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READER EDITION

May 6, 2026

ISRAEL BRIEF

Wednesday, May 6

The IRGC reaches for the soft Gulf target as Trump freezes the strait around it. Inside Israel, the coalition's brakes file their Thursday deadlines while the field sorts itself for the vote.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE The Forest Hills overnight, the Park East picket, the NYPD 60% figure, and Mamdani's lackluster statement (and lack of action) all on the same calendar day are not a coincidence — they are a regime. The mayor learned the syntax: the words “antisemitic hatred” go in a press release while the operational decisions — the buffer-zone veto, the synagogues-as-international-law-violators line, the executive orders on Israel — go in the file the cameras don't reach. This at a time when a Boulder plea deal closes a federal-charge-pending loop on a man who told arresting officers his target set was “all Zionist people.” From Boulder to Bondi to New York, it's long past time to demand real political accountability for lack of action on the targeting of Jews.

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Israel Brief: Wednesday, May 6

Shalom, friends.

THE Hormuz has stopped being about freedom of navigation. After Trump paused Project Freedom and declared Operation Epic Fury closed — keeping the blockade in place and the storage-capacity squeeze running — the IRGC answered by attacking the Emirati skyline that does not shoot back. Which did two things simultaneously. It cracked Tehran's own cabinet open along the civilian-Pasdaran seam. And it locked Abu Dhabi into the operational architecture the Abraham Accords sketched on paper. Underneath, Israel's home front holds steady, the IDF crosses the Litani at Zotar al-Sharqiya, and the coalition's brakes — Bagatz, the AG, the Comptroller — file their Thursday deadlines while the political field sorts itself for an October that may move to September.

Flash Brief

- **Iran-on-UAE escalation:** IRGC missiles, drones, and cruise missiles hit Fujairah and Hormuz tankers; Israel's Iron Dome battery in the UAE assists intercept. *See The War Today.*
- **Project Freedom paused, blockade stays:** Trump suspends convoys on Pakistani mediation; Rubio declares Epic Fury over; Iranian shut-in still due in the next weeks. *See The War Today.*
- **Pezeshkian breaks with the IRGC:** Iran's president calls the UAE strike "complete madness," and IRGC commander Vahidi forms a "military council" that monopolizes contact with Mojtaba Khamenei — Pezeshkian is no longer in the room. *See The War Today.*
- **IDF crosses the Litani:** 226th Brigade engages Hezbollah at Zotar al-Sharqiya; Hezbollah hits a school-bus route at Avivim and a soldier with an FPV drone. *See The War Today.*
- **Syria intercepts Hezbollah cell:** Damascus announces capture of a "symbols of government" assassination team that crossed from Lebanon into five Syrian cities. *See Developments to Watch.*
- **Cabinet defers Gaza again:** Cairo disarmament talks deadlocked; Anas Hamed and Mohammad al-Ghandour eliminated; Sahm Unit walks its own targeting solution into a strike. *See The War Today.*
- **Levin's Thursday deadline:** Bagatz orders Levin to state when he will convene the Judicial Selection Committee; Knesset dissolves July 27, leaving sixty-seven vacancies. *See Inside Israel.*
- **AG stacks against the coalition:** Baharav-Miara moves on Second Authority appointments and Yaakobi indictment; Comptroller names ministry waste; Netanyahu's Case 4000 cross-examination breaks twice. *See Inside Israel.*
- **Pre-election sort opens:** Smotrich names Ra'am a disqualifier; Eisenkot launches Yashar! with Yoram Cohen; Likud may move the vote to September 1. *See Inside Israel.*
- **Haredi flank arms against the police:** Meron breach overrides Home Front Command order; groups post leaflets and distribute pepper spray and electric shockers ahead of Sohlberg's June 1 deadline. *See Inside Israel.*
- **Diaspora-security tempo:** Met stands up 100-officer Jewish

protection team; Forest Hills swastika spree; Park East picket tests NYC's new buffer-zone law. *See Israel and the World.*

- **Pulitzer awards the Gaza famine series:** NYT's Mohammed al-Mutawaq photo wins after the paper itself caveated the central image. *See Israel and the World.*

Today's brief runs on the same engine in two theaters. The kinetic side... Namely, Iran's regime externalizing a pressure it cannot absorb — soft Gulf targets because the U.S. convoy proved too hard, with Tehran's own president telling the Pasdaran's senior echelon they have lost their minds. The institutional side: Bagatz, the AG, the Comptroller, the outgoing Air Force chief — filing deadlines and audits.

The War Today

Iran Pivots from the U.S. Convoy to the Soft Targets It Can Still Hit

After CENTCOM sank six IRGC fast-attack craft, U.S.-flagged merchantmen broke Iran's blockade. Tehran shifted its kinetic answer from American hulls to Emirati cities. The UAE Defense Ministry confirmed twelve Iranian ballistic missiles, three cruise missiles, and four drones launched on Monday, with three Iranian cruise missiles intercepted and a fourth dropped into the sea on the second wave. Iranian drones hit a residential building, struck an ADNOC-owned tanker in Hormuz, and ignited a major fire at the Fujairah oil terminal that wounded three Indian nationals. The Israeli Iron Dome battery operating in the UAE assisted the intercept. Bahrain went to state alert. Oman recorded a residential building hit at Bukha Tabat. UAE schools moved to remote learning, sirens recurred for a sixth alert, and Brent crude crossed \$115. Again. Trump said he would blow Iran "off the face of the Earth" if a U.S. ship was hit, said Tehran "should wave the white flag of surrender," and confirmed seven Iranian boats sunk and a South Korean cargo ship struck. An Israeli official told CNN that U.S. and Israeli planners are coordinating a short, pressure-aimed round of strikes on Iranian energy infrastructure and senior officials. An Emirati official said Abu Dhabi expects an American or Israeli strike on Iran within twenty-four hours. Polymarket repriced Iranian airspace closure from 10 percent to 38 percent overnight. The civilian-Pasdaran fracture surfaced in operational form. IRGC commander Ahmad Vahidi has formed a "military council" that now monopolizes contact with Mojtaba Khamenei, blocking President Pezeshkian's attempts to call an emergency meeting to halt further strikes. Pezeshkian's "complete madness" line about a force "out of its mind" is what the last civilian in the cabinet sounds like once the cabinet is no longer where decisions are made.

ASSESSMENT

The regime externalized the pressure it could not absorb. The U.S. convoy proved hard to hit, so the IRGC reached for convoyless tankers and the Emirati skyline. The Iranian “maritime threat” was hollow. The Hormuz confrontation we’ve been publicly tracking since March now sits closer to the kinetic edge than at any point in this cycle. Trump’s “wave the white flag” line was not deterrence framing in the diplomatic-track sense — it was the hostage-of-his-own-success register of a president who has already destroyed roughly 85 percent of Iran’s missile production and is being asked, by his own sober Pentagon [well, mostly sober, depending on what news media you trust], what the rest looks like. The Vahidi council is the structural fact behind the public outburst — the cabinet is not split, the cabinet is bypassed. The men willing to trigger a regional war to hold a bargaining chip are not the men who carry a diplomatic settlement to its end.

Trump Pauses Project Freedom, Declares Epic Fury Over — and Keeps the Blockade In

Late Tuesday, Trump announced that Project Freedom — the U.S. naval escort regime through Hormuz — would pause for “a short period of time” at the request of Pakistan and “other Countries,” to give the U.S.–Iran agreement track room to finalize. Channel 12’s Barak Ravid reports that Washington expects Tehran’s response to a framework agreement within 48 hours: an Iranian uranium-enrichment freeze in exchange for U.S. sanctions relief, unfrozen assets, and a mutually reopened Hormuz. Interim only — collapse means a return to all-out war. The blockade itself, Trump said, “will remain in full force and effect.” Hours earlier, Secretary of State Rubio told reporters that Operation Epic Fury — the kinetic campaign that destroyed roughly 85 percent of Iran’s missile production capacity — “is over; we are done with that stage of it.” Hegseth, before the pause, called the convoys a demonstration that “they don’t control the strait.” The pause comes after USS Truxtun and USS Mason transited Hormuz under live Iranian fire, after CENTCOM destroyed six IRGC small craft, and after the IRGC Navy’s renewed vessel-warning ultimatum. UKMTO continued to log shipping incidents — including a French container ship, the San Antonio, hit on Tuesday with crew injured.

ASSESSMENT

The construction is precise: pause the escort, keep the blockade, end the named operation — and freeze the picture exactly where Tehran runs out of time. Trump is freezing Tehran inside the storage-capacity squeeze, with Iranian oil heading for forced shut-in during the next few weeks regardless of whether a single American hull is in the strait. The IRGC’s “we will fire on U.S. vessels” ultimatum becomes — temporarily — an ultimatum without a target. Tehran might own the press release, but at the moment Washington owns the strait. Pausing the escort while keeping the blockade means the regime’s only remaining lever is to attack the same targets again — which the Vahidi council just did, on the eve of the 48-hour window Ravid reports Washington is waiting on. The military council is answering Ravid’s framework before Pezeshkian gets a chance to.

IDF Crosses the Litani at Zotar al-Sharqiya as Hezbollah Hits a School-Bus Route

Israeli forces from the 226th Brigade engaged Hezbollah operatives north of the Litani at Zotar al-Sharqiya. The IDF struck approximately twenty-five Hezbollah targets across southern Lebanon over the past day, dismantled a thirty-meter Hezbollah tunnel together with three tons of explosive material, forty-three Claymore devices, anti-tank systems, mines, and Kornet missiles, and over the broader operation has eliminated more than 250 Hezbollah terrorists, dismantled five underground tunnel routes, and located thousands of weapons. A drone strike in southern Lebanon killed two armed Hezbollah operatives fleeing on a motorcycle. Hezbollah fired rockets toward IDF forces (one intercepted near Avivim), launched explosive drones (one wounded a soldier), attempted a SAM strike on an IAF helicopter (failed), and continued FPV-drone harassment of journalist visits. A UAV strike in Mifadoun killed two; five Hezbollah operatives died across two hours. The IDF issued evacuation notices for twelve southern Lebanese villages. Two IDF soldiers were moderately wounded in a clash. Hezbollah's Mahmoud Qamati asserted resistance continues until "the last Zionist soldier" leaves Lebanon. The Syrian regime announced the capture of a Hezbollah assassination cell that infiltrated from Lebanon into Damascus, Homs, Latakia, Aleppo, and Tartus — the cell was tasked with targeting "symbols of government." On the western border, IDF surveillance intercepted a drone smuggling four M-16 rifles into Israel.

ASSESSMENT

Two-week negotiation window, foreclosed. Aoun was supposed to walk a path that Fadlallah's "thwart" pledge, Berri's parliamentary blocking, and Qamati's "until the last soldier" line have already paved over, and the Yellow-Line creep across the past 72 hours says the Israeli political leadership has read it the same way. The crossing at Zotar al-Sharqiya is what the perishability doctrine looks like in action — Hezbollah's tunnel and munitions stockpile north of the Litani is a time-degradable asset that needs enforcement before it becomes irretrievable, and the IDF rightly chose enforcement [the alternative being a memorial in 2027]. Syria's capture of a Hezbollah assassination cell crossed from Lebanon adds to the regional dimension.

Israel Holds the Home Front Steady; Cabinet Defers Gaza Again as Sahm Police Self-Expose

No change to Home Front Command instructions despite the Iran-on-UAE escalation, with air defense and offensive systems "at a high state of readiness that has not changed since the ceasefire." Chief of Staff Zamir, at the IAF change-of-command ceremony, said the IDF maintains high readiness and is "prepared to respond forcefully to any attempt to harm" Israel. Cities — Haifa, Rishon Lezion, Ashdod — opened shelters and prepared for ceasefire collapse. Boeing's first KC-46 refueling tanker for the IAF completed its first flight test in the United States. The Defense Ministry has approved a fourth F-35I squadron and a second F-15IA squadron, putting the IAF on a path to roughly 100 F-35Is and 50 F-15IAs. Netanyahu held security consultations through the day. The cabinet deferred the Gaza renewal vote again,

awaiting Washington. In Gaza, the IDF eliminated Anas Hamed — a Nukhba commander who infiltrated Israeli territory and the Nova festival on October 7 — in a UAV strike on Bureij. A vehicle strike in Gaza City eliminated Mohammad Jamal al-Ghandour, a senior Hamas-security operative (at lieutenant-colonel rank). Two IDF strikes near the Yellow Line eliminated armed Hamas cells in northern Gaza. A clan firefight between Hamas's Sahm Unit and the al-Kafarna clan in Gaza City ended with Hamas police imposing a curfew — and an IDF strike on the Sahm caravan at Bahlul Junction shortly after, killing two and wounding several, after the “policemen's” deployment exposed their command center. Cairo disarmament talks are apparently deadlocked. Arab mediators told *Al-Sharq* that absent U.S. pressure on Israel to implement Phase One, the talks go nowhere. In Judea and Samaria, terrorists from al-Mughayyir poisoned ten water cisterns at a Binyamin sheep farm overnight and a Bethlehem firebomb attack ended with the assailants fleeing into a church compound.

ASSESSMENT

Israel is operating as a systems-nation in the strict sense — Iron Dome batteries simultaneously defending Tel Aviv and Abu Dhabi, the IAF approving its fourth F-35I squadron during a Gulf escalation, holding the home-front line steady while Sahm Unit officers in Gaza City literally walk their own targeting solution to a strike. The Anas Hamed elimination is the moral arithmetic this section keeps reaching for: a Nukhba commander who walked Israeli soil on October 7 and was named today as an “immediate threat” — not “memorial closure” or “long-overdue justice,” which is the correct register because the loss on October 7 belonged to the murdered, not to the murderer. Cabinet deferral on Gaza meanwhile holds at the position we’ve tracked: senior IDF officers want resumption, the operational plans are approved, the Yellow Line keeps creeping westward (six points since October), and Washington’s green light is what everyone is actually waiting on — not consensus, not coalition arithmetic. Hamas demands U.S. pressure on Israel to abandon Phase Two, which is the disarmament Hamas will not perform regardless. The al-Mughayyir poisoning attack and the Bethlehem church-compound retreat are the ongoing elements from the terror infrastructure that we have been talking about — though most people will hear about it from the foreign press only when Israelis feel compelled to respond.

Inside Israel

Smotrich Names Ra’am a Disqualifier as the Pre-Election Field Sorts Itself

Bezalel Smotrich told 103FM that forming a government with Ra’am’s Mansour Abbas would “obviously” be worse than the October 7 massacre. He later walked the comparison back to one between Bennett knowingly building a coalition with terror-supporters and Netanyahu’s failure of supervision. Yair Golan demanded Bennett, Lapid, and Eisenkot publicly declare Abbas a legitimate partner. Bennett used the opening to attack Itamar Ben-Gvir as “a clown running internal security” who has let Negev sovereignty collapse. “We’ll wake up to October 7 in the Negev,” Bennett said. A Maariv readers’ poll put Likud below 20 seats without Netanyahu — 70% of respondents agreed. Netanyahu rejected any compromise on his demand for ten reserved slots on the Likud list. One senior Likudnik called it “a political massacre on the list like never before.” Eitan Ginzburg quit Blue and White. Liberman’s office

stated flatly that Netanyahu has no place in the next government. Liberman's preconditions are universal conscription and a state commission on October 7. The first independent Druze party in three decades, Brit Achim, declared candidacy in Majdal Shams under Col. (res.) Wajdi Sarhan. Political sources say Netanyahu is leaning toward moving the vote from October 27 to September 1. Likud primaries would proceed in early July. Channel 12's Question of the Week put cost of living at 52 percent of voters' top-of-mind concerns, war management at 31, replacing Netanyahu at 19, judicial reform at 15, October 7 at 14, and a two-state solution at 5 — the last almost entirely from Arab voters.

ASSESSMENT

The coalition partners agree on their disqualifiers. The opposition cannot decide on its own. So the rest are sorting themselves loudly, badly, and in public. Smotrich's framing is not the misstep the foreign press is treating it as. It's the position the coalition's voters already hold, said in a way that gets them to the polls. Bennett's 28-seat ceiling collapses the moment he names Abbas a coalition partner — which is precisely why Golan keeps demanding it. Netanyahu's reserved-slots fight is the same instinct that has driven every Likud list since 2019. Lock the apparatus before the apparatus locks him. The September-versus-October timing question is genuinely contingent on Trump's Iran posture. If the constraints holding the IDF static in Gaza and Lebanon loosen, the security-ledger argument tilts back. If they don't, every additional week comes with an electoral cost. Liberman's preconditions and Eisenkot's Yashar! launch are the same opposition trying to brand itself as the security-credentialed alternative. The brand only works if the math doesn't require Ra'am. And the split math is something Netanyahu's camp is searching for a hook to break. In 1996 it was "who will divide Jerusalem." This time the road-test is "Bibi or Tibi" — which is exactly what Smotrich is rehearsing in public.

Levin Gets a Thursday Deadline as the AG Stacks the Court Against the Coalition

The High Court gave Yariv Levin until Thursday to state when he will convene the Judicial Selection Committee. Levin is trying to buy some time as the committee cannot legally seat appointees once the Knesset dissolves on July 27. Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara filed a position calling for cancellation of the government's March appointments to the Second Authority Council. The Council regulates Channels 12 and 13 and the regional radio stations. Baharav-Miara cited "serious legal flaws" in the process. Israel Prison Service commissioner Kobi Yaakobi's lawyers threatened a High Court petition if Baharav-Miara indicts him before reviewing their claims of investigative misconduct. The lawyers pointed to a recorded "no" shouted by an investigator during the hearing. State Comptroller Matanyahu Englman's report Tuesday pinned hundreds of millions of shekels in annual waste on the repeated splitting and reshuffling of ministries. Englman called the structure "bloated" and "unstable." The High Court allowed the Bazan oil refinery in Haifa to build a new power facility without a building permit, after Iran damaged the old one. The Court reiterated that the refinery itself must close on schedule. The Shin Bet quietly reversed its ban on Yonatan Urich accessing the Prime Minister's Office despite the Qatargate file. Netanyahu's Case

4000 cross-examination broke twice this week. His attorney first cited “diplomatic and security meetings that cannot be postponed.” Tuesday evening Netanyahu opened his testimony complaining about “absurdity” and the “waste of the state’s time.” He cited four heads-of-state calls in 24 hours, including with Trump. The expanded cabinet meets this evening on Iran.

ASSESSMENT

This is the AG and the Court are both continuing to under the guise of justice using legal tools to further politicize beyond their scope. They keep filing, keep ruling, keep giving ultimatums. Baharav-Miara’s Second Authority filing and the Yaakobi indictment fight follow the same pattern. Which isn’t to say the legal guild doesn’t get some things right. They do. The Comptroller’s “bloated” and “unstable” finding is a wonderful piece of bureaucratic understatement. Netanyahu’s Case 4000 cancellations are doing the work the Knesset will not do for him. The trial moves at the speed the war and the diplomatic calendar permit, which is to say, slowly. Baharav-Miara is desperately trying to entrench some wins before with her last reliable instrument before the rebalanced selection committee takes effect after the October vote.

Haredim Break the Meron Blockade as Pepper Spray Distributed

Thousands of haredim broke through police barriers at Mount Meron Monday night to celebrate Lag B’Omer, in violation of the Home Front Command order banning the gathering due to risk from Hezbollah. Police dispersed hundreds attempting to light bonfires inside the perimeter. Buses and private vehicles were detained on the approach roads. Force was used to break up groups attempting fires elsewhere on the mountain. Leaflets were posted in haredi neighborhoods last week, headlined with the Talmudic phrase “*Ha’ba l’horgekha hashkem*” (he who comes to kill you, rise first). Groups also distributed helmets, pepper spray, and electric shockers to pilgrims expecting “police violence.” Sohlberg’s June 1 enforcement deadline on police arrests of haredi draft evaders is twenty-six days out.

ASSESSMENT

A community openly distributing “self-defense kits” for use against the police it expects to encounter is not a community at the edge of a discipline question. It is a community that has decided the state’s enforcement is the enemy, and is preparing accordingly. [Which, to be clear, is exactly the precondition Sohlberg’s June 1 deadline forces the question on.] The Meron breach is the same dynamic on a smaller scale. A Home Front Command order overridden by a community that priced the cost of enforcement and concluded the state would not pay it. Whether June 1 produces compliance (no) or a contempt sequel (yes), turns on whether the police execute the warrants the Court has already authorized (highly unlikely).

Tomer Bar Calls for an Independent Oct 7 Inquiry as the Accountability Map Widens

Tomer Bar used his outgoing-AF-chief ceremony to call for an independent commission of inquiry into the October 7 disaster. He invoked the IDF’s failure to defend southern Israel and named the Air Force’s own internal probes as the standard he wanted the political tier to match. Yoram Cohen was asked whether Shin Bet head David Zini should be dismissed. He refused to call

for it absent “clear indications of personal bias.” It was a careful sentence from a former Shin Bet chief. Eisenkot said that Gaza now has “the same number of gunmen as on the eve of the ground maneuver — 35,000.” He called the result “a grave failure” the current coalition cannot fix. The Military Advocate General filed three indictments against four IDF personnel for large-scale cigarette and goods smuggling into Gaza. The accused include a captain. Shin Bet, MPCID, and the Tax Authority ran the joint probe. The IDF’s “Red Teams” warned years before October 7 that Hezbollah-style FPV drones would saturate Israeli air defenses. The recommendations were ignored. Israel’s National Council for the Child reported a 53% jump in suicide attempts among children aged six to nine, alongside sharp increases in school dropouts and violence against minors. A Petah Tikva court extended by six days the remand of the 15-year-old suspect in the murder of Yamno Binyamin Zalka. Zalka was stabbed to death on Yom Ha’atzmaut eve outside a pizzeria in Petah Tikva. A car belonging to Yariv Ben Ami’s anti-protection-racket organization “Ad Kan” took 24 rounds in Tuba-Zangariya in the Galilee. A Ramat Gan café opened on Shabbat was firebombed overnight. The owner’s husband told reporters the arsonist arrived “in the middle of the night with combustion material.” Kibbutz Nir Oz, devastated on October 7, has begun training civilian standby squads.

ASSESSMENT

This is what the second-order accountability picture looks like when the first-order political tier refuses to accept accountability and refuses to sufficiently act. Outgoing commanders calling for a robust inquiry in retirement speeches. The State Comptroller naming the structural waste that funded the failure. The Military Advocate filing the smuggling indictments most would prefer remained quiet. A Shin Bet veteran joining a new party whose founding plank is precisely the inquiry the government will not authorize. [The Air Force probed itself. The political tier has not.] The 35,000 gunmen number Eisenkot named is an operational verdict on the deferral pattern — though it is, by itself, not a good metric for success. More than two years in, the manpower the maneuver was supposed to neutralize is back at its pre-maneuver level. Fortunately, the capabilities and armaments have been degraded. The Zalka murder, the Ramat Gan arson, the Galilee shooting, the suicide-attempts jump — these are the social-cohesion price the coalition has not been forced to itemize. The bill is being paid in the periphery while the cabinet meets on Iran. The standby squads at Nir Oz are the structural answer the residents built when no one else built it for them.

Israel and the World

Germany Names Israeli Security as Policy Core as Europe’s Smaller Tests Hold

Foreign Minister Sa’ar met Chancellor Merz and Foreign Minister Wadephul in Berlin Tuesday. Wadephul told the joint press conference that Germany’s purchase of Arrow 3 makes Israeli technology a contributor to German air defense and pledged that “the moment the war ends,” Berlin will join the protection of Hormuz. He condemned the UAE strike as proof of Iran’s character. Sa’ar named Iran’s regime “insane” and aligned with Merz on preventing Iranian nuclear acquisition and securing freedom of navigation. Israel will

transfer jet-fuel surpluses to Germany at Berlin's request, with natural-gas assistance under consideration. Finland's parliament rejected by large margin a citizens' initiative to restrict Israeli weapons purchases. A British court convicted four of six Palestine Action defendants for the August 2024 sledgehammer rampage at Elbit Systems UK near Bristol — €1 million in damage, two officers and a security guard wounded, one defendant guilty of inflicting grievous bodily harm on a sergeant whose back was fractured. Ukraine's ambassador to Israel filed a criminal complaint with Israeli police over alleged Russian-occupied-territory grain shipments and warned in JPost of Kyiv's "growing frustration."

ASSESSMENT

Wadephul's Hormuz pledge — after the war ends — is the European order doing what it does, which is committing to the contribution but only when that contribution no longer matters. The substance Berlin actually delivered was bilateral and operational. Germany is buying defense capacity from the country it claims to be defending, and the Staatsräson line lands harder when the technology flows the other direction.

US-Gulf UNSC Draft on Hormuz Mines as Spain Shields the ICC

Waltz announced a US-Bahrain co-drafted UNSC resolution requiring Iran to cease laying mines in the Strait, disclose existing mine locations, cooperate on removal, and stop tolling commercial vessels — co-developed with Kuwait, Qatar, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia, framed as the precedent any mining of any international strait would face. The Board of Peace's letter to the Palestinian technocratic government conditioned every Israeli ceasefire commitment on Hamas accepting the disarmament framework — Mladenov writing that Hamas refusal renders the obligations "null and void," with Waltz saying that Hamas "will never again rule Gaza" "diplomatically or militarily." Spain's Sanchez asked the EU Council to block the United States' ICC sanctions package. South African President Ramaphosa became the first sitting head of state to sign the "Free Barghouti" pledge — the campaign that branded Marwan Barghouti, convicted of five counts of murder for the Second Intifada, "Palestine's Mandela." China's Wang Yi told Iranian FM Araghchi in Beijing that the US-Israel war on Iran was "illegitimate" and called for "a complete ceasefire."

ASSESSMENT

Two architectures sit next to each other, doing opposite work. The US-GCC Hormuz draft is multilateral law deployed against the actor actually breaking it — exactly the use-case the Security Council was built for and almost never uses, because Council majorities prefer theatre. The Spain-ICC move is the inverse: Sanchez asking Brussels to shield the prosecutor whose office was paid by Qatar weeks before the \$4.01 billion Patriot replenishment cleared. That is legitimacy laundering. Ramaphosa signing Barghouti's release pledge as a sitting head of state — not an activist, not a parliamentarian, the President of South Africa, on Freedom Day — absurd, but if we're honest, not surprising from the likes of him. Wang Yi calling the war "illegitimate" a week before Trump's Beijing visit is China pricing the diplomatic line it intends to carry into that room. None of which changes the kinetic facts. But all of it changes the room those kinetic facts get adjudicated in.

Pulitzer Awards the NYT's Gaza Famine Series After the Front-Page Photo Collapsed

The 2025 Pulitzer for photography went to Saher Alghorra for a New York Times series titled “the devastation and starvation in Gaza resulting from the war with Israel” — anchored by the July 2025 front-page image of an emaciated boy, Mohammed al-Mutawaq, whom the paper later quietly conceded had cerebral palsy and a genetic disorder linked to hypoxemia. After investigative journalist David Collier surfaced the May 2025 Gaza medical report, the Times altered the story to acknowledge the muscle-development condition and removed the mother’s quote that the boy had been healthy before October 7, 2023 — but stood by the broader famine framing. The image ran in Sky News, the Guardian, the Daily Mail, the Times of London, and other outlets — to say nothing of saturating social media. Other photos in the awarded set show Gazans queuing for food, wounded children, Ramadan in bombed buildings, and a different emaciated child who escaped the same scrutiny.

ASSESSMENT

The prize is the laundering pipeline finishing its cycle — a frame the NYT itself had to caveat at the level of the central image gets re-elevated by the institution that confers prestige on what counts as the historical record. The correction stayed inside the article while the Pulitzer goes on the bio. The prize committee’s wording is essentially Hamas messaging becoming institutional doctrine, with one flawed image plus remaining photos carrying the narrative. That the Times preserved broader famine claims after retreating on the anchoring image is its own admission. As we’ve tracked, this is how western institutional euphemism processes its own corrections: down the page, never on the prize.

Cruz Names the Vance Problem Without Naming Vance

Senator Ted Cruz used the Milken Institute Global Conference in Los Angeles to put on the record that he sees a five-year horizon in which both major US parties are “unequivocally anti-Israel and unapologetically antisemitic,” called the threat from his own party’s populist young flank real, and — when pressed by Jewish Insider on Vice President JD Vance’s staff selections and isolationist signaling — declined to defend him. Cruz framed it as a Reaganite “time for choosing:” every elected official picks where they stand. The intra-Republican line, drawn at a podium where the donors were in the room.

ASSESSMENT

Cruz is naming the partisan-sort thesis from inside the party that claims to be the firewall — and the Vance non-defense is the news, not the Reagan quote [you do not “decline to defend” the sitting VP at Milken without intending the headline]. The MAGA-isolationist drift on Israel has been ambient for at least two years. Cruz putting it on the record at a donor venue moves it squarely into the elite-Republican fundraising circuit, where it has consequences. The diaspora’s institutional protection question gets harder when the right’s own senior senators are publicly drawing the line their colleagues are crossing.

Obama Tells The New Yorker Netanyahu Pushed Him to Iran War — Mid-War

Former President Barack Obama told The New Yorker that Netanyahu used the same arguments to push him toward war with Iran that Netanyahu later used on Trump, that he doubts the war “is what’s good for the citizens of Israel or the United States,” and that “extensive documentation” exists of his disagreements with Netanyahu — placed into print while the Iran war is still kinetic and Project Freedom’s pause is the live diplomatic question. IRGC-aligned channels amplified the remarks in Persian within hours. Iranian officials separately claimed the “paper tiger” framing was wrong (Araghchi), insisted Hormuz “management” was Iran’s “legitimate right” (Vice President Aref), denied targeting UAE in operational planning [which must come as a surprise to those on the pointy end of Iranian missiles], and rejected the US claim of sinking IRGC boats.

ASSESSMENT

Obama’s timing is the news — a former president seeding the it-was-Bibi’s-war narrative is a Democratic-establishment positioning move dressed as historical clarification, and the IRGC translation desk knew exactly what it had within the hour. The Democratic ex-president and the IRGC cyber unit converging on the same sentence about the same prime minister, processed through different moral vocabularies but arriving at the same line. I’m sure that’s good for everyone. The Iranian counter-claims are noise. The New Yorker placement is signal — the case for blaming the war on Netanyahu is being positioned for whichever way the Iran outcome resolves.

NYC: Swastikas in Forest Hills, a Synagogue Picketed, a Mayor Who Won’t Recognize Israel

Vandals struck four Jewish properties across Forest Hills and Rego Park overnight Monday — Rego Park Jewish Center, Congregation Machane Chodosh, two private homes, a Jewish center housing a preschool, a school — with swastikas, “Hitler,” and the swastika defacement of a plaque dedicated to victims of Kristallnacht. NYPD released its monthly hate-crime data the same day: Jews were targeted in 60% of all confirmed hate crimes across the five boroughs last month, against a Jewish population that is a small fraction of the city. Mayor Zohran Mamdani called the attacks “antisemitic hatred” in a written statement and continued acting as he does. Tuesday evening, Pal-Awda assembled outside Park East Synagogue on the Upper East Side to picket a Nefesh B’Nefesh aliyah event — the same congregation an anti-Israel mob blocked in November. The protest is the first to test the new “buffer zone” law that became active April 25 with a veto-proof Council majority, after Mamdani vetoed the school version of the bill and his spokeswoman declared in November that synagogues hosting pro-Israel events “violate international law.”

ASSESSMENT

The Forest Hills overnight, the Park East picket, the NYPD 60% figure, and Mamdani's lackluster statement (and lack of action) all on the same calendar day are not a coincidence — they are a regime. The mayor learned the syntax: the words "antisemitic hatred" go in a press release while the operational decisions — the buffer-zone veto, the synagogues-as-international-law-violators line, the executive orders on Israel — go in the file the cameras don't reach. This at a time when a Boulder plea deal closes a federal-charge-pending loop on a man who told arresting officers his target set was "all Zionist people." From Boulder to Bondi to New York, it's long past time to demand real political accountability for lack of action on the targeting of Jews.

Briefly Noted**Frontline & Security**

- *Walla*: An Israeli military court sentenced a Palestinian Authority security officer [at some point can we lose the polite fiction that the PA isn't a terror organization?] to six and a half years for running a 3D-printed weapons lab out of his home in Judea and Samaria, where soldiers recovered submachine-gun parts, ammunition, and explosive components after a 2023 raid. The conviction is of a piece with the PA's working architecture — the man on the salaried security payroll was, on the side, manufacturing the rifles meant to kill the soldiers conducting his arrest.
- *Jerusalem Post*: The Ashkelon Magistrate's Court extended the detention of Spanish national Saif Abu Keshek and Brazilian activist Thiago Avila — the two "dominant" figures pulled off the Global Sumud Flotilla — through Sunday, with police naming aiding-the-enemy and contact-with-a-foreign-agent suspicions and identifying the agent as Hamas via the U.S.-sanctioned PCPA front. The judge ruled the suspicions extend beyond the flotilla incident itself.

Diplomacy & Geopolitics

- *Ynet News*: Turkey unveiled the YILDIRIMHAN — its longest-range missile to date, liquid-fueled, billed as hypersonic — at the SAHA 2026 defense exhibition in Istanbul. Erdogan's Steel Dome line — "we will not look at them and say, 'why don't we have this?'" — gets a strike-side companion, and the Eurofighter deal Berlin spent two years resisting cleared the same month.
- *Israel Hayom*: The US Treasury posted a reward of up to \$10 million for al-Nujaba leader Akram Abbas al-Kabi — the fourth Iraqi pro-Iran militia head bountied in roughly a month, after al-Saedi, al-Sarji, and al-Hamidawi. The bounties run alongside the pressure on Baghdad to seat a government that moves against the militias — a job the inexperienced PM-designate al-Zaidi shows little appetite to take.

Economy, Tech & Infrastructure

- *Jerusalem Post*: Bank of Israel figures put the public's financial-asset portfolio at a record NIS 7.4 trillion — up NIS 1.1 trillion in a year and 80% over six. Two years of multi-front war and the household balance sheet has

compounded, not shrunk; the “Israel-as-economic-casualty” narrative the boycott circuit has been selling is a thesis without a chart.

- *Jerusalem Post*: Smart Shooter is fielding a soldier-mounted optic that turns infantry rifles into drone interceptors, aimed at the jam-proof fiber-optic UAVs Hezbollah has been pushing across the Litani. Industry adapts faster than the procurement cycle — the gap between the threat appearing and a counter shipping is now measured in months.
- *Times of Israel*: Israeli scientists published the first cell-by-cell digital atlas of the healthy human liver, baseline data for diagnosing disease against a normal organ rather than against averages. The Israeli life-sciences pipeline keeps producing world-firsts.

Culture, Religion & Society

- *Israel Hayom*: The cabinet will approve a Yoni Netanyahu heritage center in Jerusalem, codifying Entebbe in stone fifty years on.
- *Jerusalem Post*: Senior Haredi figures threatened a consumer boycott of Rami Levy’s Israil unless the carrier grounds its Shabbat flights, and summoned CEO Uri Sirkis to Jerusalem. The leverage runs through Levy’s supermarket chain, which means the Shabbat fight inside aviation is really a fight over which cash registers get to ring on Saturday.
- *Jerusalem Post*: Lt. Col. Uriel Dreyfus — a Judea and Samaria military court judge and descendant of Alfred Dreyfus — was promoted to the same rank his forefather held when France’s officer corps stripped it from him for being Jewish. A hundred and thirty-one years on, the rank goes back where it belongs, this time inside a Jewish army.
- *Jerusalem Post*: A new Tel Aviv mural pairs the twelve Druze children Hezbollah killed at Majdal Shams in July 2024 with Iranian children killed by their own regime’s repression.

Developments to Watch

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

- **Syria’s first Hezbollah-cell intercept post-Assad** — Damascus announced the capture of a Hezbollah assassination cell that crossed from Lebanon and was tasked with hitting “symbols of government” in Damascus, Homs, Latakia, Aleppo, and Tartus. If Sharaa publicizes the interrogation product before the weekend, Hezbollah’s Lebanese sanctuary becomes a regional liability faster than Beirut’s parliamentary blockers can neutralize Aoun, and the next IDF strike on a Bekaa logistics node lands inside a Levantine consensus rather than against one.
- **Syrian air-defense reconstitution threshold** — IAF officers continue to assess gradual radar and SAM rebuilds in Syrian airspace, and the next Iran round will require that airspace whether the Syrians have signed off or not. The threshold question is whether the IDF interdicts the next visible reconstitution site this week — every additional radar accepted now is a sortie penalty paid in the round after.

Gaza & Southern Theater

- **Cairo's collapse window** — Arab mediators told *Al-Sharq* that absent U.S. pressure on Israel to abandon Phase Two, the Cairo disarmament track ends this week. If the cabinet's deferred renewal vote and the Cairo deadline arrive on the same calendar day — which the current trajectory points toward — the operational decision moves from the cabinet table to the IDF's already-approved Southern Command plan with no diplomatic interlude in between.

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

- **Iran's storage-capacity shut-in** — Bessent's named ceiling — Iranian crude facilities forced to shut soon as onshore storage maxes out — runs underneath Trump's Project Freedom pause and is unaffected by it. The shut-in is the operational fact the SNSC's six-to-eight-week protest-trigger window was always pricing toward, and the trigger calendar now hits at the same moment the regime is publicly fissured between a cabinet president calling the IRGC "out of its mind" and a Pasdaran cadre that just hit the Emirates anyway.
- **Saudi response to the Iran-UAE strike** — Riyadh's signal on the IRGC's Fujairah operation lands inside days, with Araghchi calling bin Farhan from Beijing as Tehran tries to decouple Saudi from the GCC alignment Abu Dhabi just locked in. If Riyadh aligns publicly with the GCC SecGen's statement before week's end, the Saudi-Israeli operational architecture moves another step ahead of the formal-Accords paper; if it splits, Tehran buys exactly the wedge the SNSC needs.
- **Iraqi cabinet formation clock** — PM-designate al-Zaidi's four-week runway is now roughly half consumed, and the fourth Treasury bounty inside a month — al-Kabi at \$10 million — pre-positions the U.S. position against any cabinet that seats Coordination Framework figures. The arithmetic test inside the next two weeks is whether al-Zaidi forms a government Washington can transact with or one Tehran can still run from.

Diplomatic & Legal

- **Hesse "right to exist" vote May 8** — The Hesse legislature targets Friday for VE Day passage of legislation criminalizing denial of Israel's right to exist, with up to five years' imprisonment. First European jurisdictional precedent of its kind, dropping into the same week Spain asks the EU Council to shield the ICC from U.S. sanctions — two German *Länder* and one Iberian government writing the rules in opposite directions on the same calendar.
- **Sumud flotilla detention extension hearing Sunday** — Avila and Abu Keshek's detention runs through Sunday, with the Ashkelon court already accepting that the police suspicions extend beyond the flotilla incident itself and identifying the foreign-agent counterparty as Hamas via the U.S.-sanctioned PCPA front. Sunday's ruling either consolidates the foreign-agent framing into a charge sheet — first of its kind in the flotilla cycle — or hands Adalah's

network the procedural opening it has been working two weeks to manufacture.

Home Front & Politics

- **Levin's Thursday deadline** — The High Court's deadline for Levin to state when he will convene the Judicial Selection Committee falls Thursday, and Knesset dissolution by July 27 makes any post-Thursday refusal mathematically permanent for this government's purposes. The next government inherits sixty-seven vacancies whichever way Levin moves; the Thursday filing decides whether the inheritance comes pre-stocked with names or pre-stocked with paralysis.
- **Sohlberg June 1 enforcement deadline — twenty-six days out** — Justice Sohlberg's police-arrest deadline on haredi draft evaders sits twenty-six days from today, with leaflets in haredi neighborhoods now distributing pepper spray and electric shockers against the police the deadline activates. Compliance produces enlistment; non-compliance produces a contempt sequel against the police themselves, and the leafleting pre-prices a community that has decided which side of that sequel it intends to be on.

Diaspora-Security Calendar

- **UK May 13 Nakba Day & May 16 London demonstration** — Hall's moratorium call hangs over the May 13 "Nakba Day" rally and the May 16 Tommy Robinson-adjacent London march in the same nine-day window, with the Met's new 100-officer Jewish protection team standing up inside the same arc. Whether Starmer's government converts Hall's "national security emergency" framing into the actual moratorium decides whether the protection team is sized against the demand or chasing it — and the Greens' Thursday local-election results discipline or reward the political-clock side of the same equation.

Trump froze the picture exactly where Tehran loses out. The IRGC answered by reaching for targets that do not shoot back, and the Gulf closed around Israel rather than around the regime that fired the missiles. Inside Israel, the institutions are running out their last pre-election months.

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