



Forensic intelligence for those who act.

READER EDITION

August 24, 2026

ISRAEL BRIEF

Monday, August 24

America opened an economic war on Iran and pointed it at the neutrals.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVI

THE BOTTOM LINE The only thing anybody has reached for is a travel advisory, and it works on the traveler. Jerusalem can tell an Israeli what to put away before he flies, and that is the end of what Jerusalem controls. The doorway belongs to Greece, whose chief of defense Eyal Zamir hosted in Israel this month. Rom didn't do anything at that party except say who he was.

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THE countries in between get to decide how much of somebody else's war they are willing to carry, and none of them asked for the job. Israel spent the weekend on the actor actually in the way. And at home, the rules that are supposed to govern an election turn out not to cover the situation the country is in.

IN THIS EDITION

Flash Brief	3
The War Today	3
Netanyahu and Katz Answer Gaza's Kites With an Evacuation Threat . .	3
The Airbase Israel Bombed Puts Damascus Back at the Table	4
Two Lone Attackers in One Day and Israel Stopped Both	5
Inside Israel	6
Zini Denies Eisenkot a Detail and Netanyahu Orders One Anyway . . .	6
Two Weeks to File Lists, and Neither Bloc Has 61	8
Israel and the World	9
Trump's Envoy Reverses on the Golan and Israel Routes Around Him . .	9
Hamas Sheds Eleven Points Before November and Goes Looking for Dahlan	10
Bessent Opens the Economic Campaign on the Countries That Trade With Iran	11
AVROTROS Quits Eurovision a Second Year Without Writing Israel's Name	12
Piker Tells His Audience Pro-Israel Jews Bring the Violence on Themselves	13
Melbourne Asks Canberra to Pay for Scrubbing Its Synagogue Graffiti .	13
An Athens Bar Ejects an Israeli for Saying He Is One	14
Briefly Noted	15
Developments to Watch	17

FLASH BRIEF

- **Iran:** Bessent aims Washington's economic campaign at the countries carrying Iran's oil and money, and Tehran calls them enemies. *See Israel and the World.*
- **Gaza:** Katz orders every launch out of Gaza treated as an act of war, and threatens to move civilians out. *See The War Today.*
- **Syria:** Israel's Mossad chief meets Syria's foreign minister in Jordan, five days after Israeli jets cratered Abu al-Duhur. *See The War Today.*
- **Judea and Samaria:** A soldier is stabbed on Route 90 and a rifle grabbed at Rimonim, and both attackers are stopped. *See The War Today.*
- **Eisenkot:** Shin Bet chief Zini refuses the poll-leading candidate a security detail, and Netanyahu orders him protected anyway. *See Inside Israel.*
- **Police oversight:** The High Court freezes Levin's appointments to the rebuilt Police Investigations Department until it rules on the election period. *See Inside Israel.*
- **The ballot:** Lists are due in a little over two weeks, and no mainstream poll gives either bloc the 61 seats. *See Inside Israel.*
- **Golan:** Trump's envoy Barrack calls the Golan occupied on Friday and reverses himself on the record by Sunday. *See Israel and the World.*
- **Hamas:** Hamas drops eleven points in ten months, and goes looking for Mohammed Dahlan in Egypt. *See Israel and the World.*
- **Incitement:** Twitch's Hasan Piker tells his audience that American Jews who back Israel are inviting the violence. *See Israel and the World.*
- **Australia:** Melbourne's mayor tells Australia's antisemitism commission his synagogues are tagged almost weekly, and asks Canberra to pay. *See Israel and the World.*
- **Draft:** Peleg calls its people back onto Highway 4 this afternoon after a yeshiva student is handed to the Military Police. *See Developments to Watch.*

Melbourne can clean a wall inside an hour and cannot find who wrote on it. An Israeli in Athens got walked out of a party by men his own government has no word with. Israel has a runway it can crater and a road it can search.

The War Today

Netanyahu and Katz Answer Gaza's Kites With an Evacuation Threat

Defense Minister Israel Katz told the IDF on Sunday to treat every launch out of Gaza as an act of war. A balloon counts as a kite, a kite counts as a drone, with or without explosives attached. Katz and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu came out of a situational assessment with Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir and the head of the National Security Council. They warned Hamas that if the launches don't stop, the army will step up strikes against whoever is behind them and move Gazan civilians out of the areas they fly from. The ceasefire that has held in Gaza since last October, under Trump's 20-point plan and Security Council Resolution 2803, has never produced a threat like that before, and the object that produced it now is a piece of paper on a string.

Seven kites have come down in the communities along the fence in two weeks. Four crossed into the Nahal Oz area over the weekend, and another turned up Sunday morning in the fields of Kfar Aza near the Black Arrow memorial. Nothing was attached to any of them. Field checks put twelve- and thirteen-year-olds on the strings, flying them on the instructions of Hamas commanders.

Bar Manshuri, who runs the security division at the Sha'ar HaNegev Regional Council, said Sunday morning that the colored paper isn't the point. She wants the sequence named now, because it ran once already: incendiary kite, then explosive balloon, then the drone. Residents got a warning nobody has issued since the balloon wave of 2018 and 2019. Sunday night residents near Nir Yitzhak were sent into protected spaces. The Home Front Command logged an unclassified aerial target over Sufa and closed the event when contact was lost. The army then called it a false identification.

Hamas's spokesman in Gaza, Hazem Qassem, falsely called the kites children's toys in the displacement camps and said Israel is manufacturing a pretext, then asked Washington, the mediators and the Security Council to make it stop. The strikes came anyway. The IDF and Shin Bet killed Ismail Abu Ful at al-Maghazi, a commander at a weapons production site inside Hamas's production headquarters who built charges and anti-tank rockets, and hit the site itself. Hamas had built it beside an international organization's aid distribution point. A second strike in Khan Yunis killed a Nukhba platoon commander who came through the fence on October 7. Hamas's health ministry says two people were killed in central Gaza, including a four-year-old boy.

ASSESSMENT

Hamas is probing with the cheapest object it owns, and Katz has answered by deleting the gradation it was probing for. The residents have the better argument, and it was never about kites — that sequence went all the way once, and the people who watched it run are the ones now being told there was no danger to the public. [The families of Kfar Aza are moving back in right now. Go tell them the sky is fine.] What the weekend exposed is the detection gap they keep naming: an unclassified target over Sufa, contact lost, event closed, in a sector where Israel holds most of the ground and flies over the rest of it. Moving Gazan civilians out of the launch areas is something Israel can actually do, and the live question is how many more weeks of free probing Hamas gets before Jerusalem does it.

The Airbase Israel Bombed Puts Damascus Back at the Table

Mossad chief Roman Gofman met Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani in Jordan on Sunday, under American mediation, five days after Israeli jets put at least eight bombs into the runways and hangars at Abu al-Duhur in Idlib. Syria sent its general and military intelligence chiefs along with the foreign minister. Damascus, run by Ahmed al-Sharaa since Assad fell in December 2024, confirmed the meeting through its own state agency. Nobody in that room wanted it deniable.

On the table was a special operations room in Jordan under American supervision, with Turkey inside it, as a line to keep the three of them from running into each other in Syria. Israel came with conditions: no Turkish military activity in Syria, the Syrian side of the Golan demilitarized, no strategic weapons systems for the Syrian army, protection for Syria's Druze, and troops out of the buffer zone only on terms. Al-Shaibani's asking price for confidence is that Israel stop striking, and he says Damascus doesn't trust it. Syria also put on the record that it wants Israel back behind the lines of 8 December 2024, with the 1974 disengagement agreement running again.

Underneath all of it is Turkish hardware. Israel says intelligence showed Ankara preparing to install a radar and then air defenses at Abu al-Duhur, operated by Turkish soldiers, and that Gofman raised it with al-Shaibani by phone on 14 August, before anything flew. Al-Shaibani says the Turkish officers who visited came for training and exchange of expertise. Damascus, he says, told Israel there would be no Turkish base. Ankara denies any delegation was there at all.

ASSESSMENT

The strike is what produced the meeting, and the five days between them are the argument. Washington worked for more than a year on an Israel-Syria security agreement and got one trilateral in January and a channel that froze when the Iran war opened. Eight bombs on a runway got the foreign minister, both intelligence chiefs and an American-supervised operations room in Jordan. What Israel is buying at that table is the flight path. Abu al-Duhur sits under the route the air force takes across Syria toward western Iran, and Turkish radar on that field would see every aircraft that used it. No room in Jordan gives that back once the hardware is bolted down. Barrack is the reason that room needs American supervision and the reason Jerusalem won't lean on it. He spent Friday telling a podcast that the Americans had checked Israel's intelligence and found it wrong. That is Ankara's argument, and he is America's ambassador to Ankara.

Two Lone Attackers in One Day and Israel Stopped Both

Elhanan Hanania, a 24-year-old career soldier on leave, pulled off Route 90 in the Jordan Valley on Sunday morning to buy cigarettes at a shop outside the village of Auja. His pregnant wife, their two daughters and his father-in-law waited in the car. A Palestinian standing there waited for him to turn his back, jumped him and stabbed him several times before the father-in-law got out and the attacker ran. Hanania is at Shaare Zedek with a fractured shoulder and internal bleeding, in moderate condition.

The IDF and Shin Bet sealed the area and searched Auja, Jericho and the communities around them. Eight hours later, on intelligence and observation, a Duvdevan force took the attacker: a sixteen-year-old who had fought with his family that morning and walked out of the house to find a Jew to stab. In Binyamin on Sunday, another man tried to pull a rifle off an IDF soldier at Rimonim Junction. The soldier shot him.

Route 90 and the strip beside it sit under Israeli security control, and Israeli traffic on the road is ordinary and constant. The shops along it stand inside

the village. The one Hanania stopped at is among the biggest in Auja, and Israelis have been pulling in there for years.

ASSESSMENT

Israeli work on the ground is what forces terror in Judea and Samaria down to this. The IDF and Shin Bet have made a cell hard enough to build and hold that what's left is a teenager who decides at breakfast and acts before lunch, and there's no file to open on a man who has told nobody. [It's also why Duvdevan had him by dark — no cell to hide him, nowhere to go but home.] A sixteen-year-old walked out of his house looking for a Jew to kill. Somebody taught him that, and he could expect the PA — you know, the “moderate partner” — to pay him or his family for it.

Inside Israel

Zini Denies Eisenkot a Detail and Netanyahu Orders One Anyway

Gadi Eisenkot, the former IDF chief of staff whose Yashar party leads most polling for the Knesset Israel elects on 27 October, will not be guarded. Shin Bet director David Zini ruled that he does not qualify for a detail from Unit 730, the service's VIP guard, and said on Sunday that he made the call himself and carries sole responsibility for it. The agency holds no intelligence and no alerts of any intent to harm him. It also says nobody has ever been guarded who does not already hold one of the seven offices classified as symbols of government. Naftali Bennett has a detail because he was prime minister. Eisenkot never has been.

So Eisenkot is carrying a gun. His campaign hired a private security firm months ago and the police refused to authorize arming its guards. A second request, this one naming specific threats, went unanswered. His staff say the threats include messages built on “Rabin is looking for a friend,” the taunt that ran through the incitement in the year before Yitzhak Rabin was murdered. His camp also raised Iran. Zini himself warned officials in July that Tehran was working to interfere in the October vote, and Tehran has spent the Iran war looking for senior Israeli security figures to answer for it.

Zini went to Noam Sohlberg first, the High Court's deputy president and chairman of the Central Elections Committee. Sohlberg said publicly on Sunday that Zini had informed him of the decision, that he holds no authority over it, and that section 7(a)(2) of the Shin Bet Law has the service guarding the people the government designates. Zini told him he saw no visible reason to convene the Ministerial Committee for Shin Bet Affairs, which is the body that does the designating. Netanyahu instructed Zini that evening to see that Eisenkot is protected “at an adequate level, as needed.” The Shin Bet told the prime minister it is doing the maximum and acting within the law.

ASSESSMENT

The law is built around offices and Israel now has a front-runner who holds none, a hole only the government can close and the government is the other side of the race. Zini's finding stands up on its own terms — no intelligence is no intelligence, and nobody outside those seven offices has been guarded before. The route around it doesn't. The ministerial committee is the body that designates, Zini saw no reason to convene it, and the panel that advises it is chaired by Col. (res.) Ronen Cohen, a Netanyahu appointee. Cohen says in public that October 7 is written on Eisenkot's forehead, about a man who left the General Staff five years before it happened. Netanyahu closed the gap himself within hours. The leading candidate's protection now rests on the instruction of the man running against him, and on nothing anyone has written down.

*Closed Dossier: **The Unfinished State** — The Dossier's argument is that Israel's missing constitution leaves the hardest questions to whichever institution reaches them first, which is the hole the Shin Bet Law opens here — protection assigned by office, no office that covers a challenger, and the only body that can designate one sitting on the incumbent's side of the race. ##### The High Court Stops Levin From Staffing the Department He Rebuilt*

High Court President Isaac Amit froze the appointments on Sunday to the Police Investigations Department, the Justice Ministry body that investigates police misconduct. No further step may be taken toward filling its leadership until the court decides whether that freeze holds through the election period. The Knesset passed that restructuring on 11 June, 43 votes to 39. It pulls the department out of the State Attorney's Office, stands it up as a separate agency inside the Justice Ministry with its own investigative and prosecutorial authority, and builds an appointment mechanism in which Justice Minister Yariv Levin and his director-general carry decisive weight. Most of the law takes effect eight months after publication. The appointments committee was allowed to form early, and Levin's tender for a director closed on 16 August.

Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara has joined the petitions against a law her own government passed. Her case is that filling the posts now implements the law before it takes effect, inside an election period, and binds whoever wins. The director sits for six years. The new official who arbitrates investigation disputes with the State Attorney's Office sits for three. She also disputes the independence of the five-member committee, arguing Levin shapes several of its members directly or through his ministry. Levin's answer is that the committee decides and he does not, that the law passed in June before the election was called, and that the last government appointed a chief of staff mid-campaign in 2022 with the court's blessing. Baharav-Miara has until 27 August to reply.

Baharav-Miara lost a smaller fight on Sunday too. Sohlberg rejected a petition against Itamar Ben-Gvir appearing at the police volunteers' fiftieth-anniversary event in Tel Aviv, which the police produce and pay for, after the national security minister swore an affidavit that he would not campaign from the stage. She had objected to him standing on that platform while leaving the event itself alone. Sohlberg has ruled against him before. He ordered Ben-Gvir earlier this year to delete two videos, one shot on a police

boat and one inside a Prison Service wing, for turning public assets into campaign material.

ASSESSMENT

Her case is real, and it starts with the calendar. A six-year term filled nine weeks before a vote will outlast whoever wins it, and a minister who shapes the committee that picks the people who investigate the police is a problem an elected government has to answer for. Underneath it sits a genuine question: whether a unit that prosecutes police officers belongs inside the office that prosecutes alongside them every day of the year. Moshe Saada, the Likud MK who wrote the law, ran that unit as its deputy head, and he says the arrangement bent who it went after. Elected governments answer questions like that. This one answered in June, 43 to 39, and the unelected legal officer who lost that argument in the Knesset is now asking judges to hold the answer until after the voters have had their turn.

Two Weeks to File Lists, and Neither Bloc Has 61

Lists for the next Knesset are due in a little over two weeks, and no mainstream poll has either side at the 61 seats a government needs. Kan's Kantar survey puts Yashar on 24 and Likud on 22, with Netanyahu's bloc at 51 against 57 for the parties trying to remove him. [Channel 14 has Netanyahu at 63. Nobody else is within ten of it.] Fourteen of that 57 are Beyachad, the list Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid merged into in April under Bennett's leadership. It is the third-largest party on the board and the reason the number is 57 at all. Bennett offered Eisenkot a slot and Eisenkot turned it down. The threshold is 3.25 percent of the valid vote. In 2022 that came to 154,855 ballots. On the turnout expected this time it could run to something near 171,000.

The parties closest to that line are stacked on one side. Brig. Gen. (res.) Ofer Winter announces his party today, with Yoseph Haddad second on his list. He is already polling five seats without having announced anything, and every one of them comes out of Likud, Religious Zionism, Otzma Yehudit and Liberman. Run Kantar's numbers again with Winter in the race and Smotrich sits just above the line, Ben-Gvir loses ground, and the coalition bloc drops to 50. Gilad Erdan and Yuli Edelstein's Unity does not cross at all in several recent surveys. Sharren Haskel, who quit the government in July over the law freezing arrests of haredi draft evaders, launched Israel First and picked up Jonathan Pollard at the Kotel on Sunday. Avi Maoz, Moshe Feiglin, Michael Ben-Ari and Baruch Marzel are each running their own.

The only merger anybody has actually closed went the other way. Hadash, Ta'al and Balad announced a joint run over the weekend, four years after Balad took 138,617 votes and elected nobody with them. And a haredi party launched in Beit Shemesh on Sunday to run against the two that have always owned that vote. Moti Leitner's HaTzibur HaHaredi wants full protection for men whose Torah is their trade and army service for everyone else, math and English in the talmudei torah, and job training. His charge against Shas and United Torah Judaism is that they let the Jerusalem Faction, the street movement behind the road-blocking protests, set their policy for them. "A ballot for United Torah Judaism and Shas," he told the hall, "is a ballot for the Jerusalem Faction's thugs."

ASSESSMENT

October gets decided by the ballots that elect nobody, and nearly all of them are sitting on Netanyahu's side of the map. Smotrich is at five and slides to the edge the moment Winter files, Erdan and Edelstein are already under the line, and four more lists are running for a vote that cannot carry four more lists. [Every cycle somebody tells me this is the one where the small party crosses. Bennett and Shaked missed by 1,400 votes in 2019.] Netanyahu offered Winter a Likud slot and Winter turned it down, and his people are now reportedly preparing to attack him instead — which is the calculation you make when you would rather he burn votes as an enemy than take a seat as a partner. Erdan says he is open to connections and that "it's not a matter of ego." In a little over two weeks the filing clerk stops caring who was open to it.

Israel and the World

Trump's Envoy Reverses on the Golan and Israel Routes Around Him

Tom Barrack — the American ambassador to Turkey, who also carries Washington's Syria and Lebanon portfolios — told an online interviewer on Friday night that Israel "still occupies the Golan against the UN resolutions, against all of the international order, which has said the Golan is Syria's." Israel Katz answered over Shabbat that the remarks contradicted Trump's own position. Rick Scott, the Florida Republican, wrote that the ambassador appeared to have "forgotten" what his own president signed. By Sunday Barrack was on the record with the Associated Press: "United States policy on the Golan was set by President Trump in 2019 and is unchanged." He had been describing the territory's historical status, he said, and endorsing nothing the UN holds.

Trump signed Proclamation 9852 on 25 March 2019, recognizing Israeli sovereignty over a plateau Israel has held since 1967 and applied its law to in 1981. Colombia became the second country to recognize it on 10 August.

Barrack spent the rest of that interview taking Turkey's side on the Idlib strike, and Azerbaijan has moved into the room he emptied. Ilham Aliyev convened the Kalin-Hanegbi channel in Baku in April 2025, the Israel-Turkey coordination mechanism inside Syria came out of it, and Baku is now trying to restart both after a week that ran from the Idlib strike to Ankara's Interpol request. "Have you and Turkey lost your minds? You are our friends, and Turkey is our friend too," an Azerbaijani official put it.

At the Israeli-Syrian table in Jordan on Sunday, the Syrian delegation asked to lift the Golan out of the negotiation and take up Israel's withdrawal from what it captured after that.

ASSESSMENT

Katz got the reversal inside forty-eight hours, and Proclamation 9852 is why — a recognition the president signed himself outranks an ambassador's read of the international order. [Colombia found that proclamation two weeks ago. I'd like to know what Trump's own ambassador thought he was reading on Friday night.] Jerusalem is now working Syria and Turkey through almost anyone but the American assigned to both: the Mossad chief went to Damascus's foreign minister himself, and Baku is reviving a channel that predates Barrack's appointment. The Syrian delegation asking to lift the Golan out of the talks is the part to watch — Damascus takes back what it can negotiate for and keeps the plateau as a claim it never has to settle.

 Hamas Sheds Eleven Points Before November and Goes Looking for Dahlan

Palestinians vote for a Legislative Council on 28 November, the first such election in twenty years. The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research put Hamas at 24 percent in a poll presented this weekend, down from 35 ten months ago and level with Fatah. In Judea and Samaria the fall runs from 32 to 18. Twenty percent now say Hamas came out of the Gaza war the winner, against 39 percent ten months ago, and satisfaction with how it fought has gone from 60 to 42. Forty-four percent say neither Hamas nor Fatah under Mahmoud Abbas deserves to lead them, and 79 percent want Abbas to resign.

None of that is a turn against the war. What fell is satisfaction with how Hamas fought, and the complaint inside that number is that it did not win — only twenty percent think it did. The public that has turned on Hamas wants it more militant, not less. October 7 is not the thing Palestinians have turned on.

The weapons are where nothing moved. Seventy-two percent oppose Hamas disarming before Israel is out of Gaza, and the same 72 percent say that if it disarmed first the fighting would come back and the withdrawal would never finish. Negotiation is now the most effective strategy for 44 percent, up from 36 and the highest PSR has recorded in four years. Armed struggle is down to 27 from 41.

So Hamas has gone shopping. Khalil al-Hayya met Mohammed Dahlan in Egypt last Monday, Dahlan's breakaway Fatah bloc confirmed, to discuss "unity of the national position" and the second phase of the ceasefire. Dahlan built and ran the Authority's Preventive Security Service and was reportedly behind the American-backed attempt to remove Hamas from Gaza in 2007. A Hamas official says a "political alliance" with several factions is under study, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine among them. Fatah's spokesman wanted to know on what national basis it is being assembled.

The succession numbers sit underneath all of it. Asked who is best suited to follow Abbas, 39 percent named Marwan Barghouti, against 16 for al-Hayya and 15 for Dahlan. Head to head, Barghouti takes 54. He is serving five consecutive life terms plus forty years, handed down in 2004 for the murder of five people in three attacks.

ASSESSMENT

Eleven points off Hamas is not eleven points toward moderation, and hearing it that way is how most of the planning for the day after gets written. What fell is satisfaction with how Hamas fought. The complaint is that it lost. A public angry that a war went badly has not decided the war was wrong. The demand pointing at Hamas is not that it put the guns down — it is that the guns were not used well enough. Seventy-two percent still will not have it disarm before Israel is out, the same share that says the fighting comes straight back if it does. The collapse buys the roadmap nothing.

And the alternatives are alternatives to Hamas, not to what Hamas is for. The partner it has gone looking for is the man who ran the Authority's security service in Gaza until Hamas threw him out of it. The strongest name in Palestinian politics is polling 54 percent from the cell he is serving life in for murder. Every one of them gets called moderate somewhere in a Western capital. [Nobody in Gaza or Ramallah has asked for the word.] The succession everyone says is unavailable runs through a decision Jerusalem gets to make.

Bessent Opens the Economic Campaign on the Countries That Trade With Iran

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent signed an opinion piece in the Financial Times on Sunday night: "At dawn begins an economic D-Day — the single greatest financial offensive ever marshalled against an adversary." The stated objective is to sever every economic lifeline sustaining the regime "until Tehran stands alone." The audience is third countries — the ones that buy and ship Iranian petroleum, move its money through exchange houses and free-trade zones, take its flights, and keep ship registries on its behalf. Any nation serving as "a financial artery of a withering regime," Bessent wrote, should expect to share in its isolation. He unveils the measures at a press conference in Washington today. China, which buys more than 80 percent of Iran's shipped oil, has answered that sanctions and pressure resolve nothing.

Tehran aimed its reply at the same countries. Mohsen Rezaei, who runs Iran's Supreme National Security Council, said on Sunday that taking part in the American campaign is an act of war, and that if it goes ahead "not a single drop of oil will be exported, neither through the Strait of Hormuz nor from anywhere in the Persian Gulf." Almost nothing moves through the strait as things stand, so what Rezaei is threatening is everyone else's oil.

Iran has held the strait shut since the end of February, when closing it opened the war that is still running, and Kpler counted fewer than twenty transits over the weekend — thirteen on Saturday, four on Sunday, with some ships running dark. Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission cleared an article on Sunday charging foreign commercial ships for navigation, insurance, safety and fuel, payable in rials or any currency Tehran names. It still has to survive a full vote and the Guardian Council. The new Persian Gulf Strait Authority warned shipowners that vessels breaching its transit rules face fines, detention or confiscation, and that a ship moving cargo with one already listed joins the list. Oman's foreign minister lands in Tehran on Tuesday, where fees and fixed routes are what the two have been

working on for weeks. Passage was free before the closure. Trump posted a graphic on Sunday labeling the strait “New U.S. Territory,” the second time in five days.

The neighbors are paying for it. Saudi Arabia has been talking to London brokers about a state-backed war and political-risk pool. It would carry as much as 700 million riyals, about \$186 million, for each insured event — a seized ship, a missile strike — with the state-owned Export-Import Bank standing behind the upper layers. Underwriters have started treating Saudi-linked hulls the way they treat Israeli and American ones, since the Houthis widened their campaign against the kingdom. Trump’s own subsidy for strait traffic, launched this year with Chubb and AIG behind it and up to \$40 billion of cover on offer, had written nothing months later.

Inside Iran the rial has gone past two million to the dollar on the open market. Rice costs about 60 percent more than it did before the Iran war and meat about 150 percent more. Masoud Pezeshkian told state television on Sunday that he understands the country has many problems and that his government is trying to prevent them as much as it can. [Two days earlier he was telling Iranians the world had acknowledged their victory. Pick one.]

ASSESSMENT

Washington and Tehran have aimed this at the same third countries, and neither is aiming at the other. Bessent wrote to the states that carry Iran’s oil and its money, Rezaei told those states that joining in is an act of war, and Riyadh, party to neither, is out buying its own war cover because nobody will write it at a price the kingdom can live with. A government that shuts a strait to hurt its enemies does not then legislate a toll for passage through it. Tehran needs the money. Jerusalem’s own read has been that the economy is what brings this regime down, and an American Treasury is now running that argument at full scale, with the IDF at readiness behind it.

AVROTROS Quits Eurovision a Second Year Without Writing Israel’s Name

The Dutch public broadcaster AVROTROS said today it will not enter the Eurovision Song Contest in 2027. Director-general Taco Zimmermann gave neutrality as the reason: the contest “can no longer be considered neutral, with a participating country still involved in a large-scale military conflict.” He didn’t name the country. The statement adds that Middle East tensions have “led to deep divisions,” that AVROTROS has too little confidence in the European Broadcasting Union’s newly announced rule changes, and that the humanitarian suffering in Gaza and restrictions on press freedom sit badly against the broadcaster’s own values.

This is the second year running. Last December the union’s general assembly took a package of reforms instead of the vote several members wanted on throwing Israel out, and reported that a large majority was satisfied enough that no further vote was needed. AVROTROS left anyway, and Spain, Ireland, Slovenia and Iceland left with it. Israel competed in Vienna and finished second. In July, KAN confirmed Israel for 2027 in Bulgaria and went back to

picking a singer through HaKokhav HaBa with Keshet 12. Dutch participation now reverts to NPO, the public-broadcasting umbrella, which decides whether any Dutch entry turns up at all.

ASSESSMENT

AVROTROS is refusing the reforms its own walkout produced. The union answered last winter's pressure with a rule package instead of an expulsion vote, and the broadcaster that walked over the outcome has now walked again over the remedy. Citing Gaza's press-freedom restrictions in the exit note of a song contest applies a standard the contest has no instrument to measure and no jurisdiction to enforce. [Israel has come second two years running. Nobody has yet had to find out what the union's hosting rule actually does.] The cost of this one is Dutch: the entry reverts to NPO, another Dutch broadcaster may pick it up, and Israel goes to Bulgaria with its singer already in selection.

Piker Tells His Audience Pro-Israel Jews Bring the Violence on Themselves

Hasan Piker, the Twitch streamer who says he would “vote for Hamas over Israel every single time,” told his audience last Thursday that American Jews who express support for Israel are inviting attacks on themselves. He was about two hours into a stream that ran nearly seven. “If Jews in America keep putting this idea out there that they are singularly invested in Israel, eventually someone’s going to come around and take action,” he said, “not against the State of Israel, mind you, but against American Jews.” Then the concern: “I don’t know how people don’t recognize how dangerous this predicament is, how dangerous this is for Jews.” Jews who tie their “entire identity” to a country he calls “Jewish ISIS” are, on his account, “making antisemitism worse.”

Piker has campaigned with progressive Democratic candidates this year and been booked at several high-profile events, the College Democrats among them. The record he brings to those stages is public. He justified Hamas’s attacks of October 7. He called Orthodox Jews “inbred” and defended it this year to Zeteo — “I have a policy of using pejoratives when describing any kind of like ethno, racial supremacist groups.”

ASSESSMENT

A threat is still a threat when it arrives in the grammar of concern. He names nobody who would do the violence and nobody to answer for it, and puts the cause in what American Jews say about themselves. The condition he sets is specific — the Jews he says someone is coming for are the ones who won’t drop Israel — and the “Jewish ISIS” line supplies the reason that someone would be right. [He has a policy about pejoratives, he told Zeteo. It covers the Orthodox.] None of his record is new or hard to find, and the College Democrats booked him anyway.

Melbourne Asks Canberra to Pay for Scrubbing Its Synagogue Graffiti

Nick Reece, lord mayor of Melbourne, told Australia’s Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion this morning that his city’s synagogues have been hit with graffiti close to every week since the war in Gaza began. Melbourne holds the largest Jewish population in the country. A council program that strips menacing graffiti within an hour of a report has cleared

more than 3,000 items, between 800 and 1,000 of them antisemitic. One job in January was forty posters that ran a photograph of one of the Bondi Beach shooters over the word “Aussie.”

Reece called it very expensive. He asked the commission to recommend a Commonwealth or state funding line so councils that want to run one can, and he is working with other inner-city councils to widen it. The division in the city is the hardest thing he has faced in the job. People tell him they’re afraid to come into town.

The commission was stood up after fifteen Jews were murdered at a Hanukkah candle-lighting on Bondi Beach on 14 December. It is now in its ninth and last block of public hearings, which ends Friday, on more than 200 witnesses and over 20,000 submissions. Commissioner Virginia Bell has said she will not ask for more time, and her report is due by the anniversary in December. Liberal MP Julian Leeser wants the inquiry extended and government ministers and the prime minister called to give evidence. NSW Premier Chris Minns said a couple of extra weeks would be money well spent.

ASSESSMENT

The level of government that turned up here is a city council with a paint budget, and it came asking somebody else to pay. [I’d like to know who printed those forty posters.] Bell has four months to write a report telling Australian institutions what counts as antisemitic inside their own procedures. That is what the IHRA working definition does, and the framework her commission heard last week was built to get around it. Ministers have not been called, and on the timetable Bell has confirmed, they won’t be.

An Athens Bar Ejects an Israeli for Saying He Is One

Rafi Rom has lived in Athens for twelve years. On Saturday night he went to a gathering for foreign residents and digital nomads at a rooftop bar on Avissinias Square, introduced himself to the room as Israeli and Jewish, and had guards walk him out. He was a security risk, they told him. He says he asked what he had done and got the phrase back again. Neither the bar nor Nomad Hub Greece, which ran the event, has answered him.

The rest of it now has a number on it. The Center for Jewish Impact surveyed Israelis this month and found 52 percent worried about telling anyone abroad where they are from, and 41 percent who have changed how they travel since October 7 — different destinations, cancelled trips, things they no longer do. Israel’s foreign ministry spent August telling Israelis in Greece to cover a kippah with a ball cap and keep a Magen David under the shirt.

ASSESSMENT

The only thing anybody has reached for is a travel advisory, and it works on the traveler. Jerusalem can tell an Israeli what to put away before he flies, and that is the end of what Jerusalem controls. The doorway belongs to Greece, whose chief of defense Eyal Zamir hosted in Israel this month. Rom didn’t do anything at that party except say who he was.

Briefly Noted

Frontline & Security

- *Jerusalem Post*: COGAT says more than two million tons of food have gone into Gaza since the ceasefire, about 600 trucks a day, food prices down roughly 72 percent — and that the volume now runs past what the UN's own agencies define as need. Distribution is what still doesn't work, and COGAT puts that on Hamas, leaning on who hands out what and still trying to move prohibited goods in under the aid.
- *Jerusalem Post*: Bezalel Smotrich and Orit Strock want today's cabinet to rule that no foreign force enters Gaza until Hamas has actually disarmed, and they are pointing at a staging camp that is close to finished — housing for about 1,500 foreign soldiers, vehicles for a thousand, room to grow to five thousand, and a few weeks of work left in it. Their letter says that is a much bigger force than anything the cabinet was shown.

Diplomacy & Geopolitics

- *Ynet News*: Russia's ambassador Anatoly Viktorov turned up at the Alexander Courtyard in the Old City on Saturday with a delegation of nuns flown in from Russia, days after his embassy said the re-registration of Russian ownership was “purely legal” and nearly done — Israeli officials say the review is not finished and nothing has been decided. They read Moscow as working the window before the election, on the bet that a decision gets harder to come by if Netanyahu is not the one making it.
- *JNS*: Sa'ar had two Swedish Left Party MEPs, Jonas Sjostedt and Hanna Gedin, barred under the Entry Law hours before they were due to land for a visit to the Palestinian Authority. The Foreign Ministry's first stated ground is their campaigning for international legal proceedings against Israelis, with the genocide and deliberate-starvation accusations behind it.

Public Diplomacy & Media

- *Jerusalem Post*: Iran International says Iranian state-affiliated Channel 3 aired a video offering \$10 million for the killing of Barron Trump, showing where he has been and pointing out the agents guarding him, and the video has not surfaced on any of Channel 3's own platforms. A video like it went after Melania Trump last month, telling “freedom fighters” to target the shops she uses.
- *Times of Israel*: Pakistan's defense minister, Khawaja Asif, posted an AI-generated video on Friday showing Miri Regev, Tally Gotliv and other Israeli ministers throwing chairs at each other, captioned “Runs in DNA of bloody Zionists.” His last contribution on the subject was calling Israel “cancerous” and “a curse for humanity,” which at least he wrote himself.

Am Yisrael

- *Times of Israel*: Mike Rogers asked AIPAC to stay out of his Michigan Senate race, and the day after he said so to chair Michael Tuchin the group shelved an ad it had already cut against Abdul El-Sayed. AIPAC spent more than \$30 million losing that primary, and Rogers would rather it kept the rest of its money than spend it on him.
- *The JC*: Ali Fallahi, a dual British-Iranian national from Ilford, pleaded guilty at Harrow Crown Court to April's fire at the Golders Green memorial wall, which carries the Iranians killed in January's crackdown alongside the Nova dead. The charge is plain arson with no motive attached, and sentencing is 16 October.

Domestic & Law

- *Israel Hayom*: The paper set Likud's hand-count forms from the primary against the Excel file the party published itself, and at several Jerusalem ballot boxes the two don't agree — Amsalem 59 by hand and 101 on the website, one district candidate dropping from 24 to 1 and the winner of that box from 54 to 13. It says the gaps could be data entry and stops short of calling it manipulation, Likud has said nothing, and the party tribunal rules today.
- *Walla*: Hebron-district detectives had both teenagers within a day of the video going around — the 16-year-old from Avigail who attacked a disabled Palestinian man in the South Hebron Hills is in a cell, the 17-year-old from Jerusalem who filmed it is under house arrest with conditions. The IDF is due to hand Katz its plan next week for moving civilian law enforcement over Israelis in Judea and Samaria to the Israel Police.

Economy, Tech & Infrastructure

- *Jerusalem Post*: Israel is up to 250,000 foreign workers, the most it has ever had, and heading for the 330,000 ceiling the government set in 2024 — hired in place of the 150,000 Palestinians barred after October 7, of whom 20,000 still work here. Housing is what caps the number: every employer owes it to every worker, and the Population and Immigration Authority says its inspectors find violations in every industry they walk into.

Culture, Religion & Society

- *Ynet News*: The Survey of Israel has found the Altalena — intact at 503 meters, about twenty kilometers off the coast — 78 years after Ben-Gurion ordered the Irgun's arms ship shelled.
- *Walla*: The Chief Rabbinate Council has put a floor and a ceiling on the ketubah, no less than 36,000 shekels and no more than 360,000, because grooms kept signing numbers they were never going to pay. The rabbinical courts have argued for years over whether a man who writes a sum he cannot reach has obligated himself to anything at all.

Developments to Watch

Judea & Samaria

- **PA police take a reservist's weapon in Area C** — Palestinian Authority officers worked the Beitunia bypass road in western Binyamin overnight, stopped an IDF reservist driving to the Dolev-Talmonim bloc and took his army-issued rifle. The Civil Administration's answer was to fault the Israeli for using the road, and the Yesha Council is asking for a protected route through to Highway 443 instead of an instruction to Israelis to keep off one they are entitled to drive.

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

- **Quds Force widens the Syrian smuggling routes** — Israel's defense establishment has identified a rise in Iranian attempts to run weapons across the Syrian border straight into Hezbollah's hands, with the Quds Force paying for the traffic and running it on the ground, and the working assessment is that a good deal of it arrives undetected. Israeli officials name that traffic as the reason to keep flying over Syria at all, and identifying one large shipment is what produces the next strike there.
- **Beqaa clans open a line against Hezbollah** — Tribes and clans around Baalbek and al-Hermel have started talking to each other about a joint position against Hezbollah, the Saudi channel Al-Arabiya reports, and what they say they want is the Lebanese army holding the monopoly on weapons and the Shia community out of its quarrel with the rest of Lebanon. Every disarmament plan written for Lebanon has needed Lebanese actors willing to say that, and the first ones saying it live in Hezbollah's own heartland.

Gaza & Southern Theater

- **Kushner warns al-Hayya in front of the mediators** — Jared Kushner told Khalil al-Hayya in Cairo that if Hamas tries to deceive Washington the process stops and nobody stands in Israel's way, Channel 12 reported, with every mediator in the room to hear him say it. What put him there was intelligence reaching the Americans and the mediators that people inside Hamas are planning not to disarm at all.
- **Uganda and Burundi tour Israel for the Gaza force** — Ugandan and Burundian officers came through Israel last week to work out deploying into Gaza under the Board of Peace, and Uganda's parliament voted the contribution through this month with the details being finished now. Burundi is among the poorest countries on earth and has supplied peacekeepers to Somalia and the Central African Republic for years, which is where a force nobody else volunteered for gets its soldiers.

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

- **Greece moves a Patriot battery to Souda Bay** — Athens moved an air-defense battery off Karpachos to Crete overnight to cover the naval base at Souda, after Iranian officials named American bases in Europe as targets, and it is working the threats to Greek and Cypriot sites with

Washington and Jerusalem. Bulgaria answered that warning by flying its two American tankers out on Friday night, and Athens is weighing whether to lend Sofia air defense if Sofia asks in writing.

- **Baghdad puts the militia handover after the Americans leave** — Iraq's national security adviser Qasim al-Araji said yesterday that consolidating the armed factions' weapons under state control begins gradually after the international coalition departs on 30 September, through dialogue and not armed confrontation, and Esmail Qaani was in Baghdad not long before he said it. Baghdad wrote 30 September as the deadline for handing the weapons over, and it is now the date on which handing them over starts being discussed.

Diplomatic & Legal

- **The Iran war takes a Korean landing exercise** — The American Marines told their South Korean counterparts that force availability is constrained by the Iran war and cancelled Ssangyong, the division-level amphibious drill set for next month, after Trump had already cut back Ulchi Freedom Shield over cost and Seoul's refusal to join that war. An economic campaign that asks third countries to carry real weight opens in Washington today, and the one ally that has already refused has lost two exercises to it.
- **The Joint List asks Brussels to supervise the election** — Yousef Jabareen says the Joint List put international monitoring of the Knesset election to representatives of EU countries, that Brussels has the request under consideration, and that what worries him is what people tied to the government might do on the day or after the count. Israel votes in nine weeks, and an Israeli party has gone to foreign governments to ask whether Israel can be trusted to count its own ballots.

Home Front & Politics

- **An arrest in Haifa puts Peleg back on Highway 4** — Police arrested a Kfar Hasidim yeshiva student yesterday after he clashed with an inspector over a Rav-Kav payment, found him classified as a draft evader and handed him to the Military Police, and the Color Black alert went off in Holon hours later over a second attempted handover. Peleg has called its people to the Bnei Brak entrance of Highway 4 for around five this afternoon, police are readying closures in both directions, and the exemption bill is what the next coalition gets assembled around. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

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