



Forensic intelligence for those who act.

READER EDITION

May 20, 2026

ISRAEL BRIEF

Wednesday, May 20

Trump walks Iran to the weekend, the Knesset dissolves itself 110-0, the Hague climbs from the cabinet to the general staff.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVER

THE BOTTOM LINE The bill is the closest thing American Jewry has come to a structural answer for the surge of attacks. The test is whether the appropriations process delivers the billion the authorization names, because authorization is the easy half — the money still has to be appropriated. Pairing the grant to “all houses of worship” and letting the San Diego mosque dead carry the floor vote gets a Jewish-security bill past the lawmakers who would otherwise call it special pleading [the dead become bipartisan in a way the living rarely manage]. The management rewrite is the part that matters most and will get the least attention. A grant that arrives two appropriations cycles after the synagogue burns pays for the plaque on the wall while the guard who was needed at the door was never hired.

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Israel Brief: Wednesday, May 20

Shalom, friends.

THREE deadlines are running today, and the side that has to live with each one set none of them. Trump pushed the strike on Iran to “Friday, Saturday, Sunday, maybe early next week,” and Jerusalem read the slide for what it is — Tehran’s last billable hour, spent excavating the missile sites the earlier strikes collapsed. The same Knesset that produced a 12,000-soldier shortfall took the preliminary reading on its own dissolution today, unanimously, over the exemption bill that was supposed to close the gap and never will. And the ICC’s apartheid filing has moved onto the chief of staff.

Flash Brief

- **Trump pulls the strike to the weekend:** Halts yesterday’s strike an hour out at Gulf request, gives Tehran until “Friday, Saturday, Sunday.” *See The War Today.*
- **Israel readies to rejoin regardless:** Five-hour security meeting, jets over Jerusalem, the joint deck rebuilt, the Gerald Ford back in theater. *See The War Today.*
- **Odds put past 50-50:** Israeli officials price conventional escalation inside the regime’s own ceiling at “already more than 50-50.” *See The War Today.*
- **The second decapitation question is back on the desk:** Whether to take Mojtaba off the board the way the war’s first morning took his father. *See The War Today.*
- **Sapir falls to a gunman firing from a church the IDF fenced out:** Maj. (res.) Itamar Sapir ז”ל killed inside the Yellow Line three days into the forty-five-day extension. *See The War Today.*
- **Knesset clears preliminary dissolution 110-0:** Same morning the committee reopens the haredi exemption bill the parties priced higher than any government has been willing to pay. *See Inside Israel.*
- **The army reads the shortfall into the record:** 12,000 soldiers short now, widening to 17,000 in January 2027 as evaders pass 80,000. *See Inside Israel.*
- **Rothman’s AG-split bill clears committee 9-0:** Baharav-Miara answers by indicting a sitting Likud MK in the same news cycle. *See Inside Israel.*
- **Rabello advances for Comptroller as Elron loses signatures:** Coalition consolidates against the legal guild’s preferred candidate. *See Inside Israel.*
- **The Hague extends the apartheid count to the general staff:** Slate now reaches Zamir and Asor; Smotrich answers with a demolition order. *See Israel and the World.*
- **Somaliland sites its first embassy anywhere in Jerusalem:** Hargeisa pays for Israeli recognition in the one currency Jerusalem actually wants. *See Israel and the World.*
- **Rosen and Lankford put a billion-dollar floor under Jewish security:** Bill rewrites the grant program and pairs it to all houses of worship to clear the floor vote. *See Israel and the World.*

Underneath that, the day’s real contest is over who staffs the institutions when the slides run out. Netanyahu is backing Rabello for the Comptroller and holding the original panel on the Mossad chief, while the army reads the

shortfall into a Knesset record the haredi parties refused to let close it. The Hague wants the general staff that fought the war, the Comptroller fight runs to a secret ballot where the prime minister can lose a vote he stripped signatures from, and the Mossad handover sits on a deadline the Court handed back unresolved. The Iran weekend, the dissolution math, and the warrant slate share a thread — the actors who set the terms are everywhere except the field, where the work still has to be done by hand.

The War Today

Trump Pulls the Strike to the Weekend as Israel Readies to Rejoin the War

Trump halted yesterday's strike on Iran an hour before the order, after the emir of Qatar, Mohammed bin Salman, and Mohamed bin Zayed asked him to give negotiations two or three more days. He now gives Tehran until the weekend, "maybe Friday, Saturday, Sunday, maybe early next week." Tehran's proposal, routed through Pakistan, still declines on enrichment and the Strait while asking for full sanctions relief, and Vance called the two paths a deal "in good faith" or a return to Operation Epic Fury with Washington "locked and loaded." Israel is preparing to rejoin the strikes regardless. Netanyahu convened a five-hour security meeting Monday night with the chief of staff, the air force chief, and military intelligence, his trial hearing was cancelled, and fighter jets have been over Jerusalem for days. The joint target deck is rebuilt, the Gerald Ford is back in theater, and the US seized a sanctioned tanker carrying more than a million barrels of Iranian crude in the Indian Ocean. The Revolutionary Guards warned that if the attacks resume "the war will spread beyond the region," and explosions and drones were reported over Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz overnight. CENTCOM's Adm. Brad Cooper testified that the Minab girls' school struck on the war's first day sat on an active cruise-missile base, and put Iran's defense-industry setback at 90 percent.

ASSESSMENT

Trump keeps walking the strike to the next weekend because the delay costs him nothing he values and buys the Gulf the posture it wants — on the record as the brake, with their air defenses on the same desk. The probability of conventional escalation inside the regime's own ceiling, which Israeli officials now put at "already more than 50-50," sharpens upward with every day the calendar slides, because the slide is the regime's last billable hour and Tehran is spending it excavating the missile sites the earlier strikes collapsed. The kinetic deck CENTCOM is sitting on carries the second question of the week — whether to take the heir off the board the way the war's first morning took his father, against a successor every account describes as pale, corrupt, and either leading or being dragged. Remove him and there is no Sadat waiting backstage, only the chance the recalcitrant wing splinters before what would be left of the moderates can capitalize. Leave him and the facade of command holds long enough to run the clock to the next negotiated sunset [the same 15-year sunset Mossad warned Washington about when Washington said 2026 was a problem for someone else]. The five-hour cabinet and the cancelled trial say what the proposal does not.

A Hezbollah Gunman Fires From a Church and Kills Itamar Sapir in the Yellow Line

Maj. (res.) Itamar Sapir ז"ל, 27, of Eli and Ariel, was killed yesterday morning when a Hezbollah operative opened fire from inside a church on his force operating outside the building in Qouza, north of Ayta ash-Shab, inside the IDF-controlled Yellow Line in southern Lebanon — a church the chief of staff had personally visited and had fenced off during the ground operation to protect it from damage. A Maglan officer and deputy company commander in the 7008th Battalion, Sapir had spoken with his wife Roi before he fell, and leaves a son, Maayan Yiftach, eighteen months old and named for Capt. Iftah Yavetz ז"ל, the Maglan friend Sapir fought beside at Nahal Oz on October 7 and who was killed there. Additional soldiers were wounded. The IDF struck the area afterward to close on the gunman, deliberately avoiding the church itself. Across the same day Hezbollah ran an explosive drone into a parking lot at Rosh Hanikra with no siren, leaving a 25-year-old renovation worker, Rami, in critical condition and three of his co-workers hurt, while the IDF struck more than twenty-five Hezbollah sites across the south, intercepted UAVs over Ghajar and Dan, and cleared anti-tank stores and hideouts around al-Khiyam south of the Forward Defense Line. A Northern Command officer put the destruction of Hezbollah infrastructure in southern Lebanese villages at 60 percent. In Kiryat Shmona, children in white for a Shavuot ceremony were filmed under tables when sirens sounded over a suspected drone, with fifteen seconds of warning that even the Home Front Command concedes does not reach a shelter.

ASSESSMENT

Sapir fell to a gunman firing from a church the chief of staff had personally fenced to protect during the ground operation — three days into a forty-five-day extension working exactly as designed, fire control for the IDF and a reconstitution window for Hezbollah, the strikes the only ceasefire we have actually been running. Israel respects the altar. Hezbollah ranges from it. The drone at Rosh Hanikra with no siren and the drone over Kiryat Shmona are the same rung the SAM threshold marked earlier this month, now the standing budget every IAF cycle north of the Litani carries. The IDF is clearing the Litani-north stockpile by hand at the cost of officers like Sapir because the framework's text was supposed to compel it and Beirut cannot. Sixty percent destroyed is the cost of the talks "extending" while the arsenal does not.

Israel Works the Gaza Deck Inside the Ceasefire Text as Hamas Trains and Trawls for Captives

The IDF dismantled a Hamas weapons-storage site and a rocket-launch shaft in northern Gaza holding more than twenty mortar shells, launchers, explosives, and rifles staged for attacks across the Yellow Line, and eliminated a Hamas operative who crossed the line toward troops in the south — a man who had infiltrated Israeli territory during the October 7 massacre and was working new attacks. A captured Hamas military document, recovered earlier and published yesterday, lays out a compressed seven-day course that ran 121 recruits through M16 and Tavor training, anti-tank tactics, counter-drone instruction, and October 7 lessons, built deliberately to finish before

the ceasefire it assumed would collapse. An internal Hamas letter circulated after the Knesset passed the death-penalty law for convicted terrorists called the statute “fascist” and urged the military wing to escalate abductions of IDF soldiers as “the only path” to freeing Palestinian prisoners. COGAT data put to Israel’s leadership shows roughly 80 percent of surveyed Gazans asking about relocation to a third country through the Rafah and Kerem Shalom crossings.

ASSESSMENT

The captured training document and the kidnapping letter are the ceasefire stated plainly from the other side of the line — Hamas read the pause as the interval in which to rebuild the wing and stock the next abduction, and trained 121 fighters against the clock precisely because it expected the quiet to break. Israel is working the inherited target deck inside the framework’s own text, picking the hour, which is what made it possible to take an October 7 infiltrator off the board this week without leaving the agreement. The 80 percent emigration figure keeps cutting against the one premise the whole “day after” rests on, that the population will never leave [someone should tell the people drafting the reconstruction plans the people have been asking for the exits].

Inside Israel

The Knesset Dissolves Itself 110-0 Over the Manpower Bill the Haredi Parties Refuse to Pass

The Knesset passed the preliminary reading on its own dissolution 110-0 today, the same morning the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee reopened the haredi exemption bill Netanyahu spent the night trying to revive. Both happen on one Knesset day, with every other item pulled from the plenum agenda for the second day running and the floor handed to speeches while the dissolution machinery moves underneath. Brig.-Gen. Shai Tayeb, who runs the IDF’s manpower planning, told the committee the army is short 12,000 soldiers — 7,500 of them combat — and that the gap widens to roughly 17,000 in January 2027 when the first thirty-month conscripts discharge. He put the evader count at 32,000 confirmed plus more than 50,000 on track, headed for 80,000 to 90,000, and noted no updated bill text reached the lawmakers voting on it. The committee was weighing that exemption bill alongside a separate measure stretching mandatory service from thirty months to thirty-six. The Knesset’s own legal adviser to the committee, Miri Frankel-Shor, filed an opinion from inside the committee staff ruling against the coalition’s drafting: extending service does not cure the inequality of the burden, and compensating those who serve does not substitute for conscripting those who do not.

ASSESSMENT

Tayeab read the army's shortfall into the record on the morning a coalition pricing the political cost of fixing it began dissolving itself. The 12,000 missing soldiers are the inheritance generations of exemption produced, and the bill the coalition wrote to start closing it answers the gap with a few hundred a year because the haredi parties priced the rest higher than any government has been willing to pay. The 110-0 vote means every side preferred dissolution to the trade the bill required, and the Knesset's own legal adviser piled on by ruling against the coalition's drafting from inside the committee staff — exactly the gatekeeping Rothman's reform was meant to constrain, performed by an adviser the Knesset employs to advise rather than to legislate. Netanyahu is offering one last bill no one will read before the term ends [the same offer the parties have declined since the order issued], and the haredi parties are pricing the next coalition by demanding September over October. The dissolution timetable decides the question the legislation could not.

Rothman's Split-the-AG Reform Advances as Baharav-Miara Indicts a Likud MK

The Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee voted 9-0 to send two bills to first reading: Rothman's measure splitting the attorney general's office into three positions, and a companion that raises the bar for indicting senior officials. Opposition members walked out before the vote calling it illegitimate. The committee's legal adviser let it proceed and merged ten private bills into Rothman's single version. Days earlier Baharav-Miara filed an indictment against Likud MK Tally Gotliv for disclosing classified information under the Shin Bet law. Gotliv posted in January 2024 the identity of a serving Shin Bet officer — the partner of anti-reform protest leader Shikma Bressler — alongside a claim, which both the Shin Bet and Mossad have called unfounded, tying him to contact with Yahya Sinwar before October 7. The post drew more than 400,000 views, and the prosecution says it will seek prison if Gotliv is convicted. The indictment turned on a classified-source certificate Defense Minister Israel Katz signed only after months of delay, and Gotliv will ask the House Committee, where the coalition holds the majority, for immunity. Netanyahu asked to cancel today's session in his own trial citing the security schedule, and the prosecution did not object.

ASSESSMENT

Rothman's bill separates the AG into three roles because the current arrangement gives one office the authority to advise the government, prosecute the government, and decide whom to prosecute inside it — a conflict of interest no Western democracy treats as a feature. Baharav-Miara has used the consolidation for three years to block this government's appointments and policy moves the opposition could not block at the ballot box, and an office that has spent the term filing against this government chose the week of the dissolution vote to add a sitting Likud member to its docket [Gotliv's 2024 post is indictable on its merits. The timing still tells you something.]. The split bill takes the prosecutorial sword out of the advisory hand. The immunity fight now runs to a committee the coalition controls. Whether first reading clears before the term ends decides whether the reform survives the dissolution rule.

The Comptroller Race Runs to the Secret Ballot as the Court Reopens the Mossad Appointment

Two oversight seats are being contested at once. Netanyahu instructed the coalition MKs who had signed for retired justice Yosef Elron — Eli Dalal among them — to withdraw their signatures for State Comptroller, leaving the field to Elron and Michael Rabello, the prime minister's preferred replacement for outgoing comptroller Matanyahu Englman. Daniel Hershkowitz withdrew Wednesday. The June 3 vote is secret, so coalition members who pulled their names can still back Elron behind the curtain, and opposition coordinator Meirav Ben-Ari has begun gathering signatures to put Elron forward, with Gantz's bloc already pledged to him. The High Court ordered the Gronis advisory committee to redo work it already did on Roman Gofman's Mossad appointment, citing the absence of contemporaneous documents the committee was not required to review under its own statute. The committee meets to hear Ori Elmakayes and Brig.-Gen. "G" on Thursday, and to settle whether the outgoing or incoming civil-service commissioner sits on it. Netanyahu's lawyer asked the Court to keep the original panel. The newly declassified affidavit from G — the officer who in 2022 inquired into the Elmakayes influence-operation matter under Gofman's division command — records Gofman denying he approved transferring intelligence material to Telegram channels. The Mossad handover is set for June 2.

ASSESSMENT

The opposition is treating Rabello's candidacy as disqualifying because the prime minister's lawyer would break the convention that gives the Comptroller seat to a retired justice — the legal guild's standard pick for the office, and the pattern Englman briefly interrupted in 2019 before Elron's candidacy emerged to restore it. The Comptroller fight runs on the secret ballot: even MKs who pulled their signatures for Elron under whip pressure can vote him in behind the curtain. The Court sent the Gronis file back to the same committee that already cleared Gofman, dispatching the contradiction between G's new affidavit and the 2022 record for a second pass [the Court ordering procedure where it would not rule on substance]. The coalition reads both as legitimate appointment fights. The opposition reads both as capture. The secret ballot and the calendar will settle which reading holds.

Israel and the World

Somaliland Sites Its First Embassy Anywhere in Jerusalem

Somaliland's first ambassador to Israel, Mohamed Hagi, announced that Hargeisa will open its embassy in Jerusalem — the breakaway state's first diplomatic mission anywhere in the world. Israel reciprocates with an embassy in Hargeisa, the second leg of a recognition exchange that began in December when Israel became the first UN member to recognize Somaliland's independence. Hagi presented his credentials to President Herzog on Monday, Somaliland's Independence Day, and Foreign Minister Sa'ar called the move "another significant step," noting it would make Somaliland the eighth embassy in Jerusalem. The arrangement deepens an alignment Sa'ar advanced on the ground with a January visit to Hargeisa and the appointment of Michael Lotem as Israel's first ambassador there.

ASSESSMENT

Israel bought a foothold on the Bab-el-Mandeb approaches with a recognition no other UN member would extend, and Hargeisa is paying for it in the one currency Israel actually wants — an embassy in Jerusalem from a state whose entire foreign policy is the search for recognition. The Arab and Muslim capitals registering alarm at an Israeli presence on the Horn of Africa are reading the map correctly [their objection is the best advertisement for the location]. Sa'ar and Levin have spent the month putting Israeli money behind the embassy-relocation push, and the cheapest conversions come from capitals that get something Israel alone can grant. Somaliland is the first to sign the recognition-for-Jerusalem trade from a position of needing Israel more than Israel needs it.

The Apartheid Slate Reaches the General Staff as Smotrich Answers With Khan al-Ahmar

Bezalel Smotrich confirmed at a press conference that the ICC prosecutor's office has filed a secret arrest-warrant request against him, calling the application "a declaration of war" and the Hague "the antisemitic court." Israeli assessments now put the slate at five names — Smotrich, Katz, and Ben-Gvir on the political side, and IDF Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir and Southern Command chief Yaniv Asor on the military side. Asor is the new name against yesterday's parallel-discussion list, and Zamir has moved off that list and onto the docket the prosecution is signing. Smotrich answered by ordering the demolition of Khan al-Ahmar, the Bedouin encampment east of Jerusalem, the moment he left the podium — a move authorized a couple years back by the High Court but held in abeyance due to diplomatic concerns.

ASSESSMENT

The escalation is the extension to the general staff — yesterday's parallel-discussion picture is today's formal slate, with the prosecution charging the uniformed military that fought the war Hamas started with the war crime of fighting it. Smotrich's confirmation on camera changes the politics of the filing in a way the leak could not, and his Khan al-Ahmar order is the only register that actually costs the Hague anything.

✠ *Dossier: Field Dossier: Inside the Minority — The structural rebuttal of the apartheid charge — Israel's treatment of its Arab citizens and the Judea-and-Samaria governance question against the legal definition the Apartheid Convention actually carries — is the argument the ICC's first-ever apartheid warrant is built to bypass, and the one today's entry names but does not restate.*

Tehran Marries Off Its Martyrs as Europe Pulls 14,200 of Its Posts

Iran staged mass public weddings across Tehran for couples enrolled in a state "self-sacrifice" program, broadcasting the spectacle on state television to project wartime mobilization under a fragile ceasefire and Trump's standing threat of renewed strikes. More than a hundred couples arrived at Imam Hossein Square in military jeeps mounted with machine guns, married on a stage beneath a giant portrait of Mojtaba Khamenei — the supreme leader who has not appeared in public since inheriting the post when Israel killed his father on the first day of the war. The enrollees pledged actions like forming human chains around power stations, which is to say volunteering as

the human shields the regime would otherwise have to conscript, and the regime claims millions have signed up, the speaker of parliament and the president among them. The same day, Europol announced it had disrupted 14,200 online posts tied to the IRGC across nineteen countries — propaganda in six languages, AI-generated glorification videos, martyrdom sermons, and calls to avenge the elder Khamenei, routed through hosting providers from Russia to the United States and funded through cryptocurrency, with affiliated Hamas, Hezbollah, and Houthi content swept up alongside.

ASSESSMENT

The weddings are functional propaganda aimed inward — a regime that cannot produce its own supreme leader in public produces balloon-strewn martyrdom theater instead, and the analysts calling it cohesion-maintenance for the domestic base are reading it correctly even as they overstate the cohesion. The figure mounted on the stage is the same figure on the second list in Washington and Jerusalem this week. The Europol number is the more useful data point on the influence side, because it converts the IRGC's information war from rhetoric into an inventory — 14,200 posts is an order of battle, and the crypto rails and multi-jurisdiction hosting are the same plumbing the al-Saadi indictment named in court last week, surfacing this time on the propaganda side of the ledger. Europe is finally treating Iranian influence operations as the work of a designated terrorist organization, which is what the IRGC has been since February and what its proxies' content confirms every time a takedown sweeps Hamas, Hezbollah, and Houthi posts up alongside it.

Rosen and Lankford Put a Billion-Dollar Floor Under American Jewish Security

Senators Jacky Rosen and James Lankford, co-chairs of the Senate task force on Jew-hatred, introduced the Jewish American Security Act yesterday with backing across every major denomination and both party committees. The bill authorizes \$1 billion annually for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program, rewrites the program's management to force FEMA to open applications within ninety days and disburse reimbursements within ninety more, creates a Jew-hatred coordinator at the Education Department, mandates intelligence-community assessments of transnational antisemitic violent extremism, and requires platforms with more than 50 million American users to file biannual transparency reports on antisemitic content. The ADL recorded 203 violent attacks on Jews last year, three of them fatal, and an incident rate of 17 per day. More than 400 Jewish Federation leaders worked the Hill the same week, and several invoked Monday's neo-Nazi murder of three people, including security guard Amin Abdullah, outside the Islamic Center of San Diego, where police recovered SS-marked weapons and a racial-pride manifesto. A House subcommittee hears testimony tomorrow on Jew-hatred inside healthcare-worker unions, Harvard moved Monday to dismiss the Justice Department's discrimination suit as "retaliatory," and the Combat Antisemitism Movement stood up a new Jewish Mayors and Municipal Leaders Association in Miami Beach.

ASSESSMENT

The bill is the closest thing American Jewry has come to a structural answer for the surge of attacks. The test is whether the appropriations process delivers the billion the authorization names, because authorization is the easy half — the money still has to be appropriated. Pairing the grant to “all houses of worship” and letting the San Diego mosque dead carry the floor vote gets a Jewish-security bill past the lawmakers who would otherwise call it special pleading [the dead become bipartisan in a way the living rarely manage]. The management rewrite is the part that matters most and will get the least attention. A grant that arrives two appropriations cycles after the synagogue burns pays for the plaque on the wall while the guard who was needed at the door was never hired.

Briefly Noted**Diplomacy & Geopolitics**

- *JNS*: RFK Jr.’s Health and Human Services is restoring the conscience-and-religious-freedom division Trump created in 2018 and Biden dissolved in 2023, restructuring its civil-rights office to enforce against Jew-hatred.
- *JNS*: Irish President Catherine Connolly, who calls Israel a “terrorist state” and will not condemn the October 7 massacre, said she was “proud” of her sister detained aboard the Gaza flotilla.
- *JNS*: Sa’ar landed in Prague with a 50-firm delegation — IAI, Elbit, Rafael — against \$1.4 billion in annual bilateral trade. Prague keeps deepening defense and cyber ties while Ireland, Spain, and Slovenia drive the bloc’s sanctions push.

Public Diplomacy & Media

- *Jerusalem Post*: A Hebrew University study of seized Hamas documents finds the October 7 massacre was the opening move of a planned multi-front collapse of Israel, with al-Hayya declaring in 2021 “we are not a defensive resistance but an offensive one” and Sinwar betting Israel’s internal protests had made it “weaker than a spider’s web.” Hamas miscalculated only on its patrons — Iran and Hezbollah were “deeply surprised” by a timing meant to trap them into the war.
- *Algemeiner*: Kuwaiti gold medalist Jassim Alhatem refused to shake bronze medalist Yoav Manor’s hand at the Abu Dhabi jiu-jitsu Grand Slam, called him a “child murderer,” and walked off the podium — and the Emirati hosts, Abraham Accords signatories, apologized for the conduct of a competitor whose country says it will be “the last to normalize.”
- *Israel Hayom*: FIFA reportedly plans to bar the pre-1979 “Lion and Sun” flag — the banner Iranians fly against the Tehran regime — from World Cup stadiums as “political,” while clearing Palestinian flags as the emblem of a recognized member federation.

Domestic & Law

- *Jerusalem Post*: The Haifa admiralty court handed the eleven Global Sumud boats to the state after their owners spent six months refusing to claim them.

- *Israel Hayom*: Elections Committee chair Noam Sohlberg ruled the Foreign Ministry may keep promoting Sa'ar's English-language posts as state hasbara, while his Hebrew content — aimed at voters at home — does not clear the line.

Economy, Tech & Infrastructure

- *Globes*: El Al posted a \$68.9 million loss for the quarter, its first since early 2023, and put the damage from Roaring Lion at \$145 million with another \$55 million still to land in Q2. End-of-April bookings hit \$1.2 billion and the carrier is adding 6-10% more summer seats — the demand snapped back the moment the skies reopened.
- *Israel Hayom*: Yitzhak Tshuva's NewMed and Ratio signed a 20-year, \$6.7 billion deal to supply Leviathan gas to two new Dalia power stations from 2030, one more anchor under the grid's domestic supply.
- *The JC*: British Airways pushed its suspension of London-Tel Aviv flights to at least August 1 and Iberia followed, leaving El Al dominant on the UK and US routes while Israel weighs giving Emirates seventh-freedom rights to fly Tel Aviv-New York direct.
- *Jerusalem Post*: The Israel Electric Corporation unveiled what it calls the world's first drone-mounted robot for installing aviation-warning markers on live high-voltage lines, retiring the helicopters and elevated platforms the job used to require.

Culture, Religion & Society

- *Israel Hayom*: Seven farmers across the Gaza envelope are bringing in the Seven Species again — vineyards, wheat, pomegranates, dates worked by families who buried their own on October 7, several of them planting that November under Israeli flags raised on the tractors. One Nir Am grower puts the point past sentiment: Hamas sees the land recovering, and it burns them.
- *Jerusalem Post*: The fourth Rahat Film Festival drew 4,000 visitors to the Negev's largest Bedouin city for three days of screenings, including Jewish-Arab collaborations and a documentary on a personal conflict out of October 7.
- *Times of Israel*: Tal Tenne Czaczkes sewed nearly 700 Israeli flags abandoned on roadsides into a 180-square-meter canopy, "The Flag of Flags," now touring schools through the Education Ministry and headed for diaspora communities by Israel's 80th year.

Developments to Watch

Judea & Samaria

- **Smotrich arms the clearing-fund levers** — Smotrich answered the Hague filing by threatening to collapse the Palestinian Authority economically, naming a permanent halt to clearing-fund transfers and an end to indemnity protection for Israeli banks dealing with PA banks. Either lever runs on a finance-ministry signature. A signed order this week strains Ramallah's payroll and banking channel ahead of the May 29 Washington round.

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

- **Twelve-village evacuation order in the south** — The IDF's Arabic spokesman ordered residents out of twelve villages, most of them in the Nabatieh and Tyre districts, the standard pre-strike directive that precedes an expanded strike day. The order points to a wider IAF cycle north of the Litani inside the next 24 to 48 hours, three days into the forty-five-day extension.
- **Car bomb at the Damascus Defense Ministry** — A car bomb killed a Syrian soldier and wounded roughly a dozen outside a Defense Ministry building in the capital's Bab Sharqi district, with no claim of responsibility. An al-Sharaa government that cannot secure its own defense compound is the partner Israel's Damascus track sits across from. Another such hit forces Jerusalem to price the Syria approach against a capital losing its own center.

Gaza & Southern Theater

- **Clan militia claims Beit Lahia from Hamas** — A northern-Strip militia under Ashraf al-Mansi claims it took Beit Lahia, with footage of armed men moving freely some 600 meters beyond the Yellow Line, on ground the Trump plan assigns to Hamas. If the claim holds, armed Gazan factions are contesting northern Gaza with Hamas before any governance framework arrives. The day-after question is being answered on the ground before it reaches a table.
- **Egypt presses Hamas on phase two as the Council convenes** — Egypt's foreign minister says Cairo is pressing Hamas hard to disarm under phase two, while Hamas conditions any move on an end to Israeli eliminations and the rebuilding of hospitals and schools that served as its wartime headquarters. The Board of Peace asks the Security Council to force the disarmament when it meets Thursday. Hamas's counter-conditions are the formal refusal arriving on the Council's own calendar.

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

- **Iraq distances the militias after the Saudi strikes** — Baghdad condemned the drone attacks on Saudi Arabia, pledged cooperation with Riyadh's investigation, and is moving to separate the Iran-backed militias from the launches that flew from Iraqi soil, including the salvo the UAE traced to Iraqi territory. The new Iraqi government is being measured this week against its own day-one pledge to monopolize weapons. Another launch from Iraq turns the militia question into a test Baghdad cannot defer.
- **Houthi leader orders his forces to ready a wide attack** — Abdul-Malik al-Houthi instructed his fighters to prepare for a comprehensive, large-scale attack if Washington and Tehran reach no acceptable deal, tying the threat to the US blockade of Iran's ports. The Houthi card sat out Roaring Lion, and the leader is now conditioning its play on the same weekend deadline Trump has set for Tehran.
- **Explosions and air defense over Qeshm Island** — Explosions and activated air defenses were reported on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz, with pro-regime crowds chanting against Israel and the UAE, the second night

of drone activity over the island. Whatever the cause, the regime is registering pressure on the choke point it has threatened to close, days before Trump's strike deadline lands.

Diplomatic & Legal

- **NATO defers the Hormuz escort to July** — NATO is weighing escort help for shipping through a blocked Hormuz only if the strait stays closed into early July, with leaders set to take it up at the Ankara summit on the 7th and 8th, per Bloomberg. The alliance's earliest decision point sits six weeks past Trump's weekend deadline. Any near-term move to reopen the strait falls to Washington and Jerusalem alone.

The strike slides, the coalition dissolves, the warrants climb the chain of command — and the one institution drawing the line is still the IDF, clearing the Litani-north stockpile at the cost of officers like Sapir because Beirut will not and the text cannot. Tomorrow night the country sits down to *naaseh v'nishma* — we will do, and then we will hear. That was the order Sinai chose against the institutions still inverting it, and the field is keeping it: seven farmers across the Gaza envelope will bring in the *bikkurim* under flags raised on the tractors, on the ground Hamas watches recover and cannot stand to see.

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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.



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