80 munitions in a single wave. Targets included a surface-to-air missile assembly site, anti-tank missile component manufacturing, and ballistic missile engine R&D. Separately, the IAF hit more than 140 targets tied to Iran's ballistic missile array in western and central Iran — storage sites, launch systems, and air defenses. The IAEA confirmed the Arak heavy water production plant sustained severe damage and is no longer operational [no declared nuclear material was present]. U.S. B-1 Lancers and B-52 Stratofortresses conducted large-scale overnight strikes on military-industrial sites and concealed IRGC command centers in Tehran. A B-1-B superheavy is en route to the theater. Power outages were reported across Tehran and Karaj. Inside the regime, President Pezeshkian warned IRGC commander Ahmad Vahidi that without a ceasefire, Iran's economy could collapse within three to four weeks — and demanded executive powers be returned to the civilian government. Vahidi rejected both requests and accused the government of failing to implement structural reforms before the war. Strikes on steel factories have significantly damaged the economy and will delay post-war recovery. Mojtaba Khamenei issued a rare statement thanking Iraqi militias for targeting American bases — but provided no proof of life. U.S. intelligence holds that he was badly injured in the war's opening days — assessments say that Mojtaba isn't running things, but the IRGC command is. Iran's Foreign Ministry still denies any direct negotiations with Washington. Defense Minister Katz: "We will not stop; we understand what is required — both in Iran and in Lebanon."

ASSESSMENT

The Kurdish plan's collapse is the pivot point that partly explains the recalibration — and the tension between Jerusalem and Washington that now defines the war's trajectory explains much of the rest. Netanyahu's pre-war confidence rested partly on a theory of internal fracture: sustained military strikes plus a Kurdish ground invasion would break the fear barrier, trigger popular uprising, and hand Israel something beyond a degraded adversary — a changed regime. That theory required operational surprise, Kurdish willingness, and American steadiness. It got none of the above. What remains is a devastatingly effective air campaign — shattering capacity but leaving political structures intact. The Pezeshkian-Vahidi split is irrelevant. Pezeshkian has no enforcement mechanism, and the IRGC has the guns. Israel's predicament is now temporal. Every additional strike wave degrades Iranian reconstitution timelines — but the diplomatic clock Trump controls is shorter than the military clock Israel needs.

Security Zone Expands as Lebanon Becomes a Multi-Year Operation

Netanyahu ordered a further expansion of the security zone in southern Lebanon, directing the IDF to push anti-tank missile fire beyond range of the border, after conducting an operational assessment at Northern Command headquarters in Safed with Defense Minister Katz, Chief of Staff Zamir, and division commanders. The IDF's 146th Division advanced deeper into western Lebanon, reaching the Ras al-Bayada headland south of Tyre — approximately eight kilometers north of Israel's border. Security officials say the IDF is likely to remain in southern Lebanon “for at least several months and possibly years,” even in the event of a ceasefire. The Lebanese government cannot disarm Hezbollah and has made no credible effort to do so. Chief of Staff Zamir defined three defensive lines: the first line of border villages cleared of Hezbollah infiltration infrastructure, the second and third lines from which anti-tank missiles threaten northern Israel, and the Litani River itself. Forces on the ground are operating under sustained fire — artillery, rockets, anti-tank missiles, and drones — with soldiers reporting barely seconds of warning before impact. Hezbollah launched what observers described as a “super launch” that turned the skies over Haifa, Kiryat Bialik, and swaths of the north yellow. The group continues firing hundreds of rockets daily, though the majority of recent fire has targeted IDF forces inside Lebanon rather than Israeli territory. Sgt. Liran Ben Zion ז”ל, 19, from Holon, a fighter in Battalion 9 of the 401st “Iron Tracks” Brigade, was killed when an anti-tank missile struck his tank. Three additional soldiers were seriously wounded and several moderately injured in separate incidents — one by an anti-tank guided missile, another by a Hezbollah drone, a third in an operational accident. Five IDF soldiers have now been killed in southern Lebanon and more than 30 wounded since ground operations began. The IDF struck a Hezbollah cell operating under cover of an ambulance in southern Lebanon — operatives dressed as paramedics had systematically used ambulances to transfer weapons from northern to southern Lebanon. IDF forces also eliminated Ali Hassan Shaib and Mohammad Fatouni, Hezbollah military operatives who had used journalist cover for years. An Indonesian UNIFIL peacekeeper was killed and another critically injured when a projectile exploded at the mission's position near Adchit al-Qusayr. UNIFIL has not determined the origin

and launched an investigation. Northern mayors who met Netanyahu afterward called the meeting a “waste of time.” Metula Regional Council chief David Azoulay skipped it entirely: “I’ve heard enough from Netanyahu. I no longer believe the talk and declarations.”

ASSESSMENT

Netanyahu’s language — “fundamentally change the situation” — is designed to remain capacious enough to cover everything from a temporary buffer to a semi-permanent occupation. Hezbollah’s anti-tank capability and the Litani launch infrastructure are genuine threats, and the LAF’s documented inability [or unwillingness] to disarm Hezbollah eliminates the alternative. But the manpower strain Zamir warned about last week has not been answered. The mayor revolt in the north reflects a constituency that wants disarmament. Sgt. Ben Zion z”l was 19. That cost is real, specific, and ongoing — and the question of what the country receives in exchange for it is one the prime minister has not yet answered.

Iranian Strikes Hit Haifa Refinery and Negev Industry as Home Front Absorbs Sustained Fire

An Iranian ballistic missile cluster bomblet struck the Haifa oil refinery. Energy Minister Eli Cohen confirmed no damage to production facilities and said fuel supplies would not be affected. Separately, Hezbollah launched a coordinated rocket and missile barrage — including the “super launch” over Haifa — while additional Hezbollah missiles triggered sirens in Netanya. In the south, an Iranian ballistic missile struck an open area in Beersheba several dozen meters from homes, injuring 11 people from shockwave debris and sending 20 others to Soroka Hospital with acute anxiety. A separate missile impact at the Neot Hovav industrial zone south of Beersheba ignited a large fire at an Adama Agricultural Solutions plant, with hazardous materials involvement including damaged gas pipelines. Home Front Command ordered residents inside the industrial zone to shelter with windows closed and ventilation off. Route 40 was closed due to smoke. Thirty-four firefighting teams responded. Iran’s Fars News Agency claimed the strike targeted a facility linked to Israel’s military industries — “a warning following Israeli actions against Iranian industrial assets.” The IDF separately confirmed a controlled missile impact in an open area in southern Israel, consistent with interception protocols. Two Houthi drones launched from Yemen were intercepted near Eilat overnight. Home Front Command restrictions remain in effect through April 4. Ali Gabar, 23, from Eilat, was indicted for spying for Iran — filming inside the Uvda air base where he worked, documenting routes from the base, and recording sensitive security infrastructure and residential buildings under detailed Iranian operational instructions, in exchange for hundreds of dollars.

ASSESSMENT

Iran is calibrating its strikes for economic disruption and psychological attrition. That the refinery's production capacity survived is operationally fortunate. That Iran aimed a cluster munition at it is strategically deliberate. Tehran is compensating for degraded missile accuracy and reduced volume with area-effect warheads and high-value target selection. The Gabar indictment is at least the third Iran espionage case in weeks [including the 14-year-old in Tel Aviv], confirming an active Iranian HUMINT campaign running alongside the kinetic one. The IRGC doesn't need many agents — it just needs one who works at the right base. And yet, for all the fire and all the threat — my rabbi tells me I'm too pessimistic in these pages. Fair enough. Walk through Tel Aviv right now and you'll find a stock exchange that closed at an all-time high the day the war started, a shekel near a 30-year peak, and a tech sector that didn't flinch. Israel absorbs strikes that would paralyze most countries and then goes back to building. It's a national characteristic so deeply embedded it barely registers as remarkable anymore. Iran fires cluster munitions at refineries. Israel intercepts, repairs, and opens the markets. The regime in Tehran is fighting a country that treats existential threat as a scheduling inconvenience.

INSIDE ISRAEL

Budget Passes 62–55 — Coalition Slips NIS 800 Million to Haredi Schools in Midnight Maneuver

The Knesset passed the 2026 state budget at second and third readings by a vote of 62–55 — the largest budget in Israeli history at NIS 850.6 billion, anchored by a NIS 143 billion defense allocation swollen by the war with Iran. The fiscal deficit target was raised to 4.9% of GDP. The Bank of Israel projects debt-to-GDP rising from 68.5% to 70%. The budget contains one middle-income benefit — an expansion of income tax brackets — and no substantial structural reforms. Finance Ministry Director General Ilan Rom is stepping down from his position following the budget's passage. The dominant story is what happened during the vote. The coalition proposed an amendment — typically the opposition's prerogative — allocating an additional NIS 800 million to the Chinuch Atzmai and Maayan HaChinuch HaTorani school networks, the two main Haredi education systems linked to United Torah Judaism and Shas respectively. The money had been held in budget reserves at the AG's instruction. The amendment's procedural framing confused opposition members, who voted in favor without realizing what they were supporting — producing a 109-vote majority for Haredi education funding that the AG had blocked. The NIS 800 million is “compensation” for the government's failure to pass a law regularizing yeshiva draft exemptions. The Haredi parties had threatened to vote down the entire budget — and trigger elections within 90 days — if the funding was withheld. Separately, the NGO Hiddush petitioned the High Court challenging a frozen NIS 98 million allocation to the same networks, arguing in a letter to the Knesset Finance Committee that the NIS 800 million already disbursed may itself exceed lawful entitlements and could require partial clawback. The letter seeks data on enrollment, teacher salaries, schools removed for failing core-studies requirements, and the legal basis

for an added six-percent administrative component. The Finance Committee must submit its decision to the court by April 15.

ASSESSMENT

The budget passed. That's the headline the coalition needed. Everything underneath it is more complicated. The NIS 800 million Haredi education maneuver is a masterclass in why you should always read the fine print. The AG's objections were overturned, using a procedural format the opposition didn't recognize in time. Whether the courts revisit this depends on Hiddush's petition and on whether the Finance Committee produces the itemized accounting the High Court said was missing the first time. The broader picture: a wartime budget with a 4.9% deficit target and no structural reform is a bet that the war ends before the fiscal strain becomes unsustainable. Rom's departure signals that the professional echelon considers the budget closed — and possibly that whoever occupies the Finance Ministry's senior staff next will face the harder question of what happens when the war bills arrive without the growth assumptions to cover them.

Netzach Yisrael Battalion Suspended after CNN Incident — Bismuth Demands Reversal

Chief of Staff Zamir suspended the Haredi reserve battalion Netzach Yisrael (941) — composed of veterans from the Netzach Yehuda Battalion — from all operational activity following a series of discipline violations that drew international attention. The central incident: CNN correspondent Jeremy Diamond arrived at a site near Tayasir in northern Samaria to cover the establishment of a memorial for Yehuda Sherman, murdered in a car-ramming attack. Footage showed battalion fighters pointing weapons at the crew, ordering them to sit down. One soldier told Diamond: “If they had murdered your brother — what would you do?” The network alleged that a crew member was physically assaulted. A separate incident — the vandalization of a Yasser Arafat monument — compounded the picture. The IDF is treating the incidents as systemic deficiencies requiring a full operational pause, retraining, and procedure refresher after Pesach. The battalion will remain in reserve service but is off the front line. Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee chairman Bismuth accused the Chief of Staff of undermining fighters' spirit, sowing dangerous hesitation, and providing ammunition to enemy narratives. A soldier from the battalion told Israel National News: “Instead of backing the soldiers who are dealing with a complex arena, they are simply sacrificing us to appease the world.”

ASSESSMENT

Bismuth is wrong on the remedy and right on the risk. Pointing a weapon at a journalist is a gift-wrapped propaganda package delivered on camera, and the IDF's suspension is a proportionate response to a unit that created a strategic liability in a contested space. The soldier's quote captures real frustration, and the frustration is understandable. Reservists operating in whether in Lebanon, Gaza, Judea and Samaria, or elsewhere under genuine threat do not want to feel penalized for political optics. But the optics are operational. Any of these clips get replayed in each European parliament session debating arms sales and every UN session drafting resolutions.

Opposition Fumbles Unity as Bennett, Eisenkot, and Lapid Negotiate on Camera

Former IDF Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot rejected ex-Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's merger offer, stating he will not serve as a second-in-command: "I didn't leave Benny Gantz as a number two just to become Naftali Bennett's number two." Eisenkot said he received — and immediately declined — the proposal six months ago when Bennett first extended it. Bennett's party responded with a statement urging unity regardless: "The public will not forgive those who prevent victory." Lapid criticized both men for conducting negotiations on television, saying he had executed "some of the biggest political mergers in Israeli history" and all of them succeeded because they happened far from cameras. Lapid reiterated at a Sunday Knesset press conference that public ego contests harm the opposition bloc's chances. Bennett is currently the leading challenger to Netanyahu in polling, with Eisenkot's Yashar! party not far behind. Elections must be held by October at the latest.

ASSESSMENT

The opposition's structural problem is simple math. Eisenkot, Bennett, and Lapid each control enough seats to matter and not enough to win alone. Lapid's critique? Correct, the merger conversations conducted on Channel 12 and on X serve each leader's individual brand at the expense of the collective project. Bennett's public pressure — "the public will not forgive" — is designed for a social media clip, not a coalition negotiation. If the three blocs fragment going into an election against Netanyahu, the combined opposition will once again generate fewer usable seats. The budget's passage removes the immediate trigger for early elections, but October is coming. The question is whether the opposition can solve its coordination problem before then — or whether it enters the race having already demonstrated to voters that it cannot manage even a simple communications package.

ISRAEL AND THE WORLD

Spain Closes Airspace as Diplomatic Fractures Widen — Iran's Ambassador Still in Beirut

Spain closed its airspace to aircraft participating directly or indirectly in the operation against Iran, according to El País — the most concrete obstruction by a NATO member since the war began. The move follows Spain's consistent pattern of positioning itself against the U.S.-Israeli campaign and represents a logistical [though certainly avoidable] constraint on coalition air operations transiting European airspace. Meanwhile, Iran's ambassador to Lebanon remains in Beirut this morning despite Lebanon's foreign ministry ordering his departure by yesterday. Foreign Minister Sa'ar responded: "Lebanon is a virtual country that is in fact occupied by Iran. The Iranian ambassador is drinking his coffee in the Lebanese capital this morning and mocking the 'state' that hosts him. Hezbollah's ministers are still serving in Lebanon's government, which will not regain its independence until the decision is made to confront the Iranian occupation." Meanwhile, White House Special Envoy Steve Witkoff, speaking at the FII Priority summit in Miami, equated the

release of Israeli hostages kidnapped by Hamas with the release of Palestinian prisoners — including at least 250 serving life sentences for deadly terror attacks — stating both experiences “feels like we’re changing lives.” Witkoff said a 15-point deal remains on the table addressing enrichment, stockpiles, and destabilizing forces, and that “meetings this week” would continue. He described potential “collateral benefits” including Saudi-Israeli normalization. Iran’s foreign ministry spokesman denied any direct negotiations, saying messages had been received only through intermediaries.

ASSESSMENT

Spain’s airspace closure is the first concrete operational obstruction by a European NATO member — not a statement, not a vote, a material constraint on coalition logistics. Saar’s statement on Lebanon’s ambassador situation is the sharpest official framing yet of what we predicted last week: Hezbollah vetoed the expulsion because Hezbollah runs Lebanon’s sovereignty decisions, and the ambassador’s continued presence is the proof. Witkoff’s equivalence between kidnapped Israeli civilians and convicted terrorists released under duress reveals analytical confusion at the negotiating table. The families of hostages taken at gunpoint from their homes on October 7 are not in the same moral universe as the families of prisoners convicted of orchestrating bus bombings and restaurant massacres. That Witkoff does not appear to grasp this distinction — or does not care — tells you something about the quality of strategic empathy driving the American mediation effort.

UN Appoints Pro-Hamas Academic as Rapporteur; UK Greens Fail to Pass “Zionism Is Racism”

The UN Human Rights Council is set to appoint Zeina Jallad — a Palestinian academic at the American University of Beirut who defended Hamas, justified violence against civilians as “resistance,” and blamed the West for October 7 — to the post of special rapporteur on unilateral coercive measures. The five-nation vetting committee had ranked Clara Portela, a sanctions scholar, as the top candidate. The Indonesian council president bypassed her in favor of Jallad — who heads the Palestine Land Studies Center and serves as a legal adviser to another special rapporteur. UN Watch identified two drivers: Jallad is Palestinian [a “gesture to the Palestinian Lobby at the UN”], and she is a system insider loyal to the apparatus. The outgoing mandate-holder, Alena Douhan, received more than \$1 million in earmarked funding exclusively from China, Russia, and Qatar, and issued reports siding with those regimes after official visits. Separately, the UK’s Green Party failed to pass a motion equating Zionism with racism at its spring conference after internal disputes and no-confidence votes against the party chair prevented the vote from reaching the floor. The motion — which called for abolishing Israel and establishing a Palestinian state in “all of historic Palestine” — will be voted on at a later date. Party leader Zack Polanski, who is Jewish and non-Zionist, had indicated he would vote for it if the definition of Zionism was tied to “what is happening right now by the Israeli government.” British Jew-hate incidents rose from 1,662 in 2022 to 3,700 in 2025. Two Iranian nationals appeared in London court last week accused of spying on Jewish sites including an elementary school.

ASSESSMENT

The Jallad appointment is the UN's institutional antibody response working in reverse — the system identified the more qualified candidate, ranked her first, and then overrode the process to install someone whose primary qualification is ideological alignment with the body's existing bias. The rapporteur post itself — born from a 2014 Iran-sponsored resolution, funded by China, Russia, and Qatar — exists to launder authoritarian grievances as human rights discourse. Jallad's appointment does not change the post's function. The UK Greens' failed vote is a reprieve, not a resolution. The motion will return, the membership that supports it hasn't gone anywhere, and the party leader's framing — Zionism equals whatever Israel's current government does — lets you smear it by tying it to any policy you dislike.

BRIEFLY NOTED

Frontline & Security

- **JNS:** IDF troops killed several armed Hamas operatives in central Gaza overnight, including Ahmed Faiz Salem Abu Rida — a terrorist detained during the war, released in the February 2025 hostage deal, and subsequently caught crossing the Yellow Line multiple times and transferring funds for terror activity.
- **Israel National News:** The IRGC threatened to designate all Israeli and American universities in the region as “legitimate targets” after a reported strike on Tehran University of Science and Technology, issuing a Tuesday noon deadline for a U.S. condemnation.

Diplomacy & Geopolitics

- **The JC:** Press TV — Iran's state broadcaster, banned by Ofcom in 2012 but still operating across social media with more than a million followers — is accused of functioning as an IRGC spy recruitment hub in London, with journalists allegedly used to identify and cultivate intelligence targets. Separately, Canada identified 32 senior Iranian officials living in the country flagged for deportation, and U.S. intelligence intercepted an encrypted message suggesting an IRGC “operational trigger” to activate sleeper cells worldwide.
- **JTA:** More than 130 North Americans made aliyah since this war with Iran began, with 830 new applications opened and a group flight of 25 olim landing at Ben Gurion on March 25 — the youngest 21, the oldest 96. More than half of this year's North American olim are under 35, and the pipeline hasn't slowed — because for the people in it, war is a reason to go, not a reason to wait.

Domestic & Law

- **Times of Israel:** Saturday's missile impact in Arad — 115 wounded — reignited a fight over public shelters converted into Haredi synagogues, with blast doors blocked by bookshelves, wiring run through windows meant to be sealed, and at least one shelter inaccessible to non-congregants.

Culture, Religion & Society

- **5TJT:** Touro University launched the first dedicated antisemitism institute in American higher education, consolidating its Holocaust institute, anti-semitism law clinic, and Jewish law center under a single umbrella with a professor training fellowship and an upcoming national conference. Some 70% of Jewish college students have experienced Jew-hate at their universities — the institute is a response to what individual condemnations failed to change.
- **Israel National News:** In a crime turned into a viral meme, three burglars broke into a Jerusalem office Saturday night, triggered the alarm, and fled — but not before one sprinted to the refrigerator and grabbed a bottle of milk. If milk drives people to break into buildings for a bottle, maybe the dairy reform ought be attempted again.

DEVELOPMENTS TO WATCH

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

- **Kharg Island ground option accelerating** — Trump is considering seizing Kharg Island and said Iran “has no defense.” Pentagon planning envisions weeks of ground operations, with sufficient forces in place by early next week. Iran’s Tasnim and IRGC aerospace commander have both threatened retaliation against U.S. targets if the island is approached. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Pezeshkian’s three-week economic clock** — Iran’s president warned the IRGC commander that without a ceasefire the economy collapses within three to four weeks. If the timeline is accurate, the regime faces a fiscal wall around late April — the question is whether the IRGC treats economic collapse as a reason to negotiate or a reason to escalate.
- **Iraqi militia escalation declared** — Iran-aligned Hezbollah brigades in Iraq announced increased ballistic missile and drone launches toward Israel. Combined with the Houthi front and sustained Hezbollah fire from Lebanon, this extends the multi-front operational tempo with no indication of plateau.

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

- **Iranian ambassador still in Beirut** — The Sunday expulsion deadline passed and Ambassador Sheibani remains. Saar’s response — “Lebanon is a virtual country occupied by Iran” — frames the failure as confirmation of Hezbollah’s sovereignty veto. The next marker is whether Lebanon’s government attempts a second enforcement action or quietly drops the matter. We saw this outcome coming; the thread is now closed as a test case and open as a precedent.

Diplomatic & Legal

- **Spain airspace closure — NATO fracture watch** — Spain's decision to close airspace to aircraft involved in the Iran campaign is the first material operational obstruction by a NATO member. Monitor for similar moves from Belgium, Ireland, or Norway — the political incentive structure in European coalition governments rewards visible distance from Washington. If a second NATO state follows, the logistical impact compounds.
- **Passover global threat window active** — NSC assessment of Iranian-directed targeting at unprecedented levels remains in effect. Specific guidance for UAE, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, India, and Thailand. Ben Gurion Airport still closed; land crossings operating under Level 4 warnings. Pesach begins Wednesday night. The operational window runs through at least the end of the holiday. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

Home Front & Politics

- **Hiddush petition — April 15 court deadline** — The Finance Committee must report to the High Court by April 15 on the NIS 98 million frozen Haredi education allocation. Hiddush's letter argues even the NIS 800 million already disbursed may exceed lawful entitlements. If the court orders a broader review, the coalition's midnight budget maneuver becomes a judicial confrontation during wartime.
- **Bismuth vs. Chief of Staff — command authority test** — The Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee chairman publicly demanded Zamir reverse the Netzach Yisrael suspension, accusing him of undermining morale and arming enemy narratives. If additional coalition figures pile on, this becomes a political challenge to IDF command independence at a moment when it can least afford it.

Closing Statement

TWO days before the seder, Israel is doing exactly what the Haggadah says the Jewish people have always done. Sitting between threat and deliverance, and betting that speed, precision, and sheer national stubbornness will outrun the forces aligned against it. I'm told — by my rabbi, among others — that the Israel Brief runs pessimistic. Maybe. I'd call it exasperated realism born of a compulsive relationship with history books I'd rather not have read. But here's the thing about Israel. The Tel Aviv Stock Exchange closed at an all-time high the week Iran fired cluster munitions at Haifa. Olim are landing at Ben Gurion while the airport is technically closed. A 96-year-old woman made aliyah last Tuesday. Israelis are extraordinary people — capable of sitting across from someone they disagree with politically and still passing the hummus — and the state they built absorbs existential threats the way other countries absorb traffic. I am relentlessly, stubbornly bullish on Israel. Not out of some religious fever. Out of evidence. The politicians come and go — some stay longer than they should, some shorter — but Israel endures, and

she has a habit of surprising you just when the odds look worst. *Am Yisrael*, in *Eretz HaKodesh* and across the diaspora, still has something to teach the rest of the world about what it means to hold together under pressure. That said — make aliyah or learn self-defense. History says the rough patch has a few more chapters. But I suspect HaShem has a surprise or two left. Now if you'll excuse me, I have chametz to find.

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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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