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READER EDITION

August 17, 2026

ISRAEL BRIEF

Monday, August 17

Iran comes out of the sixty-day memorandum with the Revolutionary Guards over the regular army and a bounty on any American soldier.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE This is the first Florida ballot a voter can answer with open Jew-hate in either primary, and both parties are handling it by pointing at the other one. Scott named Fishback and Bilzerian, which is more than most Republicans have managed, and then closed the same interview with “they belong in the Democrat Party, which embraces them.” What is expected to beat Larkin and Manley is demography — an older, less urban district a quarter Jewish, plus Cubans and Venezuelans who already left socialism once. Demography holds where it holds, and it travels nowhere. The people who organized against Larkin did it by changing their party registration.

CLASSIFICATION

Reader Edition

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THE sixty-day window ran out at midnight, Tehran spent it putting the Revolutionary Guards over the regular army and the men who fought Iraq back into the senior chairs, and Washington's answer this morning was that it is in no hurry. Iran and Oman have settled a map for moving ships through Hormuz, and the president who wants that water open says he will bomb Oman if it gets in the way. Israel holds the surface of the Ali al-Taher ridge and is preparing for several days of fighting over what Hezbollah spent fourteen years building underneath it.

IN THIS EDITION

Flash Brief	3
The War Today	3
Iran Spent the Sixty Days Rebuilding What Israel Burned in February . .	3
Israel Builds for Days of Fighting on the Ali al-Taher Ridge	4
Inside Israel	7
Likud Votes on a Slate Netanyahu and Ben-Gvir Both Shaped	7
Prayer Books Reach the Temple Mount and the Ban Thins Again	7
A Reservist Reached the After-Care and It Did Not Hold	8
Israel and the World	8
Trump Blesses the Mecca Pact as the Gulf Questions American Basing .	9
Trump Cuts Seoul's Drills Over Its Refusal to Join the Iran War	9
Norway Funds the Foundation Hamas Used as Its Channel Into Brussels	10
Tomorrow's Florida Ballot Tests Whether Jew-Hate Wins a Primary . . .	11
Briefly Noted	12
Developments to Watch	14

FLASH BRIEF

- **Iran:** The sixty-day memorandum expires with no deal, and Tehran comes out of it with the Guards over the army. *See The War Today.*
- **Hormuz:** Iran and Oman agree a transit map, and Trump says he will bomb Oman if it gets in the way. *See The War Today.*
- **Lebanon:** Israel prepares for days of fighting on the Ali al-Taher ridge and kills two Hezbollah commanders. *See The War Today.*
- **Gaza:** Kushner tells Hamas there is nothing to negotiate about disarmament, then asks Israel to start the pullback. *See The War Today.*
- **Likud:** Some 140,000 members vote today on the slate the party takes into the 27 October election. *See Inside Israel.*
- **Temple Mount:** Jewish men pray from siddurim on the Mount for the first time. *See Inside Israel.*
- **Reservists:** A reservist takes his own life two weeks after a platoon retreat that volunteers, not the state, ran. *See Inside Israel.*
- **Mecca pact:** Trump congratulates a defense agreement three governments built because they have stopped counting on Washington. *See Israel and the World.*
- **Seoul:** Trump cuts the annual Korean exercise after South Korea declines to join the Iran war. *See Israel and the World.*
- **Florida:** Tomorrow's Republican primary in the sixth district carries a candidate running on his opponent being Jewish. *See Israel and the World.*

Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas are each on the other side of a negotiation, and each of them used the interval to build. Sixty days for Iran, fourteen years of tunnel under Ali al-Taher, ten months of Gaza ceasefire with no weapon handed over. What Washington is asking for in all three is a slower Israel, and what it offers back is a verification nobody has yet had to deliver. And 140,000 Likud members spend today picking who carries that argument into the next Knesset.

The War Today

Iran Spent the Sixty Days Rebuilding What Israel Burned in February

The sixty-day window the United States and Iran signed in June ran out at midnight with no agreement and no talks about extending it. Tehran's foreign ministry spent this morning saying there was never a sixty-day deadline in the text at all, that the talks never started because Washington broke the memorandum weeks after signing it, and that the date has lost its meaning.

Iran spent the two months getting ready for a bigger war. Arab and Iranian officials describe hardliners meeting after the signing. They read the memorandum as American and Israeli time-buying, a pause to let the world economy recover before the next round. Missile and drone production went up. The Revolutionary Guards took authority over the regular army. Iran-Iraq War veterans went into the senior jobs: Ahmad Vahidi at the head of the Guards under a decree instructing him to prepare powerful offensive operations, Mohsen Rezaei onto the Supreme National Security Council with the

Hormuz question frozen underneath him, Hossein Taeb back to run the Basij as a domestic counterintelligence net against Israeli penetration. Advisers went out to Iraq, Yemen and Lebanon. The Guards gave the Houthis target lists that included Saudi ports and energy sites before July's escalation, and gave the Gulf states lists of their own energy facilities as a warning. Kuwaiti forces stopped an IRGC cell that came ashore by fishing boat in May.

Those appointments went out on 10 August under decrees issued in Mojtaba Khamenei's name. Nobody has seen him since the strike that killed his father on the war's first day, and there is no public evidence that he is personally directing any of it.

Five commodity ships crossed the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday. None crossed on Sunday. Thirty-one made the passage the weekend before, against the hundred and thirty a day that ran before Tehran shut the water at the end of February and opened the Iran war that has not ended since. Iran's foreign ministry spokesman, Esmail Baghaei, says an understanding has now been reached on the map of the transit route, to be finalized as a package of map plus joint statement, with ships crossing free of charge in the interim, entering near Iran and leaving near Oman. Trump's answer to that, to Fox on Monday: if Oman gets in the way, "we'll bomb the shit out of them."

The Guards' political deputy says Iran is shifting from a defensive stance to an offensive one and that its enemies should expect strategic surprises. An adviser to the Guards' commander says the force has been told to build the ability to run operations far outside Iran. Iran's army commander posted a bounty on Sunday of thirty thousand dollars, or five billion tomans, for any Iranian who kills or captures an American serviceman, double for a woman, with the killer's rifle bought back at twice its price for a museum. And Hamzeh Safavi, whose father advised the dead Supreme Leader and who holds no office of his own, asked publicly who can guarantee that Iran's enriched uranium is only what it has declared. If the Islamic Republic does not survive, he said, Israel will not survive either.

ASSESSMENT

Washington spent sixty days negotiating with Iranians it could not confirm were empowered to close anything. In May it went around its own counterparts, using the Kurdish president in Erbil to reach Vahidi on an encrypted phone and ask whether the Guards actually stood behind Araghchi and Ghalibaf. Vahidi said they did and that he preferred a negotiated way out, and he now runs the Guards under an order to prepare offensive operations. Trump confirmed that channel on Monday and said he has no time schedule and is in no hurry, and that what he wants from Tehran is "the white flag of surrender." Sixty days is what no hurry cost. Israel's part in this stretch has been intelligence and readiness. The readiness is for a missile array that Israeli officials watching the rebuild say has come back faster than anyone forecast.

Israel Builds for Days of Fighting on the Ali al-Taher Ridge

The IDF is preparing for several days of combat on the Ali al-Taher ridge in south Lebanon, where dozens of Hezbollah men are sealed into tunnels the

army is working to collapse. Northern Command has cut the supply routes in and is hunting the drones trying to reach them. They have been coming up at night to look for food. A senior officer put the terms plainly: come out and surrender and you go to Israel for questioning, stay down there and you die or we kill you.

Hezbollah has claimed more than seventy explosive-drone attacks since March, and since the ceasefire took effect in April the fiber-optic FPV has been its main way of reaching Israeli troops inside the security zone. The cable beats the jammers. The IDF has tested more than a hundred countermeasures, the Iron Drone Raider among them, and none of them works yet.

The air force struck a Hezbollah command post at Ansar and killed Ali Samir al-Haj Hassan, a Radwan battalion commander, then killed Abu Hassan Alaa of the Badr unit at Deir ez-Zahrani. Hassan's family was inside the command post with him and was hit. The IDF says they were not the target and that he had them there as shields. Beirut is now telling its own press that contacts with Washington produced an understanding — Israel stops at the strikes it has already run, Hezbollah does not avenge its two commanders — and that Aoun, Berri and Salam have signed on to the calm.

The State Department said the pilot-zone process is the only viable path for either country, that clearance has to be verified before the zones expand, and that disarming Hezbollah is integral to the June Israel-Lebanon-US framework, which ties Israel's pullback to a verified disarmament. It also said Hezbollah is the single obstacle to Lebanon's recovery and bears sole responsibility for Israeli soldiers standing on Lebanese ground.

ASSESSMENT

Israel holds the surface of Ali al-Taher. The operation that ends the tunnels underneath it is the one Washington has not released. The political echelon has turned down the army's heavier proposals twice this month to keep the Rome round alive, and Beirut now puts the timing in American hands. What sits under that ridge was built over fourteen years. Captured Hamas documents show Hamas, Hezbollah and the Quds Force working since 2012 on a Hamas force inside Lebanon, with combat units, a rocket network, infiltration planning, a joint operations room running out of Beirut through the 2021 round, and Sinwar's 2022 push for two thousand men to fight beside Radwan. The IDF's read this week is that the three of them have started coordinating again.

Closed Dossier: [The Jihadist Continuum](#) — The Dossier's argument is that Hamas, Hezbollah and the Quds Force belong to one system and not three franchises, which is what the captured documents describe in the concrete — a joint operations room running out of Beirut through the 2021 round, and Sinwar's push for two thousand Hamas men to fight beside Radwan. ##### Kushner Carries Israel's Disarmament Terms into Egypt, Then Comes to Collect

Jared Kushner sat down with Khalil al-Hayya at El-Alamein yesterday, his first meeting with Hamas since the ceasefire talks of October 2025, and told him there is nothing to negotiate about disarmament. Nickolay Mladenov, Tony Blair and two Board of Peace advisers were in the room, along with Egypt's

intelligence chief Hassan Rashad, Qatar's Ali al-Thawadi and a senior Turkish official. Ninety minutes. Hamas restated its commitment to demilitarization and conditioned it, as it has every time, on Israel stopping first.

By the accounts coming out of that meeting, Kushner and Mladenov refused Hamas's proposal to store the weapons and told the delegation the arms come out of Gaza rather than sitting inside it. That is Israel's demand. The Board of Peace's own roadmap says something else. Israel signed Trump's twenty-point plan, adopted last November as Security Council Resolution 2803. That document destroys every weapon in Gaza permanently under independent monitors. The Board published its own fifteen-point roadmap on 30 July. Hamas accepted it. Netanyahu rejected it on the record on 9 August, and it stores those same weapons in Palestinian hands under a committee.

The three of them saw Netanyahu in Jerusalem today, and an official put the aim as moving forward on every element of the plan they can. The framework they brought starts civil authority moving to the technocratic committee and lays the groundwork for a weapons handover. It rebuilds the areas Hamas does not hold or that sit on the Yellow Line, mostly around Rafah and in the north, and runs them as pilot zones on the Lebanese model. Those zones get temporary camps for the displaced and civilian services with no Hamas anywhere near them. A vanguard of the international force goes into those zones within weeks, Ugandans and Kosovars first and Moroccans later. The ceasefire renews on the earlier terms. Those terms let the IDF fire on an emerging threat and protect the troops along the Yellow Line.

None of it stopped the shooting. A Givati tank drove over a charge Hamas had planted in the Yellow Line area on Saturday, with nobody hurt. Yesterday the air force killed Tarek al-Ra'i of Islamic Jihad in a tent in Mawasi Khan Yunis and a Hamas operative in Nuseirat, within an hour of each other. Southern Command reads the charge as an escalation along the line. The political echelon still would not authorize a broad strike into Gaza City, because the White House wants strikes there and targeted killings stopped except where a threat is immediate. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, the UAE, Qatar, Turkey, Indonesia and Pakistan spent Sunday putting their names to a joint statement holding Israel responsible for obstructing the peace.

ASSESSMENT

Kushner conceded Israel's substance and came to collect on Israel's sequence. Weapons out of Gaza instead of stored inside it is the whole content of Netanyahu's objection to the fifteen points, and it was given away in a room in Egypt. What Kushner wants back is the strikes halted, the pullback toward the Yellow Line started, the aid opened and the civil handover begun. Three percent of Israelis believe this framework ends with Hamas disarmed and the IDF out of the Strip. The figure holds across left and right. That is a consensus the Board of Peace has to get past before it ever reaches the cabinet. Hamas spent yesterday telling Kushner it is ready to become a political party. In ten months of ceasefire it has handed over no weapons and dissolved no armed formation.

Inside Israel

Likud Votes on a Slate Netanyahu and Ben-Gvir Both Shaped

Polls opened at ten this morning at some eighty stations from Eilat to Kiryat Shmona and close at nine tonight. About 140,000 members mark twelve names each off a ballot of 124 candidates, 79 of them running for the national list and 45 for the seven districts. The count is done by hand, so the first numbers land tonight and the rest tomorrow. What comes out of it is the slate Likud takes to the Knesset Israel elects on 27 October.

Netanyahu voted in Jerusalem and said he is not interfering in the national list. Hours before the stations opened he settled on Dr. Ruth Kabesa Abramzon for the reserved new-woman place at No. 34, and branch heads aligned with him began adding her to their recommended twelve and striking her rivals off. He shortened the membership qualifying period for four candidates so they could run at all, among them Deputy Minister Almog Cohen, who crossed over from Otzma Yehudit. He refused a meeting with Economy Minister Nir Barkat — “no need” — days after a published account of Barkat canvassing ministers and members about replacing him. Tally Gotliv filed against Israel Katz’s reserved place at Likud’s own tribunal, then withdrew the petition. Its president, Michael Kleiner, had written that Katz campaigned in public to the last minute while the reservation was already sealed behind the scenes. “A malfunction that ought not to happen.”

Itamar Ben-Gvir published ten names — Eli Cohen, May Golan, Ofir Katz, Amir Ohana, Idit Silman, Shlomo Karhi, Gotliv, Nissim Vaturi, Sasson Gouetta and Osher Shekalim — and filmed videos for them. He also says four sitting Likud ministers and four Likud members asked him to reserve them places on Otzma Yehudit’s list in case they don’t survive today. In an interview aired Saturday he said he disagrees with the prime minister about Gaza, wants thirty to forty targeted killings a night there, and wants Israeli communities across the Strip.

ASSESSMENT

Ben-Gvir is picking names on a ballot for a party he never joined, and by his own account eight of its officeholders have already asked him for somewhere to land if tonight goes badly. Take the claim at a discount, since he gains from making it and named nobody, and it still describes what Likud’s own ministers think their arithmetic is. A Kan poll last night put Likud down one at 23, level with Gadi Eisenkot’s Yashar. No survey this month has put Netanyahu’s bloc at a majority. Avigdor Liberman closed the other route today, ruling out a minority government and calling fifty-eight seats out of the question. Asked about all this, Trump told Fox he thinks it most appropriate that he stay out of Israel’s elections, and that he may endorse somebody. Netanyahu is holding some of those reserved places back until he sees the results. That part of tonight is not on anybody’s ballot.

Prayer Books Reach the Temple Mount and the Ban Thins Again

Jewish men prayed on the Temple Mount yesterday reading from siddurim, the first time prayer books have gone up. Arnon Segal, who has campaigned for years for Jewish prayer at the site, posted a photograph of men praying

with the books open, towels laid in front of them for prostration. He called it a first experiment, with no blanket permit behind it. The police said the Mount is run according to the instructions of the political leadership, standing practice at the site, and an operational assessment.

The understanding being worked around dates to 1967. Muslims worship on the Mount, Jews pray at the Kotel, Israel holds security and the Waqf runs religious life there. Police started letting Jewish visitors up with a single printed prayer page in January, and prayer books stayed barred until yesterday. Arab League foreign ministers, joined by Turkey, Indonesia, Malaysia and Pakistan, met in Amman on 5 August over what Jordan's Ayman Safadi called an immediate threat of an Israeli takeover at Al-Aqsa.

ASSESSMENT

The arrangement moved by police practice. Safadi convened an emergency session over a threatened takeover on 5 August and came away with a communique. Yesterday somebody carried a book up the stairs.

A Reservist Reached the After-Care and It Did Not Hold

Master Sgt. (res.) Uriel Molto Getahon ז"ל, 24, of Karmiel, took his own life on Thursday. He was not in active service. His platoon in the Nahal Brigade's 932nd Battalion lost two of its men in northern Gaza in February 2024. Two weeks before he died he was at a retreat a veterans' association ran for that platoon, the first time they had all been in one room since discharge, and he stayed behind on the last day to help clear up. The IDF ran an initial review of the circumstances under the framework the committee headed by Maj. Gen. (res.) Moti Almoz set with the Defense Ministry.

Karmiel's mayor, Moshe Koninsky, wrote on Friday that the state, the Defense Ministry and the army are doing things for reservists and it is still not enough. The Central Bureau of Statistics surveyed reservists' families last year. Half the couples said the service had damaged the relationship. Fifty-five percent of the spouses had needed psychological or emotional help. Among families of men serving in the ground forces, 56 percent of the women reported their children's mental state had got worse. Every one of those shares rose with the length of the service.

ASSESSMENT

The retreat that got his platoon into one room was run by a veterans' association, and the state's part in this case is a review that convenes afterward. The army's shortfall is a retention problem on its own Manpower Directorate's reading, and the Central Bureau's numbers show what retention is up against — damage that compounds across rounds instead of resetting between them, on men who are now on their sixth. Koninsky's ask is the cheapest thing on that list and the hardest to staff — finding the men who won't ask.

Israel and the World

Trump Blesses the Mecca Pact as the Gulf Questions American Basing

Trump posted on Truth Social yesterday to congratulate Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan on the Mecca Joint Defense Agreement. The three signed it on 7 August. It shows “how the Middle East is coming together and how countries will finally be able to defend themselves in a more meaningful way,” he wrote, and called it a big, bold, important first step. The pact treats an armed attack on any one of them as an attack on all three. Pakistan’s foreign ministry says that is meant to strengthen collective deterrence. The declaration that came with it rejects Israeli hegemony in the region. Tehran is talking the agreement up too, as proof the neighborhood is walking away from Washington.

Officials from five Gulf governments spent the same weekend telling an American newspaper what they think the pact is for. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain are angrier at Washington than at any point since the Iran war began, three officials and a former American diplomat told the Washington Post. “Trump started this war,” one of them said, “and we are paying the price.” Some of those governments have started asking whether hosting American bases is still worth what it costs them. They are looking at what else is on offer. A European official called Mecca “a signal to the US” from states diversifying their security partnerships. “In their mind, the US is not enough.” A Western diplomat who works the region disputed that much had really moved, then described the movement anyway — American forces were a necessary evil out there before the war, and the necessity is the part now in question.

ASSESSMENT

Trump congratulated an alliance three governments built because they have stopped counting on the one he runs. Analysts on both sides doubt any of the three would actually fight for another, and nothing in the text has been tested yet. What Riyadh bought was the signal, and the government it was aimed at has now endorsed it. [I keep being told this thing is NATO. Pakistan’s last deployment to the Kingdom turned up after the shooting stopped.] The eight foreign ministries that promised practical steps against Israel a week ago put their names yesterday to a statement demanding Washington force Israeli compliance with a roadmap Israel never signed, and all three Mecca signatories are on it.

Trump Cuts Seoul’s Drills Over Its Refusal to Join the Iran War

Trump ordered the Pentagon yesterday to shrink Ulchi Freedom Shield, the eleven-day exercise American and South Korean forces run every summer. He gave two reasons in the same post. He has a very good relationship with Kim Jong Un, and the drills “send a signal that is totally inappropriate and hostile” to a North Korea that has been “unthreatening and respectful” while he has been in office. Then the second one. “I recently asked the President of South Korea if they would like to join us in the Denuclearization of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and they said, ‘No thanks!’” It was too late to call the exercise off, he wrote, so he told Pete Hegseth to substantially reduce it.

About 18,000 South Korean soldiers were due to take part, alongside the 28,500 American personnel stationed in the country. Seoul said the exercise

would go ahead as scheduled, and it opened this morning. Pyongyang resumed banned ballistic-missile tests this month and calls the drills a rehearsal for a war of aggression. Back in May, Hegseth was holding South Korea up as the burden-sharing model every American partner should copy.

The money for the Iran war is stuck a few blocks from the Pentagon. Russell Vought asked Congress in June for \$87.6 billion. Of that, \$17.3 billion covers operating costs and \$21 billion buys back munitions and rebuilds the industry that makes them, after the Pentagon ran its long-range missiles and interceptors down. Both chambers have already passed war-powers resolutions ordering Trump to wind the war down, and the administration's answer is that the War Powers Act is unconstitutional. Ruben Gallego, who fought in Iraq as a Marine, says he will not discuss money until somebody tells him the mission and the way out. "It's like giving a drunk more money and hoping that they'll stop drinking." Don Bacon, a Nebraska Republican who isn't running again, says Trump spent months promising a deal tomorrow and has only now leveled with Americans that this is a long fight. Iran has killed around a thousand of them, Bacon says, six hundred in Iraq with roadside bombs Tehran built and shipped. Trump's own line last week was that four-dollar gasoline is what it costs to keep a nuclear weapon out of Tehran's hands, and that he will never apologize for it.

ASSESSMENT

Trump has turned the Iran war into a loyalty test for American allies, and Seoul just failed it in public. What matters for Israel is whether the campaign pinning Iran has the endurance to finish, and the Congress that will decide has already voted in both chambers to end the war. The IDF has been preparing the option of going back at Iran on its own if the American war stops.

Norway Funds the Foundation Hamas Used as Its Channel Into Brussels

Internal Hamas records recovered in Gaza, declassified by the IDF and translated by NGO Monitor, put senior Hamas men in a room with the Norwegian Center for Conflict Resolution on 15 May 2021. They were working out how the foundation might mediate between Hamas and the European Union. NOREF describes itself as an independent foundation. Norway's government set it up. Norway's foreign ministry pays for most of it.

Basem Naim, who runs Hamas's foreign relations office in Gaza, sat with NOREF's deputy head Marte Heian-Engdal, its Middle East department head Frida Nome and its advisor Ziad Abu Mustafa. Hamas set out how it planned to use conditions on the ground to move the European position. The Norwegians asked which channels between Hamas and the EU were already working, and how they could help without getting in the way. One of them thanked Hamas for facilitating meetings on a joint youth project.

A second document, from August 2022, has Hamas coordinating a Norwegian delegation's entry into Gaza through the same advisor. By then NOREF was running a training program in political and social reconciliation with thirty participants drawn from Hamas, Fatah, Islamic Jihad, the PFLP and the DFLP.

Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the PFLP are all on the European Union's own terror list. NOREF and Norway's foreign ministry were both asked about it. Neither has answered.

ASSESSMENT

Hamas read the Norwegians correctly in 2021, and it took a document recovered in Gaza to put that on the record. Norway sits outside the European Union and was funding a route into the Union's Hamas policy anyway, through a body whose independence is a description of its letterhead. [Norway has been at this since 1993, when they got a whole peace process named after them. I'd still like to know what anyone thinks it bought.] Nobody in Oslo put a state-funded table with Islamic Jihad and the PFLP at it to a vote, and nobody in Brussels was asked either. None of this costs Norway a thing until a European parliament asks the question.

Tomorrow's Florida Ballot Tests Whether Jew-Hate Wins a Primary

Dan Bilzerian is on tomorrow's Republican ballot against Randy Fine in Florida's sixth district, and he has run the whole campaign on Fine being Jewish. His closing ad is an AI video that calls Fine a "fat Jew," a "Jewish supremacist" and "Shylock," grows horns out of his forehead, says he rapes children, and asks over footage of Hitler whether we should "revisit that Austrian painter's opinions." Bilzerian has 28 million Instagram followers. He boasts about his Holocaust denial and wants Israel's existence ended. James Fishback is running in the governor's primary against Byron Donalds on a defense of Nick Fuentes and the groypers, plus a run of taunts about Donalds being Black.

Three Jewish pro-Israel Democrats are being primaried the same day. Jared Moskowitz faces DSA member Oliver Larkin in a district that is a quarter Jewish. Debbie Wasserman Schultz faces Elijah Manley, a former DSA member who converted to Judaism as an adult. Lois Frankel faces Victoria Doyle, who is running at AIPAC. Rashida Tlaib rallied with Larkin, Manley and Senate candidate Angie Nixon on Friday, after the Jewish-owned venue that had taken the booking cancelled it and a second venue backed out too.

Rick Scott named both Republicans in an interview and said the party has to "fight, fight, fight" them. Ted Cruz called Bilzerian a brazen Nazi. Mike Huckabee said he had taken Jew-hate to a new low. Moskowitz survived a credible assassination attempt in 2024 and has taken death threats since, most of it tied to his being Jewish. He has raised close to three million dollars against Larkin's \$689,000. Republican-leaning Orthodox voters in his district have been re-registering as Democrats so they can vote for him tomorrow.

ASSESSMENT

This is the first Florida ballot a voter can answer with open Jew-hate in either primary, and both parties are handling it by pointing at the other one. Scott named Fishback and Bilzerian, which is more than most Republicans have managed, and then closed the same interview with "they belong in the Democrat Party, which embraces them." What is expected to beat Larkin and Manley is demography — an older, less urban district a quarter Jewish, plus Cubans and Venezuelans who already left socialism once. Demography holds where it holds, and it travels nowhere. The people who organized against Larkin did it by changing their party registration.

Briefly Noted

Frontline & Security

- *Jerusalem Post*: Coalition forces shot down three bomb-laden drones over Erbil early Friday, and Iran and its Iraqi militias have now put more than 950 drones and missiles into the Kurdistan Region since the Iran war opened at the end of February, killing 32. Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada denied this one and said a partial agreement is holding its fire — a US-designated terror group announcing its own ceasefire from inside the Popular Mobilization Forces, which is the Iraqi state's own paramilitary.
- *Israel Hayom*: The Gaza flotilla boat Handala 2 got as far as a marina in Kiel, hit the pier hard enough to do at least 30,000 euros of damage, and limped back to Denmark on Saturday with its own engine wrecked. The campaign funding it has sat at a tenth of its target for ten days without a donation, and the captain still says they will sail for Gaza in September or October.

Diplomacy & Geopolitics

- *Jerusalem Post*: Israel's defense minister, Israel Katz, signed a defense-cooperation memorandum on Sunday with his Honduran counterpart Enrique Rodriguez Burchard, whose delegation — the defense and internal-security ministers and the chief of the joint staff — came to hear what Israel's defense industry has to sell. Honduras, which moved its embassy to Jerusalem in 2021, pulled its ambassador after October 7 and sent a new one this month.
- *Israel Hayom*: Israel's Home Front Command delegation is the largest rescue mission working in Colombia a week after the earthquake, holding three of the five live collapse sites around Cali, and its commander, Brig. Gen. Yossi Pinto, expects the search to close in two days and his engineers to turn to reconstruction. Colombia's defense minister thanked him on a video call Pinto took in the wreckage, and used it to talk about rebuilding the two countries' historic ties.

Public Diplomacy & Media

- *Jerusalem Post*: Iran's parliament approved a bill in principle yesterday that would jail Iranians for up to two years for giving an interview to American or Israeli media, and make talking to any other foreign outlet a matter for the intelligence ministry. A Tehran court gave the photojournalist Yalda Moaiery fifteen years this month under the law already on the books — interviews, and photographs handed to American and Israeli-linked organizations.
- *Times of Israel*: Britain's Home Office is investigating Code Pink's funding as part of its work on foreign interference, and the Justice Department has put Neville Roy Singham's alleged China ties before a federal grand jury. The worry in London is said to be political warfare — Beijing paying to widen Britain's own divisions.

Am Yisrael

- *Jewish Insider*: Thirty-six House members from both parties asked Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin to strip the conditions the Trump administration has attached to the Nonprofit Security Grant Program — security money tied to cooperating with ICE and to ending DEI programs, plus a new clause letting FEMA cancel an award “for convenience.” Congregations front the cost of the work and get reimbursed later, so a cancellation halfway through comes out of their own pocket.
- *JNS*: About 200 people, worked up by a local social-media campaign calling the place illegal, threw stones and firecrackers at the two-week-old Chabad House in Hiriketiya, Sri Lanka, on Friday night, menaced Israelis walking to services, and came back on Saturday. Rabbi Yossi Gabai says the state authorities have been supportive and the local police want him out of the town — the sign is not up on the building yet, and he is staying.

Domestic & Law

- *Arutz Sheva*: Moshe Pinchi, who commands the police district in Judea and Samaria, answered Defense Minister Israel Katz’s order to take civilian law enforcement off the army by naming his terms — the Border Police under his district, and the men and the money to work it. His reason is growth: the farms that have gone up outside the established communities are what the current split between the army and the police does not cover.
- *Ynet News*: The Knesset Research and Information Center puts 3,800 Israelis moving home in 2024 against 8,000 in 2020, the American figure down from 3,700 to 1,500, and the migration balance negative by about 140,000 over the three years to 2024. A returning Israeli gets less from the state than a new immigrant does on direct payments, tax and higher education, and nothing at all on housing.

Economy, Tech & Infrastructure

- *Globes*: Decart’s three founders are in the final stages of a \$6 billion sale to Anthropic that should leave each of them a billionaire and puts the American AI company on the ground in Israel. They turned down an Nvidia offer estimated at \$7 to \$8 billion to take the smaller one mostly in Anthropic shares, ahead of the New York listing.
- *Arutz Sheva*: A Midgam poll the ZIM workers’ committee commissioned puts 67 percent of Israel’s Jews against selling the shipping company to a buyer whose shareholders include Qatari entities, with 2.4 percent willing to approve it anyway.

Culture, Religion & Society

- *Times of Israel*: A group of youths broke a window at the Kol HaNeshama Reform congregation in Jerusalem’s Baka at half past midnight on Shabbat, climbed through it into an empty sanctuary, tore a Pride flag and damaged a work of art hanging in the room.

- *Israel Hayom*: Someone went through the Church of St. Anthony on Yefet Street in Jaffa yesterday morning, pulling statues off their stands and snapping crosses across the chairs and the floor — police had a Jaffa man in his twenties in custody by the early hours.

Developments to Watch

Judea & Samaria

- **Americans are going to Qusra** — A delegation of senior American officials is due in the Samaria village within days, and has asked Israeli defense officials to come along and explain what is happening there. The Shin Bet is building the case against the Israelis who besieged two homes on the village edge and the army has handed the police dozens of photographs, so what the delegation walks into is an Israeli investigation already running.

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

- **Moscow gets back onto the Syrian coast** — A Syrian Airlines flight from Moscow landed in Damascus yesterday, the first civilian service since Assad fell, days after the two governments agreed to turn Russia's two Mediterranean bases into joint Syrian-Russian training centers. Damascus is buying a Security Council patron with basing rights, and Israel operates in that country every week.

Gaza & Southern Theater

- **Militias are back on the Yellow Line** — Journalists tied to Hamas report the first activity by anti-Hamas militias in about two weeks: a cell entering a building near the Yellow Line in eastern Gaza City, an explosion that brought the building down, and attack helicopters firing afterward. Hamas cannot present itself as the party that governs Gaza while there are armed Palestinians inside it who answer to somebody else.

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

- **Tehran will not take its pilot back** — Qatar says its search teams recovered the remains of one of the three Iranian pilots Tehran accuses it of holding, offered Tehran the handover, and invited it to review the rescue records. Iran has answered none of it, and Doha is one of two governments still carrying its messages to Washington.

Diplomatic & Legal

- **Two British regulators land on Al-Khair** — The Charity Commission has opened a statutory inquiry into the Al-Khair Foundation over alleged Hamas ties, and Britain's Department for Education is now assessing the four Muslim independent schools the charity runs. One of its employees was extradited to the United States last week and charged with conspiring

to provide material support to Hamas, and the schools are due to open again next month.

- **Jerusalem opens schools in Shuafat** — The municipality says the buildings UNRWA has been running in the Shuafat camp are privately owned, that the city holds a usage agreement from the owners, and that it intends to open its own educational institutions there. UNRWA calls that an unauthorized entry into its school compound and its clinic, and the owners say the agency took the buildings and never paid rent on them.

Home Front & Politics

- **The High Court hears the frozen transfers tomorrow** — Justice Alex Stein froze five budget transfers on 5 August over the way the Finance Committee was convened during the election recess, and a three-justice panel takes the case tomorrow with hundreds of millions of shekels still held. What the panel is really deciding is how far Knesset Speaker Amir Ohana can authorize parliamentary business after the coalition-opposition mechanism has refused it.
- **Likud gives Fly&Vote five days** — Likud's lawyers wrote yesterday giving the organizations flying Israelis home to vote five days to hand over their documents and stop, citing the Knesset Elections Law on election bribery. Noam Sohlberg, who chairs the Central Elections Committee, also ruled yesterday that parties get station turnout on election day and never a voter's name, so the ground game both sides can run is being settled ten weeks out.
- **The polygraph goes to ministers on Wednesday** — The ministerial committee on Shin Bet affairs meets Wednesday to approve a request from the new National Security Council head, Shmuel Ben Ezra, that every NSC employee sit a standing polygraph, which Shin Bet professionals resisted on manpower grounds and the service's chief, David Zini, approved anyway. Until it passes, the staff writing the prime minister's options cannot read the intelligence those options rest on.

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