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READER EDITION

August 19, 2026

ISRAEL BRIEF

Wednesday, August 19

Iran fires ballistic missiles at Emirati waters and loses its last Gulf market by midnight, and Trump declares the talks over.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE Vindman outspent Nixon sixteen to one and lost by twelve, and AIPAC's four and a half million in a Bay Area special election is not buying that one either. Money stopped being the variable in these races in Michigan. The House districts held because there are enough Jews in a few square miles of South Florida to be a constituency, and a senator is elected statewide, where that rounds to nothing. The people whose job was to see it coming spent sixteen million dollars finding out. [I'd like someone to explain what the party just bought. Ashley Moody was beatable in November and now she isn't.]

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Israel Brief: Wednesday, August 19

Iran fires ballistic missiles at Emirati waters and loses its last Gulf market by midnight, and Trump declares the talks over.

THREE governments told Israel no yesterday, and not one of them had anything behind it — an objection, a denial, a letter to the Security Council. What moved instead sat with people who needed nobody's permission: a chief of staff's signature, a lands authority's tender, a secretary of state's list of names.

FLASH BRIEF

- **Syria:** Israel puts its name on eight strikes at the Abu al-Duhur airbase, and Washington's envoy objects. *See The War Today.*
- **Gaza:** The IDF kills a Nukhba company commander at Shati, hours after Kushner withholds the October 7 carve-out. *See The War Today.*
- **Iran:** Iran fires two ballistic missiles at Emirati waters, and Abu Dhabi halts all trade and finance with Tehran. *See The War Today.*
- **Hormuz:** Trump ends the Iran talks and maps the strait as American territory, and Ghalibaf names his terms for reopening it. *See Israel and the World.*
- **Damascus:** Syria keeps the Assad-era nuclear material it told the IAEA last month it would hand over. *See Israel and the World.*
- **Judea and Samaria:** The Israel Lands Authority markets E1's first 1,400 homes, thirty-two years after Rabin proposed the corridor. *See Inside Israel.*
- **Draft:** The Attorney General puts haredim at 83 percent of draft evaders and 10 percent of indictments. *See Inside Israel.*
- **The Hague:** Rubio sanctions the ICC's president and a lawyer off the team that sought Netanyahu's warrant. *See Israel and the World.*
- **Florida:** Both Republicans who ran on Jew-hate lose badly, and a DSA member takes the Senate nomination. *See Israel and the World.*

What Washington has left in these arguments is the objection and the furniture around it — a deconfliction cell staffed around the clock in four languages, and a sanctions list that now reaches the judge presiding over the ICC. Neither stops a strike, and neither was built to. What settled anything settled closer to home, where a tender on the market is harder to undo than the cabinet decision behind it.

The War Today

Israel Owns the Idlib Strike and Washington Objects

Netanyahu's office confirmed late last night, in an English statement on X, that Israel carried out the overnight strikes on the Abu al-Duhur airbase in Syria's Idlib province. Eight of them, on the runway and the storage sheds.

Material damage and no casualties, by Damascus's own account. The stated reason: Israel and Syria had agreed a status quo on security matters, and Syria was on the verge of breaking it by letting Turkish troops deploy at the base. Jerusalem says it warned Damascus repeatedly and was ignored. Apparently the first Israeli strike on Syrian government assets since March, and the first Israel has put its name to in months.

Tom Barrack, Washington's ambassador in Ankara and Trump's envoy for Syria, called the strikes "an unnecessary escalation that does not advance regional stability." He defended the government of Ahmad al-Sharaa, the former jihadist commander who took Damascus in 2024, as one that "has neither adopted a predatory posture nor maintained proxy forces." Then he went further this morning. Turkish forces had no warning and watched aircraft heading north toward their own territory. They "could potentially have been inclined to scramble their own jets in the belief that they themselves were under attack." He is now working on a standing Israel-Syria-Turkey deconfliction cell, staffed around the clock in Hebrew, Arabic, English and Turkish.

Ankara called the Israeli explanation "frivolous," denied there had ever been a Turkish presence at the base, and put the accusation down to a wish to keep up "expansionist and destabilizing policies" before Israel's election. Damascus asked the Security Council to take a position. A Syrian foreign-ministry official then told Al Jazeera that no specific security arrangement with Israel exists at all.

ASSESSMENT

Israel bombed T4's runways in April 2025 as Turkish engineers moved in, reportedly for the reason it bombed Abu al-Duhur's last night. Turkish radar and interceptors in northern Syria would close the airspace the air force needs over Syria, and on the route to western Iran. What's new is Washington answered, defending a government founded by a former jihadist against an Israeli security claim and offering Ankara a chair at a deconfliction table. [Israel has been striking Syria for two years without a Turkish-speaking duty officer on the line. That is what's being offered as the improvement.] Damascus then denied any security understanding with Israel exists, which leaves Jerusalem accused of over-enforcing a status quo one of its two parties won't admit to. And al-Shibani announced that Syria is keeping nuclear material in the same week Washington is asking Israel to go easier on the government holding it.

Kushner Withholds the October 7 Carve-Out and Israel Takes It Anyway

The IDF struck a gathering of Hamas commanders yesterday evening in the Shati area, on the coast west of Gaza City. A Nukhba company commander, three platoon commanders and several other operatives. One of them came through the fence into Israel on October 7. The army said they were preparing attacks on troops inside the Strip, that it used precise munitions and aerial surveillance beforehand, and that it would publish results once verified. The men were meeting at a cafe by the fishermen's port. Hamas's civil defense put the dead at six including a child and the wounded at fourteen, and Shifa hospital said it took in five bodies and thirteen injured, one of

whom died later in the evening. Defense Minister Israel Katz set out the policy in one line: remove threats, eliminate terrorists, and exact retribution from anyone who took part in the October 7 massacre.

The strike landed hours after Jared Kushner's plane left. The main dispute in his four-hour meeting with Netanyahu on Monday was the prime minister's insistence that Israel keeps killing the men who carried out the October 7 attack. Trump's envoy said he wouldn't object to strikes on a genuine imminent threat, and told Netanyahu the rationale should not be read broadly. Netanyahu said the strikes continue. Nobody agreed on anything, by the account of an official in the room. Since 3 August a strike in Gaza needs the approval of the chief of staff, Eyal Zamir, with a standing exception for immediate threats to soldiers and to the border communities. Shati went through the exception.

The sequencing moved the same day. Gaza's ceasefire has held since last October under Trump's 20-point plan and Security Council Resolution 2803, which Israel signed and which puts every weapon in the Strip permanently beyond use under independent monitors. The Board of Peace's separate 15-point roadmap of 30 July, which Hamas accepted and Israel never signed, phases Hamas's disarmament against Israeli withdrawals. A Board official now says they mean to drop the phasing for a single move — every weapon out of Gaza, then a complete IDF withdrawal. It "reduces the gamble" for the states involved, he said. Kushner gave Fox the same schedule: weapons starting to come out inside 30 days, tunnels filled in 60 to 90. If Hamas doesn't perform, he said, Israel will have "a lot more support from the US and others to go and finish the job." Hamas answered yesterday that it remains committed to the roadmap and that Israel still hasn't given the mediators clear approval of it.

ASSESSMENT

Netanyahu asked for the October 7 exemption, didn't get it, and used it anyway. Moving approval up to Zamir while keeping the immediate-threat exception leaves the roster the joint IDF and Shin Bet cell built out of the killers' own footage — about 5,000 faces, 2,800 of them already dead — a live target list. It gets worked through a threat justification instead of a name. [Kushner sat down with Khalil al-Hayya in Cairo on Sunday. Elliott Abrams called that a mistake that helps legitimize them, and I can't improve on it.] The larger movement is the Board of Peace backing away from its own phasing toward Israel's sequence. That pulls the one document Hamas actually signed off the table, and leaves Hamas publicly committed to a plan nobody now intends to run.

Iran Fires Missiles at the Emirates and Loses Its Last Gulf Market

The UAE's defense ministry said its air defenses tracked two ballistic missiles launched from Iran yesterday evening, one falling inside Emirati territorial waters and one outside. Nobody was hurt. Sirens sounded in Dubai and Sharjah, and the interior ministry issued the all-clear within the hour. By the ministry's own assessment the missiles were aimed at shipping. It was the first Iranian missile fire at the Emirates since 4 May, when a strike damaged the petroleum complex at Fujairah. That is the port whose pipeline runs

around the Strait of Hormuz — the water Tehran closed at the end of February and has kept shut through six months of war with Israel and the United States. Iran's foreign ministry called the Emirati account baseless.

Hours later the Emirati foreign ministry announced that all trade, commercial exchange and financial transactions with Iran are halted until further notice, citing Iran's regional escalation. Brent went to nearly \$92, its highest this month. Saudi Aramco resumed loading crude from inside the strait last week after weeks of suspension, three very large carriers taking two million barrels each out of Juaymah and Ras Tanura between 12 and 16 August. The Houthis put drones into Aramco's Jizan refinery on the Red Sea coast the same day.

Washington is costing out its own exit. The Pentagon's policy office, the Joint Staff and CENTCOM are weighing pulling American forces back from the Gulf and, in some cases, not rebuilding the bases Iran damaged. One option moves troops and infrastructure west, into an area that includes Jordan and Israel. Nineteen American soldiers have been killed and hundreds wounded since February, most of them in strikes on those bases. Brad Cooper, who runs CENTCOM, backs discussing the move. Six commodity ships crossed Hormuz on Tuesday against a ten-day average of eleven, and better than 80 percent of everything that crossed in the past fortnight took the Omani lane under American escort — the route Tehran rejects and cannot charge for.

ASSESSMENT

Iran shot at the last Gulf economy still doing business with it and lost that business by midnight. Escalation is what a regime reaches for when it has nothing left to trade, and this one now has one less place to move money and no grip on the water it closed. The Pentagon drawdown is the thing Tehran has demanded for forty years, and it is arriving as a force-protection decision taken after nineteen American dead. The westward option puts US aircraft and bases where Israel's already are, which changes the region's working map more than any post about annexing a waterway.

Inside Israel

E1 Moves From Planning to Contractors After Thirty-Two Years

The Israel Lands Authority put the first 1,400 housing units of E1 out to contractors yesterday. E1 is twelve square kilometers of Judean Desert between Maale Adumim, an Israeli city of about 40,000, and Jerusalem. Built out, it joins the two into one metropolis, and the full plan runs to roughly 3,400 units.

What it does to the map is the reason it took this long. Arab building runs up the eastern side of Jerusalem to Ramallah and down to Bethlehem, and E1 cuts through it and carries Jewish contiguity east toward the Jordan Valley. Both sides say the same thing about that. Bezalel Smotrich, standing in Maale Adumim a year ago when the government approved the plan, said E1 construction buries the idea of a Palestinian state. Wafa, the Palestinian

Authority's news agency, describes the project's chief object as undermining a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

Yitzhak Rabin proposed E1 in 1994. Maale Adumim's mayor, Guy Yifrach, marked the announcement by saying that after more than thirty years of promises, struggles and international pressure, the vision is turning into reality.

ASSESSMENT

Every prime minister since Rabin has said yes to E1 and not one of them put a unit on the market. International pressure held it at the planning stage for thirty-two years, and it's stopped holding. Marketing isn't pouring foundations, and whoever wins in October can cancel a tender — but a contractor holding a signed bid is harder to undo than a cabinet decision, and this is the corridor that decides whether Jerusalem ends up a border town.

Field Dossier: *Where Israel Must Stand* — The Dossier's argument is that Israel decides which ground it will keep by choosing where it builds and defends first, which is the claim a 1,400-unit tender in the corridor between Maale Adumim and Jerusalem settles in a way thirty-two years of approvals did not. #####
Haredim Are 83 Percent of Draft Evaders and 10 Percent of Indictments

The Attorney General's office filed its enforcement update with the High Court yesterday. Of the 60,217 men the IDF declared draft evaders last year, about 50,000 are haredi — 83 percent, out of a community that is roughly 14 percent of the country. Of the 41,000 men carrying arrest warrants, about 31,600 are haredi. Of the 348 indictments filed for evasion since January, 34 were against haredi men.

Gali Baharav-Miara wants the personal economic penalties widened and wants the army and police back to planned operations and arrests across the whole population. The professionals told her why they stopped. Running an arrest in the haredi sector brings disorder on a scale that eats the resources. Police managed 860 proactive arrests over the past year across every population, 244 of them for desertion, evasion or a military-court warrant. Her own summary calls the result unequal enforcement, and over-enforcement of everyone else.

Moshe Gafni leads Degel HaTorah inside United Torah Judaism and answered that she has no authority over yeshiva students. He called her impudent and corrupt, noted that the government voted to remove her, and said yeshiva students will go on studying their Talmud and nothing will stop them.

ASSESSMENT

Arrests and economic penalties are two of the four things the Attorney General's office credits for haredi enlistment rising to 4,298 last year from 2,811, and the arrests have stopped. The army and the police told her why: they can run a proactive operation anywhere except the one sector where the evasion sits, because of what happens on the street when they try. That's a decision about public order described as a shortage of manpower. It lands on the High Court's docket because the coalition wrote Torah study into a Basic Law in July instead of settling conscription in the Knesset. Gafni's answer is a claim about the Attorney General, not about a conscription law nobody has repealed.

Israel and the World

Washington Sanctions the ICC's President and the Lawyer on Netanyahu's Case

Marco Rubio put the president of the International Criminal Court under American sanctions yesterday, along with one of the lawyers who asked for Netanyahu's arrest warrant. Tomoko Akane, a Japanese judge, presides over the court. Abdoulaye Seye, from Senegal, sat on the prosecution team behind the November 2024 warrants for Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant, and he is standing for election to the court's own bench. Both lose any assets inside American jurisdiction and get cut off from the banks that clear dollars. Treasury gave anyone still doing business with either of them until 17 September to unwind it.

Rubio called the ICC "a corrupt and fatally politicized supranational court" and said the administration is ready to keep going "until it is incapable of threatening American sovereignty," with more governments expected to end their funding and their membership. At least eleven of the court's officials were already under sanctions, nine of them judges, plus the chief prosecutor. Trump has said the campaign is about defending Netanyahu and others from prosecution rather than himself.

The court answered that the sanctions "undermine the rule of law" and that it stands behind its people. The Dutch foreign minister, whose government hosts it, invited Akane in to talk about continued support. Netanyahu thanked Rubio and called the ICC a kangaroo court. [I'd take the sanctions too. They still don't get him through an airport.]

ASSESSMENT

Washington has stopped arguing the warrant and started sanctioning the people who run the court. Seye is the sharp end of it — a lawyer off the Netanyahu prosecution team, designated by the United States while he stands for a seat on the bench, so 125 member governments now get to decide whether to elect a sanctioned man. Five states have filed to leave the Rome Statute since June, and not one of them left over Israel. A withdrawal takes a year to bite and leaves every case already opened running, warrant included.

Damascus Reverses on Giving Up Its Assad-Era Nuclear Material

Syria's foreign minister Asaad al-Shaibani said the several tons of nuclear material his government reported to the IAEA last month will stay in Syrian custody, a week after Syria's own atomic energy commission confirmed the agency would take it out of the country. He claimed a "sovereign and legal right" to civilian nuclear power and said technical assessments show the material carries no risk. Rafael Grossi stood beside him in Damascus and called the disclosure a "courageous decision," said the material "could be put to bad use," and said it would be accounted for and placed under international safeguards. Neither man said anything about it leaving.

Grossi's inspectors also went to Deir Ezzor, shut for eighteen years, where Israel destroyed a reactor in September 2007 that the agency later assessed was being built with North Korean help. The excavation there, he said, "validates the longstanding evaluation of the IAEA that a nuclear facility was being built in secrecy." Inspectors found uranium particles at the site in 2024.

Shaibani used the same podium to condemn Israeli strikes in Syria and to demand an immediate end to what he called Israeli violations. His government spent Monday in Istanbul with Tom Barrack working through the American sanctions it still carries. Syria has been designated a state sponsor of terrorism since 1979. Trump moved to rescind that in July, and the 45-day congressional review is still running.

ASSESSMENT

Damascus has worked out what safeguards cost, and the answer is nothing. It reported the site and opened Deir Ezzor, and it keeps the material — a month after an American-brokered understanding that was supposed to get it out of the country. The one American lever left expires this month: the terror designation Trump moved to lift in July, and Damascus spent Monday in Istanbul working on it. Nineteen years on, Grossi stood at Deir Ezzor and said the excavation validates what the agency always suspected. The air force settled that in 2007.

Trump Ends the Iran Talks and Maps Hormuz as American Territory

Trump declared the talks with Iran over yesterday, a day after the sixty-day memorandum his administration signed in June through Pakistani mediation expired without the permanent end to the war it was written to produce. "There are no talks or conversations going on, or scheduled, with the Islamic Republic of Iran," he wrote. The naval blockade stays in force, he added, the Strait of Hormuz is "open and operating," and every mine has been "removed or detonated." Hours earlier he had posted a map of the strait captioned "New U.S. Territory," an idea he floated at a rally on Friday and endorsed to reporters on Monday, when he also refused to extend it. "We control it with the blockade, and I like the idea of declaring it a territory." The waterway lies inside Iranian and Omani territorial waters.

American officials describe a change of strategy behind the posts. Trump has told his senior envoys to stop their conversations with Tehran, and the White House has been telling political allies it is moving from hitting Iran as soon as possible to strangling it over time, with further sanctions expected. Jared Kushner had told Fox News on Monday that contacts with "different areas of the Iranian government" were "probably more robust than it's maybe ever been." The Revolutionary Guards called that a fantasy. The president contradicted it inside a day.

Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, the parliament speaker who heads Iran's negotiating delegation, gave parliament the price of reopening the strait: the blockade lifted, the frozen assets released, the oil sanctions dropped, and threats and military operations ended on every front. Squeezing harder, he said, will only buy concessions that were never in the agreement — "Bessent and Hegseth are way out of their league." Mohsen Rezaei, Iran's new national

security council secretary, welcomed Washington to “the post-American order in the Persian Gulf.” Deputy foreign minister Kazem Gharibabadi answered the map directly: the strait “has been Iranian, is Iranian, and will remain Iranian.” Iranian media put Ghalibaf in Baghdad today, talking joint security with the Iraqis.

Qatar’s foreign ministry says the mediators are waiting for Oman and Iran to settle the strait between themselves before anyone goes back to the wider table. Tehran says the coordinates of the route are already agreed. Most of what still crosses runs through a UN-approved lane off the Omani coast that Iran refuses to recognize, and Trump has threatened to bomb Oman if it “gets in the way.”

ASSESSMENT

The fight has moved to who gets to say the water is open. Trump’s map claims a strait that sits in somebody else’s territorial sea, Ghalibaf prices its reopening at the entire American war effort, and there is nothing between those two positions to negotiate over. So the live channel is Muscat’s, and Qatar now says everything else waits on it. Ghalibaf’s list also bills the strait at a stand-down on every front, Lebanon and Gaza included. That is not Washington’s to sell.

Florida Buries Its Jew-Hate Campaigns and Gives the DSA a Senate Nomination

Both Florida Republicans who ran on Jew-hate lost yesterday, and lost worse than anyone else on the ballot. Randy Fine held the sixth district’s nomination, 57 percent to Dan Bilzerian’s 18. Bilzerian is the Instagram influencer with 29 million followers who denies the Holocaust. He made Fine’s being Jewish the whole of his campaign and closed it with an AI video of Hitler. In the governor’s race Byron Donalds took the nomination to succeed Ron DeSantis with 48 percent. James Fishback finished third with 10, after a campaign that courted Nick Fuentes’s groypers and promised to divest Florida’s money from Israel.

The Jewish pro-Israel Democrats on the same ballot held. Jared Moskowitz beat DSA member Oliver Larkin 64 to 36. The redrawn twenty-fifth district takes in Delray Beach, Boca Raton and Miami Beach, runs about a quarter Jewish, and is one Trump would have carried in 2024. Debbie Wasserman Schultz won her own new district against a crowded field, and Elijah Manley, running the DSA line against her, finished third with 13 percent.

The Senate nomination went the other way. Angie Nixon, a Jacksonville state legislator who joined the Democratic Socialists of America this year, beat Alex Vindman roughly 56 to 44. Vindman is a retired lieutenant colonel, born in Kyiv to a Jewish family that fled the Soviet Union, and he was the star witness in Trump’s first impeachment. He had raised about \$16.3 million to Nixon’s under one million by the end of July, and spent \$2.2 million on advertising against her \$60,000. She never bought a television or cable spot. She calls what Israel is doing in Gaza “genocide” and would cut off American military aid. She campaigned last weekend with Rashida Tlaib. Asked by the chair of Florida’s Jewish Democratic caucus, she would not condemn “from

the river to the sea.” Her Palestinian friends, she said, had explained to her that it is not a call to destroy Israel. She faces the appointed Republican incumbent, Ashley Moody, in November.

Three thousand miles away the same night, Aisha Wahab looked set to take California’s fourteenth-district special election. AIPAC’s United Democracy Project has put close to \$2.5 million behind Melissa Hernandez, and an affiliated group about \$1.8 million more. Wahab is a state senator who answered “yes” in April when a debate asked her whether Israel is committing genocide in Gaza. She had already finished 42.8 to 16.8 ahead of Hernandez in June’s primary.

ASSESSMENT

Vindman outspent Nixon sixteen to one and lost by twelve, and AIPAC’s four and a half million in a Bay Area special election is not buying that one either. Money stopped being the variable in these races in Michigan. The House districts held because there are enough Jews in a few square miles of South Florida to be a constituency, and a senator is elected statewide, where that rounds to nothing. The people whose job was to see it coming spent sixteen million dollars finding out. [I’d like someone to explain what the party just bought. Ashley Moody was beatable in November and now she isn’t.]

Briefly Noted

Frontline & Security

- *Algemeiner*: Hezbollah promised \$12,000 to \$14,000 through Al-Qard Al-Hassan to Lebanese families whose houses came down in the 2024 war it started, and Nidaa al-Watan reports most of that money never arrived — what Iran still moves in goes to the weapons stockpile. It is still paying its fighters and has cut the stipends and social services to its own Shiite base.
- *Jerusalem Post*: The Kirya security unit still patrols in Chinese electric cars from the state-owned SAIC, on the base that houses the General Staff, Air Force headquarters, Military Intelligence and the Defense Ministry. The IDF banned Chinese phones, stopped leasing Chinese cars once it worked out what was inside the Chery fleet, and would not answer a question about the Kirya.

Diplomacy & Geopolitics

- *Times of Israel*: Israel has stopped the defense exports that reach Qatar inside larger American systems — air defense, night-vision and advanced avionics worth hundreds of millions of dollars — and is cutting maintenance and support on everything already sold.
- *The JC*: Iran’s Majlis voted 183 to 4 to advance a bill against “foreign infiltration” that makes academic, scientific and media contact with foreigners a crime without IRGC or Intelligence Ministry clearance. Only 19 of a reported 27 articles are public, and the 30-year sentences are not among them.

Public Diplomacy & Media

- *Jerusalem Post*: The International Olympiad in Informatics has barred Israeli contestants from national symbols since October 7, so when 17-year-old Yotam Budnik of Rehovot raised the flag at the awards ceremony in Uzbekistan the committee zeroed his gold-medal score and struck him from its rankings. Three golds and a bronze went to Israeli students already competing under no flag.
- *Jewish News UK*: The chair of the board running Cambridge's £4 billion endowment told trustees the university will keep its £85 million in defence stocks — Palantir and GE Aerospace among them, both supplying the IDF — and will almost certainly buy more. Cambridge for Palestine wants the lot divested, and what it got back was a forecast of defence's rising share of the global market.

Am Yisrael

- *JNS*: Janine Ali told a Washington federal court that the Israeli flag she grabbed from behind and pulled tight around Kimmara Sumrall's neck was not a Jewish identifier, and Judge Trevor McFadden sent the suit toward trial anyway — the Star of David on that flag “symbolizes the Jewish race,” he wrote, and “battery is not a legitimate form of protest.”
- *Jerusalem Post*: Leaked messages from a private Green Party WhatsApp group have Sophus Magill, the parish councillor who set it up, answering a question about whether he wants Israel wiped off the map with “Yes, I would like that,” and another member calling British Jews “a brilliant weapon for the Israeli state.” Members used the group to coordinate the party's campaigning and its conference motions.

Domestic & Law

- *Jerusalem Post*: Itamar Ben-Gvir's ministry says construction has begun on the execution facility — gallows and viewing booths for bereaved families — inside the death-row wing already standing in central Israel, under the death-penalty law the Knesset passed in March and Central Command extended to Judea and Samaria in May. A petition to strike that law has been pending at the High Court since April, and the work started anyway.
- *Times of Israel*: Prosecutors indicted Abdullah Gergawi, 20, of Segev Shalom at the Beersheba District Court over a plan to car-bomb the Forum nightclub, worked up on Islamic State material he took in online and a contact who presented himself as a Palestinian operative — and his interrogation turned up the machine guns and assault rifles he had been keeping at home through last year.

Economy, Tech & Infrastructure

- *JNS*: Israir returns to New York on 19 October, pending a last FAA signature, on a route only Israeli carriers have flown since the three American legacy airlines froze their Israel service over the Iran war. Delta and United are back next month, and the agents booking the route still expect fares to hold high into the fall.

- *Globes*: Jerusalem's second light rail line opens Friday, ten years behind schedule — twelve new stations from Jaffa Road down to Malha, by way of the central bus station, the Navon rail terminal and the Hebrew University's Givat Ram campus.

Culture, Religion & Society

- *Ynet*: Shaul Mishal, professor emeritus of political science and one of Israel's senior scholars of Hamas and Palestinian politics, has died at 81 — he fought as a paratrooper at Ammunition Hill in 1967.
- *Walla*: Cafe BaSimta in Jerusalem stays open on Shabbat, which has cost it weeks of sprayed graffiti, dumped garbage and a glued lock — and a court has now barred the woman suspected of gluing it from going near the place.

Developments to Watch

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

- **Aoun wants UNIFIL kept on** — Lebanon's president told a delegation of twenty lawmakers that extending UNIFIL past its expiry at the end of the year is his first option, and failing that he wants some other formula keeping international troops in the south. Resolution 1701 put that force between the Blue Line and the Litani in 2006 to keep every weapon but the state's off the ground, and the June framework hands Israel's positions to the army UNIFIL was supposed to be helping.

Gaza & Southern Theater

- **Nobody is trained to take the weapons** — The Board of Peace needs Palestinian police recruits out of Gaza for training before it can run Hamas's weapons handovers, and Netanyahu has refused to let them leave. Kushner's schedule has weapons starting to come out inside thirty days, and the men supposed to receive them are sitting in the Strip without the training the plan is built on.

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

- **Iran looks at targets in Europe** — Regime insiders told the Financial Times that Iranian forces have assessed hitting American assets in southeastern Europe if Washington restarts the offensive, and have examined cutting the fiber-optic cables under Hormuz. Bulgaria cleared its Bezmer air base for American refueling aircraft last month, and that is what now puts a European government on an Iranian list.
- **Tehran staffs up for its own street** — A decree put Hossein Taeb, who ran the suppression of earlier protest rounds, at the head of the Basij, and Ghalibaf told parliament yesterday that Iranians' complaints about the petrol price are justified and the street is not the place to take them. The

last time a government in Tehran raised the price of petrol the country burned, and this one is doing it inside a war and a blockade.

- **The Caspian lane the blockade misses** — NBC reports that Russia is still moving TNT and drone components into Iran across the Caspian, off a European government document a Western official confirmed. The new American policy is to strangle Iran slowly with a naval blockade at Hormuz, and the Caspian has five littoral states on it and not one American hull.
- **Iran hits the channel it denies** — Drones struck Masrour Barzani's own office in Erbil on Monday and the region's counter-terrorism service traced them to Iran, a day after Axios reported that Washington had tapped his relative Nechirvan Barzani, the region's president, as a possible backchannel to Tehran. Iran's foreign ministry has since denied that any such channel exists, and a regime that wants one does not put drones on the house it would run through.

Diplomatic & Legal

- **Paris and Tehran empty each other's missions** — Jean-Noel Barrot says France will expel two Iranian diplomats in the coming days over the detention of two French embassy staff in Tehran last month, and Iran has already expelled two French diplomats and barred the two staff from returning. Tehran's stated ground is that the French broke the Vienna Convention by supporting Iranian civil society, which is a description of what a European embassy in Iran is for.
- **Riyadh treats Emirati money as high-risk** — Saudi Arabia has put transfers to the UAE under the extra bank checks it reserves for jurisdictions at high risk of illicit money flows, three people with direct knowledge told Reuters, and six businesspeople report transfers delayed or returned with no explanation. The two economies Washington needs to keep oil moving out of the Gulf are now clearing each other's money the way a bank clears a laundering risk.

Home Front & Politics

- **Three weeks to file, four lists forming** — Ofer Winter has billboards up around the country for an announcement next Tuesday and Gilad Erdan's Unity is already campaigning against Likud on a promise to hand neither bloc the seats for a narrow government, with candidate lists closing in three weeks. The threshold is four seats, and 1992 and 2019 both turned on a list of exactly this kind landing just under it.

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