



*Forensic intelligence for those who act.*

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READER EDITION

August 16, 2026

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ISRAEL BRIEF

# Sunday, August 16

*Hezbollah spends a drone on a ridge it has already lost, and Katz moves to take civilian policing in Judea and Samaria off the army.*

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

**THE BOTTOM LINE** Stearns read a falling incident count as the absence of a problem, and the count really has fallen — the ADL tracked 1,694 campus incidents in 2024 against 583 last year. The encampments ended. The rest of it moved into coursework and faculty governance, where a dean who can suspend a student needs a committee's permission to touch a professor and nothing on a syllabus ever generates an incident report. Title VI now wants proof of an ongoing hostile environment in the register the problem stopped producing. The organizations with the most riding on producing it spent the week arguing with each other about whether to.

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**H**EBZOLLAH’S answer to losing the Ali al-Taher ridge was an explosive drone into the engineering team standing on top of it, at half past two on Shabbat morning. Three soldiers went to Rambam, two of them on ventilators. Dozens of Radwan men are sealed in the tunnels underneath, the army is at high readiness for an operation to take the ridge, and Washington has told Beirut it can make that operation smaller but not stop it. Inside Israel the argument is about ground too — who polices Israelis in Judea and Samaria, the army or the police — and Likud’s members vote tomorrow with the courts on their minds.

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## FLASH BRIEF

- **Lebanon:** A Hezbollah drone wounds three Yahalom soldiers on Ali al-Taher, and Israel kills two commanders in reply. *See The War Today.*
- **Hormuz:** The sixty days Washington and Tehran set aside expire tomorrow with no negotiation held and no crude moving. *See The War Today.*
- **Gaza:** Israel resumes strikes after a week's pause, and the Board of Peace tells it not to stop. *See The War Today.*
- **Judea and Samaria:** Katz orders a plan moving civilian law enforcement over Israeli residents from the army to the police. *See Inside Israel.*
- **Likud:** Some 140,000 eligible members vote tomorrow, and eighty percent of them name the legal system first. *See Inside Israel.*
- **Manpower:** Zamir has grown the combat force by tens of percent and is still 12,000 soldiers short. *See Inside Israel.*
- **Turkey:** Ankara turns the Mecca defense pact into permanent bodies and joint production of drones and electronic warfare. *See Israel and the World.*
- **Colombia:** Bogota quits the ICJ case, recognizes the Golan, and takes Israel's ambassador back. *See Israel and the World.*
- **RSF:** Reporters Without Borders deletes two terror-affiliated names from its Gaza journalist count and issues no correction. *See Israel and the World.*
- **New York:** A man storms Central Synagogue's bimah mid-service and faces fourteen charges, six of them hate crimes. *See Israel and the World.*
- **Harvard:** A federal judge throws out the Title VI suit and raises the standard for every case behind it. *See Israel and the World.*
- **Yemen:** Mocha port suspends operations after more than twenty-five missiles, and Riyadh weighs backing a Yemeni ground campaign. *See Developments to Watch.*

Two documents written in June were supposed to produce an act by now, and neither has. The Lebanon framework ties Israel's pullback to a disarmament nobody has started. The sixty days Washington and Tehran gave themselves run out tomorrow with no negotiation held, and Iran spent them putting fifty of sixty-nine tunnel entrances back into service. What is actually moving is physical — troops standing on the shafts at Ali al-Taher, and a police force Katz wants raised for a job the army cannot hand over until somebody applies Israeli law.

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## The War Today

### Hezbollah's Drone Hits the Ridge Its Own Men Are Sealed Under

An explosive drone came down on a Yahalom engineering team at around half past two on Saturday morning, on the Ali al-Taher ridge in south Lebanon. An officer and two soldiers went to Rambam in Haifa seriously wounded. Two of them are sedated and on ventilators. The air force answered inside the night. It hit a Radwan Force headquarters at Ansar and killed Ali Samir al-Haj Hassan, a Radwan battalion commander, along with

several operatives working on attacks against the troops in the security zone. The next night it killed Abu Hassan Alaa, a commander in Hezbollah's Badr Unit, at Deir ez-Zahrani. Lebanon's health ministry counted eleven dead and about nineteen wounded, women and children among them. The IDF says Hassan kept his family inside the military headquarters with him and hid behind them, and that they were never the target. The Prime Minister's Office says the army found out they were in there only after the strike.

What sits under that ridge is what all of this is about. Israeli troops hold the surface and have capped the shafts and tunnel mouths. Dozens of Hezbollah men are still down there and won't come up. Getting them out has turned into a condition for implementing the June Israel-Lebanon-US framework, which ties Israel's pullback to Hezbollah's verified disarmament. It goes to the top of the agenda when the two delegations sit down again in Rome early next month. Lebanese President Joseph Aoun has told Hezbollah to leave the ridge and the facility beneath it so his army can take the ground. He's had no answer. Joseph Clearfield, who runs the ceasefire coordination group, has been telling officials in Beirut that Hezbollah coming off Ali al-Taher is the only way this thing holds.

Israel is at high readiness for an operation to take the ridge and is waiting on Washington. A senior Lebanese security official says the Americans told Beirut they can't stop it outright, and asked that whatever Israel does be small and precise enough not to break the framework. Tehran passed word through Lebanese channels that a move on Ali al-Taher would bring Iran into the escalation. Aoun called the strikes a violation of the framework and a message about the talks. Prime Minister Nawaf Salam said the seven killed at Ansar were not military infrastructure. The State Department put the whole escalation on Hezbollah and said handing over the weapons is how it stops. Defense Minister Israel Katz wrote that no score in any arena will remain unsettled. Israeli jets were back over the ridge and Qantara overnight, and security officials called that routine work in the security zone.

#### ASSESSMENT

*Hezbollah is bidding for the men sealed under Ali al-Taher with the only thing it has left: the ability to make standing on top of them cost something. The bid fails on arithmetic. Israel holds the surface, the ridge is the one demand Jerusalem carries into every round in Rome, and Washington has already told Beirut it can shrink the operation and not stop it. What Saturday bought Hezbollah was the picture, and Jerusalem knew it within hours — the Prime Minister's Office put classified targeting intelligence out in English during Shabbat, ahead of its own army spokesman, because by nightfall the eleven were going to be the story. [Dozens of Radwan men are sitting under that ridge waiting for somebody to negotiate them out. I can't think of a better argument for staying on it.]*

#### Hormuz Runs Dry as the Sixty Days Expire on Monday

Two ships crossed the Strait of Hormuz on Friday and neither carried crude. Before Tehran closed the water at the end of February and opened the Iran war that is still running, 130 to 140 a day went through. The sixty days Washington and Tehran gave themselves in their June memorandum run out on

Monday. Almost none of it went on talking. Abbas Araghchi says there are no negotiations under way and no decision to resume them, and that Qatar and Pakistan carrying messages “does not at all constitute negotiations.” Tehran and Muscat have agreed a shipping route map through the strait, by the Iranian foreign ministry’s account. Araghchi keeps the route and the reopening apart. The route is a technical drawing, and the water opens when Washington honors the memorandum.

Trump told a police academy audience in Nassau County on Friday that “pretty soon” he’ll declare the strait a territory of the United States. He asked Americans to take a little more at the pump for it. Kazem Gharibabadi, Iran’s deputy foreign minister, answered that the strait “cannot be seized with a tweet, nor with an aircraft carrier, nor by issuing an order, nor through an election speech.”

Under the talking, Iran hit a third ADNOC tanker in under a week. The British navy’s shipping desk logged a bulk carrier struck by an unknown projectile on Friday too. Abu Dhabi cited Resolution 2817 on freedom of navigation, and Anwar Gargash said the Emirates will defend their rights and stay on the diplomatic road anyway. The Abraham Lincoln is going home after more than 250 days on station. The George Washington is sailing out to replace her, and the Navy pulled its last carrier out of the Pacific to make that work. Washington has lost at least 45 Reaper drones, a quarter of the fleet it started with. And four months after Israeli officials told everyone the campaign had set Iran’s military industry back by years, IDF and Mossad officials have been startled by how fast Tehran is putting the missile plants back together.

#### ASSESSMENT

*Monday arrives with nothing behind it, because nobody negotiated against the deadline they set. Iran spent the sixty days on what decides the next round instead — a third Emirati hull this week, and, on the Israeli read, 50 of 69 tunnel entrances reopened across 18 underground missile sites, enough to be back at June 2025 stocks sometime in 2027. Vance has ranked cheap gasoline first among American war aims and the bomb second, which tells Tehran which of the two to keep hurting. Pezeshkian went on state television and conceded the economy has gotten dramatically worse, and a regime willing to say that has decided the pain is survivable.*

Field Dossier: *The Fifty-Year Front* — The Dossier argues that Israel won the kinetic war and left undecided the one Iran opened against it in 1975, which is the claim being tested by a rebuild that has fifty of sixty-nine tunnel entrances back in service four months after officials said the industry was set back by years. ##### Israel Restarts the Strikes and the Board of Peace Does Not Object

A Hamas charge went off under a Givati tank near the Yellow Line on Saturday and nobody was hurt. Paratroopers nearby shot two operatives who had crossed the line to wreck IDF equipment.

Israel had stopped striking in Gaza for a week without saying so, and started again on Wednesday. By Thursday it was killing commanders. Hudhaifa Qawari ran a company in Hamas’s Khan Yunis Brigade. The other was the head of Hamas’s police for the Gaza district. On Friday the army confirmed

Muhammad Bassam Mushtaha of the Shati Battalion, who came through the fence on October 7 and held Tsachi Idan, Noa Marciano, Ziv Berman, Omri Miran, Ori Megidish, Naama Levy and Matan Angrest in captivity.

Jerusalem has handed the Board of Peace a file listing a hundred Hamas violations over ten days. The Board's people spent the week answering that Israel won't be asked for one-sided moves while Hamas has not verifiably disarmed — no pullback, and no stopping the work against threats on the ground. They also asked why Israel isn't removing the threats its own army has identified. Israel signed the twenty-point plan adopted as Security Council Resolution 2803, which destroys every weapon in Gaza permanently under independent monitors. The Board's separate fifteen-point roadmap of 30 July stores those weapons in Palestinian hands under a committee, and that is the one Hamas accepted and Netanyahu rejected. Khalil al-Hayya flew to Cairo to see Egypt's intelligence chief Hassan Rashad. Jared Kushner arrives in the region this week with Tony Blair and Nikolay Mladenov, who runs the Board.

#### ASSESSMENT

*The body Israel refuses to sign with spent this week telling Israel to keep shooting, and the reason is that it has nothing else to hold Hamas with. Hamas has handed over no weapons and dissolved no formation. The only enforcement anybody actually owns is Israeli, and a mechanism built to measure a ceasefire cannot measure a disarmament that has not started. A week without Israeli strikes bought a charge under a tank and two men walking across the line, and the first Moroccan troops are still six to eight weeks out.*

## Inside Israel

### Katz Hands Civilian Law Enforcement in Judea and Samaria to the Police

Defense Minister Israel Katz ordered the IDF on Friday morning to draw up a plan moving every civilian law-enforcement power over Israeli residents of Judea and Samaria to the Israel Police. He gave the instruction after a Thursday session with Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir, the head of the Operations Directorate and the head of Military Intelligence. The police are to raise a dedicated force for it and get the powers and the budgets to run it. Central Command keeps overall responsibility for the area. The Judea and Samaria Border Police would take the operational weight on nationalist crime.

Katz put his reasoning in the announcement. The cabinet has approved 104 new communities and moved to regularize the agricultural farms. The security load on the central front is growing. And the army's job is Palestinian terrorism and the borders — “not to chase teenagers on the hilltops.” The thinking is not his alone. Maj. Gen. Yoram Halevi, who runs the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories, put a redivision of labor between the army and the police on the chief of staff's desk months ago, on his own initiative. He reworked it for Katz in recent weeks. The map he was writing for holds more than 160 farms and small points now, spread thin across open ground, each of them a policing problem a town isn't.

The occasion was Qusra. A group of Israelis put up an outpost on Sunday beside two Palestinian homes on the village's edge, in Area B, cut the water and the power, and blocked the access. Border Police tried to clear it on Wednesday and got stones and blocked roads. On Thursday the general staff sent in the Golani Brigade's 51st Battalion, a regular infantry unit that normally goes north to Hezbollah. Two outposts near Qusra and Jalud came down overnight, and troops detained one Israeli. Another tent went up on Friday and came down the same day. About fifteen people walked back past a closed military zone on Saturday. The army has opened a probe into the whole week, including why the first eviction took 48 hours and why troops sent to carry it out didn't.

The communities answered fast and on the record. Yisrael Ganz, who chairs the Yesha Council and runs the Binyamin regional council, said the events at Qusra are serious and "are not our way," and that nobody gets to decide on his own to put an outpost in a family's yard. Beit El council head Shai Alon called the men criminals doing irreversible damage to Israel and to the settlement movement. Yechiel Leiter, Israel's ambassador in Washington, read them this week's parsha — Shoftim, judges and officers in all your gates — and called what they did a desecration of the commandment they claim to be serving. Katz condemned them from the podium at Ganim, at the ceremony re-establishing a community the state emptied in 2005.

Mike Huckabee, the American ambassador and the closest friend the settlement enterprise has in this administration, called them "Israeli terrorists" on Thursday and said the IDF and the police went into the village at the embassy's request. He drew his own line hours later. "'Settlers' are not the problem," he wrote. "'Unsettlers' are." Washington started pressing after it learned that one of the besieged homes belongs to a family with American citizenship. What the White House wants now is Netanyahu saying it in his own voice. He hasn't said anything since Sunday.

#### ASSESSMENT

*Moving law enforcement over Israeli civilians from a military government to the national police is what a state does on its own territory, and it is the largest step toward sovereignty available without a Knesset vote — Yisrael Ganz welcomed it the same morning and asked for the rest, cancel Oslo and apply Israeli law. The enforcement record it would inherit is already Israel's own: 967 police investigations opened in 2025 and 61 indictments filed off them, built by Israeli police and charged by Israeli prosecutors. What Katz hasn't got is a police district that can take it. The Judea and Samaria district still needs the army to get into Areas A and B, and the Central Command GOC is the legal sovereign until somebody applies the law. He also never cleared any of it with Itamar Ben-Gvir, who holds the police and says the job belongs to the army. So nothing moves before the Knesset Israel elects on 27 October, which leaves this week's actual enforcement question where it started: a general staff that had to send Golani to do what a Border Police company couldn't, and is now investigating its own soldiers to find out why.*

## Likud Votes Monday With the Courts as Its Members' First Issue

Likud's primary opens at ten on Monday morning. About 140,000 members are eligible, the largest membership the party has ever had, and turnout in its recent primaries has run 55 to 57 percent. Forty candidates are on the national slate, each voter marks up to twelve, and a realistic place needs more than 20,000 votes. The convention handed Benjamin Netanyahu eight reserved slots, at positions 3, 5, 9, 11, 15, 18, 26 and 29. He added three more for Israel Katz, Haim Katz and Michel Buskila. That leaves about fifteen realistic places for men through position 30, and three for women against eight sitting female members. Another eighty-four people are running for the district and reserved-representation slots.

Three sitting members pulled out instead of running. Eliyahu Revivo said the reserved slots and the voting method had made a realistic place too hard to reach, and his brother Yair, who runs Lod, has worked Netanyahu's ground campaign in the last three elections. Moshe Fassel went too. Tzega Melaku, the only Ethiopian-Israeli in the faction, pulled out on Friday after community leaders asked Netanyahu to reserve her and got no answer, saying the immigrant slot was blocked and no reasonable path was left.

Netanyahu has recorded an endorsement video for no sitting minister or member except Almog Cohen, who crossed to Likud from Otzma Yehudit and was there for him on the vote that mattered. He gave two more to district candidates who have never sat in the Knesset. Miri Regev, who got nothing, posted a four-year-old photograph of the two of them that appears to have been run through an AI refresh.

Ministers and members ran their own polling this month to build their message sheets, and it came back one-sided. About 80 percent of Likud members named the legal system as the most urgent thing on their minds — the attorney general, selective enforcement, and Bagatz ruling past its own authority. Security came second, with Iran at about 60 percent. Knesset Speaker Amir Ohana's campaign launch video is built almost entirely on his fight with the court. In an exit interview this week he said he is proud to be the first Speaker who told Bagatz that not every ruling will be obeyed. Coalition chairman Ofir Katz said this morning that the reform was handled too gently, and that after the election they go all the way.

The polling outside the party runs the other way. A Maariv survey on Friday put the coalition bloc at 48 seats, Likud at 21, and Gadi Eisenkot's Yashar at 23. Zman Yisrael had Yashar at 25 and Likud at 21 on Thursday, the anti-Netanyahu bloc at 58 and Netanyahu's at 50, with Eisenkot eleven points clear on preferred prime minister. Nir Barkat goes into Monday carrying a published account of his canvassing ministers, members and journalists between October 2023 and March 2024 about replacing Netanyahu. Health Minister Haim Katz brought it to Netanyahu at the end of November 2023, and Netanyahu broke it up with private talks and promotions. Barkat has sued nobody over it. And when Trump asked Netanyahu in the Oval Office on 28 July how he was polling, he got a pause and then an aide answering

for him: “Mr. President, he is winning.” He has told people since that Bibi is his own worst enemy, and he still hasn’t endorsed.

#### ASSESSMENT

*Netanyahu reserved eleven of the first twenty-nine places because he knows what his members are voting on, and it isn’t him. Eighty percent naming the legal fight as their urgent issue selects for whoever says the hardest thing about the attorney general and the court, which is how a Knesset Speaker ends up campaigning on refusing to obey rulings and a coalition chairman ends up promising to go all the way after October. [I’ve spent three years being told the fight over the court is Netanyahu’s trial wearing a costume. Eighty percent of his own members just said it’s theirs.] His own numbers price that line at 21 seats against Eisenkot’s 23, so the slate his members hand him on Tuesday morning and the slate he needs to build a government are two different slates — and the reserved places are what he is paying to cover the difference.*

### The IDF’s Manpower Fix Is Running Ahead of the Conscription Law

Under Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir the standing and reserve combat force has grown by tens of percent since October 7, across Gaza, south Lebanon, the Syrian border and the Jordan Valley. The Gaza Division held two regional brigades and four battalions before the invasion. Two division headquarters, five brigades and sixteen battalions hold the border and the ground inside the Strip now. In the north, two brigades and four battalions became two divisions, eight brigades and fifteen battalions. The Syrian border went from one brigade to three, holding ground past the fence. On the eastern border the army raised the Gilad Division, five new reserve brigades on the open line through the Jordan Valley. A tank battalion used to be two conscript companies with the third sitting in reserve. The battalions are manned all the way through now, and the army raised nine new companies to do it.

The reserve pool has grown by about 36 percent, through cancelled exemptions, volunteers, returning servicemen and call-up orders. More than 100,000 people came back through it. The army also says it is short about 12,000 soldiers, 7,500 of them combat. The Manpower Directorate’s own read is that the induction center is not where the problem sits. Retention is. Thousands of soldiers walked out over three years of it, worn through.

The men holding the line are on their sixth round. Two reservists’ wives told Ynet this week that the army keeps extending the orders because there is nobody to swap in, and that each round runs between 100 and 120 days. One of them has stopped counting. Elazar Stern, who ran the Manpower Directorate himself, put it flatly on the radio on Thursday: we have no soldiers, and nobody should imagine a reserve army can be held for years at 120 or 200 days.

Bezalel Smotrich launched a plan called “Reservists Home” on Thursday evening, in front of several hundred fighters and officers, at the opening of Religious Zionism’s reserve headquarters. The target is thirty reserve days a year by 2027, on a principle of more people and less time. Roughly 50,000 soldiers who sit in no active reserve unit go back into one. A national haredi enlistment program funds pre-military academies, hesder yeshivas

and service tracks built to preserve haredi life. And a Basic Law for those who serve would give them and their spouses priority in housing, day care, degrees and civil-service hiring. The finance minister says the plan is a condition for entering the next government. He also says the army stonewalled him for four years.

#### ASSESSMENT

*Zamir has answered the exemption with management, because the Knesset would not answer it with law — two divisions where the north had two brigades, a reserve pool a third larger, nine tank companies raised from nothing. The 12,000 is what is left after all of that, and the men covering it are on round six at 100 to 120 days a round. Smotrich's plan turns on the haredi enlistment his own term legislated against: the coalition wrote Torah study into a Basic Law on 13 July, 63 to 52, and he is now campaigning on a second Basic Law for the people the first one leaves holding the line. [He told a parlor meeting this week that he brought the army a plan to cut the reserve-days curve and it told him not to run its army for it. He had four years and a chair in the defense ministry, and I'd have liked to see this plan in year one.]*

## Israel and the World

### Turkey Builds Out the Mecca Pact While Washington Holds the Jets

Turkey's defense ministry used its weekly Ankara briefing on Thursday to say how the Mecca Joint Defense Agreement will actually work. Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan signed it on 7 August, and it treats an armed attack on any one of them as an attack on all three. The three will now put their defense ministers, foreign ministers and chiefs of general staff into permanent bodies, run joint land, naval and air exercises, and move from selling each other equipment to building it together — joint development, technology sharing, maintenance and logistics, with unmanned systems, electronic warfare and artificial intelligence first in line. Ankara says the pact stays open, names Egypt as the candidate, and insists it cancels nothing anyone has already signed.

The ministry also put Turkey in the Jeddah talks on an international coalition to protect Red Sea shipping, which is Riyadh's project and now has Ankara inside it. Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan spent two days in Egypt working the fourth chair, meeting Arab League secretary-general Nabil Fahmy and Egypt's intelligence chief Hassan Rashad, and calling Egypt a natural partner that is examining the details and will soon be an official one. He also said what he thinks Mecca answers. Israel, Greece and Cyprus built a security alignment in the eastern Mediterranean, Fidan said, and it draws a line between Turkey to the north and Egypt to the south. On Gaza he warned that Turkey, Qatar and Egypt would take "radical steps" if Washington did not press Israel harder.

Israel's foreign ministry told him he could spare it the lectures and the threats, called Turkey the headquarters of the Hamas terror organization, and said Gaza has to be demilitarized and Hamas disarmed before any

further Israeli step. Two days earlier Erdogan had stood beside Mahmoud Abbas in Ankara and promised to work “resolutely” for a sovereign, geographically contiguous Palestinian state with eastern Jerusalem as its capital. Jerusalem answered that with arithmetic: Turkish troops hold roughly 36 percent of Cyprus, 5 percent of Syria and 2,000 square kilometers of Iraq, against the 0.1 percent of Syria Israel holds as a buffer.

The one Turkish ask that would move Israel’s own military position is still stuck. More than a month after Trump said he wanted the F-35 sale to go through, six aircraft Ankara paid for are sitting in the United States, where they have been since Turkey was thrown out of the program in 2019 over its Russian S-400 batteries. Senate Foreign Relations chairman Jim Risch says nothing has changed while the batteries are still on Turkish soil. Switching them off does not satisfy members who read the statute as requiring Turkey to be rid of them, and selling them on to the UAE needs Moscow’s consent and would carry the same restrictions to Abu Dhabi. Israel is working Congress to keep the block where it is, and Netanyahu warned last month that F-35s in Ankara’s hands could destroy the balance of power in the region.

#### ASSESSMENT

*Ankara has put something behind the Mecca text that costs money and takes years — a co-production line for drones, electronic warfare and AI, run by permanent bodies of defense ministers and chiefs of staff. Nothing has been flown and nobody has been asked to honor the clause, so this is still a plan on paper. But factories are slower to unbuild than a communiqué is to disown, and that is the half an Israeli planner has to work against. Israel’s live leverage over Turkey is parked on an American ramp in six aircraft Ankara has already paid for, and that is where Jerusalem is spending its capital in Washington. [Fidan wants the Americans to lean on Israel over Gaza. I’d settle for somebody leaning on the government that keeps troops in three countries which never invited it.]*

### Israel’s Ambassador Returns to Bogota as Colombia Quits the ICJ Case

Vivian Eisen has Colombian approval and flies out today as Israel’s ambassador in Bogota, the first since Gustavo Petro severed relations more than two years ago. She lands into Israel’s own search-and-rescue and humanitarian mission, sent after this month’s earthquake, and into a government that has spent its first days undoing nearly everything Petro did.

Abelardo de la Espriella took office three days before recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, which makes Colombia the second country ever to say it, after the United States in 2019. He has also announced he will move Colombia’s embassy to Jerusalem, frozen the Colombian embassy that was to open in Ramallah, agreed mutual visa-free entry, and pulled Colombia out of South Africa’s case against Israel at the International Court of Justice. Israel’s foreign minister, Gideon Sa’ar, met him this week. Under Petro, Colombia had intervened in that case on South Africa’s side, stopped buying Israeli weapons, banned coal exports to Israel, and cut relations altogether.

Slovenia is running its own reversal from Europe. Janez Janša's government revoked the arms-trade restrictions its predecessor imposed, is moving to reverse Slovenia's recognition of a Palestinian state, and is relocating its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, with Israel opening its first embassy in Ljubljana. Bolivia and Chile have restored ties inside a year, Argentina and Paraguay keep deepening theirs, and Ecuador is asking Israel for help against its crime syndicates.

#### ASSESSMENT

*Leaving the ICJ case is the piece of the Colombian package a successor cannot undo with a sentence. Recognition and an embassy address are statements, and de la Espriella's opponents will campaign on reversing them. Coming off a pleading takes a party out of a proceeding that runs for years, and the Hague does not re-enrol anyone on a press release. Bogota could turn this fast because Israel's foreign ministry kept working legislators and civil society across Latin America through the years the governments there were hostile, and that groundwork is why a change of president turns into a change of policy in days.*

### Reporters Without Borders Edits Two Terrorists Out of Its Count

Reporters Without Borders took two names off its list of Gaza journalists killed since October 7 and announced nothing. The Paris press-freedom group's media-abuses Barometer carried 68 names on 20 July and 67 by 4 August. The missing man is Mohammad Jarghoun. RSF had him down as a 23-year-old reporter for a production company, killed by Israeli fire covering the fighting near the Rafah crossing. The Qassam Brigades claimed him on 1 July as one of their own fighters in Rafah. It also deleted Mohamed Nasr Abu Huwaidi, "clearly identifiable by his press vest" on RSF's own pages when an Israeli bomb killed him in Shejaiya in December. Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades call him a commander in its Central Military Media Unit. There was no correction. What went up instead was a line at the foot of the page about updating the registry "on an ongoing basis."

HonestReporting caught the deletions and audited what is left. Of the 67 names still listed, more than a quarter carry ties to terror organizations — three of them have martyr notices issued by the groups themselves, and eight are men the IDF has named. Between May 2025 and 4 August, RSF was cited in 40 articles about the IDF "targeting" journalists across 13 major Western outlets. HonestReporting also wants an explanation for the ICC complaints RSF has withdrawn, the ones built on the names that are now gone.

Al Jazeera spent the same weeks ending the contracts of at least 24 of its Gaza staff. Israeli security officials had identified at least three of them as Hamas operatives, from documents recovered in Gaza. One camera producer learned of it in a fifteen-second phone call with no reason given. The network hasn't said why it made the cuts, and its motion to dismiss an American terrorism-financing suit brought by victims of Hamas is still pending. The Committee to Protect Journalists, which started this summer's corrections, is now reviewing everything it has recorded since 2023.

**ASSESSMENT**

*The count has already done its work, and the deletions don't undo any of it. A name travels one way — out of a Gaza press office, into a watchdog's database, through Western newsrooms and into an ICC complaint — and nothing comes back along that road. RSF is the third of these organizations to edit its dead this summer, and each time a terror group published the obituary first. [Forty citations in thirteen newsrooms, and I can't find one of them going back to check its own copy.]*

**Bronx Man Storms Central Synagogue's Bimah and Faces Six Hate-Crime Charges**

Larry Montes, 46, of the Bronx, walked into Central Synagogue on Manhattan's Upper East Side a little after six on Friday evening. He stormed the bimah in the middle of Shabbat services. The synagogue's security director pulled him off and walked him out. On the way he struck a 63-year-old congregant hard enough to cut her lip, then spat on a 65-year-old guard and head-butted him. An NYPD sergeant working the door arrested him. He faces fourteen charges, six of them hate crimes. The NYPD's hate crime task force has the case. The cantor and the musicians kept playing.

Jews took 70 percent of New York's hate crimes last month, at roughly a tenth of the population. The city has recorded at least 205 anti-Jewish hate crimes this year. Late last month a man shouting "allahu akbar" stabbed a Jewish man with a screwdriver as he came out of services on the Upper West Side.

**ASSESSMENT**

*Seventy percent of a city's hate crimes landing on a tenth of its people is a number a municipal program can count and cannot move on its own.*

**Harvard Dismissal Raises the Bar for Every Title VI Case Behind It**

Richard Stearns, a federal judge in Boston, threw out the Trump administration's civil-rights suit against Harvard on Thursday in a four-page order. The Justice Department sued in March under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, which bars discrimination in programs that take federal money. It argued that Harvard was deliberately indifferent to the harassment of Jewish and Israeli students after October 7, and that the result was a hostile campus. It wanted back the billions Harvard draws from federal agencies. Stearns found the incidents the government pleaded "too isolated and episodic to support a plausible inference that any institutionalized noncompliance with Title VI persists at Harvard to this day." The complaint carried no factual allegation from after June 2025, when the government formally notified Harvard it was out of compliance. Three incidents came from March 2025. The rest came from the 2023-24 school year.

Stearns also put a reading of the statute on the record: "Congress's intent was not to penalize a wayward funding recipient but instead to incentivize it to bring itself into compliance." The Brandeis Center, which has run its own suit against Harvard since 2024, says the order raises the standard for every case behind it. A government agency would have to prove that a university refused to fix the problem and that fresh violations kept coming after it was

told to. The Justice Department disagrees and is assessing next steps. Its civil rights division still has an open antisemitism investigation.

The day before the ruling, three dozen universities filed a brief supporting Harvard in the separate case that restored its federal funding. Brown, Columbia and Cornell are on it. Each had signed its own agreement with the administration to make an antisemitism case go away. Hillel International filed a brief arguing Harvard already had the problem in hand, then withdrew it within hours after activists told donors to start calling.

#### ASSESSMENT

*Stearns read a falling incident count as the absence of a problem, and the count really has fallen — the ADL tracked 1,694 campus incidents in 2024 against 583 last year. The encampments ended. The rest of it moved into coursework and faculty governance, where a dean who can suspend a student needs a committee's permission to touch a professor and nothing on a syllabus ever generates an incident report. Title VI now wants proof of an ongoing hostile environment in the register the problem stopped producing. The organizations with the most riding on producing it spent the week arguing with each other about whether to.*

## Briefly Noted

### Frontline & Security

- *Jerusalem Post*: The navy has rebuilt Gaza's coastline into a layered defense since October 7 — upgraded patrol boats, drone surveillance, joint intelligence and a zero-tolerance engagement policy — and Gaza port, which put seven Nukhba boats into the water that morning, has no motorized vessels left in it.
- *Jerusalem Post*: Residents of Psagot found a bullet beside their synagogue on Saturday, and about thirty masked Palestinians attacked a Jewish shepherd elsewhere in Binyamin that day, then rioted and threw up roadblocks. The Binyamin Regional Council says, rightly, that neither kind of attack is unusual in Binyamin any more, and that neither kind gets reported in the press.
- *Arutz Sheva*: The Iran-backed Houthis put 44 drones over Yemen's Mocha port on Friday, killed six and destroyed a weapons shipment that had just arrived from Saudi Arabia, and sent another drone at the Aramco facility at Najran inside the kingdom itself.
- *Israel Hayom*: Kaspersky says Project CAV3RN, the Iranian espionage campaign aimed only at Israeli organizations, now runs its command channel through Google Apps Script so the traffic reads as ordinary corporate use of Google, and rebuilds itself on a fresh Google address when a security team blocks the first one. It was hiding inside Microsoft Outlook in July.

### Diplomacy & Geopolitics

- *Times of Israel*: A foundation set up and funded by Norway's government met Hamas politburo member Bassem Naim in Gaza in May 2021 to work

out how it might mediate between the terror group and the EU, according to a Hamas report the IDF later recovered and declassified. Naim told his Norwegian visitors that several European governments were already talking to Hamas and keeping those channels undeclared.

- *Jerusalem Post*: Hamas will contest the 28 November Palestinian Legislative Council election as part of a broad national coalition, politburo member Husam Badran told the group's own television channel — the first Palestinian legislative vote in twenty years. Every list has to sign a pledge to the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians, and Badran says most factions want that condition gone.
- *The JC*: Britain, Italy, Switzerland and Indonesia are on a reported short-list for the multinational body that would verify Hezbollah's disarmament in south Lebanon, drawn up at last week's Rome talks — and Israel and Washington both say no list has been agreed.
- *JNS*: Lebanon's first general amnesty since 1991 covers the families of the South Lebanon Army men who fled to Israel when the militia collapsed in 2000, and leaves the fighters themselves liable to prosecution. The same law forgives attacks on the Lebanese army, armed clashes, drug offenses and car theft.

### Public Diplomacy & Media

- *Jewish News UK*: The House Ways and Means Committee is examining whether money from Neville Roy Singham's network paid for the British end of the Gaza marches — a UK company tied to Code Pink, co-founded by Singham's wife, took more than £190,000 from bodies said to be connected to him in 2020 and 2021 and another £70,000 in 2024. Chairman Jason Smith says Singham's money reaches pro-Hamas causes in Britain as well as America, and MPs from both parties want London investigating too.
- *Algemeiner*: Spain's state broadcaster named every runner in the 400-meter hurdles heat at the European championships except Israel's Omri Shiff — the commentators went from block six to block four and left block five out. RTVE apologized, blamed the pace of live athletics, and misspelled his name doing it.

### Am Yisrael

- *Jewish News UK*: Britain's Food Standards Agency found "no clear evidence" that animal welfare breaches are more likely in non-stun slaughter than in stunned, and Shechita UK has asked the government to drop its stated preference for stunning. A petition to scrap the religious exemption closes on 30 September with more than 51,000 names behind it.
- *JTA*: Thirty-nine percent of American Jews aged 22 to 40 told a Jim Joseph Foundation survey they have pulled back from Jewish spaces or turned choosier about which ones, and 42 percent of those said it was because they see no room for nuance when Israel comes up. Three-quarters of the 2,071 respondents still do something Jewish regularly, and 30 percent do it through an institution.

- *Jerusalem Post*: A Tel Aviv University study puts Israeli emigration at record levels — 40,000 to 50,000 citizens leaving for a year or more in each of the past three years, a run that started with the political upheaval of 2023 and held through the wars that followed October 7. The authors say that carries no economic or security cost yet, and point at the brain drain, with the Tax Authority putting emigrants' pre-departure earnings about 50 percent above the national average.
- *J. The Jewish News of Northern California*: Six bills cleared California's appropriations committees on Thursday and head to floor votes before the 31 August deadline — a 100-foot protest-free buffer around houses of worship, \$100 million for nonprofit security that could also cover off-site events, and SB 1387, which would make California the first state to record Jews as an ethnicity in its own data. Newsom then has until 30 September to sign or veto.

### Domestic & Law

- *Arutz Sheva*: The state told the High Court it will stop budgeting the haredi school networks automatically, and from this school year the money turns on whether they teach the full core curriculum and let inspectors check. Degel HaTorah's Moshe Gafni answered that if the attorney general gets to decide what haredi children learn, every Israeli child should be made to study the 613 commandments or lose his funding.
- *Israel Hayom*: Elazar Stern is leaving Yesh Atid after eleven years and resigning his Knesset seat, the second MK out of Yair Lapid's party in a week. Five others have announced they are going since Lapid's April alliance with Naftali Bennett, and one of them is in talks to run with Ra'am's Mansour Abbas.
- *Times of Israel*: Israelis abroad cannot vote by post and have to fly home to do it, so Gadi Eisenkot's Yashar has put Hebrew billboards outside Larnaca airport and an American-run drive has signed up 25,000 expatriates for the trip back. Likud calls the money behind those flights a foreign war chest outside the campaign-finance rules, and the organizers answer that everyone pays his own fare.

### Economy, Tech & Infrastructure

- *Israel Hayom*: Nobody in Israel will sit on the board of the state company built to take over correspondent banking for the Palestinian Authority, and one director who walked said in a closed meeting that the personal and international exposure was not worth carrying. Discount and Hapoalim are winding the same service down, and the 2017 cabinet decision that promised a state replacement made it conditional on the Authority acting against terror financing, which it never did.
- *JNS*: El Al announced the Hanoi route in February, sold seats on it for months, and has now cancelled it — security bodies working under Shin Bet direction told the airline they would not approve the flights with Israeli aircraft and Israeli crews. Arkia flies the same route on leased foreign planes and keeps it.

- *Arutz Sheva*: Ninety thousand passengers and a backlog of ninety flights inside three hours left travellers sitting on boarded aircraft at Ben Gurion before Shabbat, waiting on bags that were still on the ground. The Airports Authority denies any strike or staff shortage and puts it down to summer volume, European airspace limits over Greece, and the American aerial refuelling flights now overhead.
- *Israel Hayom*: Israel Aerospace Industries booked the most profitable half-year in its history — \$449 million net, up 40 percent — and its order backlog climbed to about \$35 billion, close to five years of work, from \$29 billion at the end of last year.

### Culture, Religion & Society

- *Detroit Jewish News*: The plaza outside the Tel Aviv Museum of Art is officially Hostages Square now — mayor Ron Huldai unveiled the signs on Wednesday, close to three years after Israelis started calling it that on their own.
- *Jerusalem Post*: About 150 haredi demonstrators tried to stop a public bus at Meron Junction on Saturday and roughly 70 Galilee residents turned out to keep the road open — the weekly fight over buses running before Shabbat ends started in Safed and has now spread up the Galilee.
- *Israel Hayom*: The Maccabi health fund ran 19 years of its own records on 1.1 million members against every war since 2006, and the weeks after October 7 gave the sharpest reading in the series — the risk of an adult starting anti-anxiety medication for the first time rose 317 percent.

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## Developments to Watch

### Judea & Samaria

- **Hamas works the Qusra week** — Two Hamas leaflets in two days called on Palestinians to escalate, one over the families moving back into Ganim and one over Katz's policing order. Hamas wants a front in Judea and Samaria lit by an argument Israelis are having with each other.

### Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

- **Qassem makes the army the issue** — Naim Qassem marked the 2006 anniversary by asking what seven rounds of talks with Israel have bought Lebanon, and called the June framework an ongoing humiliation of an army the government keeps exposing to Israeli fire. The framework runs on the Lebanese army taking the ground Israel vacates, and Hezbollah has now told the country that taking it is a disgrace.
- **Ghalibaf puts Lebanon in the memorandum** — Iran's parliament speaker and lead negotiator says both Hezbollah and Lebanon sit inside the memorandum with Washington, and that he is still in contact with Hezbollah's fighters over Aoun's standing objection to Iranian interference. Tehran is

claiming a chair at the Lebanon question, and on Ghalibaf's own reading what runs out tomorrow runs out on the Lebanese front too.

### Gaza & Southern Theater

- **Unit 414 is warning again** — Surveillance soldiers on the Gaza border say they are watching armed men lay explosives along the Yellow Line, and that it feels like the weeks before October 7. Nobody acted on those reports the last time, and the unit lost five killed and seven taken at Nahal Oz.
- **Hamas picks a Gaza chief** — Reports indicate Hamas holds internal elections in Gaza this coming week for the head of its political bureau there, with Ali al-Amoudi the likely successor to Khalil al-Hayya. Whoever wins is the man the disarmament demand has to be served on, and al-Amoudi came up under Yahya Sinwar.

### Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

- **Mocha stops working** — Mocha port has suspended commercial and maritime operations after more than twenty-five missiles in recent days, and its director puts the damage at sixteen million dollars. Riyadh is weighing whether to back a Yemeni ground campaign for the Red Sea coast, with forces it has spent seven months assembling out of rival militias. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **Tehran says Qatar holds three pilots** — Iran has written to the Red Cross demanding the release of three Su-24 pilots it says Qatari forces have held since March without contact, which Qatar denies. Doha is one of the two channels carrying messages between Washington and Tehran, and Tehran picked this fight the day before the sixty days run out.

### Diplomatic & Legal

- **Bessent's package lands this week** — Scott Bessent said on Thursday that the announcements come next week: economic isolation on a scale no country has faced, on top of a blockade he says seals Iran's ports. It is the only thing anyone has scheduled on the Iran question for the week the memorandum runs out.

### Home Front & Politics

- **Baharav-Miara moves on the Mahash committee** — Three of the five members of the panel choosing the next head of the police investigations unit are Yariv Levin's representatives or were picked with his involvement, the attorney general told the High Court, and she wants the government barred from seating it until after the election. Levin's answer is that the last government appointed a chief of staff mid-campaign in 2022 and the court signed off on it.
- **Lieberman draws the Ra'am line** — Avigdor Lieberman told a political gathering in the Galilee that Ra'am's members talked like Hamas spokesmen after October 7, and that he will not sit in a government with them. Eisenkot's path to 61 has been read as a minority government with Arab

parties abstaining, and Lieberman has now fixed how far outside the room they have to stay.

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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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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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